



## Training Women Journalists in the Terai FINAL PROGRAMME<sup>1</sup> NARRATIVE REPORT

<b>Programme Title &amp; Number</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programme Title: Training Women Journalists in the Terai</li><li>• Programme Number: UNPFN/ E-3</li><li>• MDTF Office Atlas Number: 00072386</li></ul>	<b>Country, Locality(s), Thematic Area(s)<sup>2</sup></b> <p>Nepal, Terai region Security and Rights and Reconciliation</p>
<b>Participating Organization(s)</b>	<b>Implementing Partners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• OHCHR, UNFPA, Media and Democracy Group, National Press Institute, Sancharika Samuha, INHURED International, Article 19.</li></ul>
<b>Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</b> <p>MDTF Fund Contribution: • US\$ 20,048.68</p> <p>Agency Contribution • US\$ 53,288.68</p> <p>Government Contribution (if applicable)</p> <p>Other Contribution (donor) (if applicable)</p> <p><b>TOTAL:</b></p>	<b>Programme Duration (months)</b> <p>Overall Duration: 8 months</p> <p>Start Date<sup>3</sup>: 16 Sep 2009</p> <p>Original end date: 10 December 2010</p> <p>Revised End Date: 31 March, 2010</p> <p>Operational Closure Date<sup>4</sup>: 31 March 2010</p> <p>Expected Financial Closure Date: 30 June, 2010</p>
<b>Final Programme/ Project Evaluation</b> <p>Evaluation Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Date: _____</p> <p>Evaluation Report - Attached <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<b>Submitted By</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Name: Axel Plathe</li><li>○ Title: Head of Office</li><li>○ Participating Organization (Lead): UNESCO</li><li>○ Contact information: UNESCO Office in Kathmandu, P.O. Box 14391, Kathmandu, Nepal</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> The term “programme” is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.

<sup>2</sup> Priority Area for the Peacebuilding Fund; Sector for the UNDG ITF.

<sup>3</sup> The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MDTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MDTF Office GATEWAY](http://mdtf.undp.org) (<http://mdtf.undp.org>).

<sup>4</sup> All activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MDTF programme have been completed. Agencies to advise the MDTF Office.

## **FINAL PROGRAMME REPORT**

### **I. PURPOSE**

Female journalists working in the Terai area in southern Nepal face increasing danger because of their profession. There have been many incidents of female journalists being threatened because of stories they have written or interviews they have done. In some cases, armed gangs, often affiliated with political parties, are responsible for the intimidation. Gangs have attacked media houses and beaten reporters and editors. The attacks have ranged from intimidation to physical violence and in January 2009, to radio reporter Uma Singh's murder. Many female journalists have quit their jobs out of fear (local sources claim that between January and March 2009 about 70% of female journalists in the Terai quit their profession) and many more say there is growing pressure from their families to get out of the profession because of the danger. There is evidence that the number of attacks is increasing and the violence is occurring in more areas of Nepal.

Recent incidents of threats of violence and actual violence towards women journalists are aimed at silencing voices and affecting democratic space. The project "Training Women Journalists in the Terai" wanted to be a catalyst in supporting free media and improving journalistic reporting in Terai.

Therefore UNESCO Office in Kathmandu organized a training, addressing the key security concerns, for 25 women journalists in Terai, in order to improve their basic journalism skills, knowledge on human rights, gender based violence, conflict sensitive reporting as well as improve their confidence as women reporters by providing them with personal security training.

The overall goal of the project was to create an environment of free and fair monitoring and reporting of the political situation in the Terai by women journalists. The aimed peace building impact of the project was to help to consolidate the peace through independent media monitoring and reporting of security situation on the area.

With the state-restructuring under way and elections in the near future, the capacity of media is of particular importance in Nepal. Nepal's Peace and Development Strategy, introduced by Nepal's international development partners, emphasizes the role of free and independent media, providing high quality reporting, "not just as a check on the state but also in contributing to an effective state by strengthening democracy, human rights, good governance and citizen engagement". Through building the capacity of women journalists, particularly on conflict-sensitive reporting, the project has contributed to Nepal's peace building efforts.

The expected outcomes of the programme were:

- A) 25 women journalists in the Terai are provided the skills and knowledge to improve their security and to feel confident continuing to working in an environment of heightened personal security risk.

- B) 25 women journalists in the Terai are provided the skills and knowledge to improve their journalism skills, particularly through their ability to address issues pertaining to human rights, conflict and gender, and gender based violence.

The key indicators for the outcomes were:

- A) Fewer cases of violence and harassment reported on the 25 women journalists trained and generally on women journalists in the region; More women back to work in the field of media in the Terai region.
- B) More quality in human rights, conflict, gender and gender based violence reporting and generally in reporting standards; More work available for higher qualified journalists; 3. Higher awareness within and outside the community where the journalists are based.

