

A Study on

THE STATUS OF NEPALI WOMEN JOURNALISTS COVERING FOREIGN AFFAIRS



A Study on
**the Status of Nepali Women
Journalists Covering
Foreign Affairs**



A Study on the Status of Nepali Women Journalists Covering Foreign Affairs

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Foreword

The study, “**The Status of Nepali Women Journalists Covering Foreign Affairs**”, conducted by Media Advocacy Group (MAG) explores the reasons for women's underrepresentation in foreign affairs and security reporting and to identify strategies for increasing the number of women journalists in this field. MAG is an organization that focuses on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) perspectives in the areas of Right to Information, Internet Freedom, Digital Security, Media, and Journalism. MAG has also conducted research on “The impact of COVID-19 on Women Journalists”, “Impact of Online Violence on Women Journalists” and carried out a media monitoring on “Political Coverage of Women Politicians in Mainstream Media.”

Due to Nepal's complex geopolitical situation and relationship with other countries in terms of economic, political, and cultural context, reporting on foreign issues and national security is complex. Being a highly intellectual and diplomatic issue, reporting in foreign issues is difficult too. The study suggests that there is lack of both men and women journalists, who work exclusively on foreign affairs and security. On top of that gender-based bias, lack of motivation, exclusion from professional networks and sources, and limited opportunities for career advancement are seen as some of the factors responsible for underrepresentation of women journalists in foreign affairs and security reporting.

This challenge can be addressed through various interventions. The study has recommended capacity building of women journalists including training programs, mentorship, experience sharing and motivation to enhance the representation of women journalists in this beat of reporting. The study also finds that formulation and implementation of gender responsive policies at the media organizations as a key to increase the number of women reporting on foreign affairs and security.

For the purpose of the study, MAG selected 800 women journalists and approached them. Out of the contacted journalists 500 participated in online survey. For the qualitative data, MAG used Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), In-depth interviews (IDIs), Desk Review and Case Studies. The study involved the participation of women journalists from all seven provinces of Nepal, women journalists reporting in the foreign affairs beat, as well as men journalists, senior journalists, editors, and others. MAG is grateful to all the journalists who participated in the study.

MAG expresses its gratitude to the US Embassy for supporting this research. The organization also extends its thanks to Ms. Sushmita Lama for leading the study and Ms. Nishu Ratna Bastakoti for being a co-researcher. MAG highly values the contribution of Dr. Mahendra Bista in reviewing the research report and providing valuable inputs to enrich it. Additionally, MAG would like to thank the executive committee, including President Ms. Anita Bindu, for their contributions in completing this study.

MAG believes that this research can play an important role in creating a conducive environment for women journalists in Nepal to report on foreign affairs and security issues.

Thank you

Babita Basnet

Executive Director

Media Advocacy Group (MAG)

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Executive Summary

The study aims to determine and analyze the status of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting, explore the reasons for women's underrepresentation in foreign affairs and security reporting, and identify strategies for increasing the number of women journalists in this field. The study utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, including online surveys, focused group discussions, and in-depth interviews.

The online survey was conducted among 500 women journalists. Among the surveyed women journalists, only 13.3% were engaged in political beats and 6.6% were engaged in foreign affairs and security affairs reporting. Regarding the status of participation of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting, only 2.9% of respondents considered that women journalists have high status in foreign affairs and security reporting, while 24.3% claimed it to be moderate, and a huge majority of respondents, i.e., 72.8%, shared that women journalists have less status in foreign and security affairs reporting.

Regarding the reason for the low representation of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting, 23.6% of surveyed respondents shared that gender stereotypes and gender biases in the media are the main reasons for the underrepresentation of women in foreign affairs reporting and diplomacy. 19.8% of respondents claimed it was the lack of interest and knowledge in foreign affairs reporting and diplomacy. 16% considered foreign affairs reporting to be more challenging than other beats and cited this as the main reason for the low number of women in foreign affairs reporting. 15.1% of respondents shared that women are underrepresented in Nepali media, which leads to fewer women in foreign affairs reporting. 13.2% claimed that senior management does not trust women reporters in foreign affairs reporting, and 6.6% claimed that foreign affairs reporting requires tremendous effort, time, and dedication with the same payment as in other beat reporting. 2.8% believed proficiency in English language also affected the interest to cover foreign affairs.

Regarding their interest in pursuing a media career in foreign and securing affairs reporting, 85.6% showed their interest in pursuing a career in foreign and securing affairs reporting, while 7.7% showed no interest, and 6.7% were not sure whether they would further their career in foreign and securing affairs reporting.

On improving the participation of women journalists in foreign and security affairs reporting, 51.8% of respondents believed that capacity building of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting is important, while 21.2% stressed the need for gender responsive media house policies to encourage more women journalists to cover foreign affairs reporting; 14.4% said that letting go of the mindset that foreign affairs is a beat that only men can cover; and 9.6% believed that developing personal interest in pursuing the foreign affairs beat is important.

Similarly, the findings of the focused group discussion suggested that there are few women journalists in foreign affairs reporting beats owing to significant challenges that contribute to their underrepresentation. Not only women, but even male journalists are less involved in foreign affairs reporting as foreign affairs has not been developed as a separate beat of reporting in several media. Journalists working on political beats are normally assigned the job of reporting on foreign affairs and security when there are specific reporting issues. The lack of interest in media management, the lack of resources, and the unavailability of trained and expert human resources on this issue in the media sector are some of the major reasons due to which the foreign affairs beat has not been established largely as a major beat of reporting.

Foreign affair issues are complicated in the case of Nepal due to its complex geopolitical location and other ties with other countries in terms of economic, political, and cultural context. Reporting on foreign issues can be sometimes tricky as it can be related to the status of the country. Being a highly intellectual and diplomatic issue, reporting in foreign issues is difficult too. On top of that challenges include gender-based discrimination and bias, lack of motivation and awareness, exclusion from professional networks and sources, and limited opportunities for career advancement are other concerns for the underrepresentation of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting. The women journalists feel undervalued and underrepresented in their field and highlight the need for greater support and mentorship for women in foreign affairs and security reporting.

To address these challenges, the study identifies various strategies that could help increase women journalists' representation in foreign affairs and security reporting. These include providing more opportunities for training and professional development, developing specialized expertise in certain areas of foreign affairs reporting, increasing visibility and recognition of women journalists including building networks and alliances with other women journalists, and creating more supportive and inclusive workplaces to promote gender equality in newsrooms.

The study also presents several case studies of successful women journalists, who have achieved fame in foreign affairs reporting. These case studies highlight their stories so as to motivate other women journalists to participate in foreign affairs and security reporting.

The study emphasized the need for greater support and recognition for women journalists in foreign affairs and security reporting. This includes providing more opportunities for women journalists to access sources and build their expertise, as well as promoting greater diversity and inclusion in newsrooms and professional associations.

Overall, the findings of this study shed light on the need to address challenges faced by women journalists in foreign affairs reporting and to take concrete steps to support and empower women in this field. By promoting greater diversity and inclusion in foreign affairs reporting, we can help to ensure that a wider range of perspectives and voices are represented in the global conversation on important issues.

1. Background

1.1 Women in Journalism

The history of women in journalism dates back to the 17th century.¹ Sophie Morsing's name appeared on the print line as editor of a newspaper in Denmark in 1658. Although her name was printed as an editor, she did not work in production of news but just took care of her husband's newspaper without working as a journalist. Charlotte Baden was the first woman, who published articles in Danish newspapers. She wrote articles for '*Morgen Post*', a famous weekly newspaper in Denmark, from 1786 to 1793. Catharina Ahlgren is considered the first woman journalist and editor in Finland. She was a Swede and owned and edited a Swedish language newspaper *Om att rätt behaga* in 1782, which also is among the first newspapers in Finland. Even though women are appearing sporadically in journalism in different countries, since 1850 it has been considered normal for women to enter journalism. After Anne-Marguerite Petit du Noyer became a famous French journalist in France and Europe in the 18th century, it can be said that women made history in journalism.

The first women's magazine, "*The Ladies*," was published in America in 1693. *The Ladies*, with a male editor, however, closed after four issues. Marguerite Higgins Hall was the first women journalist to receive the world-famous Pulitzer Prize for Foreign Correspondence. She was honored in 1951 for her coverage of the Korean War.

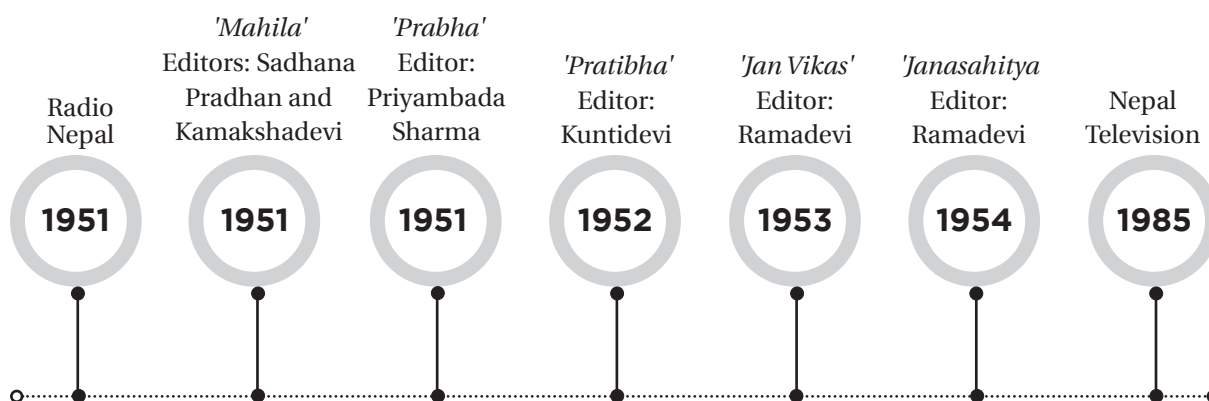
1.2 Women in Nepali Journalism

The history of Nepali journalism goes back to 1886 AD, when Motiram Bhatta published the first Nepali language magazine, *Gorkha Bharat Jeevan*, from Kashi, India. However, the first magazine published in Kathmandu, Nepal, was '*Sudha Sagar*' in 1899. The first newspaper published in Nepal was '*Gorkhapatra*' weekly, published in 1901, which has been published as a daily until now as a state-owned newspaper. The first radio station, 'Radio Nepal,' was established in 1951 and the first television station, 'Nepal Television,' started its regular broadcasting in 1985.

