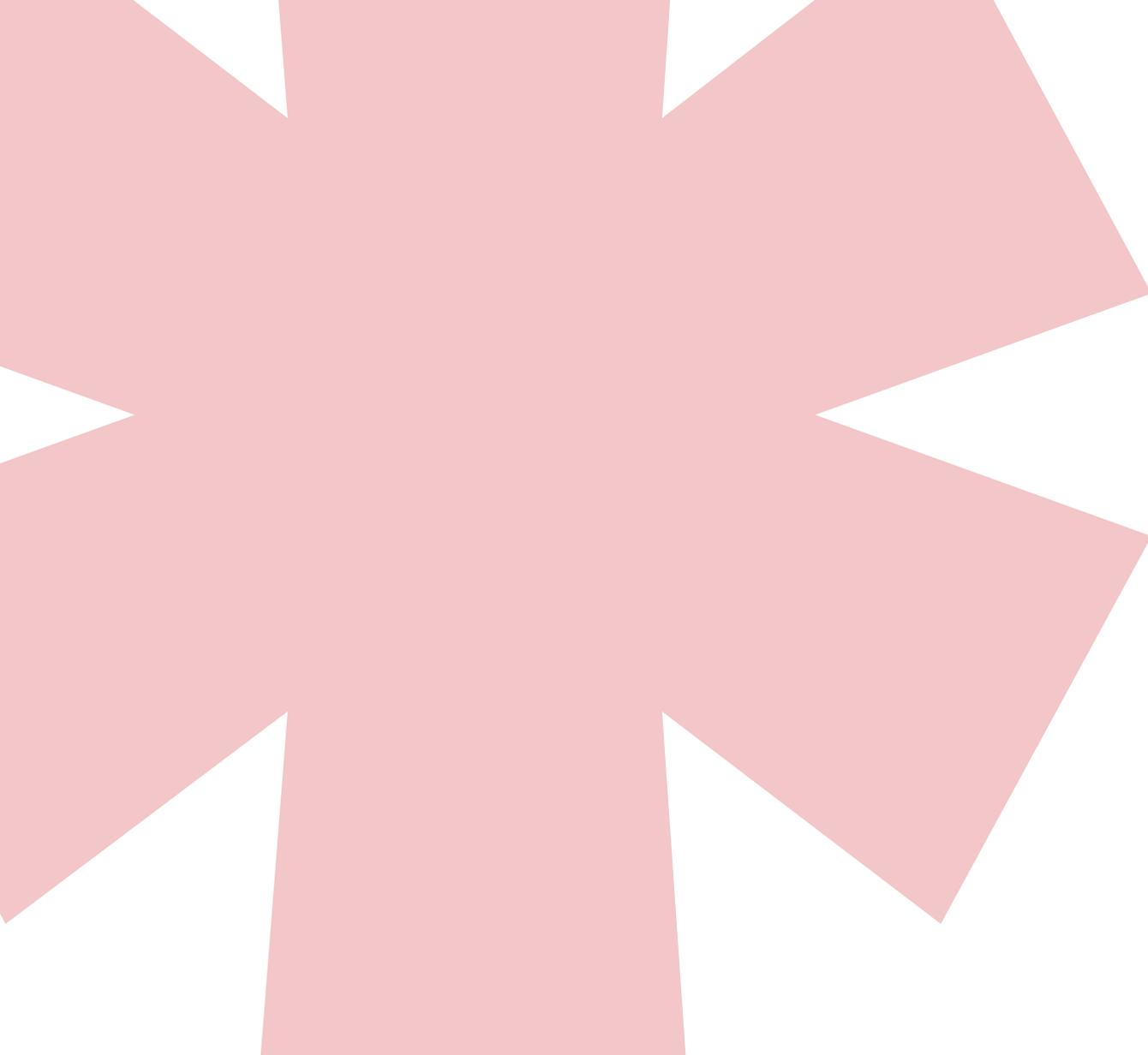


* vikes

“Supporting Democracy
through Digital Investigative
Journalism in Nepal”

EVALUATION REPORT



PROJECT IMPLEMENTED BY
**Centre of Investigative Journalism - Nepal & Finnish
Foundation for Media and Development (VIKES)**

WITH SUPPORT FROM
Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland

EVALUATORS
**The Writing Workshop P. Ltd.
Lalitpur, Nepal**

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Executive Summary

 This evaluation was carried out between November 2018 and January 2019 focusing on a two-year project implemented by CIJ Nepal with support from Vikes. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland funded the project. The project was the third in the series done by the two organizations starting in 2010.

The evaluation was done by The Writing Workshop P. Ltd. a company that specializes on strategic communication and media development planning and support. Two former journalists were engaged in the evaluation.

The evaluators employed a consultative approach and worked with both CIJ Nepal and Vikes and the project stakeholders to ensure that the exercise achieved optimal results, while also being independent and unbiased. Standard evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact were used. The views of the different groups were considered, analysed and triangulated to arrive at conclusions.

The project was appropriate in that it marked a move towards specialisation (digital investigative journalism) as against regular investigative journalism. However, a review of the content of some stories suggested that there was still need for training on classical investigative journalism linked to story production as requirement for certification. The 2017-18 trainings had contributed towards enhancing skills and confidence of trainees, particularly those who had produced stories.

There was consistency in program approach in terms of how trainings were organized and how journalists were supported to produce stories, and there has been an increase in the number of stories produced.

The training in 2017-18 was designed to impart digital journalism skills, which was perhaps why the weightage on foundational skills such as writing and ethics, was either low or missing. There was no session on ethics, or a dedicated session on writing techniques. Safety of journalists is another area of training that could be considered because investigative reporting can be dangerous.

Generally, despite the institutional capacity building support received by CIJ Nepal the evaluators found weak documentation and record keeping that made it difficult to verify outputs against work done, or to measure institutional progress more definitively.

Major findings

1. **The stories in 2017-18 covered a large range of topics, which reflected the diverse issues facing Nepali society. Maintaining a balance between diversity and focus can be challenging, because imbalance can dilute impact and also make follow up difficult.**
2. **CIJ Nepal had multiple channels for disseminating stories but it did not have a policy for promoting stories on various channels including social media, and this was done as and when needed.**
3. **Gender representation was low in CIJ Nepal trainings carried out with Vikes support over the years. It was very low in the 2017 training while in 2018 the male-female trainee mix was equal (seven each). Overall about 15 per cent women were trained in all Vikes-supported trainings since 2011. The representation of ethnic groups and minorities was also low both in 2017 and 2018.**

4. The course outline showed gaps in terms of information on the knowledge and skills transferred because no lesson plans and training material (other than some power points) were available for review. Further, the course outline that was available had little or no time for hands-on exercises and class work, nor did it have adequate time for instructions on foundational skills such as writing, and ethics.
5. The capacities of trainees in the 2017-18 cohort differed in terms of their knowledge and skills about journalism that could have affected the pace of teaching learning, and also the learning expectations and experiences of trainees. This could have resulted because CIJ Nepal did not have a practice of doing training needs assessments or evaluating trainings with pre- and post- surveys.
6. The selection criteria of CIJ Nepal for trainees required journalists to have 3-years experience and to have done investigative journalism (a story was needed to be submitted with the application). This requirement may have prevented candidates with fewer years of experience in media, those from underrepresented groups, and those with interest and promise from applying for the training.
7. The evaluators did not find logical links between planned activities and the stated goals in the project document. It was therefore difficult to measure definitive impact in terms of stories supported by Vikes. One CIJ story on fake education qualifications of the Chief Justice had triggered other stories in media that eventually led to his ouster. While this story could have contributed towards the larger impact, there was no way to attribute the ouster only to the CIJ Nepal story.
8. Review of stories suggested issues related to professionalism, writing and editing that were observed could have resulted from the pressures to do more stories. This had affected the overall quality of output
9. Each trainee attending training was not required to produce a story for completion because a comparison of story produced and trainee list showed that some trainees had done more than one story, while others had done no story.
10. There were some programs activities in the log frame that did not have a corresponding budget and had to be swapped with another activity.

