



media action nepal

Media, Elections & Human Rights

A Study on Media Coverage of Elections from Human Rights Perspective

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Media Action Nepal, 2023

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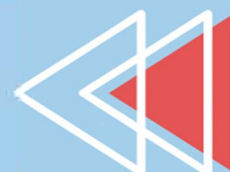
Elections are often called the festival of democracy and rightly so. One of the key actors who help convert elections into a festive occasion is the media. This is because journalists working across all mediums – radio, television, print and online – play a vital role in making elections free and fair. They do this through dissemination of credible and accurate information to help people make informed choices about political parties, agenda and candidates. Equally, they are responsible for holding political parties and leaders responsible for their words and actions.

The media play an important role in promoting various fundamental human rights including the rights of citizens to participate freely in electoral processes. These rights are laid out in key international human rights instruments, including the Article 19 of UDHR, which protects freedom of expression at all times. Its Article 21 protects political participation and voting. These rights are resounded in ICCPR. Its Article 19 states that everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression, including freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers. Also, the Article 25 states that every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections.

Furthermore, the media can create an enabling environment to encourage voters to participate in elections mainly through electoral education. While they provide a platform to political parties to reach voters with information, they also have a duty to independently observe and disseminate information about electoral processes, including electoral management and state accountability.

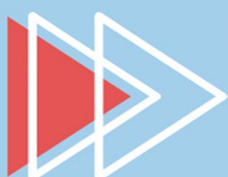
An assessment of MAN carried out in 2021 highlights the need for more investment in building capacity of journalists in Nepal to increase their understanding of key social issues. As a CSO working from the center to the grassroots, among other areas, on media capacity-building, we felt the need to work together with the media ahead of the parliamentary and provincial elections held on 20 November 2022 as it is widely known that biased media contents undermine the integrity of elections.

In light of this and ahead of the elections, MAN made initiatives to work with the media to promote accurate, unbiased and credible news contents during the elections. As part of this, MAN collaborated with CFLI to organize sensitization workshops in all seven provinces of Nepal, directly engaging a total of 175 working journalists – more than half of them female journalists. These workshops were aimed at promoting ethical journalism as well as countering disinformation and covered topics such as professional standards and code of conduct for journalists, media approach to human rights, countering hate speech and promoting inclusive news content. One of the major outcomes of these workshops was production and dissemination of appealing human-interest stories by selected fellows covering HRI issues.



Another area of our collaboration was to study media coverage of the elections from HRI perspectives analyzing news stories published in selected newspapers and online news portals. This report is all about that. Some of the findings of this study are thought-provoking. I hope this study will encourage media owners and practitioners to introduce an effective in-house strategy of promoting HRI issues through media contents.

Laxman Datt Pant
Chairperson
Media Action Nepal



Content

Content	Page
Background	1
Statement of the problem	2
Study objectives	2
Methodology of the study	2
Significance of the study	3
Limitations of the study	3
Selection of the indicators	4
Indicators	4-7
Selection of media outlets	7
Interpretation and analysis of data	8-15
Findings and conclusion	16
Recommendations	17
Annexes	18
References	19

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CFLI: Canada Fund for Local Initiatives

CEDAW: Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

CRC: Convention on Rights of the Child

CRMW: International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families

CSO: Civil Society Organization

CRPD: Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities

GBV: Gender Based Violence

HRI News: Human Rights and Inclusion News

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

ILO: International Labor Organization

LGBTIQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, or Questioning

MAN: Media Action Nepal

NHRC: National Human Rights Commission

NIDS: Nepal Institute of Development Studies

PWD: Person with Disabilities

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

UN: United Nations

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNOHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights



Background

The media in Nepal are diverse in numbers. With more than 6,000 different media outlets including booming online news portals, the reach of media has spread far and wide from policy-makers to people at the grassroots. While diversity in numbers is encouraging, media cannot be diverse as long as the contents they produce and disseminate don't cover human rights and inclusion perspectives.

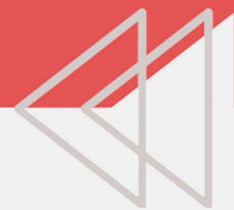
Despite Nepal being a party to international human rights instruments and the constitution of the country guaranteeing fundamental rights and committing to principles of human rights and inclusion, newsrooms are producing less amount of in-depth, comprehensive and diverse contents. A study by Media Action Nepal (2022) shows the media contents are not reflecting inclusive perspectives. It further says that the more the news sources are diversified, the greater the credibility of the media.

Another study (2021, *ibid*) states that the media must apply constitutional provisions on inclusiveness to their day-to-day work. Despite this, media have been criticized for doing less to promote inclusion and calls for being sensitive towards the plights of vulnerable groups are growing louder (2022, *ibid*).

Elections are an opportunity to give voices to minority people, highlight their needs and bring them to the attention of political parties and leaders as the media have a watchdog and agenda-setting role.

Amid this context, MAN launched an initiative during the elections for the House of Representative and Provincial Assemblies, held on 20 November 2022, to build capacity of journalists to enhance their understanding on human rights and inclusion issues. This was mainly implemented through capacity-building workshops in provinces. One of the needs felt by the journalists during the workshops was a knowledge gap on key issues, including human rights approaches to content production. Most of the participants admitted lack of human rights and inclusion lens in newsrooms.

Amid this context, MAN, as a responsible CSO working towards building responsible media, conducted this study to determine the pattern of media coverage on human rights and inclusion issues during the elections.



Statement of the Problem

Issues of human rights and inclusion are ingredients of media reporting. However, it is widely known fact that they are few and far between. Also, the depth and comprehensiveness of media contents has been another concern. A study (2022, *ibid*) pointed out the increasing need for dishing out analytical perspectives of the issues journalists are reporting on in addition to a mere reporting of the events.

- The participants of a mentoring session, a culmination of the capacity building workshops in provinces, felt utter lack of media contents from human rights and inclusion perspectives during the time of elections.
- Fewer investigative and comprehensive news stories and opinion pieces concerning representation of women, Dalits, minority communities and disadvantaged people to hold political parties accountable for their words and actions.

Study Objectives

This study is aimed at discovering the state of media coverage on elections from human rights and inclusion perspectives to enhance newsroom understanding on these issues. It also aims to:

- Assess the pattern and degree of coverage on human rights and inclusion issues by selected newspapers and online news portals through a content analysis.
- Recommend newsroom practitioners on the ways to promote human rights and inclusion through media reporting during the time of elections.

Methodology of the Study

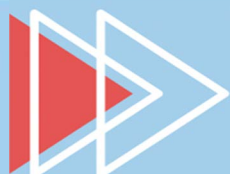
This study employs three specific research methods in relation to the aforementioned objectives. They are:


- Content analysis
- Literature review
- Consultations

The content analysis included a purposive mix of 20 media outlets (10 newspapers and 10 online news portals) for a period of 16 days – eight days before the election day, the polling day and seven days following the elections (see Annex 1 & 2 for the list of media outlets).

Likewise, relevant and latest studies, documents and publications were reviewed to prepare the background and set indicators for this study.

Fourteen journalists selected from 175 participants of the capacity building workshops through a competitive fellowship program were consulted to find out the level of newsroom understanding and the trend of media reporting on human rights and inclusion issues.





