



# **CONFLICT-SENSITIVE JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION IN NEPAL**

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A Baseline Study  
2022

# Conflict-Sensitive Journalism and Communication in Nepal

## A Baseline Study

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## **Preface**

The media play an important role in shaping public discourse. Such a role of the media in a country like Nepal that is multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural comes with a great responsibility. While this diversity has numerous strengths, it can also invite conflict. Nepali media have been a witness to different conflicts the country has gone through in different phases of political changes. With its watchdog role ever increasing amid rising popularity of social media, the media must uphold in letter and spirit conflict sensitivity. A host of challenges Nepali society has been facing and continued spread of misinformation and disinformation must be tackled. For that to happen, media houses and journalists must stay away from fanning the flames of any type of conflict. Equally, they must function in an informed and fair manner offering an inclusive and safe space for healthy dialogue and developing impartial content for the citizenry.

The purpose of conducting this study was to understand the current situation of conflict-sensitive journalism and communication in Nepal and recommend a way forward. A thorough analysis of the work of journalists, their reflection on their roles and responsibilities as well as their level of knowledge about conflict sensitivity provided insights into existing challenges. In addition, a review of the content published in Nepali media helped understand to what degree conflict-sensitive journalism is practiced and what better can be done going forward both at the individual and professional levels. By applying a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, a broad overview of CSJ in Nepal was provided with key recommendations for strengthening conflict sensitivity in Nepali media.

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<b>ACOS Alliance</b>	A Culture of Safety Alliance
<b>BBC</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>CA</b>	Constituent Assembly
<b>CIEDP</b>	Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons
<b>COCAP</b>	Collective Campaign for Peace
<b>CPA</b>	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
<b>CPN-S</b>	Community Party of Nepal-Socialist
<b>CPS</b>	Civil Peace Service
<b>CSJ</b>	Conflict Sensitive Journalism
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>DoIB</b>	Department of Information and Broadcasting
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>FNJ</b>	Federation of Nepali Journalists
<b>GIZ</b>	German Agency for International Cooperation
<b>IFJ</b>	International Federation of Journalists
<b>IMS</b>	International Media Service
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunication Union
<b>LGBTIQ</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
<b>MA</b>	Masters in Arts
<b>MAN</b>	Media Action Nepal
<b>MDI</b>	Media Development Indicators
<b>MFC-CN</b>	Media Freedom Coalition-Consultative Network
<b>MoCIT</b>	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology
<b>PCN</b>	Press Council Nepal
<b>PJ</b>	Peace Journalism
<b>PM</b>	Prime Minister
<b>PWA</b>	Public Welfare Advertising
<b>RSF</b>	Reporters Without Borders
<b>SAG</b>	South Asian Games
<b>TRC</b>	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
<b>UML</b>	United Marxist Leninist
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## Summary

This study provides baseline information on Conflict-sensitive Journalism (CSJ) and Communication in Nepal. It is divided into five chapters. While the first chapter presents an introduction, the second and third have a literature review and research design respectively. The fourth chapter has a presentation and analysis with major findings captured in the final section.

The general objective of the study is to provide baseline information on the current situation of CSJ in Nepal and provide key suggestions to promote conflict sensitivity in Nepali media. In addition, the study assesses the state of conflict sensitivity in Nepali media through content analysis of selected newspapers and online news portals. Backed up by FGDs and intensive interviews with experts and stakeholders, it determines the existing level of conflict sensitivity among Nepali journalists and their understanding of conflict-sensitive journalism.

The content analysis, carried out as part of this study, shows that Nepali media have been upholding conflict sensitivity in general. However, there are a few instances of oversight or insensitivity that could have been addressed through CSJ interventions. The participants of the FGDs aver that the present state of CSJ is unsatisfactory. There is a common argument that conflict sensitivity reflected in media content is due to the personal efforts of journalists and institutional endeavors to promote conflict sensitivity in the media are nowhere to be found. Furthermore, the participants place a great emphasis on the need for CSJ interventions. The insights from the interviews are in congruence with the findings from the FGDs. However, the media fraternity along with other stakeholders do not seem happy with the current state of conflict sensitivity and seek CSJ interventions.

Recommendations presented by the study place a great emphasis on the need for a regular assessment to track the level of conflict sensitivity and sustainable collaborations among media houses to promote conflict-sensitive journalism and professionalism of journalists. One of the recommendations calls for regularly conducting content analysis of news outlets and other mass media of Nepal to track the state of conflict

sensitivity in Nepali media. Besides, conflict sensitivity among Nepali journalists and their understanding of conflict-sensitive journalism needs to be assessed. Institutional endeavors vis-à-vis the promotion of conflict-sensitive journalism and communication should remain a newsroom priority. Media institutions, academics, CSOs and journalists should together explore a working modality to this effect. For instance, incorporating CSJ in the journalism curricula of universities can be instrumental in bringing about a much-needed change.



# **Chapter I**

# **Introduction**



## 1.1 Context/Rationale

Journalism and any other forms of communication in the public domain in Nepal requires a high level of context sensitivity due to the country's multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural characteristics. Nepal saw an armed insurgency and political unrests that highlight the vulnerability of the country regarding political and other conflicts. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006 between the then Seven Party Alliance and Maoist rebels formally ended the 10-year-long violent insurgency. Clause 10.7 of CPA says, "We heartily appeal to the civil society, professional groups, class organizations, media, intellectual community and all Nepali people to actively participate in this historic campaign to build a new Nepal and to establish lasting peace through the constituent assembly elections by ending the armed conflict."<sup>1</sup>

The key pillars of the peace process were the management and integration of the Maoist combatants, promulgation of a new constitution through Constituent Assembly (CA) elections and transformation of transitional justice and socio-economy. Some components of the CPA are yet to be completed still leaving space for the possible conflicts in the society. In 2015, Nepal promulgated a new constitution that failed to completely address the root cause of the conflict. The Madhesh-based parties and some ethnic groups have joined the constitutional process, but they still do have reservations about the new constitution. Similarly, various marginalized groups continue to express their dissatisfaction against the political processes. Nepal has witnessed a rise of identity based political and social mobilization thereby increasing the possibility for conflict.<sup>2</sup>

Looming economic crisis, rising unemployment, high-level inflation and inequality are likely to cause social unrests in the society. The media should pay close attention and report independently on these issues. Gender-based violence, local grievances over resources and community rights, and communal and ideological clashes are some of the conflicts which could flare up if they are not handled well.

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<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive Peace Accord. (2006). [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/N-P\\_061122\\_Comprehensive%20Peace%20Agreement%20between%20the%20Government%20and%20the%20CPN%20%28Maoist%29.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/N-P_061122_Comprehensive%20Peace%20Agreement%20between%20the%20Government%20and%20the%20CPN%20%28Maoist%29.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Adhikary, N. M. (2013). Inception context analysis on the safety situation of journalists in Nepal. A report submitted to the UNESCO Kathmandu Office. [A section of the report is on conflict analysis of Nepal.]



In the past, Nepali media played a vital role to bridge the gap between conflicting parties but nowadays their role as a de-escalating actor seems to have changed with conflict transformation remaining still unresolved, the issue of CSJ has taken a backseat in Nepal. When it comes to conflict transformation, transitional justice remains a pending issue. In 2015, the Government of Nepal formed two commissions: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Commission of the Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP). These commissions have failed to make any headway to settle the war-era cases.

To mitigate or prevent any conflict in the society, the media plays a pivotal role. For this, the current level of understanding and knowledge on CSJ is inadequate and should be improved. For instance, Nepali universities running journalism classes are yet to include topics on CSJ in their curricula. Media houses are not training journalists on conflict-sensitive journalism, and universities do not impart education to that effect.

In such a context, a conflict sensitive approach is a must in public discourse in Nepal. For instance, the needs have increased for journalists, to have enhanced capacity to analyze conflict and employ conflict-sensitive approach when giving coverage to any event or situation.

Mass media have significant roles in treating conflicts pertinently while fulfilling their functions. According to Lasswell (1948), media performs the following three functions: surveillance of the environment, correlation of the parts of the society, and transmission of culture.<sup>3</sup> According to Dominick (1999), the following are the functions of mass media: surveillance, interpretation, linkage, transmission of values, and entertainment.<sup>4</sup> Rabiou (2012) discusses following six functions of mass media: to provide surveillance of the environment, to give interpretation, to create ties of union, to inform and transmit values, to entertain and to persuade.<sup>5</sup> Media functions such as surveillance, interpretation, linkage, and transmission of values can be instrumental for promoting peace. Journalism has a broader scope in this regard.

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<sup>3</sup> Lasswell, H. (1948). The structure and function of communication and society. In L. Bryson (Ed.), *The communication of ideas*. New York: Harper and Brothers.

<sup>4</sup> Dominick, J. R. (1999). *The dynamics of mass communication*. 6th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>5</sup> Rabiou, M. S. (2012). Functions and dysfunctions of mass communication media. Retrieved 2022, August 20 from <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/cajtns/article/view/75085/65682>.



Surveillance refers to what is popularly known as the news and information role of the media. This function may be instrumental surveillance or warning and beware surveillance. Instrumental surveillance concerns about day-to-day happenings. News coverage on different types of conflicts and their consequences are examples of instrumental surveillance. Warning or beware surveillance occurs when the media inform specifically about threats from different happenings such as conflicts, political turmoil, depressed economic conditions, increasing inflation, or natural disasters. The beware surveillance function of media becomes more crucial during conflicts.

Mass media also provide information on the ultimate meaning and significance of those events. This function is called interpretation. Example of this function can be found on the editorial pages of a newspaper. Interpretation is meant for an added perspective. Likewise, the mass media seek to connect different elements of society. The linkage function of mass media links various groups with a common interest. Transmission of values is also a crucial function of mass media. Mass media present portrayals of the society, and by watching, listening, and reading, people are supposed to learn how to act and what values are important.

Employing a conflict-sensitive approach by journalists and other media professionals increases the chance for better coverage in the media. The media play a major role in shaping the public discourse about certain topics. Media practitioners, including community broadcasters, professional journalists, and multipliers within the civil society, can have an important influence over non-violent conflict transformation and function as peace actors within the society. Communicators have the capacity to provide an inclusive and safe space for dialogue and exchange, to make different perspectives heard and to provide reliable and in-depth analysis and information to the public or to selected target groups. They can help to diminish the spread of mis-information and dis-information, and help to identify trustworthy sources. As the professional communicators, journalists and other media professionals have a significant role to play in this regard.

Increasing the knowledge about CSJ among the target groups is instrumental in promoting conflict sensitivity in Nepal. CSJ enhances the journalists' professional capacity to cover conflicts and their consequences. In the case of Nepal, context sensitivity in general and conflict sensitivity in particular are required for ensuring journalists' safety too.



Thus, emphasis on CSJ is in fact essential for the healthy growth of the press in Nepal. Hence, it is pertinent to study the current situation of conflict sensitive journalism and communication in Nepal. It is also pertinent to identify challenges regarding conflict sensitivity among the stakeholders, and also to outline plans and policies to promote conflict sensitivity among them.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

As a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural country with geographical diversity, Nepal requires a high level of context sensitivity. Nepal has a history of an armed insurgency and political unrests that highlights the vulnerability of the country regarding political and other conflicts. Journalism and other forms of mass communication have significant roles in treating the conflicts pertinently while fulfilling their functions. This requires an emphasis on conflict-sensitive journalism in particular and upholding conflict sensitivity in any form of public communication and mass communication. In view of this, it is relevant to understand the current situation of conflict-sensitive journalism and communication in Nepal and to develop plans and policies to promote conflict sensitivity in Nepali media. The present study is aimed at providing baseline information on the current situation of conflict-sensitive journalism and communication in Nepal followed by suggestions to promote conflict sensitivity in Nepali Media.