Recommendations

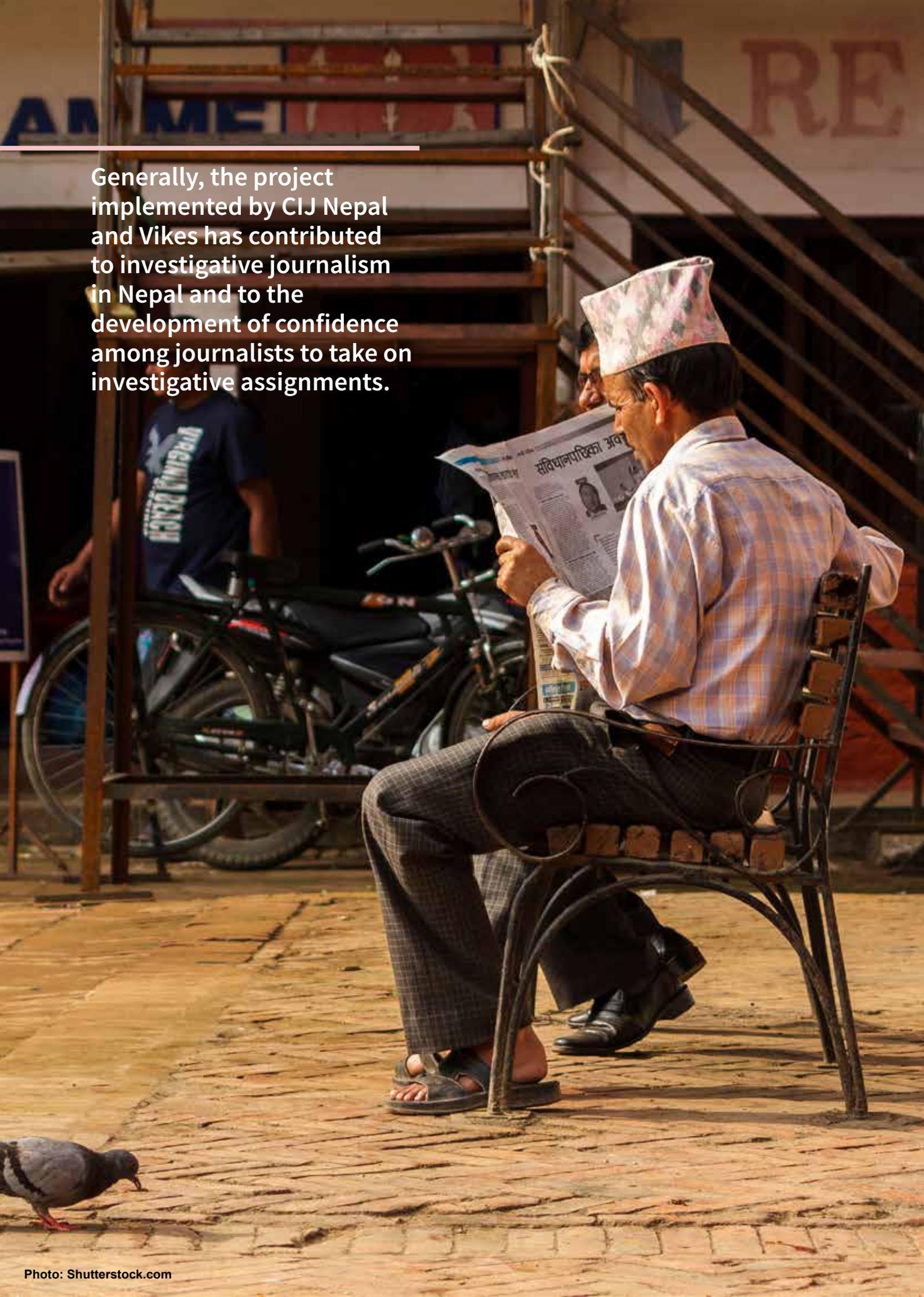
CIJ Nepal has made a contribution to introducing and promoting investigative journalism and its activities need to be continued, particularly given the efforts of Nepal to democratize and the introduction on new governance structure in the country. Generally, the project implemented by CIJ Nepal and Vikes has contributed to investigative journalism in Nepal and to the development of confidence among journalists to take on investigative assignments. Some trainees also received awards and citations. The trainings have also provided journalists opportunities to spend more time researching stories and working with mentors to produce copy. However, there also were areas where CIJ Nepal and Vikes could take actions to further enhance the overall quality and impact of the investigative projects. The following are recommendations from the evaluation.

1. Consider focusing investigations on a select number of themes related to the overall goals to produce a larger overall impact. This is something that could be identified during project formulation to take into account the major local/ contextual issues that require to be investigated.
2. Review website and redesign the interface with audiences to make it more user friendly as a strategy to retain visitors. Continue use of social media to promote stories at regular intervals -- this would require a story production and posting policy, and a policy for engagement with audiences on the Internet sites.
3. Consider organizing training only for women journalists and journalists from under represented groups in investigative journalism for at least a year to narrow down the gender and representation gap in Nepali journalism -- design and organize trainings for attracting women from different stages of their careers in print, broadcasting and online media.
4. Introduce the practice of mandatorily preparing lesson plans and training

materials and to design and plan trainings with adequate time for classwork and hands-on exercises on investigation skills, and foundational skills such as writing. Include sessions on professionalism, ethics and safety at all trainings.

5. Include trainees with similar capacities at trainings. This would require introducing standardized pre-training tests on skills knowledge and written exercises to test writing skills, and post training tests to measuring learning.
6. Prepare trainee selection criteria with special provisions for including women candidates and those from underrepresented groups. Such criteria could consider provisions applicable to different types of training -- basic investigative journalism, refresher trainings, training on advanced investigative skills, etc.
7. Require each trainee to mandatorily produce a story to complete the course for certification, and discourage repeat story-support opportunities for trainees as far as possible as a strategy to provide fair learning opportunities to newer candidates.
8. Consider doing fewer but high quality -- even if fewer -- investigative stories rather than in-depth reports on issues. Further, CIJ should organize critical reflection sessions on stories that have been published at least once every six months involving journalists and experts not directly associated in the production to ensure quality control and performance improvement.
9. Prepare a five-year strategic plan and an action plan for CIJ Nepal, and use the plan to design projects and activities for different donors. Use planning exercise to review goals and objectives of CIJ Nepal -- supporting investigative journalism and/or producing in-depth reports, for example -- to clarify programmatic focus for the coming years.
10. Prepare policies on story promotion and audience engagement on the Internet and social media as part of the strategic planning effort.
11. Use strategic plan as basis for seeking and coordinating donor support for different types of investigative efforts, with regular donor coordination meetings, required.
12. Plan projects with goal-output links and clear activity budgets to avoid swapping activities in the event of budget shortfalls.

Generally, the project implemented by CIJ Nepal and Vikes has contributed to investigative journalism in Nepal and to the development of confidence among journalists to take on investigative assignments.



1. Introduction

1.1 Context and project background

In 2017/18 Nepal held three elections under the new Constitution of Nepal (2015). The election marked the first efforts to institutionalize the new constitution that has provided for three tiers of government -- federal, state/province, and local/municipal -- and shift of both authority and resources to these levels. Under the new governance structure authority and funds flow through 752 municipal/local, seven provincial and one federal government. The new state structure takes decisions closer to the people to support overall democratization and stability in Nepal. The local governments will become the seat of decisions that will directly affect citizens and therefore will be of interest not only locally, but also in context of overall democratization and peace building in Nepal.

The authorities vested by the Constitution at the local and provincial level, and concurrent powers these levels share with the federal government suggest that the local governments will have full say in deciding development spending, local taxation, including some regulation of media, among others. This context makes good journalism more relevant because information on decisions and the decision-making processes at local government levels will be critical for “increasing democratic ownership of development, freedom of media and right to open access to information” that were among the goals outlined in the just completed project under evaluation. These overall objectives or the impact that the Centre for Investigative Journalism- Nepal (CIJ-Nepal) and the Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (VIKES) had intended to attain during the project period (2017-18) are therefore still relevant.

According to documents made available by CIJ Nepal, the project was conceived after the new constitution was promulgated, a time when Nepal had scored 27 (zero = most corrupt, 100 = cleanest) and ranked 130/168 in Transparency International’s corruption Perception Index 2015. The Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders had ranked Nepal 105th in 2015 and 2016, 100 in 2017 and 106 in 2018 (a lower score indicates greater freedoms). This index is based on a survey with questions about pluralism, media independence environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and infrastructure.¹ The project “Supporting Democracy through Digital Investigative Journalism in Nepal” (the project) had anticipated improvements in Nepal’s position in such indicators at the impact level through digital investigative journalism.

In 2018, Transparency International had given Nepal a score of 31/100, a slight improvement over 2015, and ranked Nepal 131 among 180 countries (using 2017 data).² Similarly, Freedom House had ranked Nepal 106th in 2018. The Freedom House index is based on a ranking of media independence, self-censorship, the rule of law, transparency and abuses. In 2015 the press freedom score assigned by Freedom House was 55.³ Overall, while there has been a slight decrease in corruption based on

¹ <https://rsf.org/en/nepal>

² https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017

³ https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2015#.W_QL7i17GgA

the Transparency score, the same cannot be said for press freedoms, and freedom of expression, given the broad stated restrictive clauses that in Nepal's new Constitution that come together with the guarantees of media freedoms.

1.2 “Supporting Democracy through Digital Investigative Journalism in Nepal”

CIJ Nepal carried out the project with support from VIKES in 2017-2018. The main activities involved organizing two cycles of training on digital investigative journalism in 2017 and 2018 and supporting trainees to prepare investigative reports. The project was the continuation of a partnership between the two organizations that began in September 2010, when the first project supported by the Finnish Foreign Ministry was implemented. According to the project proposal, at the time the project under review was conceived CIJ had already trained about 150 journalists on investigative journalism in the preceding five years. This was reason why the project under review had sought transfer specialized skills in investigations using digital tools, and to introduce trainees to multimedia journalism.

The overall objective of the project was to “uphold freedom of information and strengthen the democratic ownership of development” and the immediate objectives were, “to impart digital skills to investigative reporters and further establish their effectiveness and relevance in Nepali media.” Briefly the project had anticipated the following outputs: train 24 journalists on digital, use the best trained journalists as trainers in future trainings, develop a network of investigative reporters with digital skills across the country and build links with international investigative journalist networks to encourage cross-border investigations, while also contributing towards enhancing CIJ's institutional capacity through national and international exposures. (See: Annex-1 for Logical framework)

1.3 Project description

CIJ Nepal began supporting investigative journalism in the mid-1990s as a unit under Himal Association, and registered as a non-governmental organization in 2007. Its role has largely been to train journalists and support the production of media content for dissemination through established media first (and on its website) and later on the CIJ Nepal portal. Some stories are also first published by CIJ Nepal. All stories produced are provided to media free of cost.

Vikes supported the project on digital investigative journalism after its earlier “Supporting Democracy and Peace-building through Investigative Journalism in Nepal” came to an end in 2015. Its role was to provide financial assistance and technical support and CIJ Nepal implemented the activities in Nepal.

