

**Media Advocacy Group (MAG)  
Annual Report  
FY-077/078 (2020/2021)**



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**Abbreviations:**

MAG: Media Advocacy Group

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

INGOs: International Non- governmental Organizations

GESI: Gender and Social Inclusion

RTI: Right to Information

UNSCR: United Nations Security Council Resolution

ToT: Training of Trainers

FES: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

SAWF: South Asian Women's Fund

UNDP: United Nation Development Program

PSP: Parliament Support Program

FHI 360: Family Health International 360

SMJT Nepal: Samjhauta Nepal

CS: MAP: Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project

MPCC: Multipurpose Community Center

NFN: NGO Federation Nepal

FNJ: Federation of Nepalese Journalists

PSA: Public Service Announcement

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

EU: European Union

FCA: Finn Church Aid

NNDSWO: Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization

GESI: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

DRRM: Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

WFDM: Women Friendly Disaster Management

PWDs: People with Disability/ Disabilities

### **Organization Background:**

MAG is a Not-for-Profit Organization established in 2008 by a group of experts in the domain of media, advocacy and management. It has been particularly established to help support the endeavors to maintain democracy and freedom to exercise the rights of all the people. It has been extensively working for the rights of the women and the people from the socially excluded groups. Besides, it has been reviewing the existing laws and policies through the gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) perspectives and makes lobby to the concerned policymakers for the policy change. In addition, it also works to improve the confidence of the CSOs and Media towards each other and also works for the promotion of Safer Migration and Right to Information. After the Massive Earthquake of April 2015 in Nepal, it has been working in the Disaster and Post-Disaster period as a member of WFDM, a loose network of Women led Non-profit organizations that lobby for the incorporation of GEEW agenda in the DRR and Disaster Preparedness Effort of Nepal.

The target groups of MAG are the Parliamentarians and the policy makers related to women; information and communication, media persons, grass root communities with focus to marginalized group such as women, and socially excluded groups.

To meet its mission and vision, MAG organizes policy dialogue and interactions with the Honorable Parliamentarians, Policymakers, CSO leaders and media persons; review the existing laws and policies through gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) perspectives for the policy gap and recommend for the policy change. It organizes workshops, seminars, capacity enhancement training ,orientations and for the capacity building of journalist and target audience on contemporary issues such as Gender Equality and Social Inclusion; Gender based violence, Adolescent issues, Civic education, right to information, safer migration, UN security council resolution 1325, 1820 etc. Above than this, MAG has been organizing media campaigns on above issues for broader dissemination and awareness creation from grass root level to policy makers.

Most importantly, MAG was involved as core consulting member for finalization of Five years strategic plan of National Information Commission, which is related to implementation of right to information. MAG also conducts research and study wherever relevant and publishes the findings for dissemination. The organization promotes publications on various issues related to women and gives priority to women's articles through newsletters, feature publications, books, etc. It has a strong network of journalists in all the strategic locations of the country.

### **Legal Status:**

Status of NGO	National NGO
Legal Status	Registered as Non-profit social welfare organization according to Nepalese act 1977.
District Administration Office (Kathmandu district) Registered No.	997 (2008 A.D)
Social Welfare Council Registered No.	25010
Permanent Account Number (PAN):	303094184

Organization's financial auditing system	MAG carries out its financial audit annually through registered auditor and report submits to Tax office and District Administrative Office.
Contact	P.O.Box: 897, Thapathali Height-Kathmandu  Tel:+977-01-4229440 Fax:+977-01-4229440 Email: <a href="mailto:maggroup08@gmail.com">maggroup08@gmail.com</a>
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**Vision:**

A well-informed and empowered society where every individual can take equal benefit of democracy and can feel proud to be a citizen

**Mission:**

Advocate on prominent issues related to Gender, Media, Women, Migration, Democracy, Peace & security through Right to Information (RTI)

**Goal:**

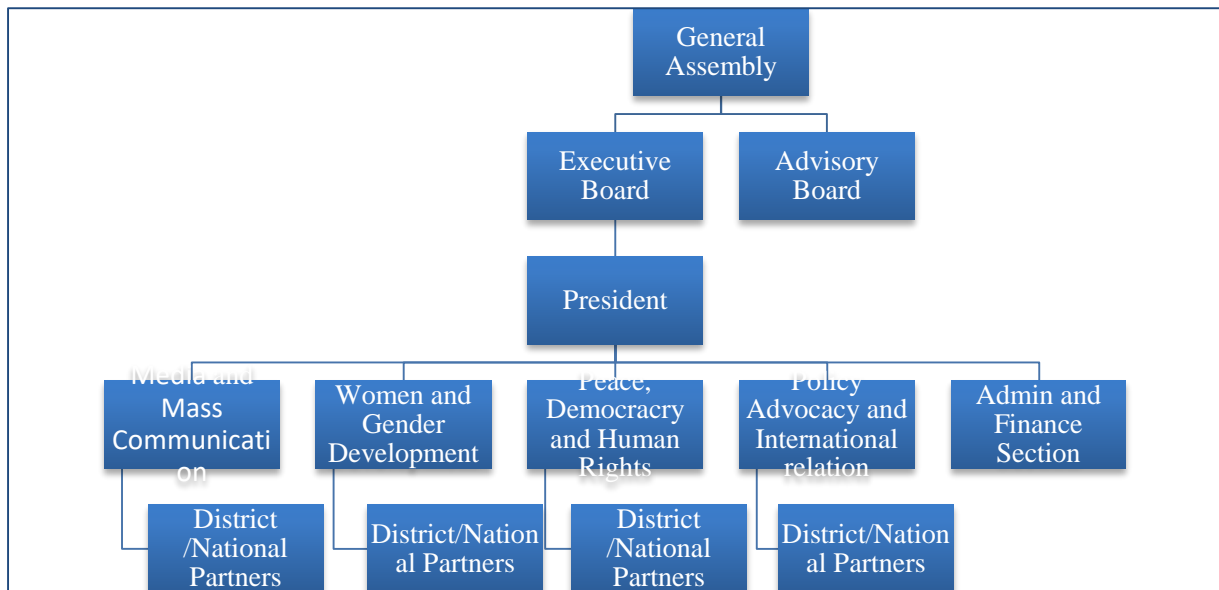
Create well informed, peaceful and gender equal society

**Objective of the Organization:**

- To advocate issues related to Gender, Media and Access to Information
- To advocate on issues of women and marginalize group through the media.
- To advocate on right to information (RTI) and international instruments in relation to women issues such as Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 & 1820 for strengthening democracy.
- To advocate and lobby for effective implementation of national laws policies and action plans related to women
- To advocate for safe migration
- To bridge the gap between media and civil society
- Provide management services to development program implementation

**Organizational Structure:**

The organization consists of a seven-member Executive Committee comprising professionals from media and development sector. MAG is led by woman having expertise in media, mass communication, gender development and right to information. The organization has also a three member Advisory Committee to provide necessary guidance to achieve organization's Vision, Mission, and Goal and longer term strategic plan.



