

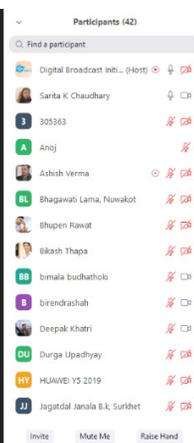
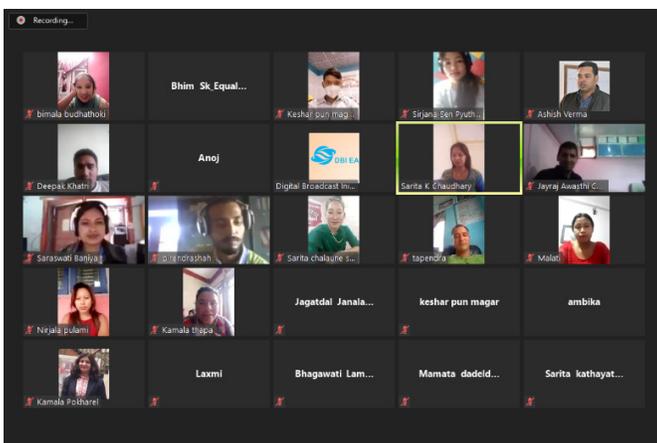
## Biweekly COVID-19 Bulletin

*CS:MAP's support for the COVID-19 response builds on over four years of engagement with media, civil society, and government in support of more responsive, accountable and inclusive governance. This bulletin is a peer-learning platform for sharing knowledge and experience, and for inviting further collaboration with everyone engaged in COVID-19 relief and recovery activities.*

Bulletin No. 17 features stories that are emblematic of a range of efforts by CS:MAP partners. Cutting across all of these activities and worthy of special attention is the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women, marginalized and other vulnerable groups (see underlined sections of stories):

- Support journalism and reporting in a public crisis to provide regular and reliable information that helps people prepare and plan; and, second, to avoid and correct misinformation (see stories 1-4, below);
- Support civil society capacity to respond to COVID-19 (see story #5);
- Support leadership by women and youth in response to COVID-19. (see story #6)
- Support the response of municipal governments to COVID-19 (see story #7-9)

## 1. Orientation to Community Reporters on Disaster Reporting



On August 24-25, 2020 Equal Access International (EAI) organized a two-day orientation for Community Reporters (CRs) via Zoom, on disaster reporting. The objectives of the orientation were to enhance disaster reporting skills and knowledge, impart understanding of potential risks and their mitigation, and the possible reporting role of CRs during COVID-19 and other disasters such as landslides and floods. The orientation aimed to equip CRs with required knowledge, skills and safety precautions to enable effective reporting. A session titled 'reporting code of conduct' dealt with ethics in reporting, including gender-sensitive reporting, seeking consent prior to interviewing, treating interviewees with respect and dignity, and ensuring that people, especially vulnerable groups, are not brought within

harm's way through the reporting.

Dr. Suman Karna, Urban and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Management Specialist, led a session on 'Evolving DRR - Global Protocols to National/Local Institutions and Legal Mandates, and provided insights and experiences from the field related to DRR in practice. Bhim Bahadur Sarki and Sabin Singh from Equal Access facilitated sessions on code of conduct, safety measures and precautions, and communication skills, with practical sessions. The 32 CRs actively participated in the orientation and expressed their commitment to use the knowledge and skills gained in their reporting.

## 2. Trained journalists in COVID-19 reporting

CS:MAP-trained journalists published more than 29 articles from August 16-31, 2020. They covered COVID-19 related issues, including those related to the lockdown enforced in various districts including in the Kathmandu valley; challenges faced by hospitals in testing and management of COVID-19 patients; impact on livelihood; religious and cultural activities restricted to prevent spread of the COVID-19 infection; and lack of strict adherence to safety measures by the public (<https://bit.ly/34O01Ag>). Four of these articles dealt directly with how women, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups had been impacted by in terms of access to services, mainly

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surrounding health. Other stories described local level responses including relief distribution for persons with disabilities and health volunteers (<https://bit.ly/34NclAN>), among others. These articles were published in national and sub-national media outlets such as the Annapurna Post, Nagarik daily, Rajdhani daily, and different online news portals including on the *MeroReport* platform. A news report prepared by one of the journalists on difference between lockdown and curfew was featured in Corona Care, a segment in the Nepal Television (NTV) News, on August 20 2020 (<https://bit.ly/2YREGSC>).