Significance of the Study

This study sheds light on newsroom awareness vis-à-vis issues of human rights and inclusion in particular around media reporting in the time of elections.

Similarly, it presents a picture of media coverage of elections from human rights and inclusion perspectives on the basis of the set indicators.

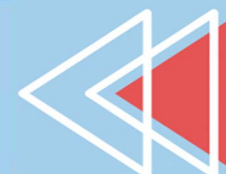
Furthermore, it recommends an action plan for newsroom practitioners to advance human rights and inclusion through media reporting.

Limitations of the Study

This study analyzed news stories of only 20 media outlets – three broadsheets and three online media from the Kathmandu Valley and seven broadsheets and seven online news portals from the provinces.

Furthermore, it covered only 16 days of the elections – eight days before the Election Day, the polling day and seven days following the elections – from 12-27 November 2022.

News stories disseminated during the timeframe are considered under the study corpus. Nevertheless, this study offers useful analysis for further studies in this area and laying the groundwork for mainstreaming human rights and inclusion issues in the newsroom.





Selection of the Indicators

Fourteen indicators were set for this study to find out to what extent contents about issues of human rights and inclusion perspectives were reported in the media. It is well understood that definitions of human rights and inclusion are centered on UN conventions and instruments. Being a party to such instruments, Nepal has an obligation to implement relevant provisions by introducing appropriate domestic laws. Many of the fundamental rights provisions contained in the Constitution of Nepal are aligned with those international instruments.

The indicators represent concerns and rights of the marginalized and vulnerable communities of Nepal and are anchored on the fundamental rights provisions of the constitution following a thorough review of the SDGs, CEDAW, CRC, UDHR, CRPD, CRMW, ICCPR and ICESCR. Nepal is a party to all of these international conventions except for CRMW.

Indicators

- 1. Right to social justice:** The UN defines social justice as the equal rights of all peoples, and the opportunity for all human beings, without discrimination, to benefit from economic and social progress in all parts of the world. The concepts of justice and equality are related mainly to economic conditions and inequality. The equitable distribution of wealth and the consequent equal opportunities are often the basis on which political equality, enjoyment of human rights and the promotion of development and human dignity are built. Social justice is crucial for peace and security in any state. The Article 42 of the Constitution of Nepal mentions the right to social justice, guaranteeing proportional inclusion, equal access to public services and facilities, access to land for agro activities. Furthermore, it advocates for an equal opportunity for the families of the martyrs, the disappeared persons and those injured during all people's movements (Law Commission of Nepal, 2020). Issues related to discrimination, transitional justice, freedom and liberty, right to vote and environment fall under the right to social justice. Thus social justice has been chosen as one of the indicators for this study.
- 2. Rights of persons with disabilities:** This indicator was selected following a thorough review of the CRPD. Nepal is signatory to the convention. The convention recognizes that discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person and emphasizes on the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of sustainable development. This indicator analyzes election-specific media coverage of issues relating to people with mental and physical disabilities, their political representation, attitudinal and environmental barriers for their full participation in society.



3. **Rights of senior citizens:** People over 60 years of age make up an ever greater percentage of the world population. The Senior Citizens Act 2006 of Nepal has provisions for the protection and social security of senior citizens and enhancement of trust, respect and good faith towards them by utilizing their knowledge, skills, capability and experiences. This indicator looks at the representation of such issues in Nepali media during the elections.
4. **Women rights:** The Constitution of Nepal guarantees women's rights as a fundamental right, reaffirms the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health, education, health, employment, equal pay, social security and property rights and guarantees inclusion of women in all state bodies on the basis of the principle of proportional inclusion. While legal frameworks provide a solid ground for advancing the rights of women and marginalized groups, there are still challenges for translating legal provisions into reality. This indicator looks at media coverage of issues concerning gender equality during the elections.
5. **Youth employment and empowerment:** Youth is a period of transition from dependence to independence and autonomy. The transition occurs at different times in relation to different rights, for example with regards to education, employment, and sexual and reproductive health, and, among others, depends on the socioeconomic context. According to the UN, young people face challenges in realizing their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. According to the report published by the World Bank, Nepal is the 19th biggest beneficiary of funds sent by migrants (Prasain, 2019). However, abuse and forced labor of migrant workers exists. Thus it is important to analyze media coverage of such issues during the elections.
6. **Rights of sexual and gender minority:** The Article 18 of the Constitution of Nepal, the Right to Equality, specifically states that marginalized groups, which include sexual and gender minorities, will not face discrimination by the state and judiciary. Furthermore, the Constitution contains Articles which specify that citizens of Nepal are permitted to decide what preferred gender identity appears on their citizenship document, and that gender and sexual minority groups have the right to full participation in state mechanisms and public service “on the basis of the principle of inclusion”. However, a study (2022) conducted by MAN shows issues of sexual and gender minority are not treated as a priority by media. This indicator measures whether LGBTIQ+ issues were covered by Nepali media during the elections.
7. **Rights of Dalits:** The Articles 24 of the Constitution of Nepal guarantees rights against untouchability and discrimination and the Article 40 highlights the rights of Dalits such as their empowerment, representation and participation, access to health and education etc. The Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2011 criminalizes all forms of caste-based discrimination. As part of this study, this indicator analyzes how often Dalit issues are covered by the media outlets in terms of their empowerment during the elections.



- 8. Rights of minorities:** Minority people depend on land for their livelihoods. Access to land is an important determinant of rural poverty. Landless and people without land security constitute the poor population in rural areas. Economic analysis has long revealed the importance of secure property rights for economic growth, and for this growth to translate into poverty reduction (Adhikari, 2006). This indicator looks into issues of landless people covered by media during the elections.
- 9. Right to education and health:** The Article 31 of the Constitution of Nepal mentions about the right to education emphasizing that every citizen has the right of access to basic education and the right to get compulsory and free education up to the basic level and free education up to the secondary level from the state. The Article 35 of the constitution is about the right to health, which states that every person has the right to free basic health services, right to information about his/her medical treatment, equal access to health services, clean drinking water and sanitation. This indicator analyzes media coverage of education and health issues raised during the elections.
- 10. Right to food:** The Article 36 of the Constitution of Nepal contains the provision of right relating to food, right to be safe from the state of being in danger of life from the scarcity of food and right to food sovereignty. Food is a less discussed topic in the context of Nepal. This indicator analyzes media coverage of food issues raised during the elections.
- 11. Issues of good governance:** In order to promote good governance, Nepal has enacted several laws. The Good Governance (Management and Operation) Act (2006), the Right to Information Act (2006) and the Local Government Operation Act (2016) are the major ones (Lamichhane, 2022). The Constitution of Nepal has divided the duties and responsibilities of all three tiers of government. The Transparency International report (2021) shows Nepal stands at 117th position out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perception Index. Thus it is important to analyze issues of corruption and poor governance raised by Nepali media during the elections.
- 12. Rights of farmer:** Although Nepal is an agriculture country, many of the agricultural products are imported. The rights of farmers are guaranteed by the Article 42 (4) of the Constitution of Nepal that says every farmer has the right to have access to land for agro activities, select and protect local seeds and agro species which have been used and pursued traditionally. However, farmers often hit streets with several demands such as for fertilizer, good prices of their produce. This indicator analyzes issues of farmers covered during the elections by Nepali media.