### Networking and Partners

MAG has good relationship with various national and regional/international networks working in the area of women and gender equality, information and media.

### Networking

- Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ)
- Online Journalists Association Nepal (OJAN)
- Global Network of Women Peace Builders (GNWP)
- Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG)
- Working Committee of the Shadow Report Preparation of CEDAW in Nepal
- National Network for Beijing Review in Nepal
- National Network on Gender and Climate Change
- National Network Against Domestic Violence
- National Network for Safe Migration(NNSM)
- 1325/1820 Action Group
- SancharikaSamuha

### International/UN Partner Organizations:

- UN Women
- UNESCO
- UNDP/ (PSP)
- USAID FHI360
- EU
- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)
- Geneva Global
- South Asian Women's Fund (SAWF)

- Centre for International Studies (CECI)
- HELVITAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal
- NDI (National Democratic Institute)
- WWF Nepal

#### **Government Alliances:**

- Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare
- Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction
- Ministry of Labor and Foreign Employment
- Ministry of Information and Communication
- Information Department
- Social Welfare Council
- Controller Office of Certification
- National Women Commission
- National Information Commission
- District Coordination Committee

### **3. Program Details**

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#### **A. European Union supported Program**

**Title:** Supporting Collective Voice and action against Caste-Based Discrimination in Nepal-SAJHA AAWAJ

**Consortium Partners:** Fin Church Aid (FCA), Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NNDSWO)

**Duration:** November 2017-Dec 2020

**Target District:** Mahottari, Siraha, Surkhet, Jajarkot & Kalikot

#### **Project Brief:**

Dalits in Nepal are historically state victimized disadvantaged communities who have been compelled to lag at the bottom of the social structure and excluded from national development mainstream due to the Hindu caste system. According to the government's figures, Dalits comprise 13.2 percent of Nepal's total population. Caste Based Discrimination (CBD) is not only denial of equality and freedom but also isolation of basic human rights. CBD affected people have to face prohibition and discrimination in every aspect of their lives from labor to civic amenities. The physical and psychosocial violence is a major threat for their human rights and freedom. The limited support system at societal and institution level, makes their access to justice difficult and constitutes grounds for vulnerability, poverty and exclusion from public life.

The project is thus designed to combat CBD, a pressing human rights and governance challenge in Nepal. Under the overall funding support of European Commission, and the Memorandum



of Understanding (MOU) with Nepal National Dalit Solidarity Welfare Organization (NNDSWO), Media Advocacy Group (MAG) is going to implement the project through media advocacy in the five districts; Surkhet, Kalikot and Jajarkot situated in province-6 represent the issues of Hill Dalits and Mahottari and siraha situated in province -2 represent the issues of Terai Dalits. The overall objective of the action is to contribute to the elimination of caste-based discrimination (CBD) and promotion of human rights of all Dalits and non-Dalits people.

Media advocacy is one of the crucial components in combating the fight against CBD and untouchability. In 2019, MAG has initiated the following activities:

- i) Supported the local journalists to support and cover news and articles that are more accurate, in-depth and evidence-based grassroots CBD issues.
- ii) Mobilized the local media including community radio, print, online and electronic media, and social media to create enabling environment at grass root level among Dalits and non-Dalits, by disseminating relevant information through TV PSAs and radio jingles, and creating mass public awareness through radio programs and news articles based on CBD, thereby, contributing in bringing a positive social change.
- iii) Conducted media dialogue program with policymakers, Dalits and human rights activists to promote public debate on the current status of Landless Dalits to make necessary changes in laws and policies, thereby supporting in advocacy endeavors that facilitate placing CBD issues on national agenda.

### **Activity 1. Airing of PSA and Radio Jingles**

Under this activity, MAG had developed 5 video PSAs and 10 different radio jingles (5 in Nepali language and 5 translated in Maithili language) covering the diversity of CBD issues around the area of access to services, justice, implementation of national and international legal frameworks and issues faced by CBD affected people in social life. In this reporting period, these TV PSAs were broadcasted 285 times through national TV stations (namely Nepal TV, Kantipur TV and News 24) while radio jingles were aired 7,552 times through radio partners across the project implementing districts. Though MAG has already reached the target, MAG had continued the airing of PSA and radio jingles to create community awareness of caste-based discrimination and untouchability.

### **Activity 2. Development and Airing of Radio Program**

As part of media advocacy, MAG in coordination with radio partners have developed and aired SAJHA AAWAJ radio program in partnership with local community radios. In this reporting period, 70 radio episodes were developed and aired by radio partners. The project team and radio partners jointly determine the theme of radio program after analyzing the needs and situations of local Dalit communities.

During the lockdown, radio programs were successful in creating awareness on Covid-19, providing updates on the local situation, the effect of lockdown on the livelihood of the Dalit communities in

particular daily wage workers, Dalit women headed household and Dalit women, slum dwellers, relief distribution process and transparency, Dalit's access to relief materials and so on. Additionally, the radio programs also raised and discussed various Dalit related issues such as Caste-based discrimination and Untouchability, follow-up on UPR recommendation on Dalit and its implementation status, allocation of the local budget and resources for Dalits, Dalit representative at local levels, Dalit's access to justice, services, information, opportunities and employment and implementation of the CBD act at the local level. The radio programs also include interviews with local government representatives, questioning their roles and responsibilities and hold them accountable for immediate supports, took their commitment to resolve the CBD issues and convincing them to prioritize Dalit issues in their developmental agenda. In this way, the radio program has provided a common platform for Dalit and Non-Dalits to address the agenda of CBD and Untouchability jointly.

Table: The themes of the radio programs have been categorized as follows:

S.N	Theme	No. of episodes
1	COVID-19 awareness, updates on current situation, effect of lockdown on livelihood of Dalit community in particular daily wage workers, Dalit women headed household and Dalit women, slum dwellers, relief distribution process and transparency, Dalit's access to relief materials and so on.	29
2	Caste based Discrimination and Untouchability and Access to Justice	9
3	Implementation of CBD Act at the local level	8
4	Right to Education of Dalit students	1
5	Access to Land and Natural Resource and Extreme Poverty	5
6	Livelihood and Employment of Dalits	1
7	Right to Budgetary Allocations and Access to Resources of Dalits	5
8	Right to Participation and Representation of Dalits	3
9	Issue of Dalit Women, children, senior citizens and PWDs of Dalit Community	3
11	UPR recommendation on Dalit and its implementation status	5
12	Dalit Rights	3
13	Dalit empowerment bill	1
14	Baligahre pratha- traditional barter system prevalent in Karnali Province	1
		74

Radio programs were effective in changing people's perspective about the CBDU. Some of the anecdotes from the radio listeners that reflect the usefulness and effectiveness of the radio programs are as follows:

Akhtar Reja, resident of Ekdara municipality-6, Mahottari said, "Radio programs are effective for illiterate people. After listening to the radio programs, Dalit people have realized their rights and now raise concerns when they are mistreated in the tea shop. Radio programs not only provide information but also advocate for ensuring the rights of Dalit people."