The project ‘Supporting Democracy through Digital Investigative Journalism in Nepal’ aimed to train and support 24 journalists in the use of digital journalism tools, produce investigative content, and to use the trained journalists as trainers to train other journalists in the future. The other purpose of the project was to support CIJ to develop institutional capacity, expand its network of trained reporters and link them with international networks. The planned outputs for the project were:

1. **“24 journalists will receive training on digital investigative reporting skills. Selected trainees may receive further grooming through internship or participation in international seminars and conferences.**
2. **“CIJ will use the resource pool of trained digital investigative journalists as trainers in the future. Also the trained journalists will improve the quality of investigative reporting in their respective newsrooms.**

3. **“A network of investigative journalists, equipped with multi-media and other digital journalism skills will be developed within the country. The project will also work to link the journalists with international network of investigative journalists to encourage cross-border investigations.**
4. **“CIJ’s institutional capacity will be strengthened through national and international exposure.”**

The trainings were carried out in two rounds, one in 2017 and the other in 2018. Thereafter, the trainees were expected to work and produce stories with CIJ-Nepal covering the costs, mentoring and editorial support. Upon completion the fellows either placed their stories in the media where they worked or CIJ Nepal posted them on its website for use by all media.

The first part of the training covered basic introduction to investigative journalism. Part two of the training included instructions on digital investigative journalism techniques. The trainees were taught digital skills including mining and analysing data using Excel, data-visualization and mapping and other Internet-related skills. In the third phase some trainees used the skills to produce multimedia stories. CIJ planned to train and support 24 journalists through these two trainings.

Another activity of the project was to have trainers and trainees working together to develop tip-sheets to be compiled and placed on the CIJ-Nepal website for use by interested journalists. During evaluation it was learnt that this activity was swapped for an investigative journalism manual when it was realized that the tip sheets had not been budgeted for. To incentivize trainings and investigative journalism, the project had provision for supporting participation of selected trainees/journalists in international internships/exposure opportunities. An international resource person and Vikes staff supported the trainings that were largely carried out by Nepali trainers.

1.4 Objectives and scope of evaluation

The scope of the evaluation was to assess the efficiency, relevance and effectiveness of support provided to VIKES and CIJ-Nepal by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Finland), while also assessing whether or not the project attained its objectives and outputs. The Terms of Reference (See: Annex-1) laid down the goals and objectives of the evaluation and covered the project from 2017 to 2018 where CIJ-Nepal and Vikes sought to focus on digital investigative journalism, develop outstanding trainees as future trainers, and strengthen the capacity of CIJ-Nepal. The overall purpose for supporting digital investigative reporting was to foster accountability and improve governance in Nepal, after the promulgation of the new Constitution.

The major answers sought by this evaluation was whether or not the project partners delivered what was promised in the proposal and accompanying logical framework, were the activities designed and executed correctly (relevance and efficiency), and impact resulting from the project in terms of contribution to democratic development, access to independently produced information/public debate and/or freedom of expression in Nepal.

Additionally, the ToR required evaluators to assess contribution of CIJ towards improving the quality of digital investigative journalism directly or indirectly, whether or not it had implemented recommendations from previous evaluations, and the capacity building support provided to CIJ by Vikes. Another ToR requirement was to assess CIJ’s learning from the project for a potential future project for supporting female journalists in Nepal. The other question that the evaluation has attempted to seek answers to is whether the results of the project were sustainable.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology for the evaluation included various tools such as review/analysis of some content produced by CIJ, feedback obtained from a mini-survey of a sample of 12 out of 28 trainees, and a group meeting with CIJ-Nepal executive committee and staffs. The methodology included key informant interviews with some editors who had used CIJ-Nepal content, telephone interviews with some trainers, and some follow up interviews with CIJ-trainees selected for further capacity development opportunities.

The documents reviewed included project proposal and reports, training curricula and training materials, training lists and a report from an earlier evaluation. Training related documents provided by CIJ included course outlines and slides used by some (not all) trainers. The reading notes and tip sheets mentioned in the course outline were not available for review.

The survey of 12 trainees was carried out via email, based on a list provided by CIJ. Similarly, the stories for content review were also based on a sample suggested by CIJ. A list of all trainees supported by Vikes was obtained from CIJ to assess gender representation. An attempt was made to disaggregate data obtained from CIJ based on gender, caste and ethnicity but this was not done because last names alone did not allow accurate identification. In 2017-18 there were 9 women among 28 trainees. However, not all trainees attended both the sessions (See: Annex-5).

The evaluators prepared a checklist and evaluation tools (see: Annex:3) to be employed, including general questions for the range of stakeholders. The major documents reviewed included the project document (proposal and log frame) and the course outline used in trainings in 2017 and 2018.

The evaluation is based on documents made available by CIJ Nepal and information provided by the CIJ officials and project manager. A discussion with CIJ Nepal course coordinator/ editor and office holders of the executive committee, including chairperson also informed the evaluation. To avoid selection biases, the evaluators had asked CIJ to select and suggest the names of editors to interview, trainees to be included in mini-survey, and the stories to be analysed. CIJ Nepal had suggested reviewing the content of eight stories produced by the trainees in 2017-18. The evaluators reviewed two of the suggested stories based on a checklist and carried out rapid reviews of other stories. Two of the reviews have been reported in detail (See: Annex-9). The evaluators read the remaining stories, discussed the content and have made brief comments on them. This change in approach was communicated to CIJ Nepal at the meeting on 26 November. Follow up telephone and in-person interviews were held with some three trainees to assess learning and to clarify some of their statements in the mini-survey. The relevant quotes are included as pull-out texts in the 'delivery of services section'.

1.6 Limitations

The evaluation had a limited budget and time frame, which is why in-person interviews with individual trainees were not done. The evaluation team did not do a content analysis of all the stories selected by CIJ because similar shortcomings were noticed in the ones that were reviewed and therefore only brief comments have been provided on content of the remaining stories.

2. Analysis and findings

2.1 Achievement analysis

The achievements of the project Supporting Democracy through Digital Investigative Journalism in Nepal have been measured against the outcomes and outputs set in the proposal and log frame.

2.1.1 Achievement of outcomes

The expected outcomes of Vikes's program to support Supporting Democracy through Digital Investigative Journalism in Nepal were increased attention and space in mainstream media to strengthened capacity of journalists and the partner organization, and improved the democratic ownership of development. Following are the project achievements contributing to the outcomes.

Expected Outcome	Achievement/Evidence
Increased visibility among public	<p>The CIJ webpage had 64,446 new users and (total views: 653,705) in November. Similarly, In November-end, CIJ had 2565 followers on Twitter. The page had 3292 likes on 1 December 2018.</p> <p>'Hello Sarkar' -- an official portal of Nepal Government to register complaints -- tagged CIJ Nepal to its instruction provided to public agencies to resolve the complaint. This suggests that its work has been noticed also in government. Similarly, CIJ Nepal's social media have received comments with story ideas and/or why certain issues were not investigated, which indicates increased visibility and public interest in its work. A district administration officer started an investigation on wrongdoing related to issuance of poverty ID cards, after a story CIJ story was published in media.</p> <p>A TV channel has used information in CIJ Nepal stories (under another project) in its broadcasts, which is an example of how its stories are being noticed by media</p>
Strong network with mainstream media	<p>CIJ Nepal has been able to place articles in mainstream media that has helped expand its reach out to wider audiences (because the media also post the story on their sites) CIJ did not have records on the number of such stories.</p>
Local/ regional issues magnified	<p>Local, regional stories prepared by CIJ Nepal have received attention at national level after media carried them. Media have also followed up some of the stories. CIJ did not have records of the number of stories that were followed up.</p>

2.1.2 Observations and comments on outcome

The evaluators did not find concrete indicators in the log frame for measuring the claimed achievements; therefore the achievements stated by CIJ-Nepal could not be compared with what was planned. Generally, the achievement was in the direction towards contributing to some of the planned outcomes. The matrix above shows the evidence and outputs that contributed towards achieving some of outcome statements, while some statements did not have supporting outputs planned and therefore could not be commented upon. Areas needing attention as regards the achievements are:

- Define outcome indicators in concrete/measurable terms, as that can guide the project management in developing interventions, prioritizing activities and management focus. The outcome -- increased visibility among public, for example -- could be measured through audience surveys in future evaluations.
- Other measurable outcomes were observed in terms of journalists trained. However, reviews of sample content (see below) suggested that increased attention is still required in areas of writing and editing skills, identification of issues to investigate, network building and to increase the number of investigative journalists, and the quality of their work.

2.2 Achievement of outputs

The table below provides a summary of the project outputs during the evaluation period (2017 and 2018).

Activities/output areas	Achievement/status	Remarks
Training on updating investigative journalistic skills and incorporating digital applications.	Two trainings (and two follow up trainings) were organized. 28 journalists trained on using digital tools for storytelling, create more interactive and multimedia contents, and learned ways to get more exposure for stories in digital platforms Training participants included 15 from the print media, 5 from television, 4 from radio and 4 from online news portals.	The project has exceeded training target (24 for 2017-18). CIJ did not have disaggregated caste and ethnicity lists for trainees but said it had reached out to marginalized and vulnerable communities as well.
Development of investigative contents	Total 20 stories of 20 planned for 2017-18 were produced by December 2018. Not all stories were done by 2017-18 trainees	Most stories were used in the print media whereas in some instances some television stations also used information from some stories in their content. (The stories used could not be traced to specific projects)
Capacity building of best 2 trainees each from 2017 and 2018 for visits to international newsrooms	Two trainees from 2017 and two from 2018 travelled to the Philippines Centre for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) and the Asian Investigative Journalism Conference (AIJC) in South Korea, respectively.	The trainees were able to interact with journalists from different countries and got to know about each other's work. The trainees had submitted reports on their visits to CIJ Nepal. An interaction was also held at CIJ after one of the visits.
Capacity building of CIJ itself from training its staffs and exposure visit of CIJ aboard to journalistic conference worldwide.	CIJ institution capacity strengthened through a training of one web-master on video editing. CIJ chairperson, course coordinator and project manager visited Finland as part of capacity building CIJ course coordinator/editor and Chairperson attended the GIJC conference in 2017 and 2018	No reports on the visits or training were available for review. Vikes informed by email that CIJ visitors participated in various meetings in Finland, including one with the Foreign Ministry. The CIJ visitors discussed the election outcomes and provincial system.
Network of trained journalists formed and used	No formal network of trained journalists formed (the project document did not specify the type of network intended) CIJ has used some trainees as resource persons to share their experiences at trainings. Specific number of trainees used, as resource persons, was not available.	The network indicated in the output was not clearly defined in the project.