13. Rights of the child: Nepal is signatory to the CRC. The Article 39 of the Constitution of Nepal guarantees the rights of the child including the right to education. The Act Relating to Children, 2018 of Nepal emphasizes the need for maintaining the best interests of children by respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling the rights of the child. Rights of the child are not often discussed about in the context of Nepal. This indicator analyzes media coverage of children's issues highlighted during the elections by Nepali media.

14. Poverty alleviation: The SDGs has poverty as one of its goal. Nepal has made a commitment to implement the SDGs. Furthermore, one of the focuses of the current 15th Periodic Plan is to alleviate poverty. Thus it is important to understand how much priority Nepali media are giving to issues of poverty during the elections.

Selection of Media Outlets

Media outlets were selected purposively. Due consideration was given to those media outlets that were not covered by previous studies commissioned by MAN. Media selection involves newspapers that are bringing out regular editions as well as online news portals disseminating media contents on a regular basis.

TABLE 1: Media outlets included in the study.

S.N	Name of the media	Location	Type
1	shilapatra.com	Kathmandu Valley	Online
2	nagriknews.com	Kathmandu Valley	Online
3	annapurnapost.com	Kathmandu Valley	Online
4	Rajdhani	Kathmandu Valley	Newspaper
5	Nepal Samacharpatra	Kathmandu Valley	Newspaper
6	Naya Patrika	Kathmandu Valley	Newspaper
7	purwanchal.com	Province 1	Online
8	Kapurinews	Province 1	Newspaper
9	todaykhoj.com	Madhesh Province	Online
10	Prateek	Madhesh Province	Newspaper
11	kalikanews.com	Bagmati Province	Online
12	Samriddha Samaj	Bagmati Province	Newspaper
13	nepalahile.com	Gandaki Province	Online
14	Dhorpatan	Gandaki Province	Newspaper
15	awaj.com	Lumbini Province	Online
16	Dainik Lumbini	Lumbini Province	Newspaper
17	jwalasandesh.com	Karnali Province	Online
18	Sajhabisaune	Karnali Province	Newspaper
19	simarekha.com	Sudurpaschim Province	Online
20	Dhangadhi Post	Sudurpaschim Province	Newspaper





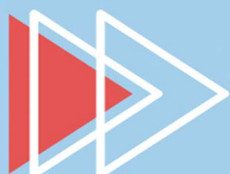
Interpretation and Analysis of Data

A total of 7,459 news stories were analyzed for this study. Among them were 1,735 contents published by newspapers and 3,990 by online news portals from Kathmandu Valley.

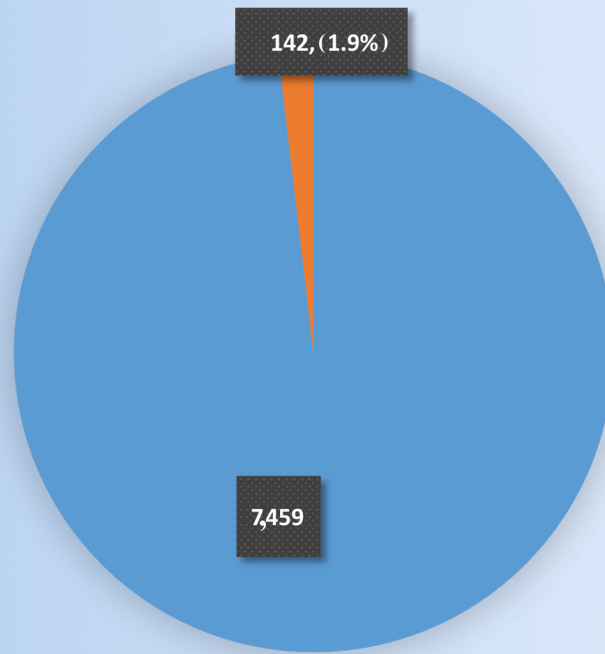
In the provinces, 935 news stories published by online news portals and 799 by newspapers from seven provinces were analyzed.

TABLE 2: Number of news stories analyzed.

S.N	Name of the media	Location	# of news stories analyzed
1	shilapatra.com	Kathmandu Valley	1,088
2	nagariknews.com	Kathmandu Valley	1,237
3	annapurnapost.com	Kathmandu Valley	1,665
4	Rajdhani	Kathmandu Valley	444
5	Nepal Samacharpatra	Kathmandu Valley	579
6	Naya Patrika	Kathmandu Valley	712
		Total (of Kathmandu Valley)	5,725
7	purwanchal.com	Province 1	200
8	Kapurinews	Province 1	60
9	todaykhoj.com	Madhesh Province	27
10	Prateek Daily	Madhesh Province	156
11	kalikanews.com	Bagmati Province	339
12	Samriddha Samaj	Bagmati Province	105
13	nepalahile.com	Gandaki Province	57
14	Dhorpatan	Gandaki Province	143
15	awaj.com	Lumbini Province	214
16	Dainik Lumbini	Lumbini Province	123
17	jwalasandesh.com	Karnali Province	39
18	Sajhabisaune	Karnali Province	92
19	simarekha.com	Sudurpaschim Province	59
20	Dhangadhi Post	Sudurpaschim Province	120
		Total (of seven provinces)	1,734
		Grand Total	7,459