Babita Yadav, Sakhuanankati rural municipality-2 shared, "After listening to the radio programs, I have changed my behavior and attitudes towards Dalits. I used to follow the traditional practices of treating Dalits differently but now I am aware that it is inhumane to consider Dalits untouchable based on caste. I also told my father and mother-in-law not to discriminate against Dalits and

*caste-based discrimination is a punishable act. I saw many Non-Dalits have changed now as radio programs always mention about the punishment for doing caste-based discrimination."*

*Binita Shahi, Barahatal rural municipality, shared, "I have always believed that caste-based discrimination is not good but after listening to the radio program, I understood that it is legally punishable to discriminate people based on the caste."*

*Ghanshyam Oli, Shivalaya rural municipality, said, "SAJHA AAWAJ radio program is very relevant and awareness-raising program. I learned that Caste-based discrimination and untouchability are against the law and those who commit this inhumane crime will be punished as per the legal provision of the CBDU Act. Media such as community radio should create awareness on the legal provision on CBD as the act has not been effectively implemented in the community."*

*Dharmendra BK, Barahatal Surkhet, shared, "I learned about constitutional rights of Dalits after listening to one of the radio programs aired by Jagaran FM, Surkhet. Now, I share this information to other Dalit friends so that they can fight for their rights."*

#### Commitment from Local Representatives

*In rural parts of Karnali province, 'Bhalighary pratha and khalo pratha' is still prevalent. It is the barter system where Dalits provide services to the non-Dalits in exchange for their skills and labour. It creates unequal and discriminatory employment relationships between the so-called upper-caste and the Dalit people. After raising the issue of 'Bhalighary pratha and khalo pratha' through radio programs, Tej Bahadur Bhusal, Chairperson of Barahatal rural municipality, Surkhet and Narendra Kumar Shahi, Chairperson of Shivalaya rural municipality committed to supporting the local effort to eradicate 'Bhalighary pratha and khalo pratha' from their respective districts.*

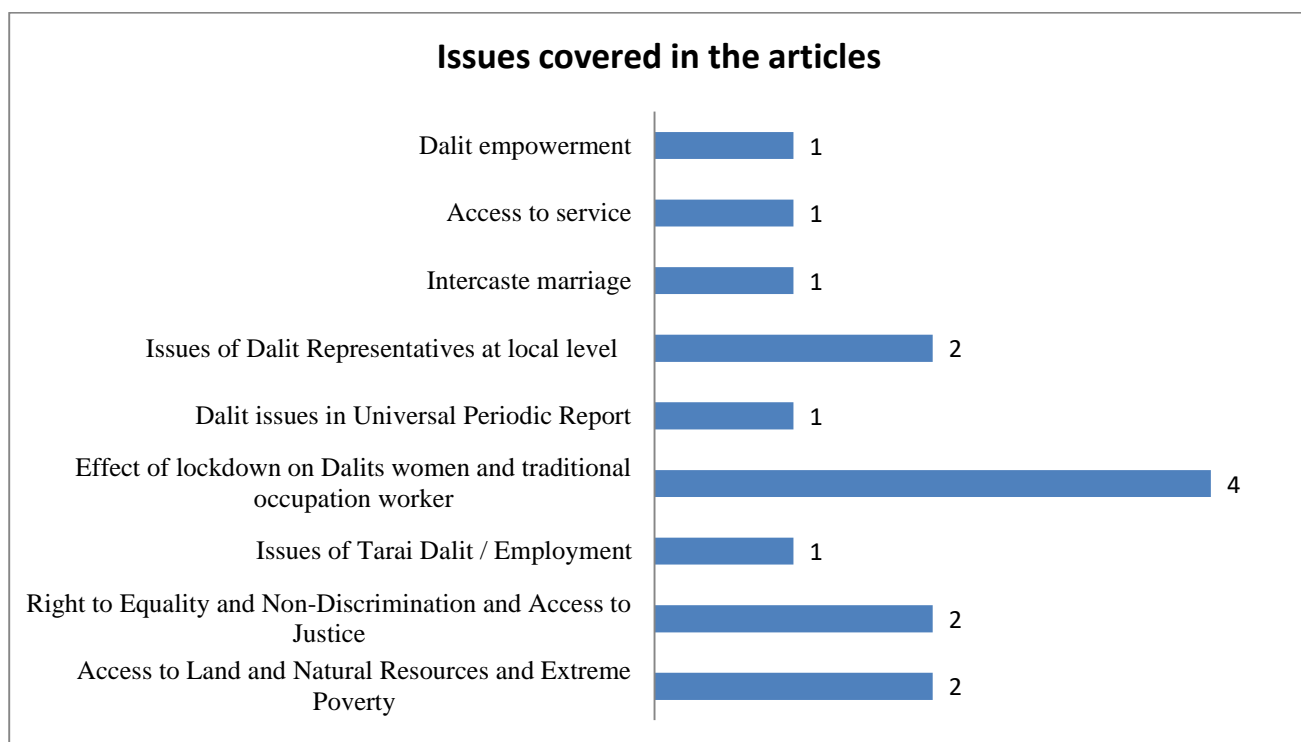
#### **Activity 3. Social media campaign using Facebook and twitter**

In order to reach out to larger stakeholders and to develop solidarity among them on issues concerning CBD and Untouchability, MAG created the SAJHA AAWAJ page on Facebook and Twitter. Through these social media platforms, project-related activities from districts and media coverage on CBD issues faced by CBD affected communities linking with constitutional and legal rights have been shared. Media dialogue webinars were shared live through the Facebook page of MAG. Also, Dalit related news and articles along with the project updates have been shared extensively on the SAJHA AAWAJ Facebook page. In this reporting period, the number of page likes and followers has reached 1009 and 1065 respectively.

#### **Activity 4. Support Journalist to explore and publish analytical news articles**

In this reporting period, 15 local journalists (M: 11 & F: 4) received SAJHA AAWAJ fellowship to collect and publish analytical articles around the CBD issues through explorative journalism. The issues include Dalits access to service and justice, the implementation status of Dalit related recommendations in Universal Periodic report, the impact of lockdown on Dalit women and traditional occupational workers due to covid-19, Dalits right to Equality and Non-discrimination and access to justice and access to land and natural resources, issues of local Dalit representatives, and Dalit empowerment. The fellowship not only surfaced the hidden grassroots reality of Dalit communities for further policy advocacy but also provided some financial support to local journalists who had lost their jobs after lockdown.