2.2.1 Observations and comments on outputs

An examination of the activities and outputs achieved as compared to the activities planned shows that the project was able to produce the envisaged outputs planned. However, since the outputs were not clearly and quantitatively defined in the project document it was difficult to measure all of them accurately. The evaluation recommends

that output areas be defined more precisely and clearly in future engagements. The exposure of trainees to international investigative reporting environments had contributed to their development. A trainee who had been on one such visit said he had developed contacts and was working on an investigation with an international partner. The evaluation found that exposure visits had contributed to capacity building of journalists, and agreed to the approach of selecting the best trainees for the visits. The capacity transferred to CIJ-N as an institution was difficult to measure as relevant reports were not available. No outputs were noted as regards building a network of investigative journalists, equipped with multi-media as stated in the project document, and there was no evidence to verify some activities such as capacity building (viz., resource pool journalists -- best of trainees develop their own module and tip-sheets relevant and useful for Nepali journalists activities). CIJ-N informed the evaluation that the tip sheets had been swapped for preparing a handbook/manual, as there was a budget mismatch to the planned activities.

2.3 Unplanned and additional achievements

CIJ Nepal said that exposure in GIJC conferences had made its work noticed internationally. One example was the invitation extended by International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) to be its Nepal partner to investigate Panama Papers relevant to Nepal's context. The following CIJ trainees of 2017 and 2018 have received awards and citations:



Photo: Bidhya Rai

- 2017**
- Basanta Pratap Singh was awarded a prize by the United Mission to Nepal for supporting and writing on women rights. Kantipur daily also awarded him a prize for being the best district reporter.
 - Krishna Gyawali was awarded the Barbara Adams Investigative Journalism Award by Barbara Peace Foundation Nepal. (Mr. Gyawali said he was awarded for the investigation of tax fraud).
 - Pramod Acharya, a trainee, later worked as Assistant Editor at CIJ for a year.
- 2018**
- Nimendra Shahi's efforts were recognized by the District Children's Rights Forum for his contribution to child rights for his story on children sent to outside the municipality for work as household help.



The exposure of trainees to international investigative reporting environments has contributed to their development.

3. Performance analysis by the evaluation criteria

3.1 Relevance

The evaluation found that the project had aimed addressing the prevailing needs and issues facing Nepali journalism, and some of the activities and outputs can be assessed to be contributing to some of the outcomes, together with outputs of other projects that the CIJ Nepal was implementing. For example, some TV channels had picked up stories by CIJ (under another project) and used it in their broadcasts. It was difficult to track definitive impact because sometimes story was done under one project and follow up with funds from another project.

An improvement area noted by the evaluation is the definition of project outcomes, outputs and activities more clearly, coherently, concretely, and thereafter identifying measurable indicators of achievement. For example, it was not possible to derive direct contributions of the outputs to the overall impact anticipated by the project. Another area of improvement is matching intensity and priority of activities with the context (see below). Further, a comprehensive evaluation of CIJ-N could result in information on overall impact of the organization towards the development of investigative journalism in Nepal.

3.1.1 National and sectoral context

A review of stories and information provided by CIJ Nepal suggested that it has had occasional ground breaking investigations that were also followed up by other media. It had done some investigative reports on the work of local governments formed after the elections of 2017 and 2018. However, there were possibilities to focus stories of specific issues related to local government decisions and activities as these related directly to democratic governance. One example could be the functioning of judicial committees at the municipal level as these have authority to adjudicate civil cases, another could be on development activities carried out by municipalities. Stories commissioned by CIJ Nepal in 2017 and 2018 covered a range of issues but given the recent changes in the governance structure, it would be important for CIJ Nepal to expand investigations at the local level because that is where decisions that affect the development of local communities rests and could be a direct contribution to democratic governance.

3.1.2 CIJ context

CIJ Nepal has so far trained 150 journalists with support from Vikes. Not all of them are members of the organization, whose membership has now reached 76. In 2017/2018 CIJ Nepal added nine trainees supported by Vikes as members, all of them women. This has taken the percentage of women members at CIJ Nepal to about 15 per cent, which still remains low given representation of women mandated by the constitution (33%). CIJ Nepal and Vikes were considering developing a project to support women journalists, which could provide an opportunity for the organization to attract more women to become members.

3.1.3 Donor context

Support from VIKES was important for CIJ particularly in its formative years, according to a founder member, and also for providing journalists exposure to international trends in investigating reporting. Support for investigative journalism provided by Vikes (and the Government of Finland) was important to CIJ Nepal, particularly given the shrinking donor funding for media development in Nepal. The founding member said it was VIKES support that assisted the organization to establish a foothold after the organization was formally registered as an independent non-governmental organization.

CIJ Nepal had a number of donors in 2017/18, and most of the support had either ended or was ending in December 2018. Support from the Alliance for Dialogue/Open Society Foundation was ending in December and the donor was anticipating a no-cost extension, because some activities remained to be completed. CIJ Nepal board members said that they were negotiating new projects with The Asia Foundation and UNICEF Nepal after on going projects came to an end.

3.1.4 Beneficiaries' context

CIJ Nepal has trained 178 journalists on different skills related to investigative journalism with Vikes support (project cycles: 2010-11, 2013-15, and 2017-18). The total number of women journalists trained with Vikes support so far number 26 (17.3%). Generally, the number of women trainees was low, and well below the inclusion requirements in the Constitution (33%). One reason CIJ said for this was the low number of applicants, which in turn could have been caused by the generally higher bar set by the CIJ selection criteria (discussed elsewhere). CIJ Nepal can consider focusing on training only women journalists in different levels of investigative journalism (basic, intermediate, advanced, etc.) to narrow down the gender gap among trainees -- something that could also assist in increasing the representation of women in the organization.

The beneficiaries of training were generally satisfied with the capacity building support/training provided by CIJ Nepal and it is likely there will be demand for training also in the coming years. A review of trainee attendance suggested that not all trainees had completed both the training rounds. Similarly, reviews of the stories produced in 2017-18 and interviews with some trainers indicated that there is still need for good, basic investigative journalism training with attention to writing, ethics, and hands on work. This they said would enable trainees to derive more benefits from new investigative tools. Another trainer said there was need for intensive writing sessions to further enhance the quality of stories.

3.1.5 Relevance of project design

An improvement area noted by the evaluation is the definition of project outcomes, outputs and activities more clearly and concretely, and thereafter identifying measurable indicators of achievement. For example, it was not possible to derive direct contributions of the outputs to the overall impact anticipated by the project. This can be assisted by a strategic plan for the organization with clear goals and purpose, which can then be used as a basis for undertaking projects/activities to contribute to the overall goals. As another example, the project (2017-18) had anticipated building networks as an outcome, the activities could have included some meetings and get together of trainees that could have created a platform for network building. Another area of improvement is matching intensity and priority of activities with the context.

Related to project design, a review of the stories produced in 2017-18 and interviews with trainers indicated the need for CIJ-Nepal to focus on good, basic investigative

journalism training (with attention to writing, ethics, and hands-on work). Having trainings of different levels (basic, intermediate, advanced, etc.) for trainees with different capacities could assist CIJ Nepal better plan and deliver training to match the different needs.

3.2 Efficiency

The evaluation was based on consultations and interviews with a small number of trainees, trainers and mentors owing to the constraints imposed by the time, therefore all aspects of efficiency were not examined. The information obtained and presented here is therefore indicative. The efficiency aspects of the project are discussed below.

3.2.1 Human resource engagement and deployment

The evaluation found that the project was implemented efficiently in terms of the human resources available. The following staffs had managed the project on a day-to-day basis.

- **Course Coordinator (Supported by VIKES)**
- **Program manager (Supported by VIKES)**
- **Finance officer**
- **Web-master**

Other human resources deployed by CIJ Nepal for the project were trainers and mentors who were hired for specific purposes. The CIJ Nepal had provided job descriptions to both the course coordinator who also took on editorial responsibilities and the project manager. An assistant editor supported the course coordinator/editor for about a year but the editor has been handling all editorial and course coordination responsibilities after the assistant editor left the organization for higher studies. Given the scope of the project, particularly trainings and story production (including workload of other projects) CIJ Nepal was under-staffed, particularly because producing 20 investigative stories in 24 months is not easy. Staffs at CIJ Nepal not directly supported by the Vikes project were supported either through the organization's core funds or other projects. CIJ Nepal had projects with other donors but those were not under the scope of this evaluation.

3.2.2 Implementation efficiency

The project was largely efficient in implementing planned activities. While the planned trainings were completed within the project timeframe, story production was slow and it was only in December that all the stories were completed. Some delays in training were caused by three elections (local, federal and provincial) and that -- perhaps -- explained the delays story production. The evaluation considers that the pace of work, given the uncertainties that were encountered during project implementation, to be satisfactory.

3.2.3 Observations on efficiency

The project was able to finalize all 20 investigative stories planned for the project period.