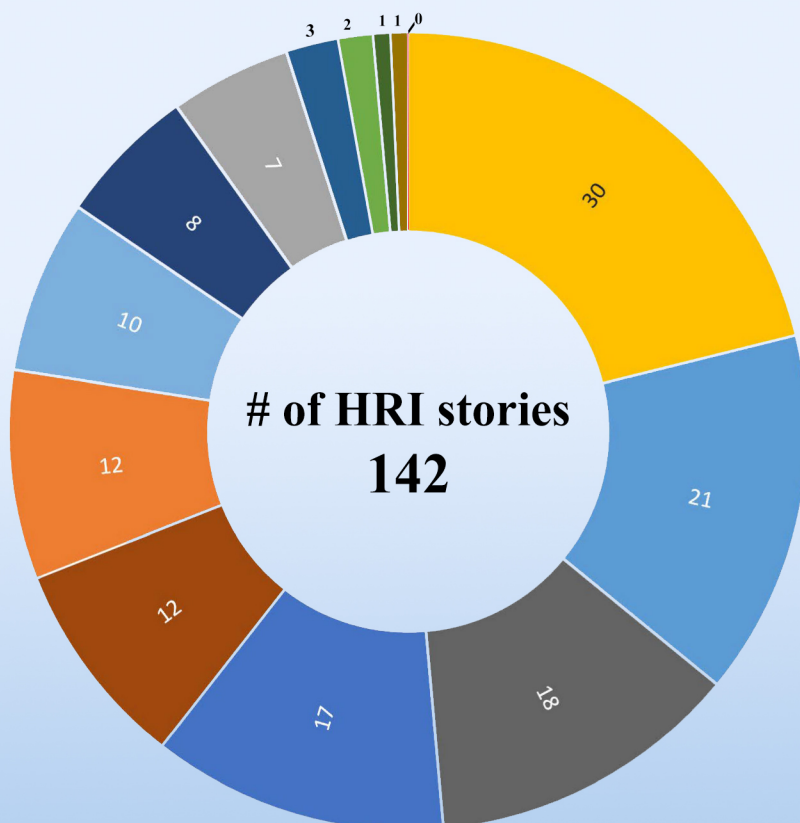


Media coverage of HRI issues during elections



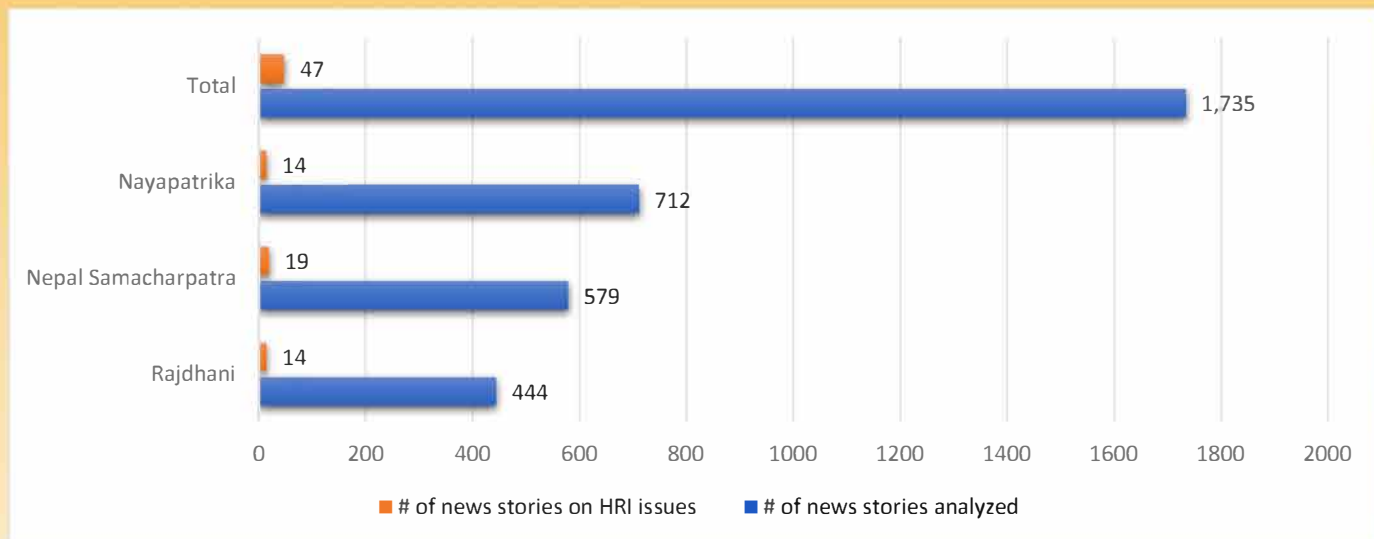
■ # of news stories analyzed

■ # of news stories on HRI issues



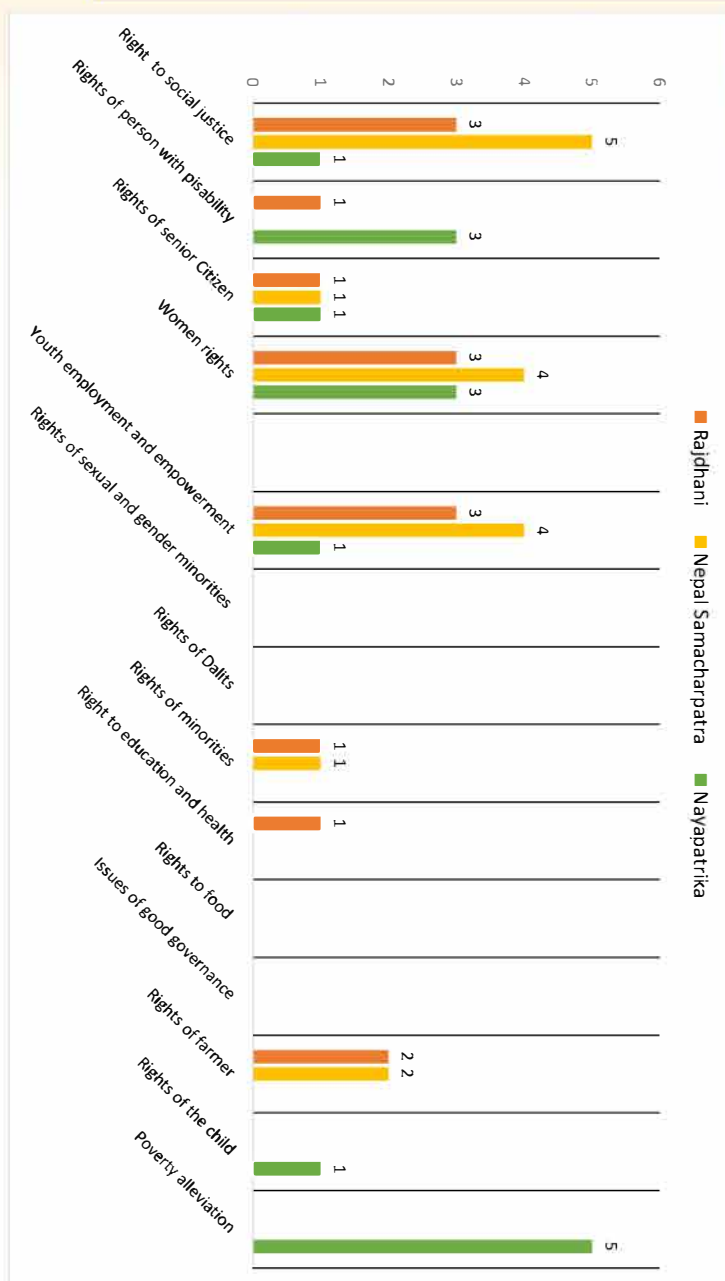
- Right to social justice
- Rights of persons with disabilities
- Rights of senior citizens
- Women rights
- Youth employment and empowerment
- Rights of sexual and gender minorities
- Rights of Dalits
- Rights of minorities
- Right to education and health
- Right to food
- Issues of good governance
- Rights of farmer
- Rights of the child
- Poverty alleviation

News stories on HRI issues published in Kathmandu-based newspapers



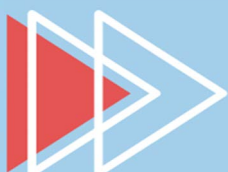
Out of 1,735 contents analyzed for this study, only 47 news stories were on HRI issues as shown above. This means only 2.7 percent of the news stories published by the three newspapers covered HRI issues.

Indicator-wise findings of the Kathmandu-based newspapers



Issues of women and gender rights accounted for the majority of the news stories highlighted by the three newspapers during the time of the elections.

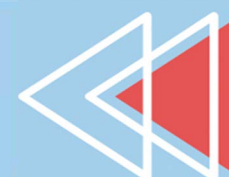
A story published by Rajdhani on 25 November 2022 stated that some women candidates not only won the elections, but also defeated "heavy-weights". This news has the power to inspire other women who are aspiring to join politics to break male dominance. Also, a story published by the same newspaper on 20 November 2022 pointed out dismal representation of women in the elections under the title "Women candidates in male candidates' shadow". This clearly shows that newspapers gave priority to representation of women during the elections.