Dalit related issues covered in the articles are as follows:



**District wise and gender wise distribution of Fellows:**

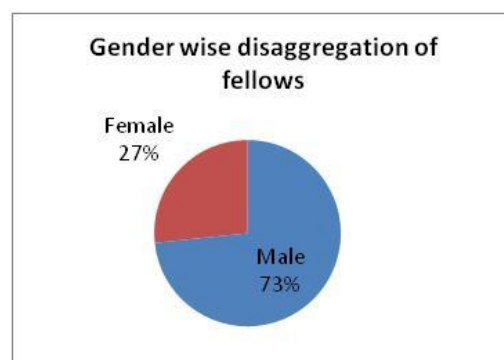
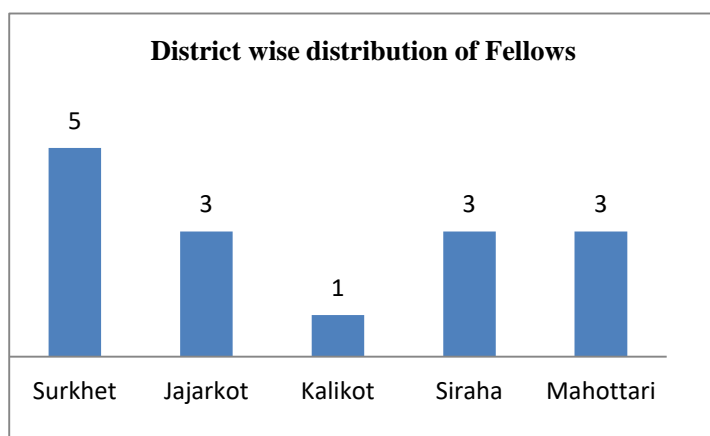


Table: A summary of the fellowship has been tabulated as follows:

S.N	Name	District	Issues	Media	Published Date
1	Sher Bahadur Thapa	Surkhet	Effect of Lockdown on the livelihood of Dalit women -Daily wage working women residing in slums of Birendranagar.	enayanepal.com	15th May 2020

2	Dhanbir Mahato	Mahottari	Effect of Lockdown on the livelihood of the Dalit community, in particular Mushar community, living in the slum/squatter at Gaushala, Mahottari district.	sancharkarmi.com	8th June 2020
3	Rajendra Karki	Jajarkot	Caste-based discrimination - Intercaste marriage between Dalit and Non-Dalits	Vision Khabar & Kuse malika online	22nd June 2020
4	Jagatjanali BK	Surkhet	Effect of the lockdown on the Dalit community residing at different wards of Birendranagar who are making earning utilizing traditional skills such as utensils making and also earning by working as a daily wage laborer.	Karnali Times	31st June 2020
5	Ganesh Bishu	Surkhet	Incidence of Caste Based Discrimination in Karnali Province	Nagarik news	8th July 2020
6	Sunita Mahato	Mahottari	Dalit's access to clean drinking water at Mahottari	todaypati.com	19th July 2020
7	Ram Sebak Mahara (Mochi)	Siraha	The effect of lockdown on their daily livelihoods of the Mushar community who survive on the daily wage working at the field of so-called upper caste landlords.	Nepal Post Daily/ nepalpostdaily.com	31st July 2020
8	Chandani Kathayat	Surkhet	Success stories of the Dalit community breaking the caste barrier.	Kantipur	13th Aug 2020
9	Kali Bahadur Nepali	Jajarkot	Article on a flood-prone Dalit settlement in Jajarkot who had lost their family members.	Bherimalika (Print), tajapatrika.com, sancharclub.com, dalitonline.com	29th Aug 2020
10	Surendra Kamati	Siraha	The impact of disaster both COVID -19 and flood on Dalit settlement, in particular, Dom and Mushar families in Siraha.	Nayapatrika Daily	24th Sep 2020
11	Yamuna Kharel	Siraha	Effect of Lockdown on the lives of Dalit families in Siraha	Janakpur Today	5th Oct 2020
12	Kali Bahadur Malla	Kalikot	UPR and its implementation status regarding Dalit Issues	Newsfnepal.com	12th Oct 2020
13	Tika BK	Jajarkot	Issues of Dalit women representatives	radiokhalanga.org	24th Nov 2020

14	Gobinda Devkota	Surkhet	Challenges of Dalits' Access to Justice	missiontodaynews.com	29th Nov 2020
15	Ranjan Bhandhari	Mahottari	Challenges of Local Dalit representatives	Bhumi Weekly	29th Nov 2020

After the fellows cover the news, an immediate outcome was observed in Surkhet as follows:

*On Asar 15, 2077, Karnalitimes.com published an article by Jagatdal Janala BK, SAJHA AAWAJ Fellow entitled 'Na payincha kaam' (Could not get work). After the news was published, 7 very poor households received food. The news highlighted the effect of lockdown on daily wage workers, most of them belong to Dalits community. Jagatdal Janala BK is the recipient of SAJHA AAWAJ Fellowship. After hearing the news, an official working at the World Food Organization, Surkhet branch made personal donation.*

*After receiving food items, a 60-year old, resident of Birendranagar-8, Pancha Nepali is elated, who says, "nowadays we cannot get work and we did not receive reliefs as we don't have money. So, how can we survive without working." Dalle BK, permanent resident of Dailekh and temporary residing in Birendranagar-4, is suffering from leg cancer for the long time. He survived on the alms begging at nearby bazar but since lockdown, he and his 6-membered family has experienced food shortage. His family also received food relief.*

*Jagatdal Janala BK is the recipient of SAJHA AAWAJ Fellowship. He has been writing articles on caste-based discrimination after receiving an explorative journalism training organized by MAG under SAJHA AAWAJ project.*

### **Activity 5: Media dialogue program on CBD issues with policy makers, NHRIs and CSO actor**

In this reporting period, MAG organized two events of dialogue programs through webinars. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MAG has made considerable changes in the implementation strategy of the media dialogue program. Instead of two events of remaining media dialogue programs, MAG planned media dialogue through webinars (5) and through TV programs (2) to be accomplished by November 2020. The program was shared live through the Facebook page of MAG that has 977 views.

#### ***Media dialogue program through webinar on 'UPR and Dalit Issues'***

The first webinar on 'UPR and Dalit Issues' was organized on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 in the presence of 54 participants (direct beneficiaries representing Dalit CSOs/ NGOs, media/ journalists, Human Rights activists, and related stakeholders: 29, Project Staff, Consortium Partners & Resource Persons: 25 ).

In the webinar, there was a paper presentation on 'UPR and Dalit Issues' by Mr. Shyam Biswakarma, lawyer, where he highlighted UPR, its significance, and why UPR is important for Dalit rights advocacy. He also shared the status of UPR and Dalits issues, and a review of past recommendations. The presentation was followed by panel discussion and interaction with participants. Ms. Babita Basnet, Executive Director of MAG, moderated the program.