One activity, i.e. 'network of investigative journalists' was not clearly defined in the project document/activity list and therefore it was not possible to verify and report on its status. The course coordinator and board members said that they had an informal network of journalists in Kathmandu, and that their formal network comprised of the organization's membership. The resource pool of best trainees has not been formalized but CIJ Nepal said it had used some trainees as resource persons at trainings where they

had been asked to share their experiences. Some trainees had also served as mentors. However, the trainees had not prepared modules and tip-sheets mentioned in the logical framework of the project, which as learned later had been swapped for preparing a handbook/manual.

The evaluation did not do detailed analysis of the unit cost of activities or a budget analysis by output given the limitations in the scope of the exercise. However, estimates on the cost of production of a story that were discussed -- for example, the support provided to journalists -- and it was evident that the production cost was on the high side, given that CIJ Nepal did not have a mechanism to recover (let alone profit) the investment from media using the stories. CIJ Nepal said its non-profit status prevented it from selling stories, but this explanation needs to be explored further because there are other non-profit organizations that sell their products.

3.3 Effectiveness

3.3.1 Delivery of project services

The project was able to provide the promised services to the target groups. The main services provided were training to 28 journalists, mentoring and editorial support; capacity strengthening of CIJ through exposure visits abroad for CIJ leadership and staff, and the best journalists-trainee, and placement of investigative stories. The targets set by the project were achieved. However, as noted under the performance section, the activities undertaken cannot be said to be adequate for effectively contributing towards the planned outcomes mainly because it was difficult to find direct links of activities with the outcomes.

CIJ Nepal organized two trainings for 28 journalists. The trainings were carried out in two phases each year. The idea was to first introduce trainees to investigative journalism concepts and the second part of the training introduced them to new skills in investigative journalism -- on data and multimedia skills, in addition to some investigative journalism sessions.

The stories produced by CIJ were disseminated through the media where the journalists worked, and through its website, supported by promotions/announcements on CIJ's twitter handles. The website seemed to have a sizeable number of users but the bounce rate was high indicating the need to devise ways to retain audiences/readers (download data was not available). This could be done by enhancing the design of the website and making it more user friendly.

3.3.2 Timeliness of project intervention

Broadly the project activities were timely, particularly in a country that has had high corruption, as indicated by international indices on corruption, and shrinking space for free expression. Investigative journalism trainings were aimed at enabling journalists to expose corruption and irregularities and contribute towards making public officials accountable. The need for well-investigated, independently produced reports will remain a need in Nepal as in many countries of the world where media content has come under increasing influence of political and corporate organizations.

3.3.3 Timeliness of stories investigated

CIJ Nepal has produced a large number of investigative stories over the years, some of which have been ground-breaking such as the investigations on the courts, private hospitals and tax fraud. The stories done with VIKES support in 2017-18 covered a range of areas: plagiarism in academia, analysis of election manifestoes, policies of the central bank, stealing of social service funds by the powerful, mismanagement of



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NO PLACE TO HIDE
FOR INVESTORS

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A class split
planet?

Gyawaalibha
view
with Indira

the Kathmandu Post

The need for well-investigated, independently produced reports will remain a need in Nepal as in many countries of the world where media content has come under increasing influence of political and corporate organizations.

Photo: Eeva Simola

old vehicles at the parliament secretariat, employment of 31 couples and relatives at a public institution, the army's investment in commercial operations, misuse of passports, human trafficking, poverty IDs for the well off and indebtedness of a village. The range of issues covered made it difficult to track impacts in terms of accountability or what happened after the story was published -- CIJ Nepal also did not have a mechanism to do that.

The project had the overall objective of upholding freedom of information and strengthening the democratic ownership of development, the ability of CIJ to attain this was difficult to measure largely because of the lack of a system of documenting developments after stories were published and also because both 'upholding freedom of information' and 'strengthening democratic development' are very broad terms and were not defined in the context of the project.

For definitive measurement of impact, future projects could focus on corruption in specific sectors/areas, say for example local governance, or a particular sector such as agriculture or health. A strategic plan can assist CIJ Nepal to determine the focus of its efforts at least in terms of stories to produce for the medium term (5 years).

3.3.4 Quality of stories (themes covered, issues investigated, etc.)

The audiences/readers are the best judges for quality of journalistic content but because it was not possible to track down and interact with readers/users of CIJ Nepal's content, conclusive statements on quality have not been made. The awards that some CIJ trainees won in 2017-18 can be a proxy for assessing quality; another would be the engagement of audiences with CIJ content. Given that three journalists received some awards or citations, it can be said that content produced by CIJ Nepal's trainees has been better than that done by the peers. However, it was not possible to link the award to particular stories. That said some stories done by CIJ Nepal trainees have received very wide coverage and discussion on public platforms (examples, those on the former chief justice, tax frauds, medical education and malpractice, etc.).

The other indicator of quality is the use of stories by media organizations. This is an area where CIJ Nepal has done very well as many of its stories have been used by major Nepali media. Since CIJ Nepal did not have a proper monitoring and documentation of the use of its stories it was not possible to quantify the use. Editors consulted during the evaluation said that they had been using CIJ content, and value its training as it had assisted the capacity building of their staff -- an area where there is very little investment by media organizations. This suggests that the stories produced by CIJ are above average in terms of Nepali journalism but there is also room for improvement -- as indicated by the analysis of some content for this evaluation.

The evaluators found that media organizations were largely satisfied with the work done by CIJ Nepal and the training it had provided to reporters. An editor said that the reporter at the paper had done a story on carelessness of a contractor after which staff at the World Bank Nepal had come to make inquiries. The editor added that investigative journalism was a need in Nepal and CIJ Nepal had filled the gap, and contributed towards professionalism. The editor particularly remembered stories done by two reporters from three that had been sent for training. The editor said he would send reporters for training should more opportunities arise and stressed the need to train journalists in research skills. The trainees also largely found the trainings carried out in 2017-18 effective.

Another editor found improved skills in multimedia and use of info-graphics, and a general improvement of content done by district-based reporters. After one CIJ Nepal training one media organization and the trainee investigated migration of Nepali workers to Malaysia -- whose exploitation had been written about by media. But this

investigation focused on the different interest groups and companies sending the workers. According to the editor, this took the debate to a new level. In the story, the reporter was also able to get cross border reporting experience that was also noted by the editor. The editor was positive about sending reporters for training to CIJ Nepal but stressed that finding information and writing about it were not enough and that there was need for training on presentation -- in areas such as multimedia use, language, data analysis and visualization, etc.

3.3.5 Appropriateness of project implementation approach (planning of trainings, selection of trainees, trainers, mentors, etc.)

The project approach to implement activities was logical, in the sense that trainees were first introduced to investigative journalism, and later assigned stories to work on that CIJ Nepal supported them to complete. One reason, why the trainings were organized in two phases was because if done in one phase it would have resulted in absence of trainees from newsrooms for extended periods. However, even with two phases some trainees did not attend both the sessions. Further, since the trainings were phased the course outline could have included some hand-on sessions in the second phase for finalizing story ideas, which the CIJ said usually, took some time after the training was over (and hence resulted in delays in story production).

There were two women trainees in 2017. The second training held in 2018 was balanced gender-wise -- seven men and seven women. Still the overall number of women in trainings supported by Vikes so far has remained low, about 17 per cent, and therefore remains an area that can be improved. The representation of journalists from ethnic groups was 2 in 2017 and there was 1 Madhesi trainee in 2018. (Note: CIJ Nepal had not desegregated data on ethnicity and this information was postulated from the list of trainees using their last names to identify ethnicity and caste group). The remaining trainees in both trainings came from the Khas Arya group.

3.3.5.1 Training

Selection of trainees: CIJ trainings were advertised in two newspapers and also through its website and social media interfaces. There were 35 applicants for the first training and 29 for the second. The training announcements on its Twitter page (or the tweet related to the training) had high engagement suggesting that this mode of communication was able to reach intended audiences. Since CIJ-Nepal did not have the practice of having pre- and post-training evaluations where how trainees came to know about the training could have been asked, it was not possible to determine the best channel for publicizing training opportunities. Most of the trainees surveyed suggested they had either seen newspaper advertisements or that on the Internet (including social media) or had heard about it from friends/acquaintances.

The advertisement of the trainings mentioned the months when the training would be held and not specific dates, which can also make it difficult for potential trainees to plan attendance. While CIJ did have an annual work plan, it appeared that it had not been updated after the training dates had been shifted to account for the 2017 elections. Further, even though the training announcement said that inclusion would be considered in selection, it also stressed that the main criteria would be the 'capacity of candidates, their interest, and dedication'. Since CIJ did not make training selection criteria available to evaluators it was not possible to comment on whether or not it had assisted towards increasing the diversity and gender balance among trainees.

The candidates were required to have a minimum of 3 years experience as journalists and had to submit one investigative story as part of the selection process.

This requirement was justified for the 2017/18 trainings since it was on advanced (digital) skills on investigative journalism. However, such requirements can sometimes become a barrier for promising candidates who may not have done investigative journalism, and for candidates from communities and social groups that have lower representation in Nepali journalism (women, people from socially excluded groups, etc.)

Delivery of training: The trainings were planned for five days but for practical purposes -- as explained by CIJ -- they were effectively 4.5 days to allow out of station participants opportunity to arrive the same day or depart on the last day of training.

The first training session of 2017 covered a wide range of issues including some investigative journalism basics. Most of the trainings were delivered through lectures or interactions/ discussions with exercises included only in two sessions -- one hour long session and another two-hour session. Since these sessions also included lectures and discussions it was difficult to determine what exercises were done and how much time was spent on that. The second round of the training in 2017 also had one session for exercise but the hour-long session also included a lecture. No lesson plans were available for review, and even though CIJ Nepal made some power points/slides available, it was not possible to use them as basis to conclude on what knowledge was transferred. There were few classroom exercises mentioned in the course outline but it was not possible to determine the time spent on the exercises or the skills that were practiced.