## 1.3 Objectives

The general objective and specific objectives of the present study are as following:

### 1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to provide baseline information on the current situation of conflict-sensitive journalism and communication in Nepal, and to provide necessary suggestions to promote conflict sensitivity in Nepali Media.

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:



- To assess the state of conflict sensitivity in Nepali media by conducting content analysis of selected newspapers and online news portals on the basis of a sample.
- To assess the current level of conflict sensitivity among Nepali journalists and their understanding of conflict-sensitive journalism.
- To provide necessary suggestions to promote conflict sensitivity in Nepali Media.

## 1.4 Research Questions

In congruence with the aforementioned specific objectives, the study has following research questions:

- What is the current state of conflict sensitivity in Nepali media?
- What is the state of conflict sensitivity among Nepali journalists and their understanding of conflict-sensitive journalism?
- How can conflict sensitivity in Nepali media be further promoted?

## 1.5 Significance

The study provides baseline information on the current situation of conflict sensitive journalism and communication in Nepal. It not only gives information on the state of conflict sensitivity in Nepali media as reflected through their contents, it also provides insights regarding the state of conflict sensitivity among Nepali journalists and their understanding of conflict sensitive journalism. Thus, it is an important document for analyzing the working reality of journalists with regard to their reflection on their roles and responsibility and their level of knowledge about conflict-sensitivity.

As such, the present study helps identify needs of the involved actors including journalists, and outlines challenges for the successful implementation of any plans and policies in this regard. It also provides a scope for further studies and a plan for implementation of CSJ interventions in Nepal. Furthermore, it provides suggestions that would be useful for CSJ initiatives in Nepal.





# **Chapter II**

# **Literature Review**

## 2.1 Media System in Nepal

The media system in Nepal had been analyzed and by various scholars and from different perspectives. A study published in 2013 presents an assessment of media development in Nepal based on UNESCO's Media Development Indicators.<sup>6</sup> Another study published in 2016 also presents a general overview of the media environment in Nepal while studying the issue of journalists' safety in Nepal.<sup>7</sup> "Journalism remains professionally weak and economically insecure, and the journalists are in a vulnerable condition in terms of physical and psychological safety," it concludes.<sup>8</sup>

A brief overview of the recent state of the media system can be found on the platform media landscapes, based on an analysis conducted by Center for Media Research Nepal.<sup>9</sup> The specifics of Nepali media system are the influence and importance of radio<sup>10</sup>, community radio stations and the role of print newspaper for political agenda setting in the Kathmandu valley. In the rest of the country the circulation of newspapers is low as a result of the geographical terrain, but the relevance of digital outlets is increasing as internet penetration is on the rise especially mobile use. The number of television stations is increasing (more than hundred licensed television stations) and it is estimated that television receives 20% of the overall advertisement revenues. According to the Nepal Media Survey 2019 conducted by Sharecast Initiative Nepal<sup>11</sup> 60% of households own a TV-set, watch TV regularly and use it as the primary medium to access news, followed by watching entertainment.

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<sup>6</sup> UNESCO. (2013). Assessment of media development in Nepal based on UNESCO's media development indicators. Kathmandu.

<sup>7</sup> Adhikary, N. M., & Pant, L. D. (Eds.). (2016). Supporting safety of journalists in Nepal: An assessment based on UNESCO's journalists' safety indicator. Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>8</sup> Adhikary & Pant, 2016, p. 100.

<sup>9</sup> Acharya in, U. (n.d.). Media Landscapes - Expert Analysis of the State of the Media. <https://medialandscapes.org/country/nepal>

<sup>10</sup> List of radio stations in Nepal: <https://www.asiawaves.net/nepal-radio.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Acharya, M., & Chapagain, B. (2019). Nepal Media Survey 2019: National Survey on Nepali Media Landscape. Lalitpur: Sharecast Initiative Nepal.



## 2.2 Media History and Political Representation

The printing press has a history of being partisan, either in support of or opposing the monarchy and/or successive ruling parties. The constitution of Nepal defines press freedom as a base of democracy. The privately-owned daily newspapers today follow modern standards of journalism. State-owned daily newspapers and most of weekly newspapers still support one or another political agenda. The reasons behind that are that weekly newspapers are either directly funded by political actors or their owners have political ambitions. Further, due to the economic pressure that they are facing, they are dependent on such funding. Political parallelism is also visible in the content produced by independent media. In addition, most local radio stations and digital outlets are owned by political interest groups. With increasing professionalization among journalists and the emergence of big media houses, the journalistic community became heterogenic and slightly less influenced by political ideologies. On the other hand, most professional journalists, under economic stress, are members of unions which again are related to certain political parties.

A comprehensive insight into media history and the context before 2010 can be extracted from the biography 'A compassionate journalist: The life and time of Bharat Dutta Koirala'.<sup>12</sup> A study published in 2005<sup>13</sup> provides a profile about the journalist profession in Nepal by exploring their roles, working-areas, challenges and reasons. Another study published in 2016 observes, "It is widely perceived that journalists' affiliation to one or other political party has led to partisan and biased reporting and unprofessional journalism practice. The journalists themselves consider that political party-based journalism creates feeling of antagonism in the opposition parties thereby inviting threat and intimidation."<sup>14</sup> Such a situation increases vulnerability regarding conflict in the society.

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<sup>12</sup> Adhikari, D. (2010). *A compassionate journalist: The life and time of Bharat Dutta Koirala*. Varanasi: Pilgrims Publishing.

<sup>13</sup> Ramaprasad, J. (2005). Nepalese journalists: Idealists, optimists, and realists. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 10(1), pp. 90-108.

<sup>14</sup> Adhikary, N. M., & Pant, L. D. (Eds.). (2016). *Supporting safety of journalists in Nepal: An assessment based on UNESCO's journalists' safety indicator*. Paris: UNESCO. p. 26.





## 2.3 Political Regulation

Nowadays, all press outlets have to be registered before they publish; radios and television acquire a license and even digital news outlets need to enlist. The directive is given by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MoCIT), another important actor is the Department of Information and Broadcasting (DoIB), responsible for funding for the media. The Press Council Nepal (PCN) together with the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) function as umbrella organization that also issued a code of ethics and monitors media activities in times of elections (e.g. to ensure equal air time to all parties). The PCN is funded by the government and merely seen as a state agency, this organization also does the rating for the Public Welfare Advertising (PWA) scheme that supports media outlets.

## 2.4 Journalism Education in Nepal

Although the demand to pursue a journalism and mass communication education is increasing, the academia seems unable to keep pace. In a 2016 seminar on “Overcoming Challenges of Journalism Education Nepal<sup>15</sup>” various problems and burning issues were raised. According to this publication, the academic education lacks a clear definition of what constitutes a formal degree in journalism or mass communication. Education ranges from theoretical and analytical media analysis to pure practical skills-training, and the syllabus often is not adapted to the changing media landscape in the country, digitalization and other forms of broadcast. There are no clear criteria for the selection of teachers and educators. Plus there is the potential for addressing sensitive issues like diversity, inclusion or gender sensitivity. In the mentioned speech, four burning challenges were identified; the lack of regulation and supervision, lack of human resources and infrastructure, inconsistent course curriculum and a lack of collaboration with the media industry.

A study published in 2016 had observed that "the journalists in the districts are deprived of exposure to journalism education, training and in-house

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<sup>15</sup> Pant, L. D. (2016). Overcoming Challenges of Journalism Education in Nepal. A paper presented at the National Seminar on Overcoming Challenges of Journalism Education Nepal organized by National Integrated College and Media Action Nepal with support from University Grant Commission, Nepal, 16-17 May 2016, Kathmandu.

grooming. The growth of media and journalism in quantity has not been followed by quality."<sup>16</sup> It would be interesting and fruitful to research what has changed since 2016 and how the curricula of the most important academic institutions that work in the area of mass communication, media and journalism have changed or adapted to current issues.

Currently, there are various faculties and colleges that enlist Bachelor's and Master's studies in journalism and/or mass media. The Kathmandu University, Mid-West University and several colleges under the Tribhuvan University and Purbanchal University run academic programs in mass communication in Nepal. The Far-Western University is running only Bachelor-level course in journalism. Furthermore, the Kathmandu University has started a Masters in Media Studies from this year.

## 2.5 Audience Research

The Nepal Media Survey 2019<sup>17</sup> shows that media preferences are not only defined by socio-economic status, demographics or education, with more options and more content provided, personal choices are of increasing relevance. With mobile phone usage and internet penetration on the rise, the way media is consumed is transforming. On the other hand, the data still shows the difference of media usage between rural and urban population and a digital divide within the country. In order to access local news, radio was named the most preferred medium and TV for international and national news. Mobile phones are used to access all kind of media content. Internet usage correlates with educational level and the internet is mainly accessed via mobile phones. Internet usage is often equivalent with using social media and messenger services. The data about digitalization in Nepal presented by Datareportal<sup>18</sup> shows that even though the total internet penetration appears to be low and not increasing much, the mobile connections and access to social media through mobile phones is growing fast. Due to the numbers, 30% more mobile connections than inhabitants in Nepal are registered and 99% access social media via mobile phone. Interpretation of

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<sup>16</sup> Adhikary & Pant, 2016, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Acharya and Chapagain (2019).

<sup>18</sup> DataReportal. (2021). Digital 2021: Nepal. Retrieved from <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-nepal>



these numbers has to consider other factors as well, e.g. than one person can own more than one phones and a number of sim-cards. Many mobile phones might still be used for text and calls only and not for internet usage. Infrastructure and access to mobile connection and the huge difference between urban and rural areas play a crucial role in Nepal with its diverse landscape. Further, there is a disparity in the numbers about internet penetration presented by different sources, from 21% (ITU), 33% (Nepal Media Landscape Survey) to 55% (Internet world stats). These differences show the difficulty of making assumptions based on numbers only. A useful indicator of interpreting growth of (mobile) internet usage is the year-on-year average change in mobile connection speed which shows a 53% increase from 2020 to 2022. Most web traffic to browsers (73%) is counted through mobile devices. Facebook estimates (marketer analysis) that 54% of Nepali population is active on Facebook

## 2.6 Recent Challenges of the Media Sector

The FNJ recently collected more than 500 complaints by professional journalists. Salaries are irregular and it is estimated that 40% of journalists had their earnings cut during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. Media houses cut broadcasting hours and overall the number of publications has decreased. Women were even more affected by this economic crisis of the media sector, with increased reports of female journalists being publicly shamed and harassed. Intersectional dimension applied as well, e.g. Madheshi and Dalit women even faced more intensive attacks<sup>19</sup>.

According to the South Asia Press Freedom Report 2020-21<sup>20</sup> media regulation is increased across the region and bills that limit the work for journalists are implemented. In Nepal, the Media Council Bill, the Public Service Broadcasting Bill, the Information Technology Bill, and the Special Service Bill are endangering press freedom. In the name of the country's sovereignty, security unity and harmony, social media content is being monitored.