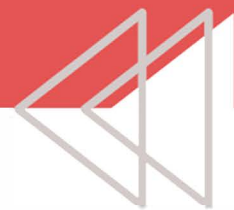




Indicator-wise findings of Kathmandu-based newspapers

- ➔ Nepal Samacharpatra analyzed the existing data and laid bare a miserable situation of women candidates contenting the elections. A news item was published by the newspaper on 11 November 2022 under the title “Only 9 percent of women candidates in the fray”.
- ➔ Nayapatrika carried out a story on 20 November 2022 titled “Big political parties using children”. The news has made a reference to the concerns drawn by the NHRC on the use of children during the elections.
- ➔ The voting rights of detainees was highlighted by all the three media. For instance, Nayapatrika published a news story on 18 November 2022 titled "348 detainees casting votes in Karnali".
- ➔ A story on poverty alleviation linking to farmers was published in Nayapatrika on 14 November 2022, with a titled “Why land reform issue is raised only during the elections”.
- ➔ Migrant workers leaving the country during the time of the elections received media attention. Samacharpatra published a news story on 16 November 2022 titled “More concerns over hunger than votes”. The story stated that Nepalese are going to India for food and those migrant workers do not care about the elections.
- ➔ Education and health are considered the foundation of development. However, it was found that news stories relating to education and health were not published by the three newspapers.
- ➔ Elected women candidates were in the news. But during the study period there were no analytical news stories to advocate for 33 percent of women and Dalit representation in accordance with the constitutional provisions.
- ➔ PWDs’ access to polling stations was prominently raised by the media, but their social and economic challenges and commitments made by political parties to address their problems were not highlighted. For example, Rajdhani published a news story on 19 November 2022 about PWDs spotlighting how polling stations are not friendly to them.
- ➔ Media rightly gave due space to the marginalized community and farmers. For instance, Rajdhani published a news story on 14 November 2022 “Marginalized are only for vote bank”.

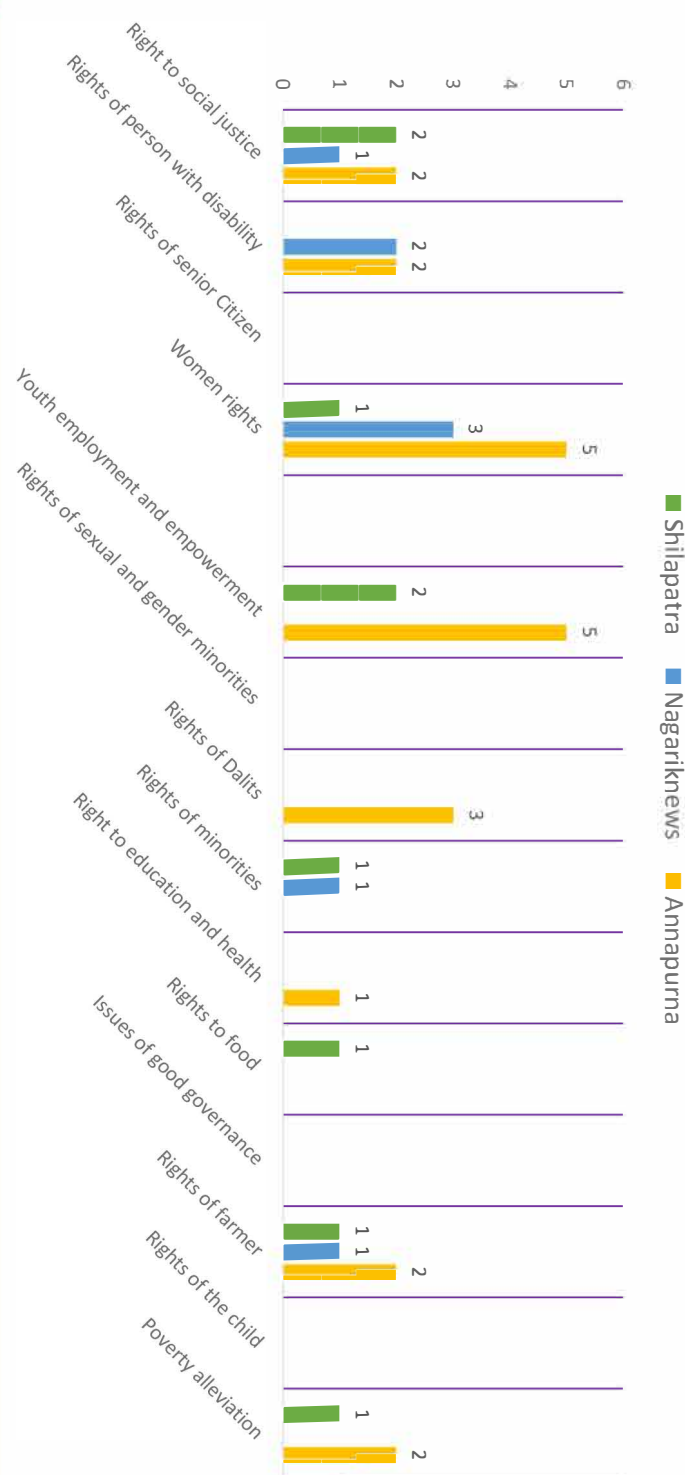




Indicator-wise findings of Kathmandu-based online news portals

SN	Media	# of news stories analyzed	# of news stories on HRI issues
1	shilapatra.com	1,088	9
2	nagriknews.com	1,237	9
3	annapurnapost.com	1,665	21
	Total	3,990	39
	# of news stories on HRI issues		39

Out of 3,990 news stories published by the three online news portals and analyzed for this study, only 39 news stories (0.98 percent) were on HRI issues.