Some trainers consulted as part of the evaluation said that the time they had for their sessions was short, particularly those related with writing, language use, identification of story ideas, etc. They suggested that more time should be allotted for these foundational skills.

Discussions with CIJ editor suggested that it took quite some time to get trainees to finalize their story ideas after training, which ideally should have been finalized during the training. This would require budgeting adequate time submitting, discussing and finalizing story ideas during the training itself. The CIJ's form to submit story ideas is available at all times on its website for interested journalists to submit ideas. The form was extensive and adequate, and could be adapted and included as a part of the trainee selection application, especially for advanced trainings. For increasing effectiveness, CIJ could even consider asking all trainees selected at its two-part courses to come to the second part of training with story ideas in the forms for discussion and finalization in the classroom.

A trainer consulted during the evaluation said CIJ Nepal needed to attract the new generation of journalists to investigative journalism by addressing to their interests and needs and designing training programs, accordingly. He said CIJ Nepal had to make it mandatory for all trainees to complete stories for certification, as that would compel both trainees and mentors to produce stories. He also suggested that CIJ Nepal should revive a mechanism that he said existed earlier and had been used for seeking a second opinion on stories for publication. This commentator said the place to begin improvements would be to have more sessions where trainees did actual legwork on stories -- making phone calls, doing interviews, writing exercises, etc. and discuss their findings with trainers and mentors.

Feedback from trainees

The evaluators had sent out a questionnaire to 12 trainees selected by CIJ Nepal to seek feedback on training. The following paragraphs discuss the findings of the mini-survey. The respondents were asked to rate different aspects of training on a scale of 'poor, satisfactory, good, and very good' and the findings are summarized by Table-1.

Table 1: Evaluation of training by trainees

Subject matter	Weak	Satisfactory	Good	Very good	Total
Curriculum	0	2	4	4	10
Trainee selection	0	1	4	5	10
Knowledge of trainers	0	0	4	6	10
Mentoring & support	0	1	4	4	9
Support in story writing	1	1	2	5	9
Others (please explain)	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	5	18	24	48

Source: Mini survey

Overall, the respondents found the curriculum, trainee selection and knowledge of trainers good or very good. However, there were some respondents that said the trainee selection, mentoring, and support and training curriculum were satisfactory. One respondent said that the support in story writing was weak. Given that the respondents were purposefully selected by CIJ Nepal and not random, and the number was small to be conclusive, what the data suggests is that there are areas for improvement particularly with curriculum, support to story writing and mentoring and support.

Trainee feedback

“The expertise of trainers could be expanded. For example, having police and CIAA (commission for the investigation of abuse of authority) to share their experiences with trainees would have helped us to learn new investigative skills.”

Among the respondents, two had not done any investigative report after the training, three had done one story each, one had done two stories and four trainees had done more than four stories. The feedback received from trainees has been organized in five paragraphs below: (1) Curriculum, (2) Learning, (3) Trainee selection, (4) Mentoring and support, (5) Overall feedback.

Trainee feedback

“There were experienced journalists (as resource persons) and they spoke about and analysed what they had done. Discussions on ethics, language, writing, and presentation were lacking.”

Curriculum: Among areas that trainees suggested that could be improved were adding sessions on basic ICT use, engaging subject matter experts as trainers/discussants (because they can serve as sources later), and including more hands-on or exercise sessions. Another recommendation was designing the curriculum to match the interests and capacities of the trainees after they had been selected.

Learning from training: Trainees said they had learnt how to find news within stories and to report data in simple and understandable formats. Another learning was how to work with and manage archives. For others, the techniques for searching data on the Internet and using the data were important, while for others it was the skills in using audio and video in their stories that they said was what they had learned. Another trainee identified learning to use Excel for analysing data as important. The trainees also said the trainings assisted them to identify issues to investigate and also increased their understanding of the importance of investigative journalism.

Trainee selection: There was a recommendation suggesting that CIJ Nepal should select young trainees and teach them both basic investigative journalism skills and also tools like data journalism. One comment said that individuals that had received CIJ Nepal training should not be selected for another one to provide opportunity to young aspirants. One trainee suggested that CIJ Nepal should have separate trainings for trainees with similar capacities. Five participants trained in data journalism with OSF support (in 2015 and 2016) had participated in the training supported by Vikes in 2017.

Trainee feedback

“It would have been nice if trainees had been asked what they wanted to learn; this would have helped trainee selection.”

Mentoring and support: A trainee suggested that there should be regular dialogue and consultations between the editor and the reporter to help trainees become better journalists. Another trainee suggested that the editor should point out mistakes made by reporters so that they could avoid them in the future. Otherwise, most trainees found editorial support and mentoring to be fine.

Trainee feedback

“Stories can be discussed among a few people but not in a group because if there are editors from other media in the team I feel it could be leaked.”

Overall feedback: Most trainees said their confidence had increased and the working relationship with the editor had helped them to enhance their skills and writing capacities. The inclusion of journalists from outside Kathmandu and the support provided for completing stories was praised. One suggestion was the need to include young aspirants (as against only journalists with a certain number of years as experience) in trainings. One trainee had suggested that CIJ Nepal should seek trainee inputs (needs assessment) before designing the curriculum. Another suggestion was that CIJ should try to seek more trainers to have diversity rather than having the same trainers delivering different sessions.

Another suggestion was to have small panel of editors to review stories (and ensure editorial independence and confidentiality in the process) and forming small informal groups of interested journalists to regularly discuss story ideas. There was also a suggestion that CIJ Nepal should start facilitating joint investigations by reporters from competing media, and for building networks with international journalists for doing joint stories.

The inclusion of journalists from outside Kathmandu and the support provided for completing stories was praised.



The evaluators had asked the trainees two more questions, responses to which are summarized below:

Reasons for attending the course: Some trainees wanted to do something different from regular journalism and had therefore opted to apply, others were influenced by friends, and some came out of interest in data analysis and to network among journalists and international resource persons. A district reporter wanted to change from the daily routine of reporting events and had applied for training to learn about different areas that could be written about.

Personal gains from training: Most trainees said they had learnt new subject matter related skills, and one trainee had this comment: “Despite a long time in journalism, I believed that news was only about events and accidents. This has changed... I used to write stories without plans... the training has helped me to develop a habit of planning each story, researching it and meeting people to confirm information...” Another trainee added that investigation was more difficult than regular journalism and that there is now realization about how it should be done -- spending time to understand the issue before reporting. Another trainee said there was a sense of improvement in the work he/she had done as the stories that were done after training were discussed widely locally (in the district the journalist came from).

Trainee feedback

“It (training) has given me confidence in my own capabilities and my colleagues also acknowledge that. It has increased my confidence. They come to me to seek support... I am confident if an editor does not publish a good story, I have the confidence that I can find alternatives.”

3.3.5.2 Production of stories in 2017–18

CIJ delivered project services to trainees directly, and indirectly, the work of trainees (investigative stories) took investigative stories to the general public. This was done through various means. The priority was to place the story in the media of the concerned trainee, and after that on the CIJ Nepal website. CIJ Nepal also republished stories first published in a particular media on its website after the media had uploaded content online. The stories on CIJ website could be used by all media free of cost.

The stories on the website were also promoted by CIJ-Nepal’s social media platforms and through handles of its editor and staffs. It was not possible to monitor engagement of the general public with stories that were first published in different media outlets. The CIJ-Nepal’s public engagement platforms (website, Facebook and Twitter) were reviewed as a proxy to assess the delivery of services (stories).

Stories produced: CIJ-Nepal produced 10 stories in 2017 and 10 in 2018. One trainee had done three stories (one in collaboration with another reporter) and one reporter had done two stories. So the actual number of trainees producing stories is lower than the number of stories. CIJ had suggested that eight stories be evaluated in the review. However, because of the time consuming nature of content analysis, the evaluators carried out detailed analysis of two stories (one from 2017 and one from 2018).

3.3.6 Review of content of stories

The evaluators reviewed the content of two of eight stories selected by CIJ-Nepal as part of the assessment. The review was based on a checklist that included relevance of subject choice, adequacy of sources and of data/information, completeness of investigation, policy influence/change and writing (sequencing and presentation). The analysis was done qualitatively. Two stories that were closely reviewed were headlined, ‘31 couples employed in a single government office’ and ‘Supply of children from Bajura to Kathmandu...’ to work as household help. The detailed findings of the analyses are discussed in Annex-9.

Generally, the subjects selected for investigations of most stories were found to be in the general interest, and were about wrongdoing at public institutions. However, some stories caused a reader to hope for further investigations. The other area where the stories could have been improved was in terms of diversity of sources related to the particular story and also explanations on the process of the investigation. Another area for improvement was writing and editing.

A trainer consulted during the evaluation said that CIJ Nepal used to have what he called an editorial board to discuss stories prior to publication, which he said had been discontinued. Having such an arrangement can assist quality control. The trainer added the CIJ has done some ground-breaking reports by seasoned journalists, and more of such investigations (such as that of the chief justice and courts, and taxes, and public spending on construction, etc.) rather than producing more stories could produce larger impact. Trainees also raised the idea of an editorial board -- but said that it should be a small group and should assure confidentiality of the stories (their fear was that editors of competing media could get ideas and get their reporters to do the stories before they CIJ reporters had completed their investigations.)