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<sup>19</sup> International Federation of Journalists. (2021). World Day for Decent Work: Firing journalists kills the story. <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/-press-releases/article/world-day-for-decent-work-firing-journalists-kills-the-story.html>

<sup>20</sup> International Federation of Journalists. (2021). South Asia Press Freedom Report 2020-21. Retrieved from <http://samsn.ifj.org/SAPFR/>



Incidents of violations of press freedom are being collected, monitored and published by Freedom Forum.

The report “Media in Nepal: Safety of Journalists, Sustainability and Gender Inclusiveness published in 2021 by Media Action Nepal<sup>22</sup> further addressed digital media literacy and gender inclusiveness as important issues to address. As social media itself cannot (and/or should not) be regulated on a national level, every user and producer of content is responsible for their actions within this sphere. A media practitioner with a certain gatekeeping-function should be even more aware of the effects that spread of dis- and misinformation can have within society. Therefore, digital literacy is important to everyone, but especially for people with a greater audience.

Gender inclusiveness in the media sector is a burning issue as numbers show that female participation at the decision-making level in the media is low. There is a lack of gender policies and the work environment is difficult for women and members of the LGBTIQ community. This is reflected also in the media products, e.g. a victim-centered approach when reporting on gender-based violence and a general lack of inclusive approaches. The study “Gender Sensitivity in Nepali Media”<sup>23</sup> by Media Action Nepal shows that even though most of the content was produced considering gender-sensitive approaches, issues of women and people with diverse sexual orientation in general are less prioritized. Numbers of publications with a byline of women are disappointingly low (0,6%) and representation of women topics is almost invisible.

## 2.7 Conflict-sensitive Journalism

The term conflict-sensitive journalism scientifically emerged from so-called peace journalism (PJ) that was introduced by Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung<sup>24</sup>. The call for peace journalism responded to the dominance of war reporting, reflecting a military rhetoric and focusing on quantitative data. The acknowledgement of the impact that journalism has on society,

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<sup>21</sup> Reporters without Borders. (2019). RSF’s recommendations to amend controversial Media Council Bill: <https://rsf.org/en/nepal-rsf-s-recommendations-amend-controversial-media-council-bill>

<sup>22</sup> Media Action Nepal. (2021). Media in Nepal: Safety of journalists, sustainability and gender inclusiveness. Kathmandu.

<sup>23</sup> Media Action Nepal. (2022). Gender sensitivity in Nepali media. Kathmandu.

<sup>24</sup> Galtung, J. (2003): Peace Journalism. *Media Asia*, 30(3), pp. 177-180.



including the learnings about the effects of propaganda, exploring the agenda setting approach – all these insights supported in developing a more conflict-sensitive understanding of journalism. Although the term PJ faced some criticism (of supporting biased reporting techniques), the methods for peace journalism became more prominent.

According to McGoldrick and Lynch (2000)<sup>25</sup> in peace or conflict-sensitive journalism the role of a journalist is transforming from watchdog or reporter to “enabler” and “facilitator”. The aim is to work solution-oriented, peace-oriented, truth-oriented, and people-oriented, based on a knowledge about conflict analysis. This knowledge includes methods for analyzing the context and all involved actors, working with a multi-perspective approach and the ability for self-reflection. In order to create conflict-sensitive stories, practical tools for context and actors’ analysis, the onion model, analysis of the timeline, PIN analysis (positions/interests/needs) and reflection on the escalation model are used by journalists and content creators on an everyday basis. Journalists or media practitioners as peace actors continue their journalist practice but add certain knowledge and methods to their research, reporting and reviewing process. Further, an ongoing reflection about journalistic values and ethical questions is essential for conflict-sensitive media practitioners.

The system and the pre-conditions of content creation also play a major role and need to be considered in order to be context sensitive. Personal security, privacy and data protection are identified obstacles for conflict-sensitive journalism and communication.

Even though the focus is on journalists and their roles and responsibilities as gatekeepers to provide unbiased, accurate and contextualized information, the overall aim of CSJ activities is to impact the public. Journalism for peace should support mutual understanding within a society, enable the public to make educated choices, to participate in political processes and to become actors for conflict transformation.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Selvarajah, S. (2021). Identifying obstacles to peace journalism in Sri Lanka and Nepal. *Journalism Practice*, 15(1), pp. 136-152.

<sup>26</sup> forumZFD et al (2018): *The Conflict Sensitive Teaching Guide: Philosophy and Practice*.



There has been no previous research on the state of conflict sensitive journalism and communication in Nepal. Meanwhile, the importance of CSJ is considered by the media fraternity. The present research provides a baseline information on current situation of conflict sensitive journalism and communication in Nepal, and presents recommendations to promote conflict sensitivity in Nepali Media.





# **Chapter III**

# **Research Design**

### 3.1 Research Approach

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in this study.

### 3.2 Research Method

The study employs different research methods regarding aforementioned three specific objectives. First, a content analysis has been conducted in order to assess the state of conflict sensitivity in Nepali media. Second focus group discussions and interviews have been carried out in order to assess the level of conflict sensitivity among Nepali journalists and their understanding of conflict-sensitive journalism. Third, the insights from the content analysis, focus group discussions and interviews, also considering international practices of CSJ interventions, were used to draw conclusions and present recommendations to promote conflict sensitivity in Nepali Media.

### 3.3 Sampling

For the content analysis, a total of 20 news outlets (10 newspapers and 10 online news portals) covering all seven provinces were selected (see Appendices 1 and 2). The news outlets were selected by using the non-probability sampling technique, particularly purposive sampling. One newspaper and one online news portal from each of the seven provinces of Nepal have been selected for the study based on their reach and accessibility. Three newspapers and three online news portals were selected from Kathmandu Valley on the same basis. The national level newspapers and online news portals are based in Kathmandu and read all over Nepal. The content analysis covers a duration of a month (May 2022). News stories, op-eds and editorials (referred as "media materials") published in the selected newspapers/posted on the selected news portals during the time frame are considered under the study corpus.

The selection of the participants in both of the focus group discussions (FGDs), 12 in each, employs purposive sampling in order to ensure pertinent participation. The first FGD includes university professors teaching conflict and journalism as well as editors and participants from CSOs contributing towards peace-building (see Appendix 7).





The second FGD includes young practicing journalists from the seven provinces of Nepal representing radio, TV, newspaper and online news portals (see Appendix 8).

Thirteen interviewees were selected by employing purposive sampling technique. The interviewees include journalists who worked as reporters during the conflict time in Nepal, editors-in chief and professors teaching journalism and conflict studies in Nepal (see Appendix 9).

### 3.4 Method of Data Collection

For the content analysis, a total of 9 (nine) indicators have been set on the ground of their readership. The indicators are set based on the previous research studies conducted by Media Action Nepal, inception meeting/ consultations with GIZ-CPS and analyzing various other studies on conflict-sensitive reporting (see Appendix 3).

For the first FGD, eight questions concerning the importance of the linkage between journalism studies and conflict studies in context of Nepal and the role of media for conflict transformation are used as the framework for an intensive discussion (see Appendix 4).

Similarly, for the second FGD, 10 questions about journalists' understanding of conflict sensitivity were used as the framework for an intensive discussion (see Appendix 5) with pertinent insights out of it forming the foundation for data.

Regarding the interviews, eight questions (see Appendix 6) are used as the indicators. Interviews were conducted to get an in-depth understanding of the situation and practice of conflict-sensitive journalism in Nepal and ways to improve/promote it.



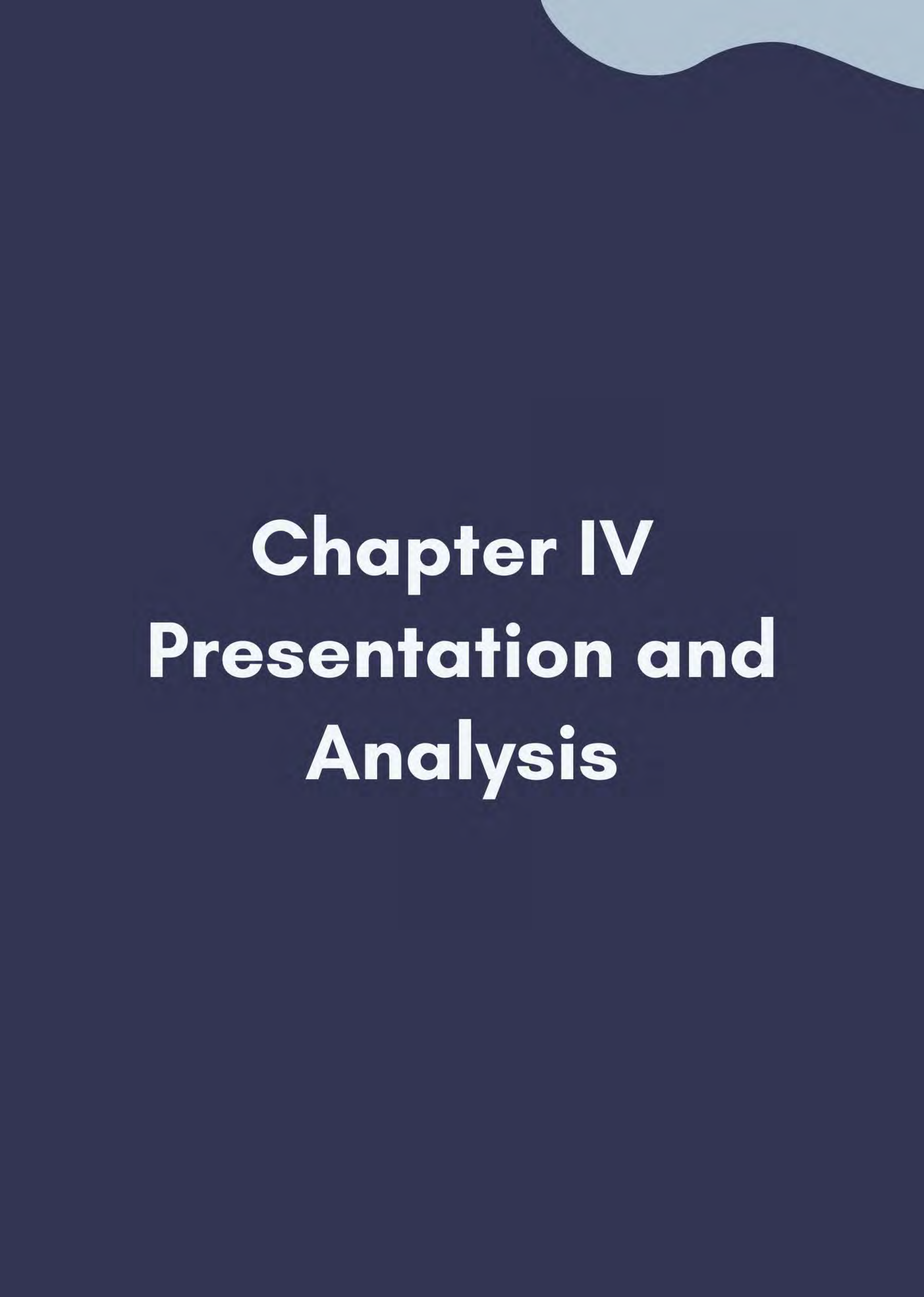
### 3.5 Data Analysis

The content analysis uses the descriptive statistics technique to analyze quantitative data. Particularly, the tabulation method is used for the presentation of the data. The data (facts) collected from the focus group discussions and interviews have been analyzed by employing a conflict-sensitive approach and using inductive reasoning for qualitative analysis.