### 3. Radio programs on COVID-19 issues

The *Sajha Boli* radio series has been playing an important role to inform and raise awareness among people during the pandemic. Episodes produced centrally and sub-nationally raised the issues on the role of youth, civil society, and media during this unprecedented crisis; public participation, with a focus on women, youth, and marginalized groups, in local level planning process; the preparations of the local government to control the spread of disease; other challenges at the local level; current quarantine facilities and management, among others. The episodes laid emphasis on the safety and security, and the special needs of women, children and persons with disabilities, in the preparation and management of quarantine and isolation facilities. The episodes included voices of citizens, youth campaigners, health experts, government authorities, elected representatives, and people in quarantine, and returnee migrant.

A recent episode broadcast on August 22, 2020 focused on the transparency of the budget spent on COVID-19 and citizen monitoring. The program in a call-in format, incorporated questions from audiences to their local representatives. Of the 15 people that posed queries concerned with the budget, 5 were female, 10 male, and 6 were Janajati. Some of the questions raised in the program were on the expenses on COVID-19 prevention and response at the local level, awareness information dissemination mechanisms at the local level, and mechanisms for civic monitoring of public expenditure. The queries were sent in by citizens of Dang, Okhaldhunga, Kailali, Pyuthan, Palpa, Sindhupalchok, Kavre, Doti, Arghakhanchi, Makwanpur, Ramechhap, Gorkha and Nuwakot districts. In order to address these queries, the questions were posed to local representatives from respective districts. There were a total of 16 queries from citizens in 14 districts.

### 4. Public Service Announcement (PSA) on COVID-19 preventive measures

From August 17 onwards, EAI along with other radio partners, produced and broadcast a PSA on safety precautions to be taken for COVID-19 prevention while carrying out agricultural activities. The PSAs called upon listeners to ensure safety measures such as the use of masks, and social distancing, and the use of disinfectants while working in the field. Produced in 10 different languages, targeting linguistic minorities, these PSAs were broadcast 390 times daily by the radio partners, and were also shared through the social media platforms of CS:MAP (<https://bit.ly/34T7jT5>).

### 5. Nuwakot CSOs Discuss COVID-19 Preparedness and Response

On August 27, 2020, the Nuwakot chapter of NGO Federation convened a virtual meeting with CSOs in Nuwakot and discussed COVID-19 response in the district. The participating CSOs discussed their COVID-19 response efforts ensuring gender equality and social inclusion considerations, COVID-related insurance of their board of directors and staff, and their capacity building efforts.

The meeting decided to support CSOs that were financially weak and to collectively insure all CSO staff of Nuwakot, under the leadership of the district chapter. The district chapter also discussed current capacity building programs for CSOs including organizations led and run by women and survivors of trafficking, on proposal and report writing. The meeting also decided to conduct needs assessment related to the COVID-19 response with special consideration to gender-differential impacts and needs of single women, poor and vulnerable populations, to identify gaps for further intervention. The chapter chairperson Minkumar KC chaired the meeting attended by 23 participants.

### 6. 'Mero Palika Mero Chaso' – SMS My Voice (SMV) campaign encouraging youth in COVID-19 response

The CS:MAP SMV campaign through its Facebook page *Ma Khaandina* and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, motivated youth in various parts of the country to initiate and share their efforts in the COVID-19 response in their communities. From August 16-31, the campaign has received over 121 calls on IVR and three video messages through the Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/MaKhaandina>). In these calls and messages, the youth shared their experiences of promoting awareness, collaborative efforts in quarantine management, promotion of safety measures, ensuring availability of medical supplies to frontline responders, ambulance services, and other initiatives. They also discussed about access and safety and security concerns for women, children and differently abled persons in quarantine and isolation.