Another trainer interviewed said that feature writing and investigation skills are two basic skills that a large number of Nepali journalists lack. Good, classical investigative journalism training is still needed, along with skills in story telling because more and more stories seem to follow a pattern/style, with little or no effort to try something new. He added that more effort was needed in mentoring and one way to do that would be to associate the names of mentors with the stories produced and do them as joint stories. Another trainer/mentor said he had edited stories by trainees for up to 4-5 times and sent it back for finalization, which also suggests need for intensive writing courses.

3.3.6 Dissemination of stories

CIJ Nepal delivers stories to audiences through the media and its own website. This section reviews the reach of stories produced and disseminated. The following are some inferences that can be drawn on CIJ-Nepal’s reach through its website and social media platforms.

Website: The website analytics covered the period from Dec 1, 2017 to Nov 27, 2018. Based on the data provided by CIJ-Nepal it had 64,446 new users or the number of devices (computers, phones, tablets) that had not accessed the website before.

Similarly, there were 87,902 sessions on the website during the review period. A session is the times users visit the website or one session = one visit to a website (irrespective of how much time the reader spends on the website). For example, if a visitor visits the site (cijnepal.org.np) and looked at 10 stories, it would be a session.

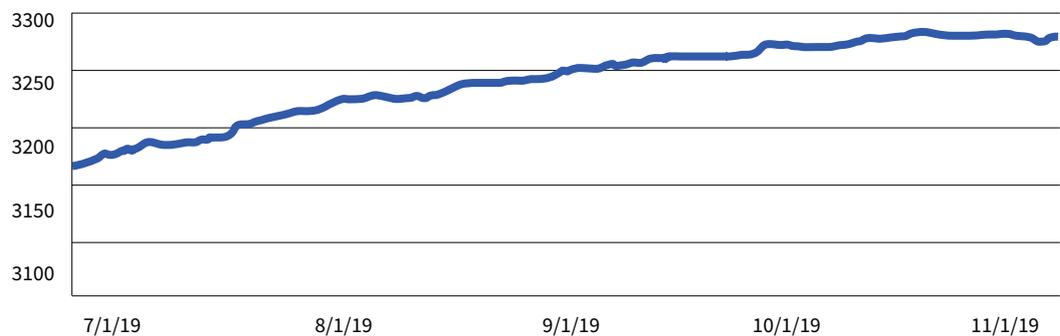
The total number of page views was 137,677 -- this provides the number of actual pages viewed during that time. (If a visitor visits cijnepal.org.np and looks at 10 stories, it is 11 page views (1 home page + 10 story pages).

The CIJ website had a bounce rate of 78.51 per cent. A bounce is a single-page

session or data on a user who leaves the site after viewing just 1 page. Despite having users at the site, the number of sessions or the time that readers spend on the site was low and the bounce rate high, suggesting a need for updating/redesigning the site for higher audience retention and populating the site with engaging content. One factor that could explain the high bounce rate is that visitors to the website might download a story and leave -- but the percentage was still on the high side for this explanation to justify the high bounce. No data was available on downloads.

Facebook (CIJ Nepal): CIJ-Nepal also maintains a Facebook page and a Twitter handle that it uses to promote stories. The number of lifetime page likes on Facebook increased by 200 between July and November 2018. The page had 3292 likes on 1 December 2018. It was not possible to review what specific posts had more likes. The following chart provides the lifetime likes on Facebook based on data provided by CIJ-Nepal.

Chart 1: Lifetime likes of Facebook



Twitter (@cijnepal): CIJ Nepal began using Twitter in November 2013 and on 1 December 2018 it had 2565 followers. A table in Annex-4 summarizes CIJ-Nepal’s Twitter presence based on the analytics. The stories that had most engagements are summarized (as “story summary” in table) to provide an indication of what type of stories engaged most audiences. For example, Training announcements were generally most engaging to users suggesting that most of them were journalists (because this is something of interest to them). Other stories that had most engagements were Indian pension distribution (national security), mobilization costs in construction contracts, construction aggregates (corruption), fact check of election manifestoes (politics), chief justice (abuse of authority/corruption), local-taxes governance, etc. Other stories that had high engagement were those on the local elections.

There have been instances when readers/audiences have used Twitter to send CIJ Nepal suggestions on stories it could do. One such Tweet on November 23 suggested that CIJ Nepal should investigate the ‘race’ of elected local government officials to attend workshops and seminars for the allowances they receive. The Tweet had cited frustration of the mayor of a village municipality. The editor of CIJ Nepal said there have been other similar tweets including one suggesting that it investigate the killing of a minor after rape in July 2018, in Kanchanpur District. Such engagement by audiences suggests a following for the work of CIJ, and those who have engaged include the government’s Hello Sarkar handle. The Tweet from Hello Sarkar was a response to a complaint by a citizen that it tagged to the @cijnepal handle.

Overall the reach and dissemination of work of trainees at CIJ Nepal has expanded with their stories being published and broadcast in regular media. Its own website and social media handles also promote content. It was not possible to assess reach among audiences nationwide, which was beyond the scope of this evaluation. CIJ did not have

a policy for posting stories and for engagements online, and stories were posted as and when they were ready. Regular updates are important to people visiting the website and therefore it would be important for CIJ Nepal to consider having a policy for story publication online (including engagement and follow up) as part of its dissemination efforts.

In Finland, Vikes said it informed Finnish audiences about its activities for supporting democracy and related events. This took place through the Vikes website and through short articles on stories done by trainees. It also used social media. The tweets were also done through handles of individual staff and office holders at Vikes. However, data on the number of stories was not available because Vikes had a website change in summer 2018.

Vikes also supported CIJ to attend Nepal related events in Finland. One such event in spring 2018 had the CIJ chairperson, editor and project manager in Finland where they engaged in discussions on the new provincial system and election outcomes. The event had 20 participants. Vikes had also organized other engagements with different journalism related organizations during the visit.

3.3.8 Management effectiveness

CIJ Nepal's annual meeting provided the partners (Vikes and CIJ Nepal) with broad guidance based on which CIJ Nepal prepared its annual calendar of activities. The project partners had communicated closely throughout the project and that had facilitated decisions and amendments to plans, as required by the circumstances. Vikes officials also visited Nepal to monitor the activities and to plan for the next round of interventions.

CIJ Nepal said that flexibility allowed by Vikes in project implementation had made it easy for them to adjust activities to the ground reality and local contexts (postponing training for elections, for example). CIJ Nepal had an implementation plan that had to be changed because of the elections. It organized the trainings after the elections and managed to complete the planned activities. This could have been possible with proper sequencing of activities because at one point of time during project implementation CIJ said it had to schedule activities supported by four different donors.

The evaluation did not review board decisions related to the project and its management to assess the interest of the board in project implementation. But interactions with the chairperson and key members of the executive committee indicated both their interest, and also participation in its activities. CIJ Nepal officials (including project staff) were cooperative during the evaluation and provided information that was sought.

An aspect of CIJ Nepal management that needed improvement was documentation and record keeping, which can not only assist in maintaining a documented history of the organization's evolution, but can also serve as evidence during external evaluations. The documentation could include online databases to monitor progress of trainees in terms of stories they do after training, use of stories by different media, and also a consolidated annual reporting on activities carried out during the year.

3.3.9 Partnership modality

The partnership between Vikes and CIJ appeared to be an obvious match. Vikes is an organization of journalists and its partnership with CIJ Nepal had established links among professionals. Vikes project management staff were also investigative journalists and therefore capacity development support was both informal, in addition to the formal engagements during training sessions. Vikes had supported CIJ Nepal to access

both resources and professional support (by also serving as trainers) and in project management. Both organizations also worked closely in planning projects and the partnership appeared to be forward-looking and as desired by both sides. Both detailed project planning related decision-making in terms of changes and adjustments and planning for new projects were done jointly.

3.3.10 Observations on the effectiveness

The evaluation observed that the work done for capacity building of CIJ were generally appropriate. Vikes had supported exposure and learning opportunities for the board members of CIJ Nepal, and also that of outstanding trainees. In 2017-18 capacity building opportunities were provided to the Chairperson and Course Coordinator, project manager and four trainees. The capacity development for trainees focused on journalism skills and therefore, it would be appropriate to continue similar capacity building support. Attention is also required for enhancing the capacity of CIJ Nepal staffs in specific areas of project management, mainly documentation, writing success stories, and record keeping of successes (even failures), and follow-ups.

The number of women candidates as trainees at CIJ Nepal was very low in 2017 and was corrected in 2018. One reason CIJ Nepal said for low enrolment of women journalists was the fewer number of applicants. CIJ Nepal could consider capacity building opportunities for promising women trainees -- even though without investigative journalism experience as required by its trainee selection criteria -- as a way to attract more applicants.

CIJ Nepal engaged with editors as part of its regular activities. However, it could also consider engagements with media owners to inform and interest them on the values of investigative journalism; and increase regular engagement with trainees in critical reflection sessions aided by media experts not involved in story production. The interventions to be considered include regular meetings and interactions, workshops, and exposure visits for editors and media owners that produce their own investigative stories.

3.4 Impact

The project document had envisaged contributing to increasing democratic ownership of development, freedom of media and access to information in Nepal. Two years is a short time for these impacts to emerge but there were some indications of changes that could contribute to the impacts. (The evaluation focused on 2017-18 and therefore could not make a definite comment on how the support from Vikes since 2010 may have contributed to the impact. The impacts discussed below were observed at the organizational (partner capacity) and individual (trainee) levels.