The panelists for the program were as follows:

- Hon. Ms. Anjana Bisankhe, Member of Parliament, House of Representative
- Mr. Govinda Acharya-President, Federation of Nepali Journalists
- Ms. Mohanmaya Dhakal-Deputy Mayor, Birendranagar Nagarpalika
- Mr. Murari Kharel-Joint Secretary, National Human Rights Commission
- Special Guest- Mr. Trilok Chand Viswas B.K, National President, NNDSWO

The recommendations drawn from the panel discussion and interaction with participants have been summarized as follows:

- Nepal government has not been able to formulate the laws and policies as per the ratified International commitments.
- There is anti-CBD and Untouchability Act but its implementation is not effective as there lacks coordination between legislative and executive bodies for the effective reflection of the act made by the legislative bodies. For the effective law implementation, policy level, and structural level management is important.
- Dalit representation should be ensured in the law implementation bodies. The empowerment of Dalit communities is crucial for social transformation.
- There is a need for policy-focused media intervention rather than event-based news and reports on Dalits.
- Policy advocacy on the experience of Dalit women is crucial to draw the attention of the State towards violence against Dalit women and girls. In most cases of sexual assault and rape of Dalit women and girls, the cases are reconciled and settled at the local level taking advantage of the low economic status of Dalit women so criminals/perpetrators are set free without punishment.
- Dalits have unequal access to opportunities so the State should ensure Dalits' access to all services and opportunities.

### ***Media dialogue program through webinar on 'Discrimination and Violence against Dalits'***

The second webinar on 'Discrimination and Violence against Dalits' was organized on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020. There were altogether 50 participants (*direct beneficiaries representing Dalit CSOs/ NGOs, local and central media/ journalists, Human Rights activists, and related stakeholders: 30, Project Staff & Board and Resource Person: 20*). The Facebook live of the webinar through the MAG page has 441 views.

There was a paper presentation on 'Analysis of Discrimination and Violence against Dalits' by Mr. JB Biswokarma, Dalit Activist and a lawyer, where he highlighted the current scenario of the discrimination and violence against Dalits in Nepal, various socio-cultural and economic factors that promote CBDU, New Constitutional Provisions and Legal reforms to prevent CBDU, and shed light on the role of State, politicians, civil society, and media to eliminate CBD. The presentation was followed by the panel discussion and interaction with participants. Ms. Babita Basnet, Executive Director of MAG, moderated the program.

The panelists for the program were:

- Hon. Ms. Parbati Kumari Bisunkhe, Member of House of Representatives, Federal Parliament of Nepal
- Mr. Sanjeev Raj Regmi, Spokesperson, Office of the Attorney General, Nepal
- Mr. Ganesh BK - Senior Activist & Advisor, NGO Federation of Nepal

The recommendations drawn from the webinar have been summarized as follows:

- Effective implementation of anti-CBD laws and policies is necessary to reduce the incidence of violence and discrimination against Dalit communities in Nepal.
- The state should be made accountable for not addressing the issue of CBD cases and rape and killing of Dalit girls and women.
- A collective campaign and cultural revolution is necessary for positive social transformation.
- Law enforcing agencies such as judiciary bodies- court and police, local level representatives, government lawyers should support in providing Dalits access to justice.
- For the effective law implementation, policy level and structural level management is important.
- Dalit representation should be ensured in the law implementation bodies.

### ***Media dialogue program through webinar on 'Roles of Non-Dalits in the Dalit Movement in Nepal'***

The third webinar was organized on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 in the presence of 47 participants ( *direct beneficiaries representing Dalit CSOs/ NGOs, media/ journalists, Human Rights activists, and related stakeholders: 30, Project team, resource persons, and Panelists:17* ). The program was shared live through the Facebook page of MAG with more than 1700 views.

In the webinar, there was a paper presentation on 'Analysis of Roles of Non-Dalits in the Dalit Movement in Nepal' by Mr. Bhakta Biswokarma, Dalit Activist and President of Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), where he shed light on the Dalit Movement in Nepal, highlighted the crucial role of Non-Dalits for the effective Dalit Movement and how they can support in bringing social transformation by advocating for the elimination of Caste Based Discrimination & Untouchability in Nepal. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion and interaction with participants. The program was moderated by Ms. Babita Basnet.

The panelists for the program were:

- Hon. Mr. Dharma Raj Regmi, Member of Parliament, Karnali Province, Nepal
- Mr. Jitram Lama, President, NGO Federation of Nepal
- Ms. Rekha Thapa - Actor, Nepali Movie

The recommendations from the program were as follows:

- To eradicate CBDU, Nepal Government and Dalit NGOs need to develop a strategy with a framework highlighting the role of Dalit and non-Dalits to eliminate CBDU at the local, provincial, and central levels.
- Political discourse on caste discrimination and untouchability is needed.
- Rather than focussing on issue-based advocacy, we need to come up with a plan that provides immediate, short term, and long term sustainable solution.
- Conduct public awareness programs at grassroots and local levels to change people's mindset.
- Stakeholders from all the fields such as NGO/ CBOs, human rights defenders, media, and political leaders should join hands together for an effective Dalit movement.

### ***Media dialogue program through webinar on ' Implementation Status of Dalit related Laws and Policies'***

The fourth webinar on ' the Implementation Status of Dalit related Laws and Policies' was organized on 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 in the presence of altogether 49 participants ( *direct beneficiaries representing Dalit CSOs/ NGOs, media/ journalists, Human Rights activists, and related stakeholders: 30, Project*



*team, resource persons, and panelist:19* ). The program was shared live through the Facebook page of MAG with more than 315 views.

There was a paper presentation on "Analysis of the Implementation Status of Dalit related Laws and Policies' by Mr. Bhoj Man Lamgade, Advocate. He made a presentation on the Dalit related legal and policy provisions including Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability Acts and Policies; its current implementation status, analysis of the role of the state, government, and non-government stakeholders for the effective implementation of laws and policies to ensure Dalit rights, and made recommendations on what could be done for the elimination of Caste Based Discrimination and Untouchability in Nepal. The presentation was followed by panel discussion and interaction with participants. Ms. Babita Basnet moderated the program.