The project has been supervised and guided by UNESCO Kathmandu Office and implemented by the Nepal Press Institute (NPI) in collaboration with Sancharika Samuha (SS), UNFPA, OHCHR, INHURED International and Media and Democracy (M&D) Group Canada.

## **II. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMME/ PROJECT RESULTS**

The training for women journalists was organized between August and October 2009, with an additional 3-day refresher course in March 2010, resulted in contributing to the goal of free and fair monitoring and reporting of the political situation in the Terai by women journalists.

25 women journalists were selected to participate in the training course through a notice that was circulated to all media houses in the Eastern Terai region, calling for applications from women journalists. The participants were selected from Sarlahi, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Bara, Parsa, Rauthat and Saptari districts.

The initial training was divided into two phases: Phase I, 14-25 August 2009, focused on personal security and basic journalism skills, and phase II, 26-31 October, 2009, focused on conflict and gender sensitive journalism. The refresher course, organized 18-20 March, 2010, recapped the issues learned the previous year. The first part was organized in Janakpur, and the refresher course in Birgunj. The techniques used during the training included class room lectures and practical exercises, group discussions and field work.

In addition, a handbook and a documentary film were produced to support the learning of the training participants.

The expected outcomes of the project were partially met: Outcome A on improving the security of the women journalists turned out to be challenging. While on one hand it was useful for the participants to receive the basic security training, after the training, some of the participants have moved to Kathmandu for security reasons, even though there they have only part time jobs in the media. On the other hand, some of the women have stayed in Terai and

continue working as journalists, and some of them have better jobs because of the skills acquired during the training.

Before the training the situation of women journalists in Terai was challenging: the women faced threats and violence, but did not receive support from their families or employees. The training did not only provide them with the basic security skills, but opened their eyes to seeing that they are not alone, and created a platform for the women to interact and share experiences and seek peer support in difficult situations. According to the participants, without the opportunity to learn and network that the training provided them, many of them would have left their profession as journalists. The network is still active, one year after the last training module.

Outcome B on the skills and knowledge on journalism turned out to be well accomplished. In their feedback to the organizers, the participants emphasized the importance of such training, particularly basic journalism skills, telling how their confidence in themselves as journalists has grown, and how the training will help them to maintain their dignity as journalists. This finding is supported by the fact that some of the training participants have moved to Kathmandu to work. The moving has been often security motivated, but without the training, the women could not compete with the many journalists already living and working in Kathmandu.

The participants of the training proved to be motivated, dedicated and brave in their work. Many had had at least one experience of threats or intimidation and all knew someone who was harassed because of their work. However, threats and intimidation were not the only difficulties the women journalists were facing. Most of the participants had received little training. They are often poorly paid, or in some cases, not paid at all for long periods. Many reported that they get no support from their editors or media house owners, even when facing threats of violence in the course of their work. In many cases it was even the opposite: participants reported being criticized by their supervisors for writing legitimate news stories that were not in the interest of advertisers or powerful business people. Therefore some of the participants had other paying jobs, such as teaching, and some said that in the long term they may have to give up journalism altogether.

The collaboration between a relatively large number of project partners of heterogeneous background turned out to be a success: The UN agencies and INGOs brought to the table the expertise in media development and human rights, while the local media organizations provided the project with in-depth knowledge on media in Nepal. As an added bonus, the project provided the three UN agencies a platform for concrete cooperation.

### **III. EVALUATION & LESSONS LEARNED**

For some of the participants it is difficult to fully implement the journalistic principles or journalism skills taught during the course because editors and owners might resist. However,

only through patient and subtle pushing by the growing number of trained journalists, can the level of media reporting be increased and self-censorship decreased.

During the refresher course in March 2010, some of the participants reported that their employers did not want them to be trained and therefore become more professional, as that would mean they would have to be paid more. In line with the fear, some of the participants indicated that if they were trained even further, they would indeed quit their current jobs and start looking for better jobs.

This poses a complicated challenge: on one hand, it is crucial for the peace building process that journalists from small local media houses are well trained and equipped with the skills needed to report in a professional and unbiased way. On the other hand, it is natural for journalists to move forward with their careers after improving their professional skills. As long as journalists have to move to Kathmandu in order to gain appreciation of their work, even in as simple form as regular salary, it is difficult to have professional journalists to stay in the rural areas. For the situation to change, not only journalists, but also the owners and editors of media houses need to be trained and sensitized to appreciate their skilled workers.

The format of the training – three modules within a time period of 7 months, combined with practical internships – was successful, to the extent that it could be replicated as a best practice. With three different modules, all of them could focus on one theme, and after the theoretical training period, the participants could apply what they learned during practical internships. However, in order to maintain the motivation of the participants, it is crucial to maintain contact with the participants throughout the training programme – therefore such a long programme is more time and resource intensive than a one time training.