### 3.6 Limitation

The study includes only 20 media outlets during a duration of one month for content analysis. Its scope would have been broader in case the representative sample had been beyond the current number. News stories, op-eds and editorials published/posted during the time frame were part of this study. It employs the purposive sampling technique, which might result in sampling errors. Nevertheless, the study establishes a scope for conducting further research on conflict sensitivity and CSJ interventions in Nepali media.





# **Chapter IV**

# **Presentation and**

# **Analysis**

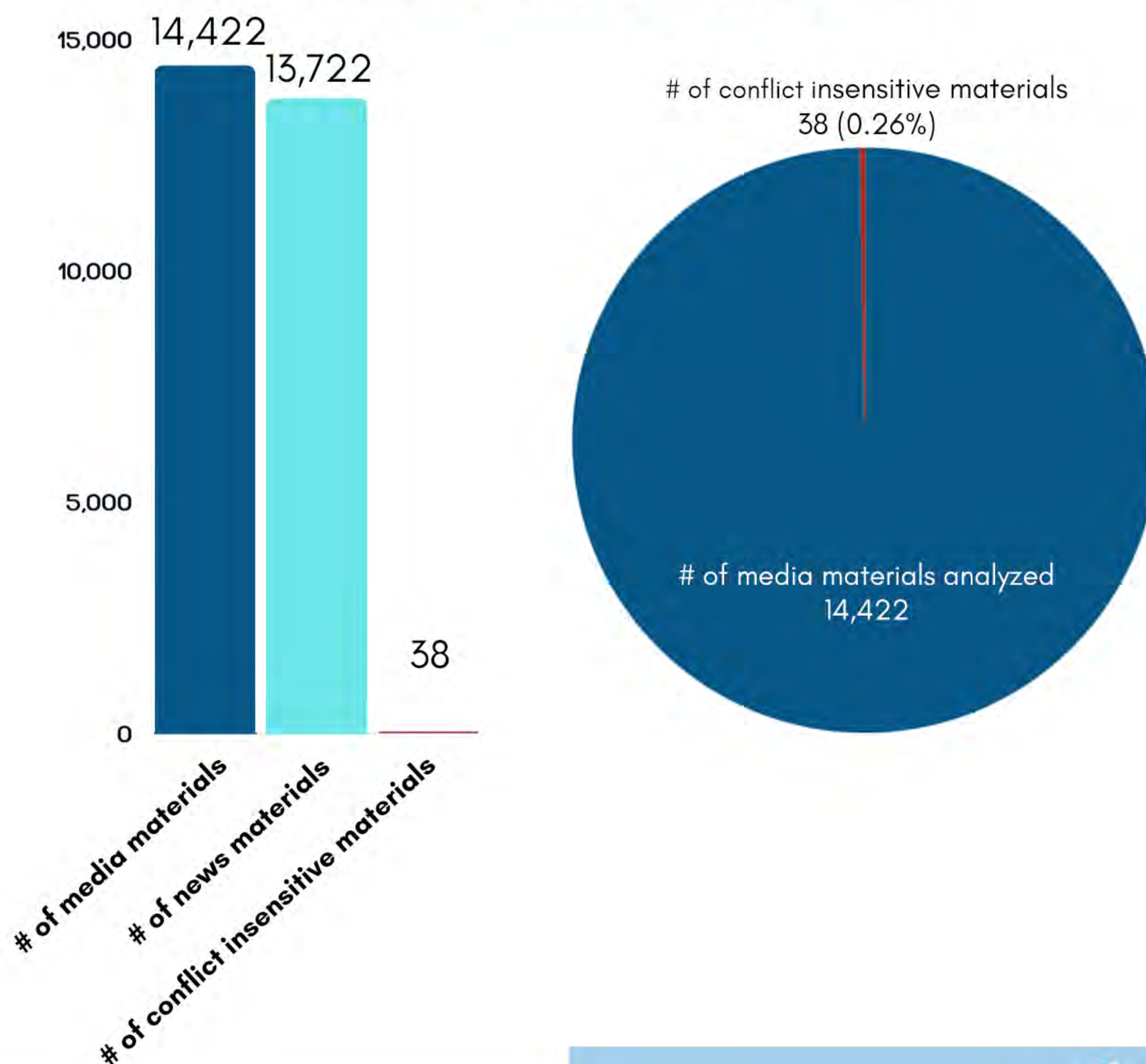
## 4.1 Insights from Content Analysis

### 4.1.1 Overview

A total of 20 media outlets (10 newspapers and 10 online news portals) selected from all seven provinces are included in the study. Media content analysis was carried out from May 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. As a first step, all news stories, op-eds (opinion piece) and editorials published in 20 media outlets were counted. A total of 14 thousand 4 hundred 22 media materials, of which 13 thousand 7 hundred 22 items are news materials, were analyzed as part of this study.

Based on the indicators set for this study purpose, it was found that a total of 38 media materials contained conflict insensitive information, which accounts for 0.26% of the total amount of media materials studied.

### Conflict Sensitivity in Nepali Media



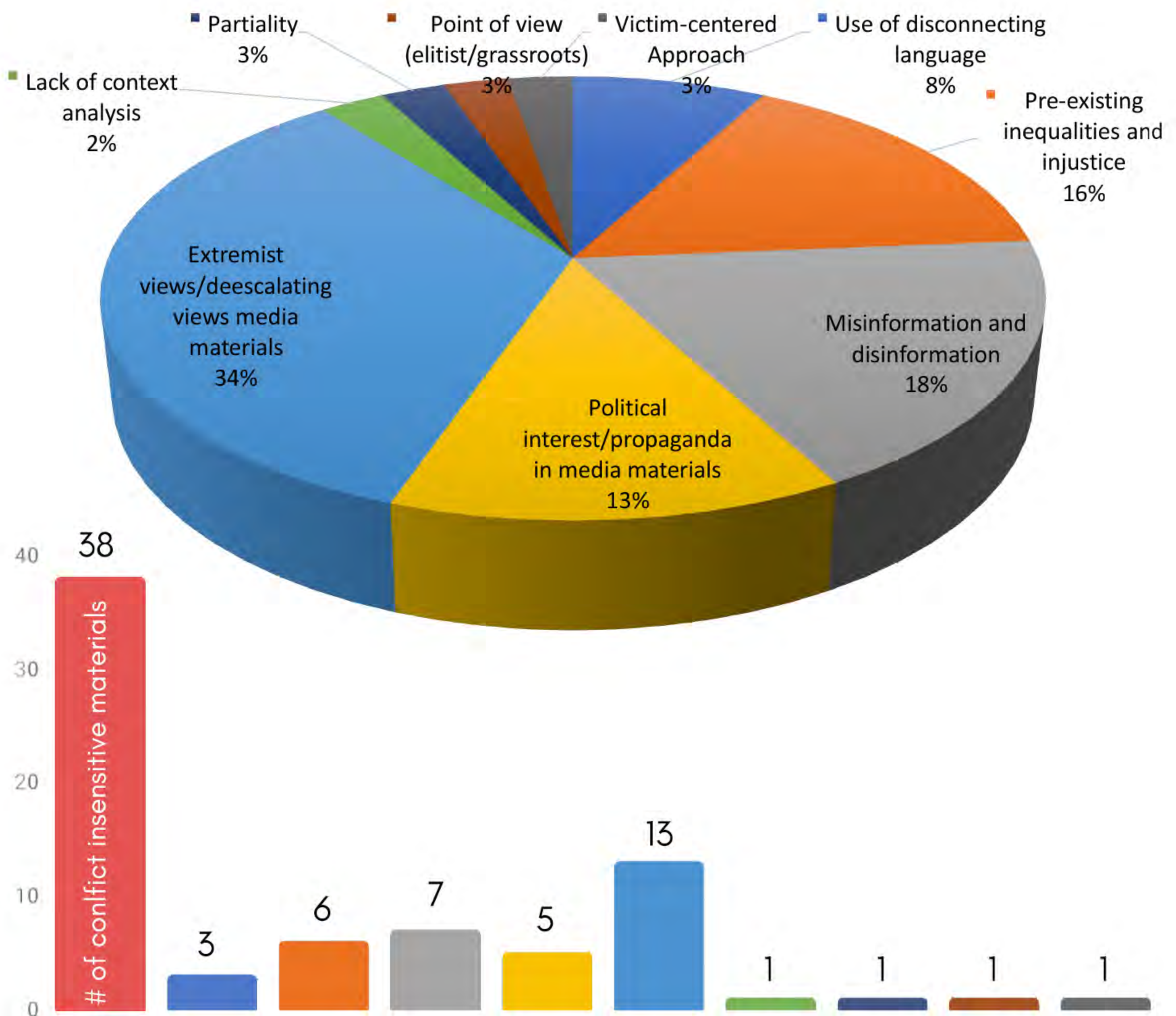
Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Total number of news materials published
Kathmandu Valley/ Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	691
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	1,785
	Naya Patrika daily	779	683
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	2,900
	Setopati	554	542
	Ratopati	1,083	1,046
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	378
	Purbeli News daily	347	347
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	499
	Todaypati online	133	133
Out of Valley/Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	345
	Narayani online	379	379
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	287
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	1,067
Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	295
	Sabal Post online	186	186
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	146
	Nepali Raibar online	92	90
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	473
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	1,450
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>13,722</b>

*Table 1: Number of Media Materials in the Study Corpus*

The Kathmandu-based daily newspaper and online news portals studied for this purpose have been publishing 44 media materials daily on average, whereas the other newspapers and online news portals have been bringing out about 14 news stories every day. While the Kathmandu-based daily newspaper selected for this study published 37 media materials on average, the newspapers outside the capital city produce 12 media materials each day. Similarly, online news portals based in Kathmandu are publishing about 49 news materials a day and those outside the capital city have an average of 17 media materials every day.



## 4.1.2 Conflict Sensitivity in Nepali Media



### 4.1.2.1 Use of Disconnecting Language

Media, regarded as representations and industries and deeply ingrained in our everyday lives, are considered important for how we maintain relationships, build institutions, and social cohesion.<sup>27</sup> It cannot be denied that at times media become the voice of those who control it rather than the voice of the voiceless. Media can become a tool or a space where it can try to disconnect the voices of opposing views from those in power. This indicator was included for this study and there are three media that fall into this category during the study period.

<sup>27</sup> Couldry, N. (2020). *Media: Why it matters*. Cambridge: Polity Press.



Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Use of disconnecting language
Kathmandu Valley/ Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	
	Naya Patrika daily	779	
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	
	Setopati	554	
	Ratopati	1,083	
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	2
	Purbeli News daily	347	
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	
	Todaypati online	133	
Out of Valley/Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	1
	Narayani online	379	
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	
Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	
	Sabal Post online	186	
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	
	Nepali Raibar online	92	
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>3</b>

Table 2: Use of Disconnecting Language in the Study Corpus

Table 2 shows that of the 20 media outlets, two newspapers have used disconnecting language. An op-ed titled “Congratulations Renu!” published on May 26 in Chitwan Post, a news on May 25 in Blast Khabar titled “Issue water, signature in tax” and an op-ed titled “How will Dharan forge ahead now?” published in Blast Khabar on May 26 used disconnecting language. All the three news items are about the work of mayors that speak disparagingly of them without much evidence and mostly based on assumptions.

Use of disconnecting language was only detected in three out of total 14,422 media materials indicates that the journalists avoid it to a large extent. However, there is always scope for further improvement.