The panellists for the program were:

- Hon. Mr. Jiwan Bahadur Shahi, Member of Parliament, Karnali Province, Nepal
- Hon. Manju Yadav, Member of Parliament, Province 2, Nepal
- SSP Durga Singh, Nepal Police

The main recommendations from the program were as follows:

- Though Nepal is progressive in the law making process, there is a huge gap in the effective implementation of the law. Nepal has laws against caste-based crimes but they are rarely applied. This is because of weak implementation mechanism and lack of rule of law. Also, legal provision do not assure social acceptance, for which a massive public awareness campaign from the grassroots to the policy making level is needed.
- Despite constitutional guarantees and legal provisions, impunity for caste-based discrimination and violence remains high in Nepal. In many cases the police refuse to even register CBD cases and they are found to engage in mediation process to reconcile between CBD victims and perpetrators. So, sensitization of law enforcing agencies including police and lawyers is also necessary.
- In case if the police do not register the CBD cases, one can register complaints against the police in the provincial government and CDO office. She shared that Women, children and elderly people service center is present in all 75 districts from provincial to ward level that facilitate and coordinate for social issues including CBD issues as well, and such cases can be informed through hotline number 100 as well.
- Dalits experience a severe form of discrimination and violence ranging from their limited access to equal education, employment, housing and sanitation.
- COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown have also exacerbated incidents of violence and prejudice against Dalits. The pandemic exposes existing structural inequalities and also deepens their effects.
- Among the Dalit community, Dalit women and girls face more violence and marginalization than men. Females are deprived of control over resources such as land, housing, money, or education, and are also extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation such as rape.

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***Media dialogue program through webinar on 'the Dalit issues in Nepali Media'***

The fifth webinar on 'the Dalit issues in Nepali Media' was organized on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 in the presence of 52 participants ( *direct beneficiaries representing Dalit CSOs/ NGOs, media/ journalists, Human Rights activists, and related stakeholders: 39, Project team and Resource Person:13* ). The program was shared live through the Facebook page of MAG that has 619 views.

In the webinar, there was a paper presentation on 'Analysis of Dalit issues in Nepali Media' by Mr. Bishwo Bhakta Dulal 'Ahuti', Senior Activist and Writer, where he made a comprehensive presentation on the portrayal and presentation of Dalit related issues in media focusing on the issue of media sensitivity while raising Dalit issues in different forms of media: papers, TV, and radio contents; types of Dalit related news and information generally portrayed by Nepali media; the reasons for the stereotypic presentation of Dalits in media; the role of Nepali media for the elimination of caste-based discrimination and untouchability, and for bringing social transformation; and recommendation on how media could be used as an effective advocacy tool to bring social transformation in Nepal for ensuring Dalits rights and elimination of Caste-based discrimination and untouchability. Ms. Babita Basnet moderated the program.

The panellists for the program were:

- Hon. Ms. Bimala BK, Member of Parliament, House of Representative
- Dr. Mahendra Bista, Executive Chairperson, Nepal Television
- Mr. Umesh Chauhan, Editor, Nayapatrika

Furthermore, the best Fellow Journalists in exploration journalism on Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability were acknowledged in the program.

The main recommendations from the program were as follows:

- Media do not raise Dalit issues properly. The media only reports cases of discrimination and violence in a simplified manner. However, media can be an effective tool that can accelerate the social issue and make the state accountable for social issues.
- Media covers sensationalize news on CBD including violence, rape, and murder for some time but lack regular follow-up. So, the media should cover investigative reporting on CBD cases and analyze the implication of CBD in society rather than event-based reporting. The media should provide recommendations to the state for legal and policy amendments if there is any gap in the judiciary process. In this way, the media can support in providing justice to the CBD victims.
- Additionally, the media can present articles on traditional occupations and skills of Dalit communities so that Dalits youth are motivated to carry forward the traditional skills and can be used for their empowerment.
- Representation of Dalit journalists in the newsroom and media is also crucial to bring Dalit issues more effectively.

**Table :** *Beneficiary data of Media dialogue webinars on CBD issues with policy makers, NHRI and CSO actors are as follows:*

SN	Date	Beneficiary					Remarks
		F	M	Total	Dalit	Non-Dalit	
1	16-Oct-20	15	14	29	13	16	The beneficiaries do not include panelists and MAG staff.

2	21-Oct-20	12	18	30	9	21	
3	6-Nov- 20	16	14	30	6	24	
4	12-Nov-20	13	17	30	13	17	
5	29-Nov-20	12	27	39	9	30	
		68	90	158	50	108	

### ***Media dialogue program through TV Program***

MAG in partnership with Himalaya TV raised 2 dalit related issues in 2 episodes of 'Bishesh Kurakani.' The first TV program broadcasted on 11<sup>th</sup> November raised the issue of follow-up of the murder of Nawaraj BK and his friends by Non-Dalit villagers (West Rukum Case). The guest speakers for the program were the fact-finding team from NNDSWO and the honorable member of parliaments as follows:

- Hon. Prakash Snehi, Member of Parliament
- Mr. Trilok Chand Vishwas V.K, National President, NNDSWO
- Mr. Dinesh Tripathi, Senior Advocate

Link of the 1<sup>st</sup> TV program

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZOxNp2\\_1hw&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZOxNp2_1hw&feature=youtu.be)

The second program broadcasted on 29<sup>th</sup> November raised the status of National Dalit Commission. The guest speakers for the program were

- Hon. Ms. Anjana Bisunkhe, Member of Parliament
- Mr. Man Bahadur Nepali, Former President, National Dalit Commission
- Mr. Bhakta Biswakarma, President, Dalit NGO Federation (DNF)

Link of the 2<sup>nd</sup> TV Program

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkTkqofKaP0>

### **Success Story 1**

#### ***Investigative Journalism Training empowered local journalist***

Kali Bahadur Nepali is a local journalist based in Jajarkot who has been working in the journalism sector for the past five years. He used to write reports and news on different beats concerning social issues. However, for the last two years, he has started to focus on writing various issues concerning Dalit communities and caste-based discrimination. These changes happened after he participated in 'Issue-based explorative Journalism Training on Caste-based discrimination' supported by the SAJHA AAWAJ project.



Though Kali Bahadur belongs to the Dalit community, he never had much interest and knowledge on issue-based reporting focussing on Dalit issues for social justice. When he learned about 'Issue-based explorative Journalism Training on caste-based discrimination' organized by Media Advocacy Group (MAG) in June 2018 at Jajarkot, he immediately participated in the training as a reporter representing Jajarkot FM.

After training, he not only gained investigative journalism skills but also became committed to reporting on Dalit focussed issues and eventually started covering many grassroots Dalit issues on caste-based discrimination and untouchability.

Speaking of the changes that he had experienced after the training, he said, "I found that the training organized by Media Advocacy Group is different than other training programs for local journalists. Most people at the local level have poor economic status among which Dalit communities are more marginalized and poor. The State largely ignores the concerns of marginalized people so I realized that I should become their voice and advocate for the rights of voiceless Dalit communities. I have a bitter experience of covering news on local politicians with their sayings on a larger headline of the news. But, this training has completely changed my perspective on journalism."

He further added that now he uses his pen to advocate on behalf of the victims of CBD and social injustice, as the 'pen' is mightier than the 'sword'. The training has made him able to investigate the local Dalit issues that are not generally reflected in the local print media. As a journalist, he feels that his writings should promote social justice and he is willing to raise the voice of those who are denied justice from society. He believes that the State must address the issues of Dalits and his writings often question the responsibility and accountability of the State in this matter.