The presence of Nepalese women in the field of journalism can be seen in the magazine '*Mahila*', published in 1951. Sadhana Pradhan and Kamakshadevi were editors of '*Mahila*' magazine. This is the first time any magazine has been edited and published by women in Nepal. Salvanti, Madhukari, and Pramila were co-editors of the magazine, with Sadhana Pradhan and Kamakshadevi as its editors, while Mayadevi played the role of manager.

Another monthly magazine, '*Prabha*' was published under the editorship of Priyambada Sharma in 1951. In 1952, '*Pratibha*' (monthly) was published under the editorship of Kuntidevi. Similarly,

1. Situation of Online Violence Against Women Journalists, MAG and FES, 2022



in 1953, Ramadevi appeared as the editor and publisher of "*Jan Vikas*," a monthly magazine. Twelve issues of the *Jan Vikas* monthly were published, while others were limited to one or two issues.

Similarly, in 1954, another magazine called "*Janasahitya*" (published bimonthly) was also published by Ramadevi. Had the speed of engagement of women in journalism like in the 1950s continued, the status of women participation would have been different - stronger and wider. However, the participation of women in journalism could not be sustained due to the prevailing political instability in the country, a lack of education, and conservative family and social values.

Women's participation in the national media was evident in 1951 with the launch of Radio Nepal, which increased after the launch of Nepal Television in 1985. The participation of women journalists prior to that can only be seen sporadically. After the restoration of democracy in 1990, the media spectrum expanded due to the constitutional right of press freedom and freedom of expression. Many private and corporate agencies joined the media industry. The number of newspapers increased. In the mid- and late-1990s, FM radio stations started to flourish throughout the country, increasing the number of journalists at the local level. Establishment of several private TV channels in the early 2000s, and the online media started to pick up in the late 2000s.

Nepal has a large number of media working from around the country. Radio has been one of the most popular media platforms in Nepal for over two decades. However, due to the emergence of technology and digital platforms, online media has become most popular now. According to the Department of Information and Broadcasting (DoIB) there were 7953 registered newspapers and magazines February 12, 2023.² Similarly on February 7, 2023, there were 186 registered television channels³ and 931 radio stations⁴ throughout the country. On the other hand, the Press Council Nepal has enlisted 3916 online media as of April 13, 2023.⁵ As the number of media organizations increased, so did the number of journalists - both male and women increased. There are numbers of women journalists working in all forms of media.

2. https://api.giwms.gov.np/storage/23/posts/1677559433_71.pdf (Retrieved on April 19, 2023)

3. https://api.giwms.gov.np/storage/23/posts/1675758962_61.pdf (Retrieved on April 19, 2023)

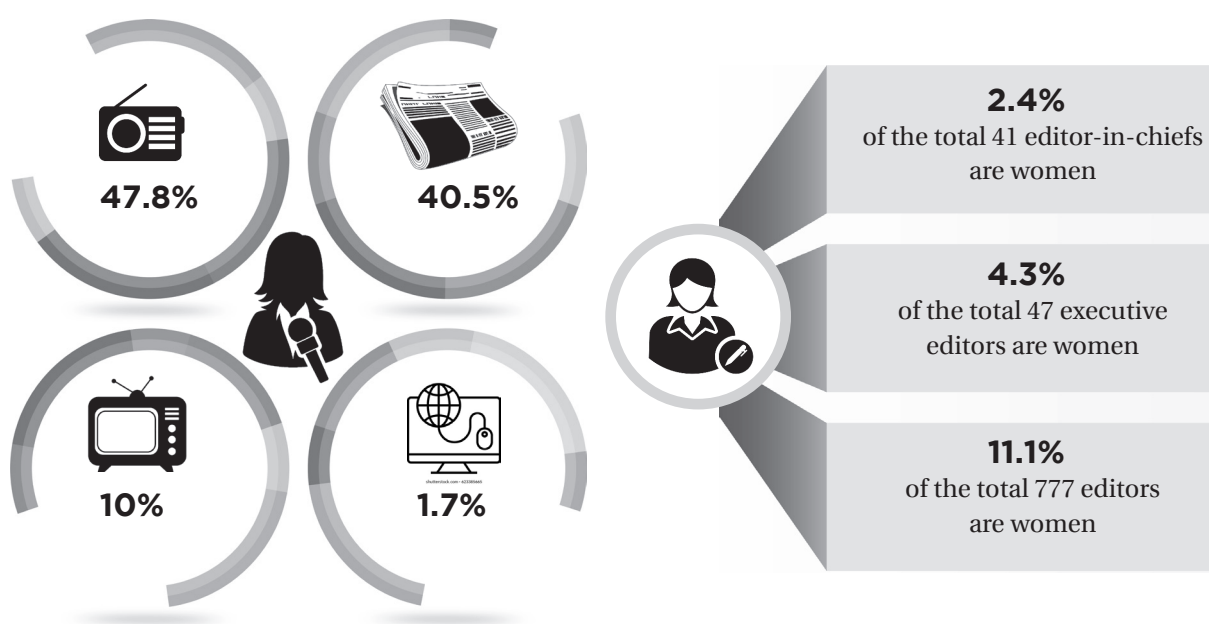
4. https://api.giwms.gov.np/storage/23/posts/1675758953_75.pdf (Retrieved on April 19, 2023)

5. <https://www.presscouncilnepal.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Enlisted-online-Media-till-2079-12-29.pdf> (Retrieved on April 24, 2023)

1.3 Status of Women Journalists in Nepal

There were 13,077 members of Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), the umbrella organization of Nepali Journalists, as of April 19, 2023. Among them 2,408 were women journalists.⁶ According to a study conducted by Sancharika Samuha in 2016 among 907 media houses across Nepal, 21% of women journalists were working in various media in the national capital.⁷ Similarly, 26.7% of the journalists throughout the country were female. The study shows that most of the women journalists and media workers (47.8%) were working in radio, while 40.5% in print media (newspapers), 10% in TV and 1.7% in online media.

Further, the number of women in the main decision-making positions is very disappointing. Only 2.4% of the total 41 editor-in-chiefs are women. Similarly, among the 47 executive editors, 4.3% are women, and 11.1% of the 777 editors are women. Looking at the statistics of 32 media houses in Kathmandu, there are zero women among the total of 12 chief editors and 6 executive editors. Similarly, out of 67 editors, 98.5% are men and only 1.5% are women.



Most media outlets were found to have no clear gender policy. 61.8% of them stated that they do not have a gender policy. Only 14.7% of media houses that participated in the survey said that they have a separate gender policy.

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, the journalism sector flourished in Nepal with the increased participation of women journalists. The number of women journalists and media professionals then continued to rise as FM radios became more widespread. After 2008, along with the exponential growth of online media, the participation of women in media also increased. Women are now working in all forms of media, such as print, electronic, and online. In contrast to male journalists, however, there are still very few women journalists in all forms of media. Although there are some studies on women journalists, it is still very difficult to identify the actual number of women journalists in Nepal.

6. <https://fnjnepal.org/np/page/members-data> (Retrieved on April 19, 2023)

7. <https://www.sancharika.org/public/publication/details/2> (Retrieved on April 19, 2023)

Due to the establishment of FM stations in various districts and the enthusiastic participation of women in them, the number of women journalists increased. In the past, women were mostly engaged as news anchors, but now they are increasingly involved in reporting, editing and other tasks in the newsroom. But the number of women reporters could not increase, even in some big media houses. Although the participation of women in radio and television is encouraging, the number of women in reporting, editing and technical fields is less than in program production and feature writing. Furthermore, the number of women journalists in the political beat of media houses is even less, both in state-owned media as private media. Similar is the case of participation in media management. The number of women as the directors of private media houses and on the board of directors of the government media is also very low.

1.4 Policy Status of Women Journalists

The Press Commission Report of 1958 is considered to be the first policy document related to media in Nepal, while the National Mass Media Policy, 2016 is the latest existing policy. The National Mass Media Policy, 2016 includes the convergence of media such as print, radio, television, online and the internet; media classification based on investment, ownership, nature of media and sector; publicizing editorial policy; a clean feed; discouraging media monopolies; and media concentration. The bodies to be formed under the Mass Media Policy are Public Service Broadcasting, the Media Council with restructuring, the National Mass Media Authority, the National Mass Media Training Institute, the Nepal Mass Media Museum and the Advertising Board. There are provisions for women representation in the decision-making bodies of all these structures.

Similarly, the Gender Responsive Communication Guideline issued by the Press Council and Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), deals with gender aspects in the media content as well as women as media professionals. In addition to mentioning the points that should not be published and broadcasted through a gender lens, the professional interests and opportunities of women journalists are also covered in this guideline. FNJ also has special provisions for women to get membership and reservations on leadership in its central, provincial and local chapter too. While the minimum eligibility of experience for male journalists is three years, for women journalists, the eligibility is limited to one year to apply for membership.

The Safe Workplace Guideline for the Media Sector, 2022, developed by Media Advocacy Group and owned by Press Council Nepal and the Federation of Nepali Journalists, deals with the physical and professional safety of women journalists at the workplace, including the media office and field. It highlights that the responsibility for ensuring safety from gender-based discrimination and violence is the prime responsibility of media management. It also calls for the formation of a separate complaint hearing mechanism at every media house.

Although the participation of women in radio and television is encouraging, the number of women in reporting, editing and technical fields is less than in program production and feature writing. Furthermore, the number of women journalists in the political beat of media houses is even less, both in state-owned media as private media. Similar is the case of participation in media management. The number of women as the directors of private media houses and on the board of directors of the government media is also very low.