### 4.1.2.2 Pre-existing Inequalities and Injustice

Inequalities have been the unwanted companion of media and communications. The media sector is part of society and therefore embedded in a structure of inequalities and injustice. Media is never fully independent from political economy and this might have influence on the published content as well. Mass media were criticized for creating inequalities by being biased, serving hegemonic interests, accumulating far too much power in the hands of mighty industrial conglomerates and creating knowledge gaps among their various audiences.<sup>28</sup>

Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Pre-existing inequalities and injustice
Kathmandu Valley/ Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	
	Naya Patrika daily	779	1
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	
	Setopati	554	
	Ratopati	1,083	1
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	
	Purbeli News daily	347	
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	
	Todaypati online	133	
Out of Valley/ Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	1
	Narayani online	379	
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	1
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	
Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	
	Sabal Post online	186	
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	
	Nepali Raibar online	92	
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>6</b>

Table 3: Pre-existing Inequalities and Injustice

<sup>28</sup> Trappel, J. (2015). Media subsidies: Editorial independence compromised? In S. Barnett & J. Townend (eds.), *Media power and plurality: From hyperlocal to high-level policy* (pp. 187-200). Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.





As evident from Table 3, out of 14,422 total media materials, six of them failed to address pre-existing inequalities and injustice.

A story titled “South Asian Games gold medalist Sanju dies” published in Naya Patrika daily presents an assumption of suicide rather than scientific facts of the event which does not seem to be serving justice to the victim. “Baby in arms, pamphlets in hand” is a news published in Adarsha Samaj daily which presents the story of a Dalit woman, a nursing mother, running for the local elections. Everything in the story is informative, but the use of language depicts the pre-existing inequalities of the society. The news story fails to showcase the strength and capability of the woman.

Similarly, a news story published in Dinesh Khabar on May 6 is about singer Swopna Suman getting married with actress Jyotsna Yogi. However, its headline suggest Swopna Suman already got married. The story reflects the pre-existing inequality between a man and woman in the society. Although Jyotsna Yogi is a popular model and actress, the headline of the news story does not mention her.

A news story published on May 7 in Chitwan Post suggests there is only one Brahmin voter in one of the wards of Kalika Municipality and provides a full glimpse of his life and achievement that too for only being a single Brahmin voter in a particular ward.

A news story published in Ratopati on May 31 mentions that a woman lost her life due to a fight with her husband after a bitter dispute. She is brutally tortured by her husband that led to her death. Domestic violence was said to be the cause of the family dispute. However, the same coverage in other newspaper and online media mentioned it to be a case of domestic violence.

A news story published in Dinesh Khabar on May 2 is about an ex-minister supporting a candidate for elections. However, the first line of the story identified her as a politician’s daughter-in-law although she already has her own identity and has already been a minister.

An analysis of Table 3 confirms there exists general awareness to address pre-existing inequalities and injustice, albeit a few instances showing the need for CSJ interventions in this regard.



### 4.1.2.3 Misinformation and Disinformation

According to IGI Global, American academia publication house, false and deceitful information is misinformation. However, the sender of information does not intend to harm others. Misinformation disseminated by the media can mislead a large number of people. This may result in financial, physical and psychological damages. According to UNESCO (2018), disinformation is the deliberate dissemination of information with the aim of harming people, social groups or organizations. Fake news can fall in both categories, misinformation or disinformation.

Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Misinformation and disinformation
Kathmandu Valley/ Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	1
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	
	Naya Patrika daily	779	
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	
	Setopati	554	
	Ratopati	1,083	
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	1
	Purbeli News daily	347	2
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	3
	Todaypati online	133	
Out of Valley/ Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	
	Narayani online	379	
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	
Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	
	Sabal Post online	186	
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	
	Nepali Raibar online	92	
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>7</b>

Table 4: Number of Misinformation and Disinformation

“Madhesh-based parties’ manifesto has other parties panicky” is a news story published by Janakpur Today on May 3. Its headline is sensational and intended for manipulation. “Disregarding office decorum” is an editorial published in Janakpur Today on May 18 which is appreciative of the Indian PM and critical of PM Sher Bahadur Deuba. The editorial is a bit manipulative as it is comparing two PMs. An editorial published on May 24 in Janakpur Today titled “Congress success” is another manipulative content.

“Rahul returned with his friend on Thursday” is a news story published in Kantipur daily on May 6. A line in the news story “Not only are the residents of the North East of India (Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Uttaranchal) called Chini (Chinese), but also incidents of abuse are common in India”. This line might be true, but no data is presented to support this statement and the news might also somewhat fuel already existing anti-India sentiment.

A full-page news story was published in Blast Khabar on May 7 about a school seemed more like an advertisement than news. The news story is a promotional material of the school and has messages from the principal and others associated with the school implying that it is the “best school”.

A news published in Purbeli news on May 23 has a headline stating that celebrities are giving their opinions on a recent rape case. However, its inside the story contains only basic information of the incident, but nothing related to the celebrities.

Another news published in Purbeli on May 24 has a headline “Newly elected Mayor Poudel demolished the judicial bench room”. The headline suggests it is an incident related to violence, whereas the actual news is about reconstruction of the judicial bench.

Table 4 shows that out of 14,422 media materials, seven published by four newspapers fall under the category of misinformation and disinformation including manipulative and fake information. Even though the proportion is low, it indicates the existence of the problem that should be addressed.



#### 4.1.2.4 Political Interest/Propaganda in Media Materials

Propaganda is defined as a form of persuasion targeted to play with readers emotions. It often lacks solid evidence to support a point and can be used by advertisers and politicians who may lack adequate facts to persuade people to support their point of view.<sup>29</sup> The press is instrumental in creating informed citizenry, and should be free from political bias and propaganda. "Editorialization" of news to insert journalists' or owners' political interests has to be avoided.

Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Political interest/propaganda in media materials
Kathmandu Valley/ Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	
	Naya Patrika daily	779	
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	
	Setopati	554	
	Ratopati	1,083	
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	1
	Purbeli News daily	347	
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	
	Todaypati online	133	
Out of Valley/ Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	1
	Narayani online	379	
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	3
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	
Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	
	Sabal Post online	186	
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	
	Nepali Raibar online	92	
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>5</b>

Table 5: Political Interest/Propaganda in Media Materials

<sup>29</sup> Calub, Cecilia & Calub, Francelle. (2022). *Propaganda in journalism, advertising, and politics*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361039309\\_propaganda\\_in\\_journalism\\_advertising\\_and\\_politics](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361039309_propaganda_in_journalism_advertising_and_politics)

The news stories published on May 7, May 8 and May 10 in Adarsha Samaj dainik seem like a piece of propaganda. The headlines of the stories were: “Buoyed by its decision to field seven mayoral candidates, Congress commits to 33 percent of women leadership and says 5-party monkeys can loot ballot papers”.. “Ideologically undefeated” is a news story published by Chitwan Post on May 25. The story glorifies a mayor candidate of Chitwan who recently lost the elections and won third place in the elections. However, there is no mention of the candidate who stood second.

“How will Dharan forge ahead now?” published in Blast Khabar on May 26 seems to be trying to make a point that it is difficult for the mayor to work.

The story implies that the mayor will face a raft of challenges and the concerns of general public and misses the fact that he is trusted by people that helped him win the elections.

Table 5 shows that out of 14,422 media materials, only five published by four newspapers contain political interests or have an inclination towards propaganda. This indicates that most journalists avoid propaganda generally.

#### **4.1.2.5 Extremist Views/Escalating Views in Media Materials**

According to International Media Support (IMS), mass media often plays a key role in today’s conflict. Basically, their role can take two different and opposed forms. Either the media takes an active part in the conflict and has responsibility for increased violence, or stays independent and out of the conflict, thereby contributing to the resolution of conflict and alleviation of violence. Which role the media takes in a given conflict, and in the phases before and after, depends on a complex set of factors, including the relationship the media has to actors in the conflict and the independence the media has to the power holders in society.



Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Extremist views/escalating views in media materials
Kathmandu Valley/ Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	
	Naya Patrika daily	779	
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	
	Setopati	554	
	Ratopati	1,083	
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	2
	Purbeli News daily	347	
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	
	Todaypati online	133	
Out of Valley/ Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	1
	Narayani online	379	
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	1
Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	
	Sabal Post online	186	9
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	
	Nepali Raibar online	92	
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>13</b>

*Table 6: Extremist Views/Escalating Views in Media Materials*

Sabal Post's May 19 edition contained four news stories that clearly shows the online news outlet's support to Nepali Congress and disapproval for UML. One of its headlines read "Muslim community of Butwal in favor of Congress candidate Pandey" which implies that every Muslim supports Nepali Congress.

A news published by the same media on May 5 is about an e-rickshaw driver, whereas it is also mentioned that e-rickshaws are given to people close to the UML party. Sabal Post published three news stories on May 7 with all of them clearly supporting Nepali Congress. Also on May 14, it ran stories supporting Congress.

A news story on May 8 on Parichaya “UML weak in Bharatpur, we did not buy votes during silence period: Chairperson Neupane”. The headline implies that UML is losing because it did not distribute money during the silence period. A story by Blast Khabar “Harkman reins in on UML's victory chariot” was published on May 26 is about a mayor candidate of Congress who won in Itahari. However, the headline is written in a sensational way suggesting that a candidate of Congress made UML loose since the beginning of his political career.

As evident from Table 6, out of 14,422 media materials, 13 published by four news outlets were found having extremist views/escalating views in their content. Sabalpost online alone published nine such materials.

#### **4.1.2.6 Lack of Context Analysis**

As generally highlighted in the journalistic codes of ethics, journalists should be impartial and neutral. However, as people carrying different opinions, feelings and values it is often difficult for journalists to be neutral. They are of particular gender, caste, skin and color that often times makes them present the side of the story that they relate to. However, in order to reflect the reality, all sides of the story need to be presented. Presenting different sides of the story serves for balance thereby ensuring credibility of the news outlet.



Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Lack of context analysis
Kathmandu Valley/ Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	
	Naya Patrika daily	779	
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	
	Setopati	554	
	Ratopati	1,083	
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	
	Purbeli News daily	347	
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	
	Todaypati online	133	
Out of Valley/Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	
	Narayani online	379	
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	
Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	
	Sabal Post online	186	
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	
	Nepali Raibar online	92	
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>1</b>

*Table 7: Presentation of Different Sides in Media Materials*

Out of all the media materials included in the study, only one seemed to have failed to present the other side of the story. Dinesh Khabar published a news story “CPN-S leader Punya Gautam injured” published on May 6. The story presents only one side of the story and it was published during the time of elections. A balanced presentation of different sides in all the materials included for this study, with just one exception out of 14,422 items shows that journalists pay attention to balancing different sides while giving coverage to newsworthy events or situations.



### 4.1.2.7 Partiality

Partiality is the bias of journalists and news producers in the selection of many events and stories that are reported and the way they are covered. The term "media bias" implies a pervasive or widespread bias contravening the standards of journalism, rather than the perspective of an individual journalist or article. Journalists can have personal bias in favor of certain political, cultural, and social ideologies.

Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Partiality
Kathmandu Valley/ Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	
	Naya Patrika daily	779	
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	
	Setopati	554	
	Ratopati	1,083	
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	1
	Purbeli News daily	347	
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	
	Todaypati online	133	
Out of Valley/Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	
	Narayani online	379	
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	
Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	
	Sabal Post online	186	
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	
	Nepali Raibar online	92	
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 8: Partiality in Media Materials



The news story titled “How will Dharan forge ahead now?” published in Blast Khabar on May 26, instead of being objective, seems to be prejudiced against the recently elected mayor who won as an independent candidate and seems to have mistrusted the mayor who won the local elections.