Now he is working as a News Chief of Bherimalika Daily of Jajarkot where he raises Dalit issues more frequently than before. Along with the training, he is also a recipient of the SAJHA AWAJ fellowship program. The training helped other local journalists like Kali Bahadur to enhance their skills to produce investigative reports and resources to advocate for the human rights of the Dalits. Thanking the SAJHA AWAJ project for the opportunities, he also vowed to continue writing for social change covering issues related to caste-based discrimination, untouchability, and inequality.

## **Success Story 2**

### ***SAJHA AWAJ radio programs providing information amid Covid-19 lockdown***

Sudip Kumar Mishra is a radio presenter at Rudraksha FM in Mahottari, one of the radio partners of the SAJHA AAWAJ project. Even at the time of Covid-19 lockdown, Sudip had managed to develop and air radio programs amid various social challenges.

During the lockdown, Sudip closely saw the sufferings of people from poor and marginalized communities' including Dalits, Women, and daily wage workers owing to their poor socio-economic status. That time, he realized the importance of radio programs to provide relevant information addressing the urgent need of the marginalized Dalit communities.

Moreover, misinformation, myth, and fake news on Covid-19 also made the situation stressful. So after receiving guidance from MAG's SAJHA AWAJ project team, he aired the radio program with the changed modality. In addition to providing information related to CBDU, the radio programs also provided information on Covid-19 and its preventive measures in Maithali language as information contents on Covid-19 was available only in Nepali and English languages at that time.

Meanwhile, Sudip and his team focussed on advocating for poor and marginalized communities and raising voices for the voiceless Dalit communities. Report and updates were provided on the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, create public awareness of preventive measures of Covid-19 and the importance of physical distancing, connect local people with concerned government stakeholders and

**Photo: Sudip and co-presenter recording a radio program**

human right activists for relevant information and relief packages and economic assistance to make local government more accountable and transparent of all the processes along with the advocacy on the rights of Dalit, women, and marginalized communities.

Sudip also visited the Dalit settlements and quarantine residents to collect updates and to interview the people who needed relief supports. He interviewed government and non-government stakeholders and human rights activists through phone and put the concerns of poor people for urgent action.



Sharing an experience working on the SAJHA AWAJ radio program, he added, "I learned about Dalit issues while creating contents for the radio programs and interviewing both Dalits and Non-Dalit stakeholders. I still cannot believe that caste-based discrimination still exists in our community. So, I will keep on advocating for Dalit's rights and creating awareness on Dalit issues through radio programs."

### **Success Story 3**

#### **Continuing radio program amid Covid-19 lockdown**

Tek Raj KC is a radio presenter at Jagaran FM, Surkhet, one of the radio partners of the SAJHA AAWAJ project. Covid-19 has had devastating effects in all sectors including media. In response to the outburst of Covid-19, the Government of Nepal announced nationwide lockdown restriction from March 24 onwards as a preventive step to control the transmission of the Covid-19. Sudden lockdown by the government created a state of confusion among media workers and our radio partners as well. Lockdown restrictions presented a huge challenge in collecting information and voices from the community at grassroots levels and on-field reporting. This even led to a temporary suspension of the SAJHA AAWAJ radio program for a few weeks.



**Photo: Tek Raj KC, radio presenter/ producer at Jagaran FM, Surkhet**

The pandemic majorly hit the livelihood of poor and marginalized communities' including Dalits, Women, and daily wage workers who are rendered more vulnerable due to poor socio-economic status and had to bear the brunt of prolonged lockdown. Moreover, misinformation, myth, and fake news on Covid-19 also made the situation stressful. At that time, Tek Raj realized the importance of radio programs to counter such misinformation, myth, and bogus news. Hence, immediately after discussing with Radio Jagarana and MAG, the team decided to continue the radio program amid the Covid-19 pandemic with some changes in the modality of radio programs.

In addition to raising issues of Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability, the radio programs were modified to provide accurate updates on the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, create public awareness on preventive measures of Covid-19 and importance of physical distancing, connect local

people with concerned government stakeholders and human right activists for relevant information and relief packages and economic assistance to make local government more accountable and transparent of all the processes along with advocate on the rights of Dalit, women, and marginalized communities.

Though local government provided relief materials including food, genuinely affected people from Dalit communities who earn as daily wage workers did not receive the relief as they also lack citizenship and election identity card. That time, the radio program was successful in advocating for poor and marginalized communities and raising voices for the voiceless community members. Due to which the affected communities also received some relief supports.

Further, Tek Raj shared that some of the pressing issues raised that time was the situation of Nepali returnee migrant workers from India in quarantine, reducing social stigma associated with the Covid-19, and minimizing discriminatory behaviors against them after they return to their village. He believed that the information disseminated through the radio program helped the people to realize their responsibility as a citizen and not to discriminate against returnee migrant workers from India and Covid-positive people.

Now looking back, Tek Raj is content to be able to produce radio programs amid the lockdown restrictions, however, concerns of personal safety measures made him anxious while making field reporting for collecting voices from slums, villages, and quarantine settings. He stated that journalism is a risky profession and he has vowed to serve no matter the circumstances are. Further, pandemic reporting and raising concerns of marginalized people, helped him gain the confidence to continue the program and support those needy people with relevant information.

### **C. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Nepal (FES) Supported Program**

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), established in 1995, is working with partners such as trade unions, media, academia, political parties, and NGOs for capacity building on issues of social justice, human rights, rule of law, and inclusion. Furthermore, it holds discussions on current political and economic topics providing opportunities for cross-party dialogues and exchange between representatives of the government and civil society. It also provides civic education program/training to the people. FES Nepal, has been partnering with MAG in providing different training to the women journalists to enhance their capacities.

#### **Activity 1: Impactful Journalism during the COVID-19 Pandemic- One day training program for Women Journalists**

MAG in support of FES Nepal organized one day training program with an aim to capacitate the women journalists on impactful journalism during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding its preparedness, coverage and response on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Since, the whole country was in a state of lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic, this training was organized and completed virtually via Zoom app. Public health expert, Dr. Rabindra Pandey delivered a session on basic concept of COVID-19 and safety procedures/measures for the media. Senior journalist Mr. DevprakashTripathi presented on COVID-19 reporting issues and angles and gave examples of different COVID-19 reporting issues and angles. Similarly, Dr. MahendraBista trained the participants on different

COVID-19 reporting guidelines and Code of conduct for the media. The training session was very informative and interactive and was successfully conducted. All together there were around 40 participants which consisted women journalists of various media platforms from various districts of Nepal.