2. About Research

Media Advocacy Group (MAG) is a national-level Non-Governmental Organization working in Nepal since 2008 for the promotion of the Right to Information (RTI), Gender Equality & Women Empowerment, and the Rights of marginalized communities through media advocacy. It has been closely working with and engaging parliamentarians, working journalists, government officials, political leaders, and other professionals in its advocacy efforts and knowledge sharing. Its organizational approach is Right-based Advocacy, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, Participatory, Transparency, and Accountability, Cultural sensitivity and Strategic partnership. Media Advocacy Group (MAG), with the support of US Embassy in Nepal conducted this research with the aim to find the status of women journalists in reporting on foreign affairs and security. For the purpose of this research Security is limited to national security and is different from the inland security.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- » To determine and analyze the status of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting.
- » To determine how many women journalists report on foreign affair beats and identify gaps in why women journalists do not cover foreign affairs.

2.2 Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of this study are:

- » The study only covers the status of women journalists reporting on foreign affairs and security. Security here refers only to issues of national security especially in relation with the foreign land. It does not cover internal security issues like the police and military forces.
- » The study findings and recommendations are based on group discussion and interviews with a limited number of editors, journalists, and reporters, which may not be representative of the entire community of media professionals, including editors and journalists.
- » Focused group discussions and case studies provide subjective qualitative data that may not be generalized to other contexts or situations.

- » The online survey was voluntary, and respondents who choose to participate may have different experiences or opinions than those who do not participate. Therefore, the survey findings may not be generalized.
- » The study focuses only on specific aspects of women journalists' experiences in foreign affairs reporting and do not capture the full range of challenges and opportunities that they face in this field.

Even though this study offers valuable insights into the challenges faced by women journalists covering foreign affairs and security issues and possible strategies to enhance their representation, it is crucial to acknowledge these limitations, when interpreting the study's findings and drawing conclusions from them.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Process

The study report on the situation of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting was conducted using a mixed-method approach that combined an online survey for quantitative data and qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and case studies.

The process of the study is summarized below:

- A. Conduct Desk Review:** Available past researches and books published by different agencies/ organizations were analyzed for secondary data to understand the situation of women journalists globally and in Nepal. The findings of the desk review provided background information for the study and supported in the development of questionnaires for the survey and group discussions.
- B. Questionnaire Design:** The first step in the study was to design research questions, survey questions, and focused group discussion guidelines. The researchers aimed to explore the challenges faced by women journalists in foreign affairs reporting and identify strategies to enhance representation of women in this field. There were separate questionnaires for online survey and focused group discussions (FGDs).

(The questionnaire of the online survey is attached in Annex 1 and the FGDs in Annex 2.)

- C. Conduct an Online Survey:** The researchers used an online survey to collect quantitative data on the perceptions of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting. The survey questions covered topics such as the reason behind underrepresentation of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting, their interest in pursuing a career in foreign affairs reporting, and suggestions for enhancing women in foreign affairs and security concerns reporting.

Survey participants: According to FNJ, there are 2,408 women journalists, out of which 800 women journalists were approached for the survey and 500 of them responded. In total, 500 women journalists representing all forms of media filled the questionnaires and the findings were tabulated in the report.

- D. Conduct Focused Group Discussions:** The researchers conducted focused group discussions (FGDs) with selected participants to gather more in-depth qualitative data on the challenges faced by women journalists in foreign affairs and security reporting and strategies to address these challenges. The focused group discussions were recorded and transcribed for analysis of their opinions and narratives. The FGDs were very helpful in understanding the nuances of why women journalists are underrepresented in political and foreign reporting.

Selection of participants: The primary informants for the study were carefully and strategically selected. The participants were both women and men journalists, who had experience in foreign affairs reporting; chief editors of various forms of media, including TV,

radio, and papers; and women journalists who had experience working in other beats except foreign affairs for comparative analysis.

Different group discussions were conducted with the following objectives.

- » Focused group discussion with women journalists to determine the status of women journalists in foreign affairs and security reporting, as well as the gaps and challenges that women journalists' face when reporting on foreign affairs issues.
- » FGD with editors to determine the nature, types, and trends of news published concerning foreign affairs; and,
- » FGD with chief reporters, who assign news beats to journalists, to determine why more women journalists are not involved in political and/or foreign affairs beats in journalism.

There were nine male and eight female participants, including senior editors, journalists and reporters in the FDGs.

(The details of FGDs are attached in Annex 3)

- E. Conduct In-depth interviews (IDI):** The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with successful women journalists who are working in foreign affairs reporting so as to motivate other young women journalists to pursue their careers in foreign affairs reporting. The case studies provided insights into their personal experiences and the challenges they faced.
- F. Analysis, Interpretation, and Presentation of the Data:** The researchers analyzed and interpreted the findings of the study and drew conclusions about the challenges faced by women journalists in foreign affairs reporting and strategies to increase their representation. The researchers presented the findings of the study in a report, which included an executive summary, an introduction, methodology, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, discussion, and recommendations.

Overall, the study of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting used a comprehensive approach that combined quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the challenges faced by women journalists in this field and identify strategies to increase their participation.

3.2 Sample Size

The study was based on a qualitative analysis of media professionals representing all forms of media located across the country, so no fixed sample size was followed. Women journalists, reporters, and chief editors across the country were selected randomly.

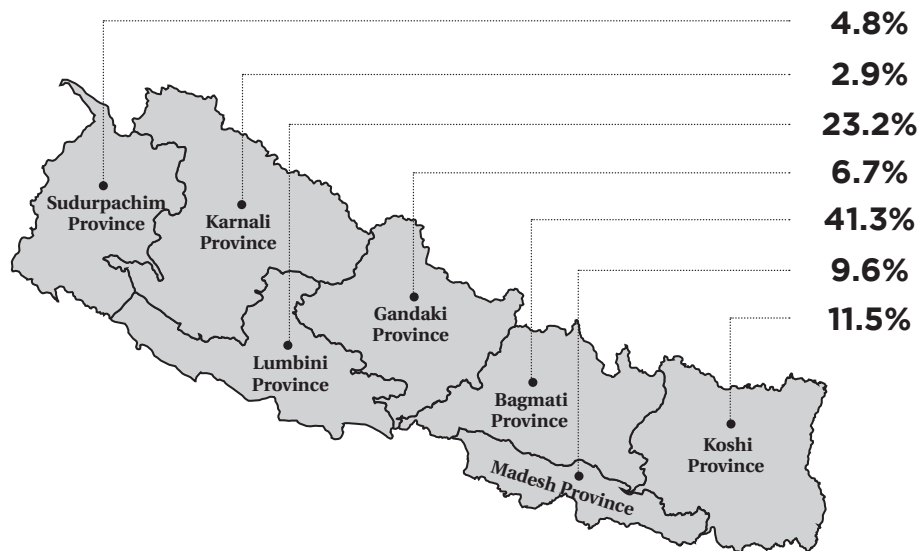
- a) Selection of women journalists:** According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), there are 2,408 women journalists, out of whom 800 were approached for the survey. 500 of them responded, with a response rate of 62.5%. Therefore, 500 women journalists representing different forms of media participated in the online survey. For the focused group discussion, women journalists working in foreign affairs and security beats and also working in other beats were approached and selected randomly.
- b) Selection of Chief Editors:** Chief editors working in various forms of media, including TV, radio, and newspapers, were selected randomly and approached for the study. Also, some editors from the media houses in Terai and outside of Kathmandu Valley, which have more potential for foreign affairs reporting, were selected.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Online Survey

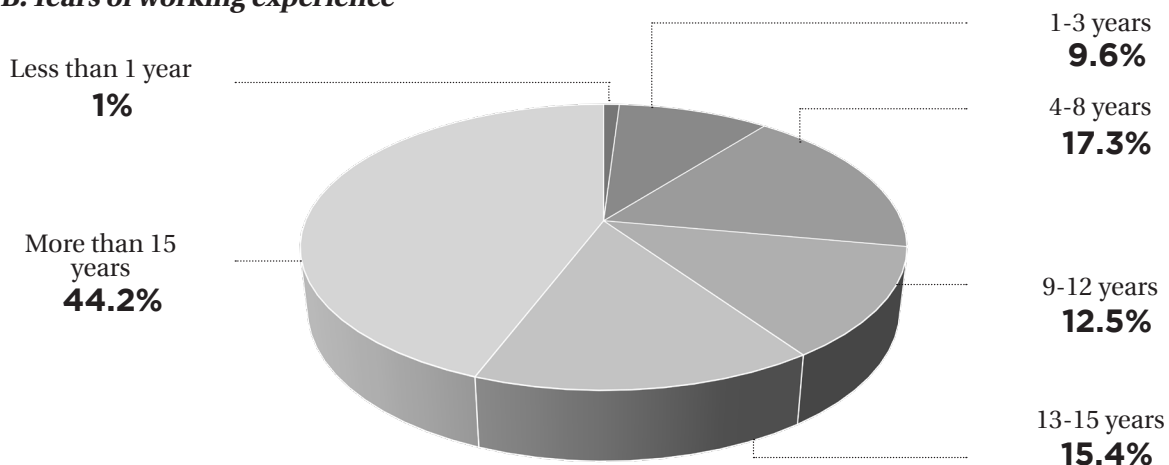
The online survey result was based on the information collected from 500 respondents. The findings of the survey are summarized as follows:

A. Demographic Information



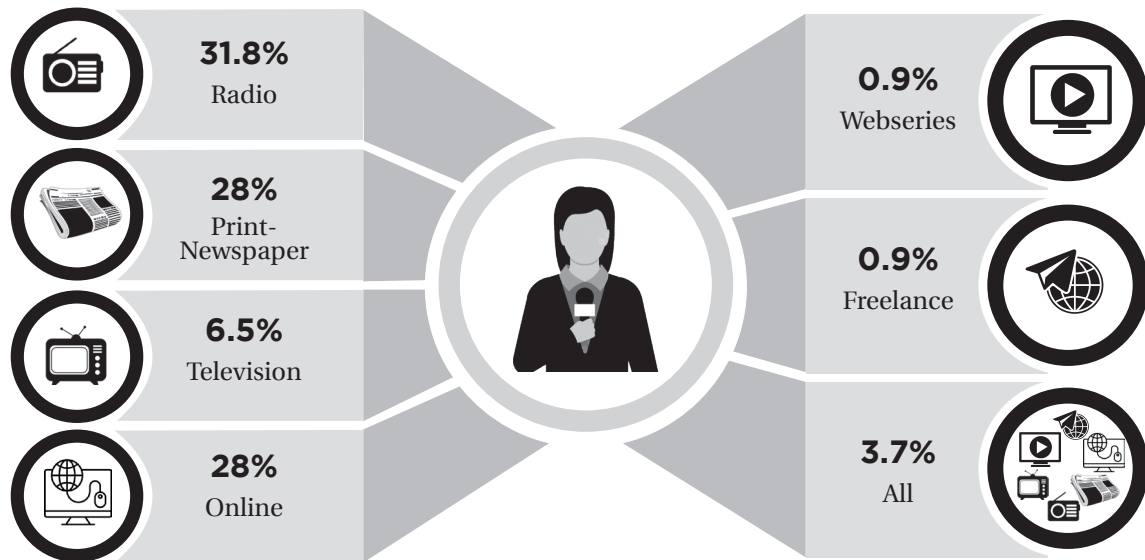
Among the surveyed women journalists, the majority (41.3%) were from Bagmati province, followed by 23.2% from Lumbini and 11.5% from Koshi province. 9.6% of respondents were from Madhesh province, 6.7% from Gandaki province, and 4.8 % from Sudhuraschim province. There was very low representation from Karnali Province, i.e., only 2.9%.

B. Years of working experience



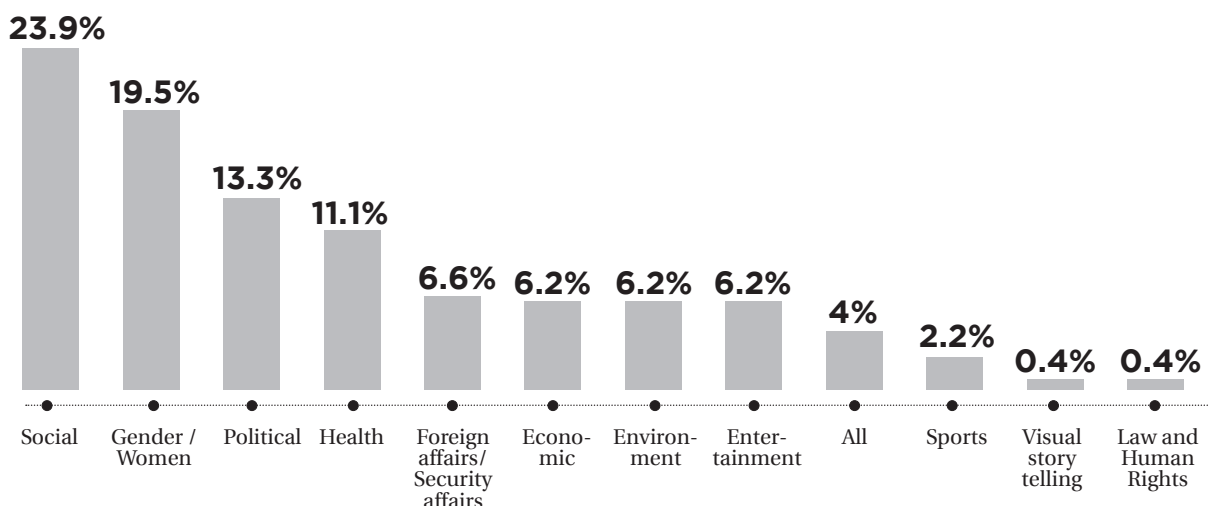
Among the surveyed women journalists, 44.20% had more than 15 years of experience in journalism, while 17.3% have 4–8 years of journalism experience, 15.4% have 13–15 years of journalism experience, 12.5% have 9–12 years of journalism experience, and 9.6% have 1–3 years of journalism experience. Only 1% had less than one year of experience in journalism.

C. Affiliation with Media



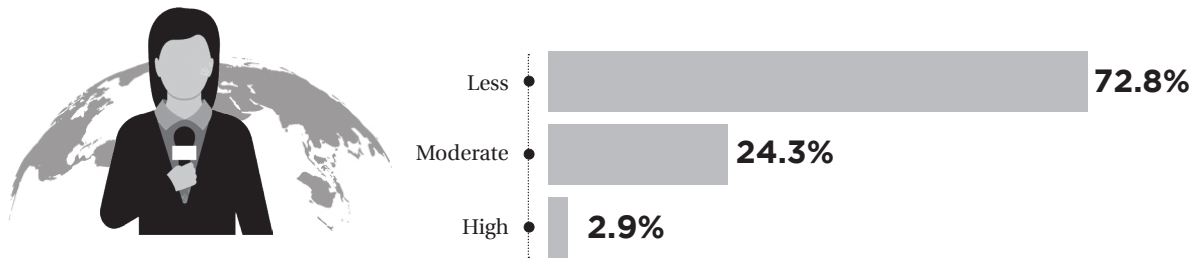
Most of the women journalists surveyed for the study were affiliated with radio, representing 31.8%, followed by online and print media with 28%, each. 6.5% of respondents were affiliated with TV, while 3.7% were affiliated with more than one form of media. 0.9% were involved in web series and freelancing, respectively.

D. Respondents' beat reporting



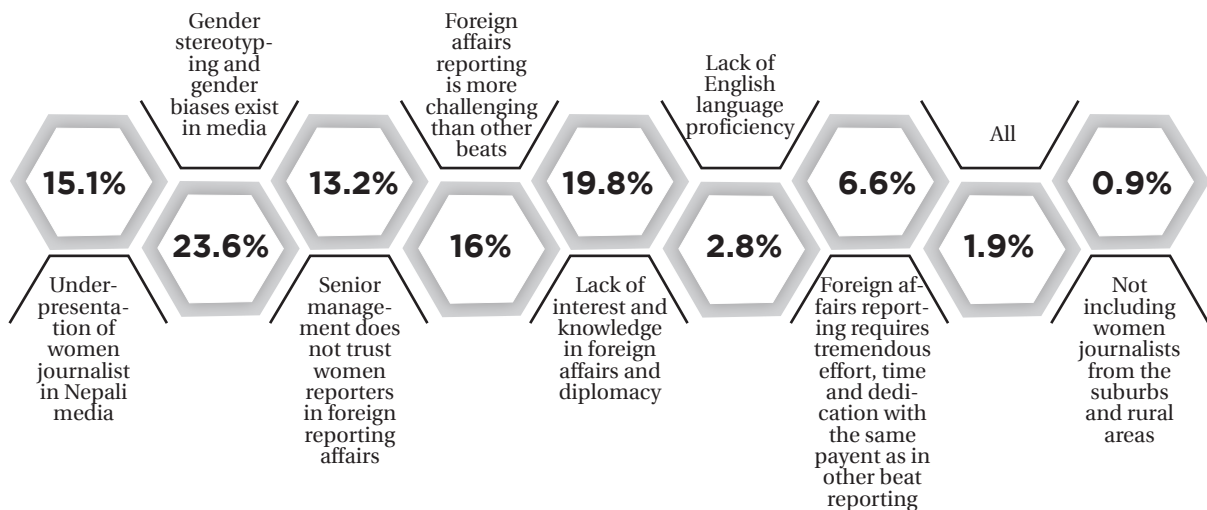
Among the surveyed women journalists, 23.9% reported on social beats, followed by 19.5% on gender and women's issues, and 13.3% on political beats. While only 6.6% were engaged in foreign affairs and security affairs reporting, 2.2% were engaged in sports reporting, and a very small 0.4% were involved in law and human rights related reporting.

E. The status of women journalists' participation in foreign affairs and security reporting

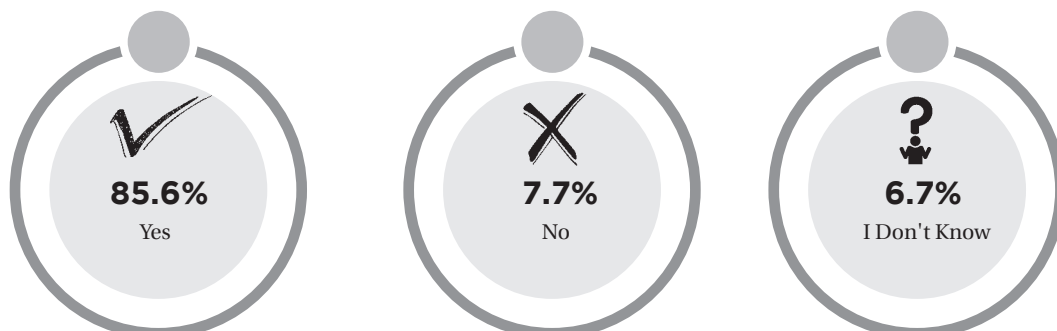


Only 2.9% of respondents considered that women journalists have high status in foreign affairs and security reporting, while 24.3% claimed it to be moderate, and a huge majority of respondents, i.e., 72.8%, shared that women journalists have lower status in foreign affairs and security affairs reporting.