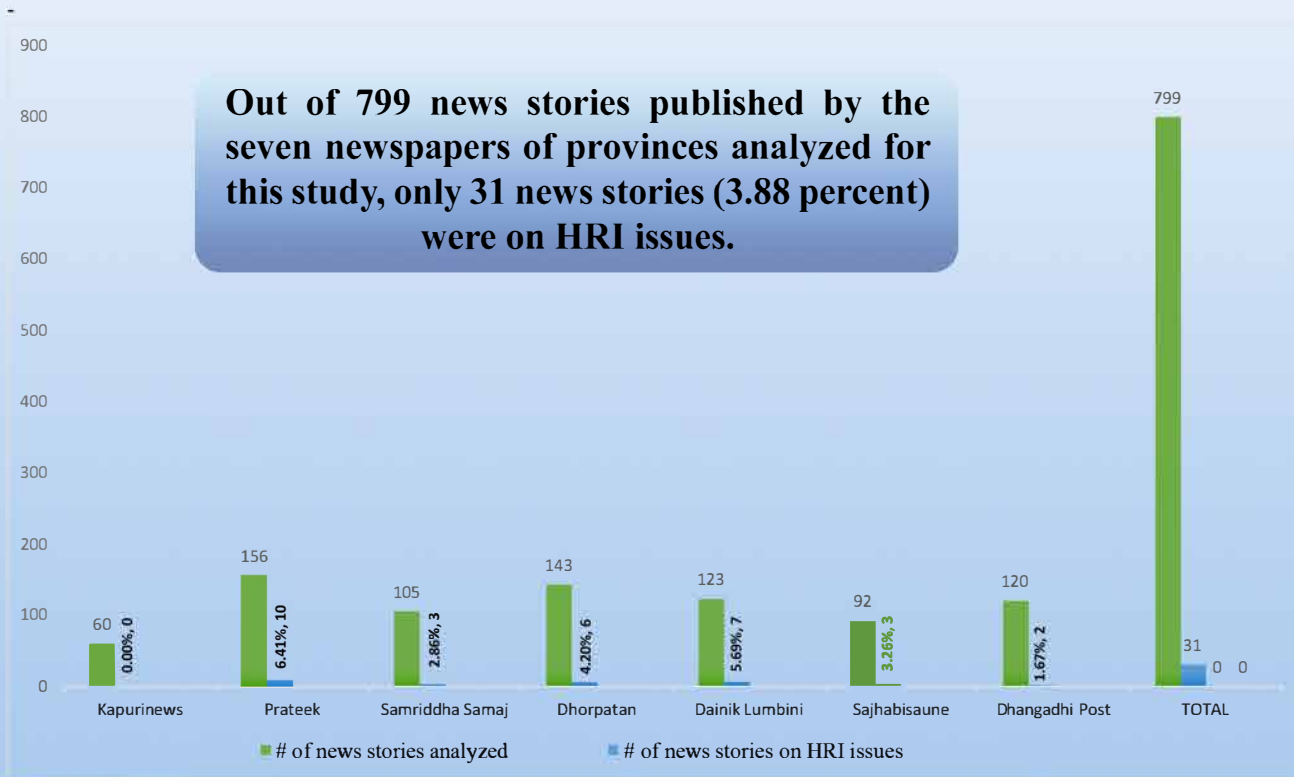


- It was found that none of the online news portals published news stories relating to good governance, LGBTIQ+, senior citizens and children during the study period.
- Voices of freed Kamaiyas, most of whom are still struggling to make their ends meet, were heard by the media. On 13 November 2022, Shilapatra published a news story on Kamaiyas titled “Don’t want to cast votes”.
- Voices of migrant workers were given due space. Shilapatra published stories on 20 November titled "Don’t want to stay here to cast votes, say abroad-bound migrant workers" and “Leaving the country on the day of elections”.
- Interestingly, the media touched upon transitional justice during the elections. On 12 November 2022, nagariknews.com published a news story on human rights and transitional justice titled “Elections offer no balm for conflict victims”.
- The right to reproductive health was treated as a priority. A story titled “Pregnant women at risk as many birthing centers closed due to elections” was published on 18 November 2022 by nagariknews.com.





News stories on HRI issues in newspapers of provinces



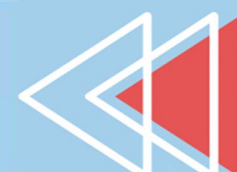
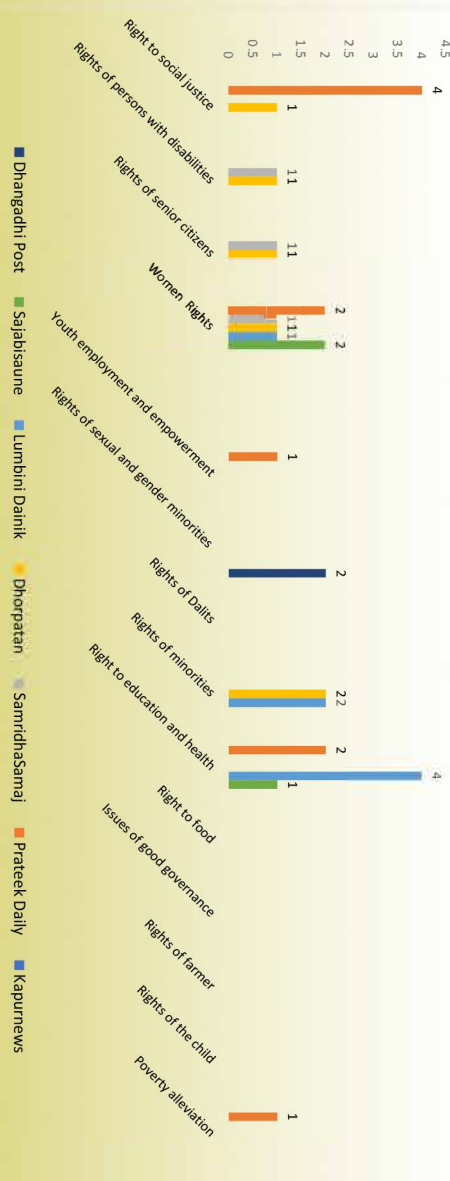
News stories on HRI issues in newspapers of provinces

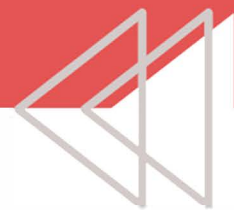
Contents related to gender and women were covered widely, most of them related to 16 Days of Campaign against GBV, by the seven newspapers of provinces during the elections. For example, Samriddha Samaj on 14 November 2022 published a news story titled "Vote for candidates who advocate for women's issues". Also, on 27 November 2022, Sajhabisaune published a story titled "Alliance against violence".

The study found that Dhangadhi Post was the only among the seven newspapers of provinces that gave space to LGBTIQ+. Stories titled "LGBTIQ+ issues: Call for greater sensitivity" and "Call for giving media space to LGBTIQ+ issues" by the newspaper on November 17 and 18 respectively.

News stories on social justice, one of the indicators of the, were mostly on social issues and environment. For example, Dhorpatan published a story on 14 November 2022 titled "Social issues on the backburner" and another 21 November 2022 titled "New mothers, elderly people cannot cast votes by themselves" on and Dainik Lumbini carried a news piece on 17 November 2022 titled "No Dalit candidates for provincial elections".