### **Major Objective:**

- The major objective of the program was to capacitate women journalists for impactful journalism during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding its preparedness, coverage and response

### **Activity 2: Impactful Journalism during the COVID-19 Pandemic- One day training program for Women Journalists**

Mag in support of FES Nepal organized one day interaction program with an aim to to assess the personal security protocols for safety of women journalist while covering Covid-19 and also the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on their professional security on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2020. Since, the whole country was in a state of lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic, this training was organized and completed virtually via Zoom. Media Scholar, Dr. SamikshaKoirala was one of the resource persons of the program. She presented mostly on the theoretical aspects of safety and job security during a pandemic. She spoke about online harassment and harassment at workspace. Second resource person, Ms. Anita Bindu shed light on the current situation and practices relating to safety and job security in COVID-19 situation. The program was mostly interaction based. The interaction was focused on how after the pandemic, life of women journalists have become unstable and full of different kinds of professional and personal challenges. The program was successfully conducted with 36 participants and generated some concrete recommendations to ensure safety and job security of women journalist in a crisis.

### Major Objectives:

The major objectives of the program were:

- To assess the personal security protocols for safety of women journalist while covering Covid-19 related news
- To assess the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on professional security of women journalists

### **D. VSO Supported Program**

#### **Strengthening Access to Holistic, Gender Responsive and Accountable Justice in Nepal (SAHAJ)**

Duration: 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020- 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020

The objectives of the program is to

- To conduct 3 Virtual Trainings/Workshop with Media Persons at project implementation areas along with Kathmandu to provide effectiveness of digital brand engagement of SAHAJ project
- To support SAHAJ project by developing and producing multimedia (especially Newspapers) content in order to increase media reach & visibility effectiveness to diffuse the change of harmful Social norms based on the organization strategy
- To provide an opportunity to discuss about harmful social norms, and drivers of GBV in various community groups among media persons and mass to challenge harmful social norms and intervene against GBV

### **Activity 1: Creation of Media Toolkit on harmful social norms and GBV**

MAG developed a media toolkit in consultation with the SAHAJ team. Based on the kit, trainings were organized and contents were decided to enhance capacity of media partner and local journalist. The toolkit served as a guide to conduct all three training programs. *(The kit is attached to the email)*

### **Activity 2: Conduct 3 Virtual Training program with media partner and local journalists**

Three events of “Two Day Virtual Training Program on Role of Media in Transforming Harmful Social Norms and Practices around GBV” was conducted for a total of 37 journalists of Province 2, 3 and 5 as follows:

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Training:**

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2020

Via: Zoom

Province number: 2

Participants: Journalist of Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, and Bara

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Training:**

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2020

Via: Zoom

Province: 5

Participants: Journalists of Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Kapilbastu, Dang, Banke, Pyuthan and Rolpa

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> training:**

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2020

Via: Zoom

Province: 3

Participants: Journalists of Kathmandu



## Data Disaggregation of each training program

Training	Date	Gender			Total
		M	F	OTHERS	=M + F +O
1.	11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> November	8	4	0	12
2.	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> December	0	10	0	11
3.	10 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> December	3	11	0	14

### Outcomes:

- The media personnel were capacitated on the knowledge and reporting issues of harmful social norms and practices around GBV
- Development of news\ articles to disseminate the learnings from the training program
- Helped readers to get more information on Harmful Social Norms as well as positive social norms that encourages breaking culture of silence and reporting incidents of GBV

### News Features:

The following are some news articles developed by the participants post the training session.

- [https://www.aayomail.com/news/8513?fbclid=IwAR2jEBAXyyDiSOlsFdbDiYne7IUQ49-Isv9Eu\\_fQwJIG7u1DUdJt1Vabn5c](https://www.aayomail.com/news/8513?fbclid=IwAR2jEBAXyyDiSOlsFdbDiYne7IUQ49-Isv9Eu_fQwJIG7u1DUdJt1Vabn5c)
- <https://www.ghatanarabichar.com/206975?fbclid=IwAR2YBDHxjFPY0QigOS-rbkDd2giLcAlVrae8n8VbQY4MNUhaon9tHob-Btk>
- <https://www.radiomalmala.org/news-details/3402/2020-12-03?fbclid=IwAR09ml62mEEFB59uVHkvZHwhyGzStT-LuMDq08LQE9JckiArKri5yEckC8E>

As many participants are in verse of developing contents, MAG team will continue with the follow regarding the same. Any new developments in news articles, TV programs or social media posts will be shared with the SAHAJ team as soon as it happens.

### **Facebook Group:**

After the completion of the training program, a Facebook group was created to diffuse the change of harmful social norms through media. The group by the name, “Alliance for Transforming Harmful Social Norms and Practices through Media” has 14 members as of now. Contents related to GBV is posted in the group and information on harmful as well as positive social norms focusing on breaking culture of silence and increase justice seeking behavior by survivors is shared.

## Tayar Nepal

### Media coverage on “Preventing and responding to gender-based violence (GBV) in disasters”

**Duration: December 2020 to February 2021**

The objective of the program was,

- To coordinate and follow up on articles, case study coverage in each of the 12 municipalities through the local media personnel

#### Process

MAG identified 12 local media persons, one for each municipality. We have collected their details (name, address, contact details) and coordinate with them to attend the interaction program which was held on December via technology. In terms of gender and caste/ethnicity 6 women journalists and 2 dalit were involved. Involved Journalists are-

1. Goma Thapa 9843403905 pigeonkhabar.com, Sagarmatha Television, Nilakantha Dhading
2. Yuvraj Neupane 9858426615 Kailali Post Daily, Lamkichuha
3. Sharada Fulara 9865664434 Godawari News, Godawari FM, Godawari, Kailali
4. Amar Sunar 9858050455 Ujjayalo Network, Yug Aawahan Daily, Dailekh
5. Chandani Kathayat 9864724950 Kantipur Daily, Surkhet
6. Uma Bhandari 9866918689 Pradesh Today Daily, Tulashipur Dang
7. Sushila Oli 9847846923 Radio Madhyapashim, CIN Ghorahi Dang
8. Yagya Sapkota 9848093011 Nayapatrika Daily, Rajapur Bardiya
9. Chhabi Sunar 9858036732 Sunawal
10. Ramesh Timilsina 9855041715 Rajdhani Daily, Chandrapur Rautahat
11. Janarjan Khatri 9854033421 Gorakhapatra Daily
12. Gayatri Acharya 9844002277 Kalinchok FM Dolakha

#### Coordinator's observation and Recommendations

- Media persons need conceptual clarity on Gender, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)
- Media persons are not serious and sensitive about the women issues, which is not intentionally but they are not clear on the concept. So they are reflecting on their write ups what they have seen in the society since the childhood and now.
- Training for issues and content development and clear understanding of the DRM and GBV for journalists needed. Also they need to know about the linkages between GBV and DRR.

- Media monitoring is needed to understand how the media giving the space/coverage on the issues of women and disaster. Which can be the basis for evidence based advocacy.