F. Reasons for the underrepresentation of women journalists in foreign and security affairs reporting

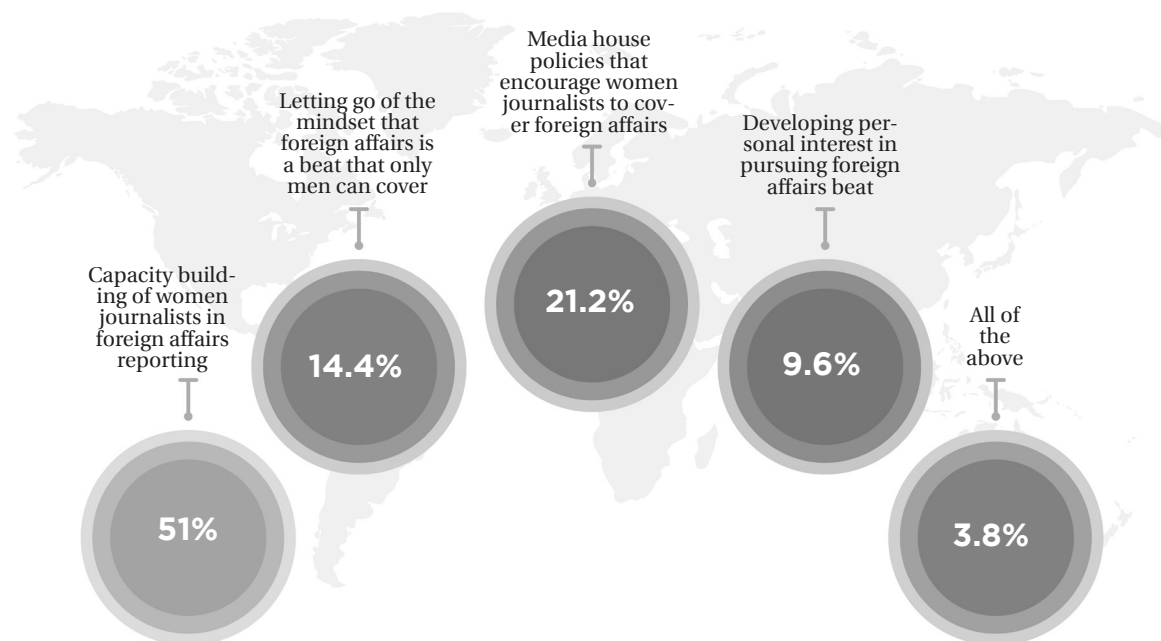


23.6% of respondents shared that gender stereotypes and gender biases in the media are the main reasons for the underrepresentation of women in foreign affairs reporting and diplomacy. 19.8% of respondents claimed it was the lack of interest and knowledge in foreign affairs reporting and diplomacy. 16% considered foreign affairs reporting to be more challenging than other beats and cited this as the main reason for the low number of women in foreign affairs reporting. 15.1% of respondents shared that women are underrepresented in Nepali media, which leads to fewer women in foreign affairs reporting. 13.2% claimed that senior management does not trust women reporters in foreign affairs reporting, and 6.6% claimed that foreign affairs reporting requires tremendous effort, time, and dedication with the same payment as in other beat reporting. 2.8% believed that a lack of English language proficiency was to blame.



G. Interest in pursuing media career in foreign/security affairs reporting

The majority of respondents (85.6%) showed their interest in pursuing a media career in foreign and security affairs reporting, while 7.7% had no interest. 6.7% don't know whether they would like to pursue foreign affairs reporting.



H. How can the participation of women journalists in foreign/security affairs be improved?

51% of respondents believed that capacity building of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting is important, while 21.2% stressed the need for gender responsive media house policies to encourage more women journalists to cover foreign affairs reporting; 14.4% said that letting go of the mindset that foreign affairs is a beat that only men can cover is important; and 9.6% believed that developing personal interest in pursuing the foreign affairs beat is important.

Summary of the findings of online survey

- » Only **13.3%** were engaged in political beats, and **6.6%** were engaged in foreign affairs and security affairs reporting.
- » Only **2.9%** of respondents considered that women journalists have high status in foreign affairs and security reporting, while **24.3%** claimed it to be moderate, and **72.8%** believed that women journalists have lower status in foreign and security affairs reporting.
- » Regarding the reason for the low representation of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting, **23.6%** of surveyed respondents shared that gender stereotypes and gender biases, **19.8%** of respondents believed it was the lack of interest and knowledge in foreign affairs reporting and diplomacy, **16%** considered foreign affairs reporting to be more challenging than other beats, **15.1%** of respondents shared that women are underrepresented in Nepali media, which leads to fewer women in foreign affairs

reporting, **13.2%** claimed that senior management does not trust women reporters in foreign affairs reporting, and **6.6%** claimed that foreign affairs reporting requires tremendous effort, time, and dedication with the same payment as in other beat reporting. **2.8%** believed that a lack of English language proficiency leads to fewer women journalists in foreign affairs reporting.

- » **85.6%** of surveyed respondents showed interest in pursuing a career in foreign and secure affairs reporting, **7.7%** showed no interest, and **6.7%** were not sure whether they would further their career in foreign and secure affairs reporting.
- » On improving the participation of women journalists in foreign and security affairs reporting, **51.8%** of respondents believed that capacity building of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting is necessary, while **21.2%** stressed the need for gender responsive media house policies to encourage more women journalists to cover foreign affairs reporting; **14.4%** said that letting go of the stereotypical mindset that considers foreign affairs as a men's beat; and **9.6%** believed that women journalists should develop personal interest in pursuing the foreign affairs beat.

4.2 Focused Group Discussions

Foreign affairs reporting and security entail the coverage by journalists on international events, issues, the security agenda and relations between countries. It encompasses a wide range of topics, including diplomacy, trade, security, conflict, human rights, bilateral and multilateral relations, multinational projects, and global development. Foreign affairs reporting aims to provide accurate and in-depth information about issues, events and developments in the international arena and their impact on countries, communities, and individuals.

The goal of foreign affairs reporting is to provide the public with a better understanding of the world, and it can play an important role in shaping public opinion and informing foreign policy decisions.

Foreign affairs reporting is an important part of news and media coverage, as it provides crucial information and perspectives on the events, trends, and issues shaping the world. It helps to inform the public, increase understanding of the world, and promote greater global cooperation and understanding.

4.2.1 Respondent's opinion on Scope of Foreign Affairs reporting in Nepal

• *The scope of foreign affairs reporting in Nepal is limited*

The study examined how Nepali journalists perceive the scope of foreign affairs reporting in Nepal. Their perspectives on international affairs differ depending on which media organizations they are affiliated with. However, the majority of them believed that foreign affairs and security reporting is still an emerging beat, which at present is covered under the political reporting beat. This limits the scope of foreign affairs reporting in Nepal.

In Nepali media, foreign affair beat reporting is not established properly, it's in a nascent stage. There is only event-based reporting, which is restricted as an assignment. So the scope is rather limited. Foreign beat reporting need comparatively more study than other beats."

- A Senior Editor

Some believed that the scope is broad in Nepal, as Nepal is closely bordered by two giant countries that impact Nepal's socio-economic and political landscape. The media, however, is not set up to cover news about the geopolitics, diplomacy and international issues.

The scope of foreign affairs in Nepal is broad. It includes reporting related to borders, foreign affairs, trade, and international relations – the relationship of bread and daughter (roti beti ko sambanda). It is a complicated subject, so there is less reporting in this sector.

- A senior editor from the Terai region

Some respondents even argued that Nepali media has not been able to raise diplomacy-related and geopolitical concerns and has not been able to function as a watchdog for alarming the government with regard to diplomacy prospects and policy amendments for protecting the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity, independence, and dignity. Foreign affairs reporting is burgeoning and has much scope in Nepal.

Foreign affairs reporting is interesting and different from other beats. The scope of foreign affairs reporting is wide in Nepal. It is unfortunate that the media has not been able to raise many foreign affairs-related issues and has not been able to recommend to the government that it amend or formulate policies on foreign affairs."

- A Woman Journalist

Some respondents shared that the Nepali government is not able to exhibit strong diplomacy and negotiate with other countries, which results in fewer foreign affairs reports in Nepali media.

There are few reports on policy-level analysis related to the foreign ministry, challenges faced during negotiations, and other serious concerns. Even the Nepali government has not considered this issue seriously.

- A Senior Editor

The geographic proximity also matters in how that state covers foreign affairs. There are province-wise foreign affairs-related issues. It is difficult to cover all the issues. In the case of foreign affairs-related news, Kathmandu covers most of the news as all embassies are located in Kathmandu; after that, Pokhara covers most news on foreign affairs.

• **Reasons for the limited scope of foreign affairs reporting in Nepal**

The study further analyzed the reasons for the limited scope of foreign affairs reporting in Nepal, which is partly due to the country's political and economic situation and partly due to the situation of Nepali media.

i. Foreign affairs reporting in Nepal has not yet become a specialized beat

Several media outlets in Nepal do not assign reporters to specific beats; instead, they are expected to cover all news, whether it be in the social, cultural, economic, political, or other arenas. Thus, a distinct beat for foreign affairs has not been well established in many media houses in Nepal. Only a few have a separate beat for foreign affairs. Foreign affairs are frequently covered as part of political beat reporting, and journalists who cover political news are assigned the responsibility of covering news on diplomacy and international affairs, which primarily includes visits of high-level delegations, dignitaries, ambassadors, and news related to embassies.

ii. Lack of interest from media houses in covering foreign affairs news

The journalists even have less interest in covering news related to foreign affairs. Foreign affairs reporters get less work until they are given an investigative assignment on geopolitics or any foreign affairs-related concerns. Moreover, the management of media houses is less interested in this reporting beat. Reporting for the foreign beat goes beyond simply covering diplomatic missions. The majority of print and online media merely share the news already shared by the national news agencies, rather than having a separate journalist cover such news. A lack of advertising and fewer domestic readers could be reasons why media owners are not interested in establishing foreign affairs reporting as a distinct beat. There is limited international news coverage in Nepali media, with a focus on regional news and events rather than global issues.

Additionally, the Nepali media landscape is dominated by a small number of media organizations, and the ownership of many of these outlets is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or groups, which can limit the diversity of perspectives in foreign affairs reporting.

iii. Nepal's geo-political and economic situation

Nepal's geopolitical situation is indeed complex, and this complexity often makes reporting on the country's foreign affairs challenging. Nepal's location, which borders both China and India, has a significant impact on its geopolitical relationships and foreign policy. Reporters

Nepal's geopolitical situation is very complex, so it is difficult to separate whether the news is political or geopolitical news. It is difficult to comprehend, and it's complicated.”