### 7. Radio Dialogue on COVID-19 Impact and Mitigation in Sindhuli

On August 28, HURADEC Nepal organized a radio dialogue program on the impact and mitigation of COVID -19 in Sindhuli, in collaboration with Radio Sindhuligadi Community FM.

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The Kamalamai municipality mayor Khadga Bahadur Khatri, Sindhuli NGO Federation President Bedraj Dahal, Sindhuli Hospital Medical Superintendent Dr. Laxman Khadka, and former president of the Sindhuli chapter of Federation of Nepali Journalists Raj Kumar Karki, talked about their efforts and expressed commitment in addressing COVID-19.

Mayor Khatri expressed commitment to transparently maintain COVID-19 related income and expenditure, and immediately make public the details on the official website of the municipality. He also shared information about the 50-bed isolation ward being developed by the municipality, and its management plan. The Sindhuli NGO Federation President Dahal, urged local governments to disclose their COVID-19 expenditure through on a regular basis through their websites.

Similarly, hospital superintendent Dr. Khadka talked about how the lack of medical staff had impacted the quality of services being delivered from the hospital. Radio Sindhuligadi Community FM broadcast the dialogue live and HURADEC Nepal broadcast the event live via Facebook and YouTube.

## 8. Public Discussion Program on Gorkha's COVID-19 Response



On August 22, 2020 SOCH Nepal conducted a public discussion on COVID-19 response in the Gorkha district. The Chief District Officer (CDO) of Gorkha, the mayor of Gorkha municipality and the coordinator of *Nagarik Sajha Sawal* (local Health, Education, Agriculture and Disaster - HEAD network) were the guests in the program. The participants raised relevant issues at the discussions via phone calls and social media messages.

An urgent issue of stricter district border control was raised in the discussion, for reducing the transmission of COVID-19. The CDO committed for stricter control at district borders, as well as to establish an inclusive oversight group in communities for effective management of quarantine and isolation centers, ensuring safety and gender responsiveness, as well as to promote the collaboration between CSOs and media at all local levels. Similarly, the mayor shared some of their initiations on COVID-19 response, such as purchase of a VTM machine for testing, special programs designed for returnee migrants, establishment of food banks for people in need, and promotion of transparency and accountability by disseminating information on municipal income and expenditure.

The program was broadcast live through Civil Khabar and Radio Gorkha 92.8 Megahertz. The program garnered six thousand views and reached more than fifteen thousand people.

## 9. Public Discussion on Okhaldhunga's COVID-19 Response

On August 23, 2020 SOCH Nepal conducted a public discussion on COVID-19 response in the Okhaldhunga district. The Chief District Officer (CDO) of Okhaldhunga, the Chief Public Health Officer and Vice Chair of FNJ were the guests in the program.

The safety of journalists working at the frontline was a concern raised by FNJ in the discussion. This led to the CDO committing to distribute PPE sets to journalists from the Command Post. Responding to the queries presented by the locals through phone calls or social media, the CDO highlighted initiatives taken by the district for effective quarantine and isolation management. However, it was accepted that these centers are not at par with standards set by the Nepal government, and both officials expressed their commitment to improve their quality. A commitment was also made to allocate separate health workers in the district holding centers and health post to minimize disease spread.



The collaboration between CSOs, media and government for generating awareness on COVID-19 and its preventive measures, was emphasized in the discussion. The administration also committed to promote local agricultural products at the weekly markets while managing crowds in markets all over the district. Addressing the common concern of limited availability of testing facilities, the CDO also committed to increase the number of PCR tests.

Disclaimer: This 'COVID-19 Situation Report' is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID.) The information in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government. The information is collected and verified in/through various GON sources including respective municipalities and provincial governments where CS:MAP is working.