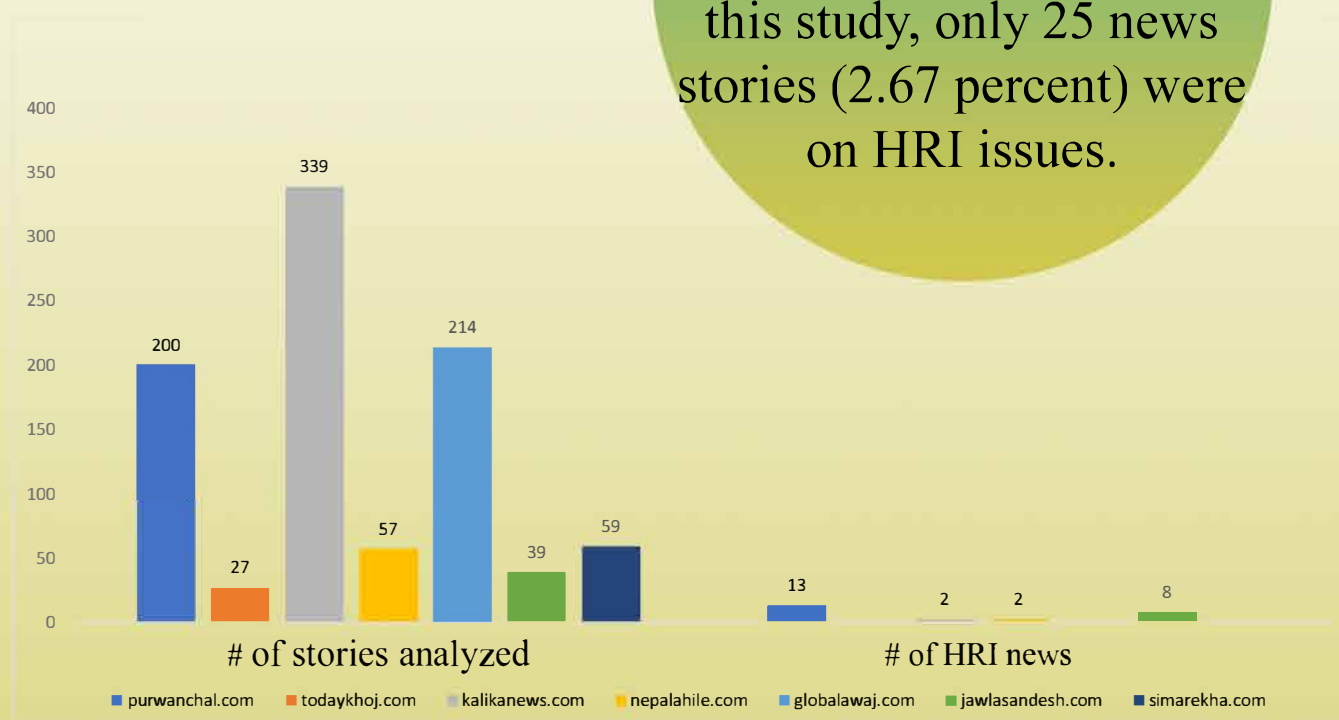
Dhorpatan published a story on 14 November 2022 titled "The lone visually-impaired candidate". However, not all the newspapers highlighted concerns and needs of PWDs during the study period.





News stories on HRI issues in online news portals of provinces

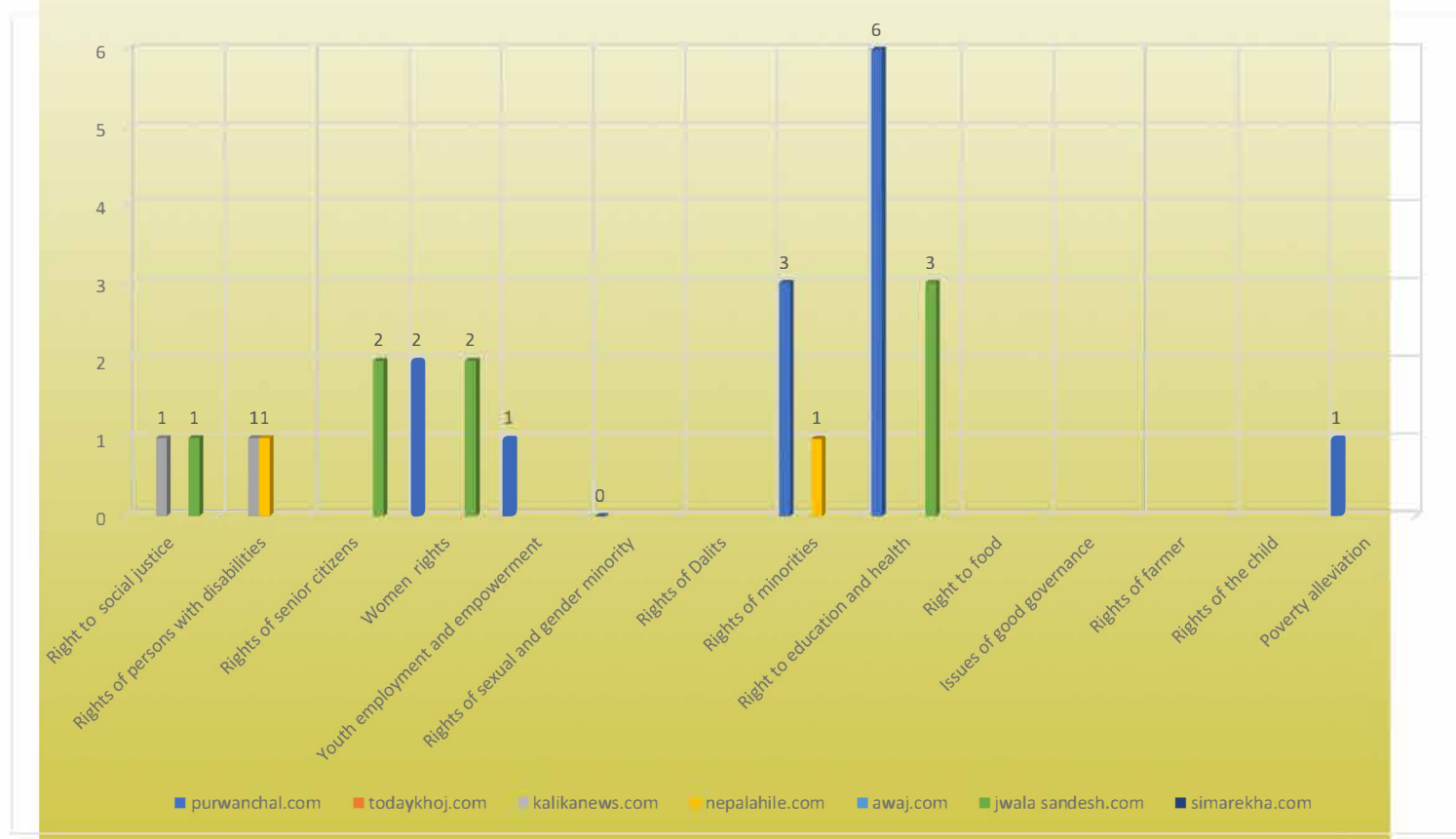
Out of 935 news stories published by the seven online news portals of provinces analyzed for this study, only 25 news stories (2.67 percent) were on HRI issues.



The above data shows purwanchal.com and jwalasandesh.com published more news stories on HRI issues during the study period than other online portals.



Indicator-wise findings of news stories on HRI issues in online news portals of provinces

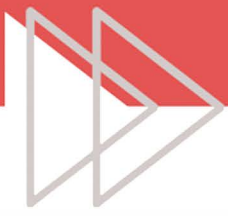


The issues of PWDs were treated as a priority by online news portals. For instance, Kalikanews published a story on 15 November 2022 titled "I myself want to exercise my voting right, says voters with disabilities" and another on 12 November titled "Call to ensure voting rights of intellectually disabled people". This is an encouraging story for other PWDs.

Similarly, issues of elderly people made headlines, albeit only in few newspapers of provinces. For instance, Jwala Sandesh published a news story on 14 November 2022 "Women, elderly people cannot cast their vote by themselves".

In addition, online portals gave priority to women voters and their issues in the elections. For example, Jwala Sandesh published a story on 16 November 2022 titled "Those who returned home with only inked nails" that highlighted women's woes of not being able to cast their votes on their own as someone from their family did so, depriving them of their voting rights.