- A Senior Journalist

need to have a sophisticated awareness of the complex dynamics of Nepal's relationship with China and India in order to situate the country's foreign policy decisions within the larger geopolitical framework of South Asia and beyond.

iv. Limited resources to support foreign affairs media coverage

Many media outlets in Nepal lack the infrastructure and resources needed to support thorough coverage of international affairs, including adequate funding and information access. However, there are several Nepali journalists who cover foreign affairs and security issues, and they are pivotal in providing the Nepali public with information and perspectives on foreign affairs topics.

• **Foreign affairs reporting is stereotypical, and there is no creativity or diversity in reporting**

Foreign affairs reporting can be challenging, as it requires specialized knowledge, access to sources and information, and the ability to navigate complex political, cultural, and linguistic barriers. However, it is also a rewarding field for journalists who are passionate about international affairs and want to make a meaningful impact on the world.

Foreign affairs reporting has been cliché. Foreign affairs reporting is, in a way, stereotypical, and there is no creativity or diversity in reporting. A pluralistic view should be ensured. As foreign affairs news, the Nepali media typically highlights the visits of ambassadors or appointments rather than how the appointment of a new ambassador might impact the diplomatic ties between two countries. There is hardly any analytical reporting.

- A Senior Editor

• **Need to include foreign migration issues under foreign affairs reporting**

During discussions, an important aspect of foreign beat reporting was brought up. Should foreign migration reporting be considered under foreign affairs reporting? The journalists shared that foreign labor migration issues should be included in the foreign affairs reporting beat. In today's globalized world, where people are increasingly migrating from one country to another owing to various reasons such as economic, political, or social factors, foreign migration could be an important aspect of foreign affairs reporting.

Migration issues are not considered foreign affairs issues, but they are related to the relationship between two countries—the country of origin and the destination country—so journalists have an important role to play in institutionalizing labor migration in Nepal.

- A Senior Editor

Foreign migration can have a significant impact on a country's foreign relations, particularly on immigration policy, border security, and international human rights. The socioeconomic dynamics of the country of origin and the destination countries are impacted by immigration. Including foreign migration-related issues in foreign affairs reporting can help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the global landscape and can assist policymakers in making informed decisions.

Foreign migration reporting is segregated from foreign affairs reporting. Therefore, the illegal imprisonment of Nepali workers in Gulf countries has been seen and presented as labor and migration issues rather than foreign affairs. There are hardly any Nepali reporters in foreign countries to report on their plights and cover in-depth stories of labour exploitation. There is a Kafala system in the Gulf countries where the owner confiscates the passport of the employer, which is still not resolved and could be dealt only through diplomacy efforts. In the case of the foreign labour issue, it should have been dealt by foreign affairs reporters, who would have evoked the political leaders to look into the situation more seriously.”

- A Senior Editor

• **Foreign affairs reporting is complex**

Foreign affairs reporting in Nepal typically focuses on regional issues, such as the country's relationship with its neighbors India and China, which encompass geopolitics, as well as broader international topics such as global politics, trade, diplomacy, security, and regional cooperation. It is a relatively underdeveloped field in the media sector, as the country has historically reporting on its internal political and economic development. However, in recent years, there has been an increased interest in foreign affairs as Nepal's relations with its neighbors, power nations, and the international community become increasingly important for its stability and prosperity.

4.2.2 The nature, types, and trends of news published concerning foreign affairs

The study also explored the nature, types, and trends of news published concerning foreign affairs in Nepali media. Foreign affairs issues are frequently raised in print media but less frequently covered online or on TV. The discussion of topics related to foreign affairs is limited to talk shows with diplomats. The media frequently reports on foreign dignitaries' visits, talks with government officials, diplomatic missions, and Nepal's involvement in summits and other international forums. Border disputes, trade agreements, and cultural exchanges are occasionally addressed. Nonetheless, there is a lack of in-depth analysis in the news coverage, and some news must be addressed diplomatically. Therefore, this kind of news does not significantly raise public awareness of Nepal's foreign policy or position. Following are some common categories and trends in Nepali news coverage of foreign affairs and security concerns:

- » News related to Nepal's bilateral relations with its neighboring countries—India and China—often receives significant coverage. These include coverage of diplomatic visits, meetings between government officials, and bilateral political, economic, or cultural issues, such as border disputes, trade agreements, or cultural exchanges.

- » News related to diplomatic activities, such as visits by foreign dignitaries or Nepal's participation in international summits or forums, is often covered in Nepali media.
- » News related to Nepal's relations with other countries and international organizations, such as the United Nations, also receives coverage.
- » Nepal's foreign affairs reporting also covers security-related issues, such as border disputes, cross-border terrorism, and defense cooperation with other countries. In the case of television media, there are only a few talk shows that discuss foreign affairs and security issues, but there are no separate beats as such.
- » Reporting on Nepal's involvement in several regional organizations, including the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and its efforts to promote regional cooperation, is an important area of foreign affairs reporting.
- » News related to foreign aid, including its allocation, distribution, and impact, also receives media coverage. Nepal is a recipient of significant foreign aid from international organizations and donor countries. For example, the issues involving the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) agreement between the USA and Nepal's government hit the media headlines due to political and public differences. In terms of trends, there has been a growing interest in Nepal's relations with China, particularly in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- » Since a significant number of Nepalese migrate as migrant workers, news related to migration and related issues such as remittances, labor rights, and migration policies also receives coverage. But, these issues are not covered as foreign affairs issues as such.

4.2.3 Women journalists covering foreign affairs in Nepal

The study also explored the allocation of news beats among journalists and looked into the reasons for the underrepresentation of women journalists in foreign affairs and security beats.

• How are reporting beats assigned to journalists in Nepal?

It is observed that there are no specific criteria for the allocation of news beats among journalists in Nepali media, and it generally depends on the requirements of the media house and the interests of the journalists. As beginners, the journalists merely report on whatever is assigned to them. After a while, when a journalist becomes interested in a certain subject or beat, they approach the editors with their request. On the basis of their qualifications and interests, journalists may occasionally be assigned to specific beats. In some cases, journalists are assigned to particular beats based on their qualifications and interests.

• Gender biases exist when allocating beats to male and women journalists

Gender biases still exist when allocating beats to male and women journalists. Compared to male journalists, women journalists are typically expected to cover soft beats and are not primarily given political and foreign affairs beat reporting.

• Representation of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting

The overall representation of women in the media is lower, and they are underrepresented in leadership positions and in coverage of certain subjects, including foreign affairs. According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), the women members are 2,408 out of a total 13,077 which is 18.41 %. Therefore, the situation of women journalists covering foreign affairs in Nepal

is similar to that of other women journalists. The online survey (with 500 respondents) showed that less than 6% of women journalists are reporting in foreign affairs.

With a limited scope of foreign affairs reporting in Nepal, irrespective of gender, both male and female journalists are underrepresented. However, the media is still dominated by male journalists in foreign affairs and security reporting.

• **Reasons for the underrepresentation of women journalists in the Nepali media**

The underrepresentation of women journalists covering foreign issues in the media can be attributed to the following reasons:

1. Foreign affairs as an emerging beat

Foreign affairs reporting in Nepali media is still in its infancy and has not been able to attract reporters. The reporters usually write articles when they are invited by embassies or celebrating some country's national day. Usually, they do not have much to write on a daily basis. However, there is so much that the reporters can explore and write about, including diplomatic missions, the diplomacy of neighboring countries, geopolitics, and more. There is so much the media house and media personnel can do to explore foreign diplomacy related issues, but there is a lack of investigative journalism related to foreign affairs in Nepal.

Need to widen the scope of foreign affairs reporting

Not only are women journalists underrepresented, but the number of male journalists covering foreign affairs and security is also low. Its scope is limited to diplomatic debates online, on TV, and in radio programs where issues are not analyzed in depth. There is less attraction for Nepali journalists to cover foreign affairs.

There are few reports on policy-level analysis related to the foreign ministry, challenges faced during negotiations, and other serious concerns. Even the Nepali government has not considered this issue seriously.

- A Senior Editor

2. Gender bias and discrimination

Gender or women in the media is taken as tokenism as in other sectors. Gender bias, gender stereotypes, and discrimination still prevail in the newsroom. Women journalists are given "soft beats," while those beats that are considered "powerful" and "hard," such as the economy, politics, and foreign affairs, are given to men.

The journalists shared that, still, the editors and owners of media houses question the capabilities of women journalists. Media houses are not women-friendly. Most editors do not believe that women reporters can do certain assignments, and because of this prior sexist mentality, women journalists get less work. Media houses have not been able to unlock the potential and utilize the capacity of their women journalists. Women journalists have to prove themselves at each step. One of the Women journalists even shared that young male journalists are trusted more than women journalists with several years of experience.

There is nothing women reporters cannot do, it's a matter of opportunity and trust

- A Senior Women Journalist

Such biased and unfair treatment demotivates women journalists, which leads them to leave the media sector and work in other sectors. Over the years, due to persistent gender biases, women journalists have left the profession.

There is a biased mentality. In order to motivate young women journalists, an idol like Sushila Karki in legal field, should be there. There is gender discrimination in media. Women journalists are ridiculed, and the attitudinal gender discrimination that can only be felt by women journalists.

- A Senior Woman Journalist

One of the female respondents highlighted the gender biases and unfair treatment in media houses. The lack of gender-responsive policy and no discussion of gender equality concerns in media houses despite media reports for gender equality advocacy. It is ironic that while media is considered a tool for bringing awareness to gender equality, the media houses are not gender-friendly in the newsroom. If only media houses were gender-sensitive and started to practice what they preached, a lot of women would have been encouraged to join and continue in the media sector.

There is no gender policy at media houses. There is gender bias in reporting. Why there is no discussion on gender policy making and encourage women journalists in leadership roles.

- A Senior Woman Journalist

Not only these, but some women journalists shared that women do not want to come out and break the societal barrier.