The participants appreciated especially the practical exercises of the training modules. The most memorable part of the training was a roleplay, where the participants practiced a situation where they are kidnapped.

Another lesson learned is that the social exclusion that is seen in Nepal as one of the root causes of poverty and conflict is also reflected in the Nepalese media environment where the low percentage of women media professionals and those from disadvantaged ethnic groups and the low castes is reflecting the widespread discrimination of these groups in society in general. The peace process and current transition to democracy seem unsustainable without the participation and integration of all parts of the Nepalese population.

People from underprivileged groups face great difficulties trying to enter into the journalism profession. Those who have managed to join the media often have only limited opportunity to develop their capacity and skill. At the same time there are many journalists who work from the rural parts of the country and seldom get any chance for career development. Though there were several initiatives funded by donors to build capacity of journalists, those were often limited to those who were employed by the mainstream urban-based national media. For this reason UNESCO decided to combine trainings on conflict-sensitive, gender-sensitive journalism and on gender-based violence. The discrimination and prejudice between castes manifested itself in a very practical way during the training: some of the participants were first

reluctant to participate when they heard there were going to be Dalit participants in the training.

Even though the course was organized in the Terai, relatively close to the participants' home towns, some of the women journalists were reluctant to leave their homes to participate the training. Therefore in the future, when planning training for women journalists, it should take into consideration their restrictions to travel and their family situations.

#### **IV. Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements**

The project has been supervised and guided by the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu and implemented by the Nepal Press Institute (NPI) in collaboration with Sancharika Samuha (SS), UNFPA, OHCHR, INHURED International and Media and Democracy (M&D) Group Canada.

Before the beginning of the program, the consultations were made between NPI, SS and local key stakeholders to revise and develop all activities, results and measurable indicators. UNESCO has presented regularly during the project period in the field.

The UNESCO office in Kathmandu has closely monitored the training programme in Terai. NPI has played the key role for selection of the journalists with collaboration with local chapter of FNJ and other local media house. Participants were selected from different 9 district with different diversity. The overall training have paved the way for the establishment of a network between Nepali women journalists facing troubles before and after reporting and have promoted the better and more diversified local news exchange and sharing of best practices.

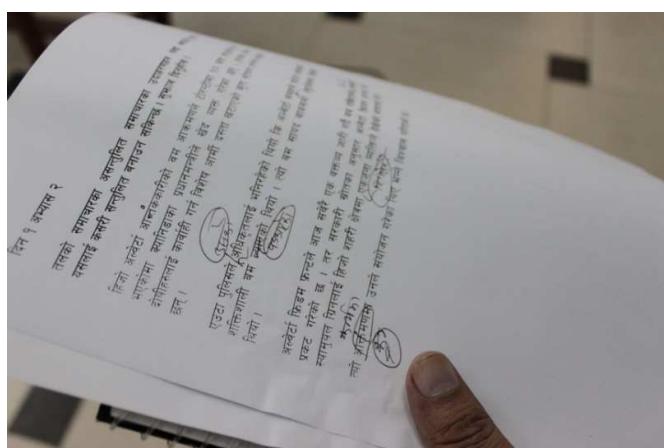
## Annex I: photos from the training course



Training participants



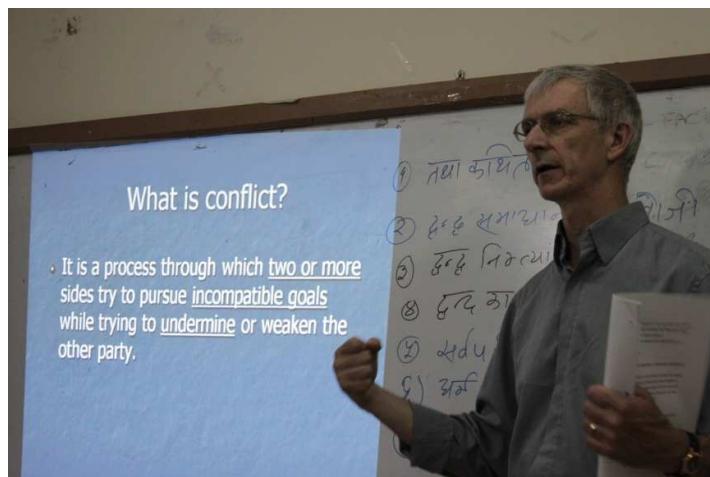
Training participants



Practical exercise on preparing a good news story



Practical exercise on preparing a good news story



John Keating from Media & Democracy Group giving lesson on media's role in conflicts.



The training participants visited the District Police Office in order to familiarize themselves with different types of guns as part of the personal security training.