As evident from Table 8, out of 14,422 media materials, only one item was found to be partial. This indicates journalists are upholding impartiality.

#### 4.1.2.8 Elitist vs Grassroots View

In modern societies, the availability of information is central to better decision-making by voters, consumers, and investors. Much of that information is provided by the media, including newspapers, television, and radio, which collect information and make it available to the public. As information is the key to decision-making, often owners and elite groups have the control over decision-making through the control of the information.

Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Point of view (elitist/grassroots)
Kathmandu Valley/ Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	1
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	
	Naya Patrika daily	779	
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	
	Setopati	554	
	Ratopati	1,083	
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	
	Purbeli News daily	347	
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	
	Todaypati online	133	
Out of Valley/ Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	
	Narayani online	379	
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	



Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	
	Sabal Post online	186	
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	
	Nepali Raibar online	92	
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>1</b>

*Table 9: Elitist Vs. Grassroots View in Media Content*

“The case against Tharus is false, say candidates of Tikapur in one voice” is a news story published in Kantipur daily on May 8. The issue gained media attention after it was stated by major political parties that Tharus and Ramesh Chaudhary were the victim of the Tikapur incident. It often happens that the elitist perspective of an incident is presented as the right perspective. This story is related to the Tikapur conflict and while Ramesh Chaudhary and the Tharus were considered as the perpetrator of the conflict even by Nepali media. However, now even when UML and Congress party are presenting different perspectives of the conflict, the media are supporting that narrative.

As evident from Table 9, out of all media content, only one is devoid of grassroots views. This shows that there is a fair treatment of grassroots views by Nepali media.

#### **4.1.2.9 Victim-centered Approach**

A news story has more than one side of the story. A news story can be victim-centered. A news story might present the facts that might support the victim or ignore the facts due to personal biases of the journalist reporting it by intention or due to lack of awareness which might further add trauma or pain to the victim and victim’s family. Out of all media content included in the study, only one coverage was found to have not taken the needs of the victim into consideration.



Location	Media	Total number of media materials published	Victim-centered approach
Kathmandu Valley/Bagmati Province	Kantipur daily	825	
	Gorkhapatra daily	1,923	
	Naya Patrika daily	779	
	Onlinekhabar	2,960	
	Setopati	554	
	Ratopati	1,083	1
Koshi Province	Blast Khabar	430	
	Purbeli News daily	347	
Madhesh Province	Janakpur Today daily	518	
	Todaypati online	133	
Out of Valley/Bagmati Province	Chitwan Post daily	390	
	Narayani online	379	
Gandaki Province	Adarsha Samaj daily	313	
	Parichaya.com online	1,072	
Lumbini Province	News Butwal Today	334	
	Sabal Post online	186	
Karnali Province	Yugawahan daily	169	
	Nepali Raibar online	92	
Sudurpaschim Province	Paschim Today daily	485	
	Dinesh Khabar online	1,450	
<b>Total</b>		<b>14,422</b>	<b>1</b>

*Table 10: Victim-centered Materials*

On May 31, Ratopati published a news story that a woman lost her life due to a fight with her husband after a family dispute. She was brutally attacked by her husband that led to her death. It further read that the death was due to a family or husband-wife dispute, rather than highlighting domestic violence. So, the online news outlet missed out on presenting victim-centered content.

Table 10 shows journalists generally employ victim-centered approach thereby respecting conflict sensitivity.

Based on the content analysis presented above, it can be concluded that Nepali media have been upholding conflict sensitivity in general. However, there are few instances of oversight or insensitivity that could be addressed through CSJ interventions.



## 4.2 Insights from the first Focus Group Discussion

The first FGD includes editors, academics, members of civil society organizations and conflict victims. A set of questions was used as the framework for an intensive discussion. Following are the noteworthy insights emerged from the discussion:

1. **Oblivious to the principle of Do No Harm:** Journalists are not aware of the Do No harm principle. They often interview the victims of conflict, gender-based violence and domestic violence, but would not follow the principle of Do No Harm and that further causes trauma to the victims. The victims also expect someone to listen to their problem to bring solutions for them and journalists, in most of the cases, do not clarify their purpose for an interview. The victims feel that someone from the authority has come to listen to their problems and when no solution is offered it leads them to a state of trauma. The victims have to repeat their dreadful moments to various people again and again.
2. **Seen violence is reported than structural violence:** Media in Nepal prioritize seen cases of violence over unseen cases such as those relating to structural violence and cultural violence. If someone is physically injured, their news gets more media attention than someone who is facing structural or cultural violence.
3. **The focus of Nepali media is political news:** There are many victims of various types of conflicts in Nepal. Nepali media do not present their story as much as they should have. Even when they do, the story gets little space without truly reflecting the conditions of conflict victims.
4. **Real voice of marginalized communities is not presented:** Misinformation, disinformation and fake news continue to be covered by the media and there is no regulation to address it. "I work for the landless women and they often complain of their unfair representation in the media and journalists only prepare news stories from the angle that seems to work for them."
5. **Lack of solution-driven journalism or reporting:** There is no solution-driven journalism in Nepal. News stories lack depth and fair representation of voices of all the stakeholders further adding to escalating conflict.



6. **Lack of responsible journalism and lack of awareness about impact of their news:** Journalists would not assess the impact of the news stories they produce before preparing and publishing it.
7. **Code of conduct of the Press Council:** If the code of conduct of the Press Council is duly followed, it can be an indication that the journalists are practicing conflict-sensitive journalism.
8. **One-sided stories are presented:** One-sided stories are presented in Nepali media. While covering the 1996-2006 conflict there are biased news stories as only one-side of the story is presented. Mostly, news stories of the victims belonging to the Maoists or the army side is presented in the media and voices or realities of the people not belonging to either side is rarely presented in the media.
9. **Conflict stories are politically biased:** Whenever there are news stories of conflict victims, they are usually politically biased.
10. **Media doing less to counter social psychology of victim-blaming:** There is a general tendency in the society to accept victim-blaming and the media support such psychology and do nothing to counter it.

Insights from the second FGD are not also in congruence with the findings of the content analysis presented above. Despite the content analysis of the sample study corpus showing conflict sensitivity among journalists, the participants in the second FGD are highly critical of contemporary media practices and are seeking CSJ interventions to improve professionalism of Nepali media. The stakeholders have emphasized the need for further enhancing conflict sensitivity among journalists and other mass communicators.

### 4.3 Insights from the Second Focus Group Discussion

The second FGD was attended by young practicing journalists from the seven provinces representing print, broadcast and online media. A set of questions reflecting journalists' understanding of conflict sensitivity was used as the framework for an intensive discussion. The following noteworthy insights emerged from the discussion:

1. **Negative criticism for presenting a different view than those of the powerful:** One participant stated one example: "Being a female journalist, I write about the issues of citizenship. Some of the constitutional provisions discriminate against women, for instance, by limiting their ability to confer citizenship to their children. I have been levelled an anti-national on my social media for writing news stories that advocate for conferring citizenship in the name of a mother too.
2. **News stories are the cause of conflict between communities during crisis situations:** During the COVID-19 pandemic a fake news about women belonging to the Muslim community throwing money at people to get them infected with the virus was published and created a conflict between people belonging to the Muslim community and other communities.
3. **Self-censorship is common among journalists:** In order to avoid the threats and negative criticism, they often do not report the incidents or the news stories of the public interest. There is a lack of institutional endeavors in order to promote conflict sensitivity in the media.
4. **Journalists belonging to a particular community report in a one-sided sway about their community:** In Sudurpaschim, there was a conflict between Pahadis and Tharus over a name of the province. The Pahadis wanted the name to be Sudurpaschim while the Tharus were for calling it Tharuhat. Divided over this, the journalists belonging to the Pahadi community supported their community and journalists belonging to Tharu community were on the other side. Eventually, the conflict became a cause of biased news stories.
6. **"YouTube journalism" is responsible for creating conflict between communities:** Elder people and children prefer YouTube as the source of information. In Nepal, many 'YouTube journalists' provide misinformation disinformation and fake news promoting hatred and negativity.
7. **Journalists have political inclination leading to biased decision-making:** Journalists in Nepal belong to a certain political party and try to create a positive image of the party they are associated with, whereas they tend to undermine other political parties. Such journalism misleads readers and viewers from getting the facts. Journalists also become a part of or lead election publicity teams during the time of



elections favoring the candidates of their parties, further misleading readers, listeners or viewers. Journalists tend to hide information that does not favor their respective political parties.

8. **Journalism is the voice of the powerful or the majority:** Voices of minority and marginalized groups are not represented in the media and their side of the story is not presented well.
9. **Not aware of choosing the right words:** Sometimes journalists do not choose the right words that affect the sentiment of the people leading to conflict. For example: “kaidi” and “bandi” are Nepali words that denote prisoners. Of them, the first one is used to denote criminals, whereas the latter is used to call political prisoners.
10. **Discrimination in media houses exist:** Discrimination prevails in the society on the basis of caste, culture, religion, language. Such discrimination is also reflected in media houses that determines what issues will be covered in the media. Over the years, the scenario has slightly improved but much needs to be done.
10. **Sometimes journalists publish the news from other sources than the authority:** When the authority is having exclusive information and would be out of contact or is unwilling to provide the information, journalists might be competing to provide breaking news. This result in dissemination of information supplied by other sources who might provide misinformation.
11. **The news written by one media is denied and called untrue by the competitor media:** In Nepal, unhealthy competition can be seen between media houses and news stories produced by one media is denied by the competitor media. This creates confusion between readers, listeners or viewers.

An analysis of the concerns raised by journalists in this FGD suggests that journalists themselves are not satisfied with the level of conflict-sensitive reporting they are practicing. They seek support from media institutions, professional organizations and academics for training opportunities. However, such consideration is not in congruence with the evidence from the content analysis discussed above. In other words, even though the content analysis of the sample study corpus shows conflict sensitivity among journalists they



themselves are critical of their understanding and practices thereby seeking CSJ interventions in order to improve their professional quality.

Thus it seems fair to say that the two FGDs seem in congruence with each other in emphasizing that the present state of conflict sensitivity among journalists and other media professionals is not satisfactory, and there is a great need for CSJ interventions.

## 4.4 Insights from the Interviews

In order to further assess the state of conflict sensitivity among Nepali journalists and their understanding of conflict-sensitive journalism, intensive interviews were conducted. Insights from the interviews are presented below:

**Understanding the conflict:** Journalists do not have a proper understanding of various dimensions of conflict that are prevalent in the society. Many think, after the signing of the CPA in 2006, no significant conflicts prevail in the society that they should care about while performing their journalistic duties.

A journalist who was trained on conflict-sensitive journalism has quit media. During the interview, respondents said that before and after the signing of the CPA in 2006, scores of journalists received trainings on conflict-sensitive journalism from various national and international organizations. As the dropout rate is high in journalism, most of them have switched to other professions. Journalists who have been practicing journalism after the peace process have less exposure and they know little about conflict-sensitive issues. Some journalists who reported during the insurgency and received training have reached the leadership level. But those senior journalists are not fully aware of the relevance of such reporting in the newsroom.