At the beginning, I realized why there were fewer women journalists covering foreign affairs issues, as it was mostly gripped by male reporters, who had been reporting for 10–15 years in foreign affairs and had developed a syndicate. So, for women reporters, it's difficult to understand and get information at the beginning. Now, I am used to most of the codes that the male reporters use.

- A Woman Journalist

Foreign affairs reporting is male dominated

One of the women reporters shared that foreign affairs reporting is male-dominated and had developed a syndicate, due to which many women journalists fail to continue.



At the beginning, it was difficult to understand the language of foreign affairs, and it was dominated by male reporters who had been reporting for 10–15 years in foreign affairs. A syndicate has been formed by these men. As a woman reporter, it was difficult to understand and get information at the beginning. Now, I am accustomed to the majority of the terms and codes used by them.

- A Woman Journalist



3. Stereotypical perceptions about women journalists' abilities and interests

The interest of women journalists in reporting foreign affairs makes it extremely important to have more women journalists in political and foreign affairs reporting. All women journalists who have been reporting on foreign affairs shared that it was initially their interest in political and foreign affairs reporting that paved their way forward in this sector. Subsequently, they developed their capacity and gained experience.

One of the women journalists shared that she did not like it when women journalists just covered social and women's issues. She always questioned why women were assigned to report on sentimental and heartbreaking social issues. She was usually attentive during discussions on national and international politics in official meetings. Soon, she realized that having knowledge of international affairs would be advantageous to a journalist. With her good command of English and translation work, she then asked her employer to assign her the foreign affairs beat. She began by reporting on national security. When she revealed to others that she covered news about national security concerns, she felt different.

Some editors have claimed that women journalists are not interested in political reporting. One of the editors shared that their media house is looking for women journalists to cover political reporting, but they have not been able to find any. In such cases, they are obliged to assign a male journalist to do the political reporting. Nonetheless, the majority of women journalists stated that editors and senior management do not trust women to report on political and international affairs. Gender stereotypes lead to the presumption that women are unsuited to reporting on politics and other difficult news beats.

Along with the interest, the continuity of women journalists in the media sector also matters. Most potential women journalists with competency in the English language join the development sector (INGO/NGO) later, which pays better. They enter the media sector and even flourish there due to their language skills, but after forming good relationships with INGOs or UN agencies, they leave the sector. This is also a huge loss for the media sector in Nepal. This is due to professional insecurity in the media sector.

In order to encourage more women reporting on foreign affairs, there should be a change in the gender-biased perception of decision-makers, editors, and media owners of the media houses. Most media houses lack awareness that the equal participation of women journalists is inevitable in covering hard-hitting reporting, including political and foreign affairs reports.

4. Perception about Foreign affairs reporting

Foreign affairs reporting is sensitive. Most respondents assumed that foreign affairs being a very sensitive and risky issue, women journalists do not want to take a risk and do not join as it could jeopardize not only diplomatic relationships between countries but also tarnish their personal lives.

Foreign affairs reporting entails very sensitive issues, so reporters should be knowledgeable about the issue.

- A Senior Editor

However, discussion with women journalists who have been covering other social and health issues claimed that all issues are equally sensitive and risky. One of the senior women journalists covering the health beat shared that she covered news during COVID-19, which was quite sensitive, and that the interchangeable use of some words such as ventilator and ventilation during COVID caused havoc in the past. In terms of security, the journalism sector is a very risky job. One should come out of their biased mentality.

All beats have their own importance; all are sensitive issues, so no beat is more important or challenging than another. We have to change our mentality and hold this kind of discussion from time to time.

- A Senior Woman Journalist

Foreign affairs reporting is risky. Some reporters who cover border-related issues receive threats and are even assaulted for covering the news. They even have to cross the border or sometimes stay in the field, jeopardizing their lives. So many women journalists do not want to risk their lives.

In cases of security concerns, it was very risky to cover reports during the Maoist insurgency. Covering news about conflict victims was very risky.

While covering news and reporting on many social issues, and holding talk shows, I have reported on violations of human rights and legal issues during the transition phase of Nepal. In my 15–16-year career as a radio talk show host, I have covered news on human trafficking, during which I have faced many threats.”

A Senior Woman Journalist

What difference can women journalists make in political reporting? Do you think meaningful engagement by women makes a difference in the reporting style of foreign affairs?

Foreign affairs deals with foreign policies and international relations, where the gender of reporters should make no difference. However, the analysis of the news would have been different based on sex. The representation of more women journalists on the foreign affairs beat would improve the analysis of foreign affairs and diplomacy issues from a gender perspective. The male journalists would analyze the issue from a hard perspective, focusing on political impacts, while the female journalists would analyze the soft part and focus on societal impacts.

For instance, while covering geopolitical issues such as border issues—Nepal shares close sociocultural and economic ties with India and China—the perspectives of male and female journalists may differ. The perspective of the story may change depending on the gender of the reporter if the border issue affects women and children. The emotional issues and problems could be dealt with differently. Women would report from a sympathetic and empathic viewpoint. But that is not how the news report ought to be. Regardless of gender, each person has a different capacity, so their reporting style may vary.

Women's foreign migration and security concerns need to be analyzed from a gender perspective. Having more women journalists would analyze these issues and might report differently.

- A Senior Editor

Stories about women who are returnee migrants and their success stories are also important. Migration issues are not considered foreign affairs issues, but they are related to the relationship between two countries—the country of origin and the destination country—so journalists have an important role to play in labor migration.

There are news coverage of male ambassadors only and few reports on female ambassadors. In the case of women ambassadors, there is biased news that highlights only negative news.

- A Woman Journalist

The representation of more women journalists on the foreign affairs beat would improve the analysis of foreign affairs and diplomacy issues from a gender perspective. The male journalists would analyze the issue from a hard perspective, focusing on political impacts, while the female journalists would analyze the soft part and focus on societal impacts.

4.3 Case studies

Case studies of women journalists who have been working in foreign affairs beat reporting were documented after an in-depth interview.

Women journalists need to constantly prove their capabilities more than men

Sama Thapa

Associate Editor, AP 1 Television

“I've been working as a journalist since 2007 A.D. While doing radio journalism from Chitwan, I used to report on all subjects, but after coming to Kathmandu, I made the English language my priority. I've previously hosted interactive English programs on Kantipur Television, and I'm currently doing the same on AP1 Television. Currently, I oversee a program that covers international and diplomatic affairs. Speaking with diplomats, participating in discussion programs with UN representatives or representatives of INGOs, and reporting on events hosted by various embassies are all that we mean by the term "foreign affairs." Basically, my interest in English made me look at foreign affairs reporting.



Over the years, one of the challenges I faced working in the foreign affairs field was the gender-biased perception of men toward women. Still, there is debate over what women can do among media organizations and other relevant stakeholders. Women journalists working in this field must prove themselves time and time again. If a small mistake is made, it is said that what a woman could do is a mistake. A woman is not as free to make a mistake as a man.

However, there are also opportunities for women journalists to work in foreign affairs. The biggest opportunity is being able to establish good networking and public relations. Expanding relations with representatives of different countries makes a difference in the perspective and knowledge of the subject matter. You can be aware of what is happening in the world. Foreign affairs are part of mainstream journalism. I believe more women journalists should work in the Foreign Affairs and Security department to demonstrate that women journalists are equally capable of doing the same work.”

There are no trainings focusing on foreign affairs

Shivani Thapa Basnyat

Senior News Editor, Nepal Television

“I have been working in television media for the past 18 years. When I entered journalism, I believed everyone should report on every beat. There was no specific beat. Since I work in English, I used to cover news reporting when there were visits by foreign politicians and officials from different countries. That’s how I entered foreign affairs reporting. Later, I continued this.



As a foreign affairs reporter, it is not enough to be updated about what is happening in your own country; you also have to be informed about the politics of different countries and the politics and conflicts of different countries. I had to understand; I had to be updated on the latest developments in global affairs. It is important to understand not only politics but also geopolitics. It is an area that requires hard work and dedication but has less scope. You get work when there is a high-level visit, and I would link other issues to foreign affairs at other times. Even though we work in foreign affairs reporting, journalists are rarely included in state-level foreign visits.

There is no specific training aimed at those who want to work in this field, which is very necessary. We learned by doing, but it is better if those who would like to join come prepared. They should know what the foreign issues are with our country. There is not even a discussion among media workers about it. It is necessary to have a media debate on such matters. The main opportunity in foreign affairs reporting is truly going global. Because of the English language, the message you want to send can be delivered all over the world. Nepali. It is a good opportunity for foreign affairs journalists to keep informed about global affairs. Extension of relationships with people in related areas and acquisition of subject knowledge should also be taken as an opportunity.”

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion of the Study

Foreign affairs reporting in the Nepali media is still in its infancy, and it is unable to cater to the wider scope of foreign affairs reporting. Moreover, foreign affairs are complicated due to Nepal's geopolitical location and its complex socioeconomic and political connections with foreign countries.

In Nepal, there is no distinct reporting beat for covering foreign affairs in most media houses. Media outlets also show little interest in covering foreign affairs topics; this could be due to a lack of specialized knowledge and expertise, a lack of resources and access to information sources to assist their coverage of international issues. Further, Nepal's geo-political and economic issues also make foreign affairs and security issues related to reporting in Nepal complicated.

Though foreign affairs reporting is interesting and different from other beat reporting, it is unfortunate that the media has not been able to raise issues related to foreign and security affairs and has not been able to provide timely recommendations to make necessary changes to the government's foreign affairs policies.

The study found that women journalists are underrepresented in foreign affairs reporting, but also that the representation of male journalists is lower. The underrepresentation of women journalists in foreign and security affairs reporting is due to the lack of a gender policy at media organizations, which results in gender-based discrimination and bias against women. The foreign affairs beat is further dominated by male journalists. The stereotypes about the interests and abilities of women journalists also restrict women's participation in foreign affairs and diplomacy-related reporting.