- Although voters rely enormously on media contents to make informed choices and opinions both during the elections and other occasions, the study found that Nepali media are paying little attention to issues of human rights and inclusion while covering elections.
- In a good start, all the media outlets rightly pointed out less representation of women as candidates. However, transitional justice, a long-awaited dream of the conflict victims across the country, was only highlighted once.
- The study reveals that the majority of the media outlets covered news stories of women candidates, their political empowerment and participation in the elections.
- A total of 142 news stories (1.9 percent) produced by newspapers and online news portals of the Kathmandu Valley and provinces, out of 7,459 analyzed as part of this study, covered HRI issues.
- Out of the 142 news stories on HRI issues published by the media outlets, 30 stories (21.13 percent) were related to women rights.
- The media outlets published 21 news stories (14.79 percent) on the right to social justice, 18 (12.68 percent) on education and health, 17 (11.97 percent) on youth employment and empowerment, 12 (8.45 percent) on the rights of PWDs, and eight news stories (5.63 percent) on the rights of farmers.
- Surprisingly, none of the media outlets produced stories on good governance, an issue considered vital during the time of elections as voters generally have the tendency to know whether and to what extent political parties are committed to it.
- Merely one (0.70 percent) news story was published each on the rights of child and the right to food.
- Corroborating repeated concerns from LGBTIQ+ and Dalits that their voices were not duly reflected by the media, only two news stories (1.41 percent) were on the rights of sexual and gender minorities (LGBTIQ+) and three (2.11 percent) on the rights of Dalits.
- Similarly, 10 news stories (7.04 percent) were related to poverty alleviation, seven (4.93 percent) concerning the rights of senior citizen and 12 (8.45 percent) on the rights of minorities.
- The media outlets largely disseminated news stories about politics during the elections, but gave little space to HRI issues.



Recommendations

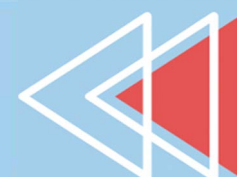
IMPROVE newsroom understanding of HRI issues through capacity building of reporters and **FORMULATE** a policy to ensure continuous media coverage of HRI issues.

ENGAGE media gatekeepers such as editors, news chiefs and copy editors through CSOs-led dialogues around HRI issues to increase media coverage of investigative and comprehensive news stories concerning representation of women, Dalits, minority communities and disadvantaged people.

PREPARE a robust plan to cover all stages of elections establishing a repository of relevant election materials and resources, including reports and documents, do's and don'ts, contact sources etc.

EMBRACE human rights approaches while reporting elections by identifying tools and measures that support the promotion of free, fair and participatory elections.

DEVELOP a media coverage framework of elections that protects and upholds human rights principles, primarily fundamental rights and individual freedoms guaranteed under relevant international human rights instruments to which Nepal is a state party and under the Constitution of Nepal.



Annex 1: The newspapers included in the study

SN	Media	Publisher	Location
1.	Rajdhani National Daily	Utsarga Prakashan Pvt. Ltd.	Kathmandu Valley
2	Nepal Samacharpatra National Daily	Kamana News Publication Pvt. Ltd	Kathmandu Valley
3	Nayapatrika National Daily	Naya Parkashn Pvt. Ltd	Kathmandu Valley
4	Kapurinews Daily	News East Media Pvt. Ltd	Province 1, Sunsari
5	Prateek Daily	Prateek Prakasan Samuha Pvt.Ltd	Madesh, Parsa
6	Samriddha Samaj Dainik	Suresh Shrestha	Bagmati, Hetauda
7	Dhorpatan Daily	Dhorpatan Sanchar Pvt. Ltd	Gandaki, Pokhara
8	Dainik Lumbini	Siddhartha Pvt. Ltd	Lumbini, Butwal
9	Sajhabisaunee Dainik	Sajhabisaunee Publication Pvt. Ltd	Karnali, Surkhet
10	Dhangadhi Post Dainik		Sudhur Paschim, Dhangadhi

Annex 2: The online news portals included in the study

SN	Media	Domain Name	Location
1	Annapurnapost.com	www.annapurnapost.com	Kathmandu Valley
2	Shilapatra.com	www.shilapatra.com	Kathmandu Valley
3	Nagariknews.com	www.nagariknews.nagariknetwork.com	Kathmandu Valley
4	Purwanchal.com	www.purwanchaldaily.com	Province-1, Birtamod
5	Todaykhoj.com	www.todaykhoj.com	Madhesh, Siraha
6	Kalikanews.com	www.kalikanews.com	Bagmati, Chitwan
7	Nepalahile.com	www.nepalahile.com	Gandaki, Pokhara
8	Globalaawaj.com	www.globalaawaj.com	Lumbini, Rupendehi
9	Jwalasandesh.com	www.jwalasandesh.com	Karnali, Dailekh
10	Simarekha.com	www.simarekha.com	Sudur Paschim, Kanchanpur

Annex 3: Names of the journalists who participated in consultations

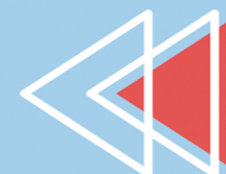
SN	Name	Affiliated Media	Location
1	Binu Timsina	Nepal Television	Province 1, Sunsari
2	Manita Chamling Rai	Dibyaroshani Online	Province 1, Sunsari
3	Reena Thapa	Pahilopost	Gandaki, Kaski
4	Raj Kumar Ale	Annapurna Post	Gandaki, Tanahun
5	Sarina Marasini	Rajya TV	Lumbini, Rupendehi
6	Khaga Prasad Sharma Chapai	Butwal Today	Lumbini, Kapilbastu
7	Sunita B.K.	Shilapatra.com, Kailali	Sudur Paschim, Kailali
8	Ishu Negi	Ekpatra.com, Kanchanpur	Sudur Paschim, Kanchanpur
9	Rama K.C.	Himal press	Karnali, Surkhet
10	Pankha Bahadur Shahi	Ratopati.com	Karnali, Surkhet
11	Binita Kandel	Chitwan Media Online TV	Bagmati, Chitwan
12	Rebati Prasad Timalsina	Sajhakura Daily	Bagmati, Makwanpur
13	Phaeja Phahmida	Factsamachar.com	Madhesh, Dhanush
14	Ranjan Kumar Bhandari	Nayapatrika	Madhesh, Mahottari





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Media Action Nepal, a Member of Media Freedom Coalition Consultative Network (MFC-CN), is working to promote freedom of expression and media development. Our core working areas include media and journalism, human rights, media research, right to information, communication and policy advocacy. We are committed to making media independent and accountable. Our goals: inclusive, independent and responsible media, and professional journalism, protection of human rights, strengthening of democracy.

Media Action Nepal has been advocating for an effective implementation of international mechanisms for freedom of expression, the United Nations Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, and the standards of gender sensitivity both in media content and the editorial leadership.

Since its inception in 2015, the organization has been contributing to independent and responsible press through research, dialogue, advocacy, publication, and documentation, capacity building of journalists in collaboration with national and international organizations.

Within the seven years of its establishment, the organization has its presence across Nepal through its offices and coordinators in all provinces. So far, nearly three thousand journalists have had their competencies built through its activities. Approximately ten thousand journalists in Nepal and other South Asian countries have benefitted from its programs and collaborative interventions. It has its active and skilled hands working across Nepal.



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