1. **No guidebook in the newsroom:** Nepali newsrooms do not have any guidebook on how to practice conflict-sensitive journalism. Senior journalists who have knowledge have not shared their learning with their colleagues. It is mandatory for the media houses to prepare a guidebook on conflict-sensitive journalism.
2. **Media played a positive role in conflict transformation:** Senior journalists and editors are of the view that, after the signing of the CPA in 2006, the media played a pivotal role to mitigate the tension between the warring



parties. The media continuously warned both sides not to abandon the Peace and the constitution-drafting processes. The media always presented positive stories related to the peace and the constitution-drafting process. On the contentious issues of army integration and the constitution-drafting process, the media always piled a pressure to find a middle path.

3. **Media are course-correcting:** After the signing of the peace process in 2006, the media played a vital role to make the peace process a success. However, the media were not fully aware of the other factors of political conflict. Initially, the media took the Madhesh movement lightly. To some extent, the media misrepresented and underreported the Madhesh movement. As newsrooms were dominated by journalists who were primarily from Kathmandu and the hilly region, their news stories were biased toward Madhesh's agenda. Similarly, people from Madhesh were also dissatisfied with the way the media were reporting their concerns. That is why many press vehicles were vandalized during the Madhesh movement. Since then, there has been a drastic improvement in media coverage of Madhesh. Lately, the mainstream media realized that Madhesh should be given a due place in the media.
4. **Less sensitive to communal issues:** In some places, mainly in the Madhesh, violence between the Hindu and Muslim communities erupts on and off. The mainstream media seem sensitive about such issues and censor news stories about such violence. But new media, mainly online media, seem insensitive to such issues and contribute to making the matter further worse. There are instances of escalation of violence due to media reporting. There are also instances of media uncovering Hindu-Muslim clashes.
5. **Conflict-sensitive journalism beyond mainstream media:** For a long time, discussions on conflict-sensitive reporting were confined to the mainstream media (print, electronic and broadcast). Now the situation has entirely changed with the emergence of online news platforms. The so-called mainstream media alone don't set the narrative. Online media are also setting the narrative on certain issues. But there is a lack of proper understanding of conflict-sensitive journalism among the people who work in online media.
6. **Grassroots reporting:** Journalists and editors say media reporting at the grassroots on conflict issues is very minimal because of a host of reasons. At the local level, there could be several issues relating to conflict but they are not covered by the media. This is due to lack of sufficient resources and little



knowledge about conflict-related issues. Nepal media, therefore, should be encouraged and supported to undertake grass-root reporting. During the time of intense and brutal conflict, media reporting is based on clashes, violence, and human casualties. But after such conflict is over, journalists should report those issues which are creating conflict in the society or are likely to create conflict in the future. But there is a lack of awareness and knowledge about the prevailing issues in Nepal. Also, self-censorship regarding local level conflicts is prevalent as some interviewees claim.

- 7. No training on conflict-sensitive journalism:** Journalists and editors said they have not received any training after the signing of the CPA. Before the CPA or during the conflict, there was a flood of training on how to cover the conflict. Such training largely helped them to cover the issues related to the conflict. When the war was over, such training were not imparted to journalists. Journalists have some knowledge of brutal war reporting. What journalists know about conflict-sensitive journalism is on the basis of the training they received during the insurgency period. During the insurgency period, many journalists received training on how to cover the war. They still remember how to choose the appropriate words, how to avoid the words used by warring parties such as terrorists, and how to invent neutral words. Similarly, they somehow, know the differences between conventional reporting and conflict-sensitive reporting.
- 8. Event-based reporting dominates the newsroom:** Media reporting is mostly focused on events and is less Issue-driven. When a conflict occurs, the media widely report such events with little efforts to find out the root causes of the dispute and offer a long-term solution. Media are providing information about what is happening, but very few are reporting on how and why it is happening.
- 9. After 2006, media divided ideologically:** Journalists and editors who participated in the in-depth interview were of the view that after the CPA in 2006, media were ideologically divided which sometimes created problems. Even as there was a broader understanding among the media houses about the need for a logical conclusion to the peace process, the mainstream Nepali media were divided into two camps—one that took a soft approach to Maoism and another as a fierce critic of the Maoist party. This led journalists to practice self-censorship. Due to the ideological divisions, media houses provided false and biased reporting.



**10. Issue identification in peacetime:** Conflict-sensitive journalism is more complex in peacetime than during an intense conflict period. In peacetime, identification of issues is a tough job as media houses and journalists are not capable of identifying relevant issues that need to be compared with a low-intensity conflict. Similarly, newsrooms were also divided along ideological lines.

It is highlighted by some interviewees that Nepal has a better working condition in South Asia compared to other countries in the region and the situation of conflict reporting is comparatively better. Nepali media are much aware of hate speech and racism as noted by the interviewees. The content that promote hate speech and racism is very low in the Nepali media.

**11. Media houses not positive about investing in conflict-sensitive reporting:** Due to the weak economic condition of media houses, they are not positive about investing in conflict-sensitive journalism. Also, they are not in the position of providing in-house training for conflict-sensitive reporting.

More number of women journalists helps promote conflict-sensitive journalism. However, the number of women journalists is decreasing day by day.

**12. Media not doing enough to heal war-era cases:** Transitional justice, a key part of the peace process, is yet to be completed. Providing relief and justice to war-era victims remains unaddressed. But the media are either turning a deaf ear to this or are disseminating one-sided stories. Media played a vital role in the constitution-drafting and integration of Maoist combatants, but there is not the same degree of enthusiasm to conclude the transitional justice issues. Some media are disseminating one-sided stories, further creating divisions in the society. Similarly, the stories related to conflict victims are stereotyping because the pain of conflict victims is always linked with Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai, but there is a lack of serious media reporting in favor of concluding the transitional justice process.

**13. Media do not filter aggressive words of politicians:** Top politicians often issue aggressive and provocative statements in the public, but the media are not censoring them. Such tendencies are likely to create disputes in the society. For instance, according to a journalist, Pushpa Kamal Dahal accused KP Sharma Oli of beheading an innocent person during the Panchayat regime and media did not censor those words which can have a psychological impact on the victim's family and sometimes could trigger mass aggression.

The media have not paid attention to fake cases or extra-judicial killings. Many people are facing fake cases relating to the Maoist movement, Madhesh movement, or other political movements. Many innocent people are languishing in jail due to fake cases, but the media have not paid attention to writing news stories on these issues.

Media is at risk of losing trust. Compared to the hilly region Madhesh remains vulnerable to conflict. But journalists and media houses do not seem sensitive to this. In some cases, the media disseminate news stories that have a high possibility of stoking conflict in the society. For instance, sometimes media disseminate the content which create a gulf between the hill and Madhesh.

14. **Editor-reporter two-way communication is needed:** To better conflict-sensitive reporting, there is a need for enhanced dialogue between editors and reporters which is not happening. There is a gap because they never discuss conflict-sensitive journalism. Reporters, exercising their own judgement, are writing news stories without any consultation in the newsroom.
15. **Little reporting on root causes of conflict:** Even after the signing of the CPA in 2006, Nepali society has seen various kinds of conflicts. For instance, the breakaway faction of the Maoist party led by Netra Bikram Chand launched a violent movement. Similarly, CK Raut launched a secessionist movement. In addition, there is always some sort of unrest in Tikapur, Kailali. When the rebelling groups joined mainstream politics, the media reported with much fanfare, but they never reported on the root causes of conflict.

Some of the interviewees opine that Nepal is always a conflict-prone country. Given the volatile condition of Nepal, as the interviewees note, there is always a possibility of Nepal plunging into a crisis, but the media have not paid any attention to this issue. They argue that there are always chances of conflicts as Nepal is a diverse country in terms of ethnicity, religion, and other aspects. The media, therefore, should be aware of it. There is very little or little understanding among journalists about it, the interviewees added.

According to some interviewees, Nepali media provide less space to the parties involved in the conflict. Traditionally, Nepali media are providing less space to those leaders who launched conflict. For instance, the media provided less space to a breakaway faction of the Maoist party. The media always promoted the factions committed to the peace and constitution



drafting processes.

Interviewees observed that growing inequality and unemployment could create conflict. Inequality, poverty, economic crisis and unemployment are rising in the society. These issues could create conflict in the Nepali society. As such, Nepali journalists should be aware of those issues. Meanwhile, some interviewees argued that Nepali media are learning from their mistakes and have become more sensitive towards conflict. Many cases show that media seem less sensitive to conflict initially, but learn a lot across the years. Initially, the portrayal of the Madhesh movement in 2006 was flawed, but the media gradually understood it and tried to better inclusion in the newsroom and sensitivity in coverage. The same occurred during the Tikapur massacre in 2015 and in the constitution-drafting process.

- 16. Less sensitivity of society:** There are many cases of media not properly handling sensitive issues. For instance, when the Covid-19 pandemic was at its peak, the media reported a case of Madhesh where a Muslim woman was blamed for spreading the virus by throwing a Nepali rupee on the roads. This was seriously flawed which creates hatred against the Muslims. It took time to realize that it was a mistake.

Nepali media often do not understand the hidden intention of politicians, political parties and institutions which also promotes insensitive journalism.

The interviewees constantly emphasized on the need for imparting knowledge and orientation to journalists about the changing facets of conflict. They suggested that the universities should immediately take measures to incorporate conflict-sensitive journalism in the journalism curricula. In the changing media landscape particularly with the emergence of online platforms, there should be a revision of conflict journalism. There should be a close coordination and cooperation between the media sector and universities to strengthen conflict-sensitive journalism. National and international organizations should provide training and orientation to journalists about conflict-sensitive journalism, the interviewees further emphasized.

The insights from the interviews are in congruence with the insights from the two FGDs mentioned above. The journalism fraternity along with other stakeholders do not seem happy with the current state of conflict sensitivity, and thus seek CSJ interventions to promote conflict sensitivity in Nepali media.

# **Chapter V**

# **Conclusion**

## 5.1 Major Findings

### 5.1.1 State of Conflict Sensitivity in Nepali Media

Content analysis of 20 media outlets (10 newspapers and 10 online news portals) for a period of one month shows that Nepali media have been upholding conflict sensitivity in general. Out of 14 thousand 4 hundred 22 media materials, very few materials (0.26%) are found to be violating conflict sensitivity. However, through CSJ interventions, those few instances of oversight or insensitivity can be addressed.

### 5.1.2 Conflict Sensitivity among Nepali Journalists and Understanding of Conflict-sensitive Journalism

A FGD among young journalists from the seven provinces of Nepal representing radio, TV, newspaper and online news outlets reveals that journalists themselves think more needs to be done to promote conflict-sensitive journalism. Even as the content analysis shows that journalists are maintaining conflict sensitivity and they are also feeling the need for enhancing their understanding and practices. As such, CSJ interventions can help strengthen their professionalism. Young journalists seek support from media institutions, professional organizations and academics for better training opportunities to enhance conflict sensitivity.

Another FGD participated by editors, academics, members of CSOs and conflict victims had them take a critical stand of contemporary media practices. It reveals that journalists favor CSJ interventions to improve professional standards of Nepali media. The stakeholders have emphasized the need for enhancing conflict sensitivity practiced by journalists and other mass communicators.

There is a congruence between both the FGDs laying great emphasis on enhancing the present state of conflict sensitivity practiced by journalists and other media professionals. There is a common argument that media sensitivity reflected in media content are due to the personal efforts of journalists and there is a great scope for more endeavors to promote conflict-sensitive journalism. The participants called for CSJ interventions to enhance standards within the media profession.