Overall, foreign affairs reporting in Nepal is an emerging field with significant potential to contribute to the country's understanding of its place in the world and its role in the international community. The meaningful participation and engagement of women journalists are crucial to the development of this field.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendations to encourage the participation of women journalists in covering international politics and foreign and security affairs

The respondents have offered their recommendations for ways to enhance and encourage the engagement of women journalists in reporting foreign affairs, and security issues, and international politics. These are as follows:

1. **Foreign affairs and security reporting beat should be strengthened and expanded in mainstream media houses:** This would widen the scope of foreign affairs reporting. It is important to diversify the understanding of foreign affairs reporting inside the newsroom and expand its scope from being confined to only some issues of some specific countries.
2. **Capacity building for women journalists:** The capacity and skill building are essential parts of increasing participation in any field. Therefore, there is need for capacity building among women journalists to enhance their knowledge and skills in foreign affairs reporting as well as their confidence to take and continue in this specific field.

In order to improve the capacity, following measures can be applied:

- i. **Training programs:** Journalists and reporters should be trained on covering a wide range of topics under the foreign affairs, diplomacy and national security. There should be series of capacity building trainings for women journalists on reporting in this beat starting from the basics of foreign affairs and security reporting to the advanced diplomatic analytical skills. Provincial level trainings as well as high level diplomatic content trainings can be organized. The media needs to prioritize empowering the women journalists located in border districts such as Sindupalchowk, Rasuwa, and Terai, who have the potential to cover foreign affairs and security-related issues.
- ii. **Mentorship:** Provide mentorship programs that link experienced journalists with younger, less experienced women journalists. Mentors can support their mentees in developing their skills and building confidence by providing guidance, encouragement, and feedback.
- iii. **Motivation for women journalists:** Women journalists have an interest in reporting on foreign affairs, but they cannot flourish without any kind of motivation. The media sector in Nepal generally lacks motivation among journalists, especially women journalists. Many women journalists leave the media sector after a few years due to demotivation in this field. Hence, the media organizations shall devise mechanisms for motivating women journalists.
- iv. **Orientation programs:** Regular orientation programs on foreign and security issues are essential for women journalists to enrich their reporting. They can better understand the scenario if provided with context, information, expert perspectives, and relevant briefings and enhance their knowledge and produce more accurate contents.
- v. **Experience-sharing forums:** Experience-sharing workshops that bring together journalists of diverse backgrounds and levels of seniority can provide opportunities for knowledge exchange and idea-sharing. These workshops can create a forum where journalists can discuss their experiences, challenges, and innovative reporting ideas while also learning from each other. This can also enhance inclusivity and collaboration among journalists all over the country.

Foreign affairs beat reporting should be established. The journalists and reporters should be trained on covering foreign affairs, in which they should have an interest. Even though they have an interest, they might not have pursued foreign affairs reporting due to a lack of confidence. So, the necessary environment or training opportunities for interested journalists must be provided.

- A Senior Editor

- 3. Formulation of a gender-responsive media policy:** The media houses should develop a gender-responsive media policy to ensure equal participation and representation of women in the media. The policy should encourage media organizations to have a gender-balanced workforce, including in leadership positions, and to actively recruit and promote women in all reporting beats.

Annexes

Annex 1: Questionnaire Form_ Google Form

Name of the respondent:

District:

Province:

1. Years of working experience in Journalism:

- Less than one year
- 1-3 years
- 4-8 years
- 9-12 years
- 13-15 years
- More than 15 years

2. Media affiliation:

- Print-Newspaper
- TV
- Radio
- Online
- Others (please specify)
- All

3. Beat of reporting:

- Political
- Foreign Affairs/ Security Affairs
- Social
- Gender/Women
- Economic
- Health
- Environment
- Entertainment
- Sports
- Visual story telling
- All
- Law and Human Rights

4. **What is the status of women journalists' participation in foreign/security affairs reporting?**
 - High
 - Moderate
 - Less

5. **If moderate/less, why do you think there are less women journalists in foreign/security affairs reporting?**
 - Underrepresentation of women journalists in Nepali media
 - Gender stereotyping and gender biases exist in media
 - Senior management does not trust women reporters in foreign affairs reporting.
 - Foreign affairs reporting is more challenging than other beats
 - Lack of interest and knowledge in foreign affairs and diplomacy
 - Lack of English language proficiency
 - Foreign affairs reporting requires tremendous effort, time and dedication with the same payment as in other beat reporting.
 - Others (please specify)....

6. **Are you interested in pursuing your media career in foreign/security affairs reporting?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know

7. **How can the participation of women journalists in foreign/security affairs be improved?**
 - Capacity building of women journalists in foreign affairs reporting
 - Letting go of the mindset that foreign affairs is a beat that only men can cover
 - Media house policies that encourage women journalists to cover foreign affairs
 - Developing personal interest in pursuing foreign affairs beat
 - Others (Please Specify).....

Annex 2: Questionnaire_ Focused Group Discussions

FGD questions for editors

1. Could you please share what foreign affairs reporting in Nepali media entails? What is its scope in Nepal?
2. How do you describe the situation for women journalists covering foreign issues in Nepal? Are there enough women journalists covering foreign affairs and security issues in Nepal? If not, why not?
3. Do you think more women should join the foreign affairs and international politics beat? If yes, why?
4. How women's engagement in political reporting, both national and international, can change the media landscape? Do you think meaningful engagement by women journalists makes a difference in the reporting style of foreign affairs? How?
5. What can be done to enhance and encourage the participation of more women journalists in foreign affairs and security reporting? What recommendations do you have?

FGD questions for women journalists covering foreign affairs reporting

1. Could you please share how you got into foreign affairs reporting? Were you interested from the beginning? Why did you join the Foreign Affairs and International Politics beat?
2. Since you have been covering foreign affairs reports and news, what do you think is the scope of foreign affairs reporting in Nepal?
3. How do you describe the situation for women journalists covering foreign affairs and security issues in Nepal? Are there enough women journalists covering foreign issues in Nepal? If not, why not?
4. What challenges have you faced or have been facing while being foreign affairs reporters in Nepal?
5. Have you faced any difficulties being a woman journalist? Could you please share your personal experience?
6. How women's engagement in political reporting can change the media landscape Do you think meaningful engagement by women journalists makes a difference in the reporting style of foreign affairs? How?
7. Do you think more women should join the foreign affairs and international politics beat? Why do you think so?
8. What are the qualities, skills, and knowledge that women journalists (or any journalists) should have to be able to report on foreign affairs and international diplomacy?
9. What can be done to enhance and encourage the participation of more women journalists in covering foreign affairs reporting? What recommendations do you have?

Annex 3: Details of Focused Group Discussions(FGDs)

1. FGD with editors and journalists held at the MAG office on November 28, 2022

S.N	Name	Gender	Media Affiliation
1	Basant Khadka	M	Nagarik Daily
2	Ashim Neupane	M	Nepal Live Today
3	Kalika Khadka	F	RSS (National News Agency)
4	Saraswatee Karmacharya	F	Nepal Samachar Patra
5	Siromani Dhungana	M	Nepal Live Today

2. FGD with women journalists covering foreign affairs held at the MAG office on December 30, 2022

S.N	Name	Gender	Media Affiliation
1	Sunita Lohani	F	12 Khari.com
2	Radha Khanal	F	Annapurna Post

3. FGD with chief editors and senior journalists held virtually (zoom) on January 3, 2023

S.N	Name	Gender	Media Affiliation
1	Dr. Mahendra Bista	M	Image Channel
2	Guna Raj Luitel	M	Nagarik Daily
3	Akhanda Bandari	M	Annapurna Post
4	Urbasi Basnyat	F	Radio Sagarmatha

4. FGD with women journalists held virtually (zoom) on January 4, 2023

S.N	Name	Gender	Media Affiliation
1	Kalpana Acharya	F	Health TV Online
2	Kamala Panthi	F	Kantipur Radio
3	Sushma Baraili	F	Kathmandu Press

5. FGD with chief editors held virtually (zoom) on January 4, 2023

S.N	Name	Gender	Media Affiliation
1	Mohan Kaji	M	Loktantra Post, Jhapa
2	Bharat Koirala	M	Adarsha Samaj, Pokhara
3	Brij Kumar Yadav	M	BBC Nepali Sewa, Janakpur Today

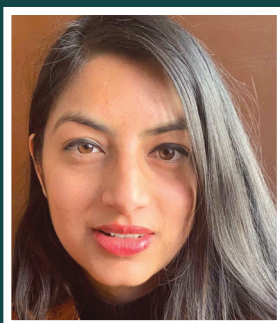
RESEARCH TEAM'S PROFILE



SUSHIMITA LAMA has over 10 years of progressive experience working in Nepal's development sector, with an emphasis on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), women's empowerment, and the human rights of marginalized communities. She has worked on GESI-related research and capacity building for girls and women on women's rights, policy advocacy, and human rights concerns of marginalized communities. She is a firm believer in social transformation through inclusion and equality, and she is keen to learn new ways to apply feminist theory to practice. She has a Master's degree in Social Science from Tribhuvan University (TU) and is currently pursuing an MPhil in Gender Studies from TU, Nepal.



BABITA BASNET has been actively engaged in journalism for over two decades. She has made significant contributions to drafting of various media policies and laws and her work has been particularly important in advancing gender equality, media freedom, right to information, and freedom of expression. She had abundant experience in writing and editing on a wide range of topics related to women and media, and has published case studies, books, training manuals, and research publications. In addition to her journalistic work, Basnet is also a writer of literary fiction, with a story collection called 'Sambandhahin Sambandha haru' and a travel memoir titled 'Samaya Sakshi'.



NISHU RATNA BASTAKOTI has been working in the media and development sector for five years, mainly focusing on projects related to gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion. She has collaborated with the Media Advocacy Group (MAG) to conduct media monitoring on political coverage of women politicians and harmful practices against women. Currently, she is pursuing a Master's degree in Crisis Management Studies with a specialization in Foreign Affairs and National Security at Tribhuvan University. She has previously worked with various national and international organizations and research institutions on different projects, and has extensive research experience. Her most recent research project is titled "Study of Impacts of Online Violence on Women Journalists."



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