

CASE STUDY

Media mentoring in Nepal: helping journalists write better stories on urban health issues



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Parbat Portel, workshop participant, Biratnagar

PHOTO: Workshop journalists during fieldwork in a slum area are briefed by their media mentors

Through an innovative project run with the support of COMDIS-HSD and the Ministry of Health and Population, HERD conducted 7 media workshops with 118 journalists to sensitise them to urban health issues, as well as improve their capacity to produce better stories on urban health matters.

Parbat Portel, participant at the Biratnagar workshop said: 'We have attended a lot of workshops and most of them were similar.

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During the media workshops, public health and media experts led technical

sessions. Rajesh Ghimire, a seasoned media professional in Nepal, highlighted the current context of health journalism across the country.

Ghimire spoke about how the existing gaps in the media sector, especially the preference for publishing mainly sensational news rather than stories of public concern. Through his promotion and advocacy of journalism at each workshop, good practices were highlighted.

It is a known fact that investigative journalism is expensive and time-consuming for journalists who are under-paid and not paid regularly. Despite this grim picture, Ghimire stressed the need for journalists to apply some of the techniques that encourage and promote the publication of powerful stories.

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Rajesh Ghimire,
media expert



Field visits: putting theory into practice

During the field visits, journalists were particularly encouraged to observe the situation from a 'development' angle trying to understand the root causes behind the problem rather than just documenting the events and incidents.

The fieldwork involved visiting key personnel in District Health Offices, Municipal Cooperation Offices, and meeting people in slums and factories to document their stories related to urban health matters.



Fieldwork reveals the root causes of poor health



Stories published after the media workshop

After the field visits, the journalists' stories were reviewed by the HERD team, and journalists were given feedback on their work before their stories were published in their respective newspapers.

Amrita Anmol wrote in the *Kantipur Daily* about growing urbanisation and the problems for working mothers who need to look after and breastfeed newborns (top left).

Dipak Gyawali's story on how the urban poor spend large amounts of money at private clinics on services they could get free at Community Urban Health Centres was published in the newspaper *Himal Khabarpatrika* (top right).

In *Rastriya Sandarva*, **Khema Basnet** focused on open defecation in poor areas and the need for the government to address this health risk (bottom).



The risks of poor sanitation are under-reported



Recognition and awards

As a result of their reporting following the workshops, some journalists have received national and regional awards:

Benup Raj Bhattarai (top left), a journalist with *Ilam*, received the Mental Health Journalism Award 2014 from the Mental Health Association.

Prabin Dhakal (bottom left) from *Nagarik Daily* gained recognition for his contribution to the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, 2014.

Manish Gautam (top right) of *The Kathmandu Post* received the Mental Health Journalism Award 2015 from the Mental Health Association.



12/16



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