There is a congruence between the insights from the interviews and the findings from the FGDs. The interviewees claim Nepali journalists do not have a proper understanding of various dimensions of conflict that are prevalent in the society. Being insensitive to communal issues, less focus on the promotion of conflict sensitivity in online media, prevailing ideological bias and self-censorship of local level conflicts are some problems identified by the interviewees. It should be noted that the content that promote hate speech and racism receive little media attention in Nepal. Meanwhile, there are risks to consider in a politically divided country like Nepal as media coverage of hate speech can stoke political conflict anytime.

The lack of any institutional endeavors to promote conflict sensitivity in media is substantiated by the fact that neither there are opportunities for training on CSJ nor the newsrooms of Nepali media have any guidelines on how to practice conflict-sensitive reporting. There is a great scope for editors and reporters to maintain regular and effective two-way communication. On the other hand, conflict-sensitive reporting can be part of the university curricula on journalism. In summary, the media fraternity along with other stakeholders do not seem happy with the current state of conflict sensitivity and call for CSJ interventions.

## 5.2 Recommendations

1. **CONDUCT** regularly content analysis of media content to measure the level of conflict sensitivity upheld by Nepali media.
2. **DETERMINE** to what extent journalists need to be equipped with relevant knowledge and resources to strengthen conflict-sensitive journalism.
3. **MAKE** institutional endeavors to prioritize conflict-sensitive journalism and communication. For this, media institutions, academics, CSOs and journalists should work out an appropriate working modality together. For instance, by incorporating CSJ in the journalism curricula of universities, conflict sensitivity can be further upheld in media content. Support from media institutions, professional organizations and academics for targeted training opportunities to enhance conflict sensitivity is a must.



4. **TRAIN** journalists on the Do No Harm approach and on peace journalism. Journalists must be familiarized themselves with key international human rights instruments to which Nepal is a state party to. In addition, they should be upskilled on key peace-building initiatives.
5. **FACILITATE** the media to be a gatekeeper while spotlighting voices of victims and also the government. Media institutions should be more proactive to tackle self-censorship and give due space to voices of the voiceless.
6. **ENSURE** effective two-way communication between editors and reporters. Media houses should have regular in-house initiatives to build the capacity of journalists.
7. **SENSITIZE** editors and reporters on the complexities and dynamics of Nepali society vis-a-vis its plurality and diversity through orientation programs, workshops and trainings.
8. **EQUIP** journalists with necessary knowledge and skills on conflict-sensitive reporting such as through fellowship programs to write conflict-related stories.
9. **RESEARCH** the pattern of post-conflict victim blaming and the psychology of victims to increase media coverage of untold stories.





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## Appendix 1

List of newspapers included in the sample:

Location	Newspaper	Link
Koshi	Blast Dainik	<a href="http://www.blastkhabar.com">www.blastkhabar.com</a>
Madhesh	Janakpur Today	<a href="http://ejanakpurtoday.com">ejanakpurtoday.com</a>
Bagmati	Chitwan Post	<a href="http://echitwanpost.com/">echitwanpost.com/</a>
Gandaki	Adarsha Samaj Dainik	<a href="http://www.eadarsha.com/">www.eadarsha.com/</a>
Lumbini	Butwal Today	<a href="http://www.butwalpost.com/">www.butwalpost.com/</a>
Karnali	Yugahwahan Dainik	<a href="http://www.yugnews.com">www.yugnews.com</a>
Sudurpaschim	Paschim Today	<a href="http://paschimtoday.com">paschimtoday.com</a>
Kathmandu Valley	Kantipur	<a href="http://epaper.ekantipur.com/">epaper.ekantipur.com/</a>
	Gorkhapatra	<a href="http://epaper.gorkhapatraonline.com/">epaper.gorkhapatraonline.com/</a>
	Naya Patrika	<a href="http://epaper.nayapatrikadaily.com/">epaper.nayapatrikadaily.com/</a>



## Appendix 2

List of online newsportals included in the sample:

Location	Online news portal	Link of the online news
Koshi	Purbeli Khabar	<a href="http://purbelinews.com">purbelinews.com</a>
Madhesh	Today Pati	<a href="http://todaypati.com">todaypati.com</a>
Bagmati	Narayani	<a href="http://narayanionline.com">narayanionline.com</a>
Gandaki	Parichay	<a href="http://www.parichaya.com">www.parichaya.com</a>
Lumbini	Sabal Post	<a href="http://sabalpost.com">sabalpost.com</a>
Karnali	Nepaliraibar	<a href="http://nepaliraibar.com">nepaliraibar.com</a>
Sudurpaschim	Dinesh Khabar	<a href="http://dineshkhbar.com">dineshkhbar.com</a>
Kathmandu Valley	Ratopati	<a href="http://ratopati.com">ratopati.com</a>
	Setopati	<a href="http://www.setopati.com">www.setopati.com</a>
	Onlinekhabar	<a href="http://www.onlinekhabar.com">www.onlinekhabar.com</a>

## Appendix 3

Indicators for content analysis:

1. Use of disconnecting language
2. Pre-existing inequalities and injustice
3. Misinformation and disinformation
4. Political interest/propaganda in media materials
5. Extremist views/escalating views in media materials
6. Lack of context analysis
7. Partiality
8. Point of view (elitist vs.grassroots view)
9. Victim-centered approach





## Appendix 4

Set of questions for the first FGD:

1. What is your observation on the current level of the capacity of journalists and how it is related to media professionalism?
2. How do the stakeholders' understanding of conflict transformation methods impact participation of women and marginalized groups in media content prioritization?
3. What are the key areas and groups to focus on for advocacy around conflict-sensitive journalism?
4. What are the relevant international standards that the media need to understand in order to promote peace-building and conflict transformation?
5. What type of interventions can lead to an increased conflict-sensitive reporting and media coverage?
6. Are you aware of the challenges of conflict-sensitive journalism in Nepal?
7. What are the roles that the media had played in the conflict transformation after 2006?
8. After the decade-long conflict, how is the Nepali media contributing to suppressed discourses?



## Appendix 5

Set of questions for the second FGD:

1. What do you understand by conflict-sensitive journalism? Is there an in-house provision that helps increase your understanding on conflict-sensitive journalism?
2. Do you know why it is important to have inclusivity in media content, work force and news source?
3. Are the media contributing to consensus-building and trust-building in the multi-ethnic society?
4. Has the work of journalists been affected due to their political inclination?
5. Are journalists aware of and have knowledge on several forms of discrimination based on caste, culture, gender and demography and are they promoting stereotypical norms as a result of this discrimination?
6. Have you ever experienced a situation wherein a news story prepared by you or your colleague has led to any kind of conflict?
7. Do you reflect your dissatisfaction or disapproval with the authorities in the media content you produce?
8. Do you think the media can escalate conflict and, if so, how?
9. What are the roles the media can play to promote peace?
10. What were the roles the media played in the conflict transformation after 2006?



## Appendix 6

Set of questions for interviewees:

1. What is the current status of conflict-sensitive journalism in Nepal? How is that related to the general political and security environment and media's role in conflict transformation?
2. How do the stakeholders' understanding of the conflict transformation methods impact the participation of women and marginalized groups in media content prioritization?
3. What is the current level of the capacity of journalists and how is it related to the media professionalism?
4. What are the roles the media had played in the conflict transformation after 2006?
5. After the decade-long conflict, how is the Nepali media contributing to suppressed discourses?
6. What are the relevant international standards that media need to understand in order to promote peace-building and conflict transformation?
7. What types of interventions can lead to an increased conflict-sensitive reporting and media coverage?
8. What, according to you, are the challenges for conflict-sensitive journalism in Nepal?

## Appendix 7

List of participants in the first FGD:

S.N	Name	Organization
1	Kundan Aryal	Tribhuvan University
2	Trishna Acharya	Tribhuvan University
3	Sujeena Shakya	Care Nepal
4	Sahisnu Paudyal	Tribhuvan University
5	Chiranjibi Bhandari	Tribhuvan University
6	Rajan Pokhrel	The Himalayan Times
7	Babita Basnet	Ghatana ra Bichar
8	Shree Ram Khanal	Gramin Adarsha College
9	Yam Bahadur Dura	Tribhuvan University
10	Mahesh Bhatta	COCAP
11	Shri Ram Adhikari	Freelancer



## Appendix 8

List of participants in the second FGD:

S.N	Name	Organization
1	Ramesh Kumar Poudel	Kantipur Daily, Chitwan
2	Shanta Adhikari	Gorkhapatra Daily, Chitwan
3	Sabitri Giri	Gorkhapatra Daily, Banke
4	Durgalal KC	Kantipur Daily, Dang
5	Sunita Lohani	News Griha Online, Morang
6	Laxmi Gautam	Kantipur Daily, Panchthar
7	Suraj Singh	RSS Karnali Bureau
8	Rajani Yogi	Sajha Bisauni, Surkhet
9	Jamuna Barsa Sharma	FNJ, Kaski
10	Yuvaraj Shrestha	Setopati, Kaski
11	Mohan Bista	Jana Sarokar Post, Kanchanpur
12	Tripti Shahi	Kantipur Daily, Baitadi
13	Madhuri Mahato	BBC Nepali, Parsa
14	Sunita Baral	Kantipur, Mahottari

## Appendix 9

List of interviewees:

S.N	Name	Organization
1	Subodh Gautam	Nagariknews.com
2	Hari Bahadur Thapa	Ekagaj Media
3	Kosh Raj Koirala	Myrepublica
4	Sitaram Baral	Nepalkhabar.com
5	Krishna Poudel	News Agency Nepal
6	Gita Chimoriya	Freelancer
7	Pranab Kharel	Tribhuvan University
8	Yogesh Dhakal	Shilapatra
9	Santa Gahamagar	Himalkhabar.com
10	Prakash Acharya	Tribhuvan University
11	Babin Sharma	Freelancer
12	Suman Adhikari	Conflict Victim Family
13	Chiranjibi Bhandari	Tribhuvan University



## Media Action Nepal

The first ever member and the Co-chair of the Media Freedom Coalition-Consultative Network (MFC-CN) from Nepal, the Media Action Nepal (MAN) is committed to developing plural, independent and accountable media and thus far has contributed greatly to change the course. Since its inception in 2015, the organization has been a torchbearer of freedom of expression, press freedom and media development in Nepal through research, policy dialogue, advocacy and capacity-building of journalists in collaboration with national, regional and international organizations. In addition, also the first ever signatory to the Freelance Journalist Safety Principles of the ACOS Alliance from Nepal, MAN works closely with the international media rights organizations to advocate for the rights of journalists, with an inclusive newsroom a top priority, and uphold their safety through evidence-backed interventions in Nepal and across South Asia through solid networks and partnerships.

## GIZ-CPS Civil Peace Service Nepal

The Civil Peace Service (Ziviler Friedensdienst ZFD) supports projects aimed at non-violent conflict resolutions in various countries worldwide. Its objectives are the prevention of violent conflicts, the reduction of violence, and the long-term securing of peace. The aim of the GIZ-CPS in Nepal is to strengthen conflict transformation through capacity development, promotion of creative forms of social transformation and dialogue, psychosocial support services, and establishing systems to document and report human rights violations. Groups of victims and conflict survivors are supported in developing their ideas for memory work, raise concerns, and advocate for the implementation of transitional justice processes.