3.4.1 Change in partner capacity

In term of change in the capacity of partner CIJ Nepal has earned recognition among stakeholders including journalists, editors, and even government agencies for its work. It has also begun gaining confidence of audiences/readers as was evident in social media engagements making suggestions for story ideas. CIJ said it also received suggestions informally during conversations and also formally via email. Further, the government had also begun to notice its work, as the Tweet from the government handle to which CIJ Nepal was copied suggested. More recently, a district administrator also wrote to local governments in Bajura seeking clarification following a story by CIJ on well-off people



CIJ Nepal has earned recognition among stakeholders including journalists, editors, and even government agencies for its work.

being issued poverty ID cards as part of its own investigation. Such engagements, however, remain to be properly documented.

3.4.2 Change in trainee capacity

The reporters who had undergone training at CIJ Nepal have higher confidence in their capacities and knowledge of journalism, which is something that can contribute to the envisaged impacts overtime. The journalists met during the evaluation said that their investigative journalism skills had been enhanced; their visibility and access had increased and they have also received recognition (citations and awards). One trainee had also been promoted to a higher -- leadership level -- position within his organization, which he said could be a contribution of his enhanced skills.

3.5 Sustainability

3.5.1 Program sustainability

The program undertaken by CIJ Nepal with Vikes support is sustainable because it's training has already made an impact in term of stories appearing in the media and also in terms of the confidence of the journalists (See: Training feedback). Since learning is sustainable by nature, the support provided by Vikes to CIJ Nepal for training journalists it is likely to continue having an impact on Nepali journalism.

From interviews with some trained journalists it was obvious that they will not only continue doing investigative journalism but also encourage others to do the same. Some of the former trainees now serve as mentors and coaches for colleagues at their media and could make good trainers. Further, since media have regularly published CIJ Nepal stories, the evaluators conclude that they have realized the value of a good story. Editors of different media met during the evaluation also said that the training had bridged the lack of investment of media organizations in capacity building and also attributed the improved capacities of their reporters to training provided by CIJ Nepal.

3.5.2 Institutional sustainability

Since CIJ Nepal has no source of income other than donor support, it would be impossible for it to continue trainings and story production without external support. Earlier media using the stories provided a token sum upon use of the story but that was discontinued owing to its "non-profit status", according to CIJ Nepal. However, this understanding could be reviewed because more than 200 radios registered as non-profit organizations in Nepal that earn incomes through advertising. For example, Radio Sagarmatha (run by a non-profit) is registered as a Value Added Tax payer and its incomes are accounted accordingly. CIJ Nepal could consider seeking registration as a VAT taxpayer and begin to earn an income for sustainability. This would also require CIJ Nepal to price stories that are produced and try to secure payment from media that use them.

Under existing legislation, another way CIJ Nepal can earn an income and also continue functioning in a non-profit status would be to consider its re-organization/ re-registration as a non-profit private company. Such an organization would be able to earn an income as long as it ploughed it back for the activities of the organization. This would be a major institutional decision and would therefore require discussion and agreement by the general assembly, comprising of the general membership. The other path to sustainable operations would be to seek contributions or cost sharing by media organizations for continued capacity building and joint investigations. For example, if CIJ Nepal can convince a media organization that it can provide two professionally

produced investigative reports each month, it would be cost effective for the media to consider paying CIJ for the stories and avoid hiring reporters that do not deliver good stories. Other ways could be crowd sourcing, forming a separate organization that provides training at a cost, etc. and profits could be ploughed back to fund journalistic activities. The pathways would need to be assessed and identified separately. A place to begin would be an institutional analysis and an assessment of the market for CIJ stories.

CIJ said it had four donors supporting different projects in 2017/18 -- Vikes, Open Society Foundations (OSF), The Asia Foundation and UNICEF Nepal. The OSF project (2017-18) sought to promote investigative journalism had similar objectives to the project supported by Vikes: (a) strengthening investigative news contents in local media, (b) producing investigative reports, and (c) strengthening CIJ's institutional capacity. The activities included content development workshops, producing stories and holding interactions with editors and its members.

The project with UNICEF Nepal (2017) sought to develop skills of female editors and journalists in investigative reporting on issues focused with women and children. The activities included training on editorial skills and investigative journalism (with at least 50% women) and an investigative journalism fellowship fund.



Since CIJ Nepal has no source of income other than donor support, it would be impossible for it to continue trainings and story production without external support.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The evaluation of CIJ Nepal and its partner Vikes has come to the conclusion that collaboration between the two organizations has resulted in progress in investigative reporting in Nepal. This was possible through trainings and story production made possible with support from Vikes (total: 150 trainees so far, and 28 in 2017-18).

4.1.1 Program focus

There was consistency in program approach in terms of how trainings were organized and how journalists were supported to produce stories, and there has been an increase in the number of stories produced. However, representation of women, Dalits and members of ethnic communities has remained low overall, and also in the 2017-2018 round of trainings supported by Vikes. This could have resulted from a number of factors such as fewer applicants, as CIJ Nepal said, and the high bar for entry -- three years of experience and having done at least one investigative story (as was required in the application).

The training in 2017-18 was designed to impart digital journalism skills, which was perhaps why the weightage on foundational skills such as writing and ethics, was either low or missing. There was no session on ethics, or a dedicated session on writing techniques, which remain as weak areas of Nepali journalism. Safety of journalists is another area of training that could be considered because investigative reporting can be dangerous.

Generally, despite the institutional capacity building support received by CIJ Nepal the evaluators found weak documentation and record keeping that made it difficult to verify outputs against work done, or to measure institutional progress more definitively.

4.1.2 Project design

Good journalism is important in present day Nepal where there are different influences in content -- particularly from politics and businesses -- and therefore the project's focus on investigative journalism was relevant. However, the inability of the two organizations to clearly link the activities planned with outcomes made it difficult for the evaluators to measure changes conclusively. Despite this, there were indications of change that the project had contributed towards improving Nepali journalism, particularly in terms of the skills and confidence that was observed among some trainees during interviews.

4.1.3 Major findings

1. The stories in 2017-18 covered a large range of topics, which reflected the diverse issues facing Nepali society. Maintaining a balance between diversity and focus can be challenging, because imbalance can dilute impact and also make follow up difficult.
2. CIJ Nepal had multiple channels for disseminating stories. It was not possible to measure reach of stories placed in the media but a review of website analytics suggested a high bounce rate of visitors to its website. CIJ Nepal did not have a policy for promoting stories on social media and they were promoted when stories were posted on the website or published in media and only very little promotion was done from the CIJ Nepal handles.
3. Gender representation was low in CIJ Nepal trainings carried out with Vikes support over the years. It was very low in the 2017 training while in 2018 the male-female trainee mix was equal (seven each). Overall about 15 per cent women were trained in all Vikes-supported trainings since 2011. The representation of ethnic groups and minorities was also low both in 2017 and 2018.
4. The course outline showed gaps in terms of information on the knowledge and skills transferred because no lesson plans and training material (other than some power points) were available for review. CIJ Nepal said it had prepared a curriculum in 2014 but the evaluation did not review that because it was evaluating a project with trainings on digital journalism done in 2017-18. Further, the course outline that was available had little or no time for hands-on exercises and class work, nor did it have adequate time for instructions foundational skills such as writing, and ethics.
5. The capacities of trainees in the 2017-18 cohort differed in terms of their knowledge and skills about journalism that could have affected the pace of teaching learning, and also the learning expectations and experiences of trainees. This could have resulted because CIJ Nepal did not have a practice of doing training needs assessments or evaluating trainings with pre- and post- surveys.
6. The selection criteria of CIJ Nepal for trainees required journalists to have 3-years experience and to have done investigative journalism (a story was needed to be submitted with the application). This requirement may have prevented candidates with fewer years of experience in media, those from underrepresented groups, and those with interest and promise from applying for the training.
7. The project document had mentioned exposing corruption, widening freedom of expression space, and right to information as goals but there were no clear links of outputs to the goals. While the evaluators understand the difficulty in producing cause and effect type of relations to project goals like other development projects, the evaluators did not find logical links between planned activities and the stated goals. It was therefore difficult to measure definitive impact in terms of stories supported by Vikes. One CIJ story on fake education qualifications of the Chief Justice had triggered other stories in media that eventually led to his ouster. While this story could have contributed towards the larger impact, there was no way to attribute the ouster only to the CIJ Nepal story. The evaluators could not find any evidence of any role played by CIJ Nepal to protect freedom of expression (FOE) space (CIJ Nepal said it was not in its mandate to advocate for FOE, when asked if it had issued statements after the new media laws came into force in August 2018). Logical links to a goal for protecting FOE, for example would be advocacy events, which were not included in the project.
8. Review of stories suggested issues related to professionalism, writing and editing that were observed could have resulted from the pressures to do more stories. This has affected the overall quality of output.
9. Each trainee attending training was not required to produce a story for completion because a comparison of story produced and trainee list showed that some trainees had done more than one story, while others had done no story.
10. There were some program activities in the log frame that did not have a corresponding budget and had to be swapped with another activity. CIJ Nepal is also said to have considered the handbook to be more useful than the tip-sheets.

4.2 Recommendations

CIJ Nepal has made a contribution to introducing and promoting investigative journalism and its activities need to be continued, particularly given the efforts of Nepal to democratize and the introduction on new governance structure in the country. There will be continued need for media to play a watchdog role on state institutions and individuals and doing this will require good journalists in all the 753 local levels, in addition to those based in the provincial centres and Kathmandu.

Generally, the project implemented by CIJ Nepal and Vikes has contributed to investigative journalism in Nepal and to the development of confidence among journalists to take on investigative assignments. Some trainees also received awards and citations, which is an indicator of the success. The trainings have also provided journalists opportunities to spend more time researching stories and working with mentors to produce copy. However, there also were areas where CIJ Nepal and Vikes could take actions to further enhance the overall quality and impact of the investigative projects. The following are recommendations from the evaluation.

4.2.1 Program focus

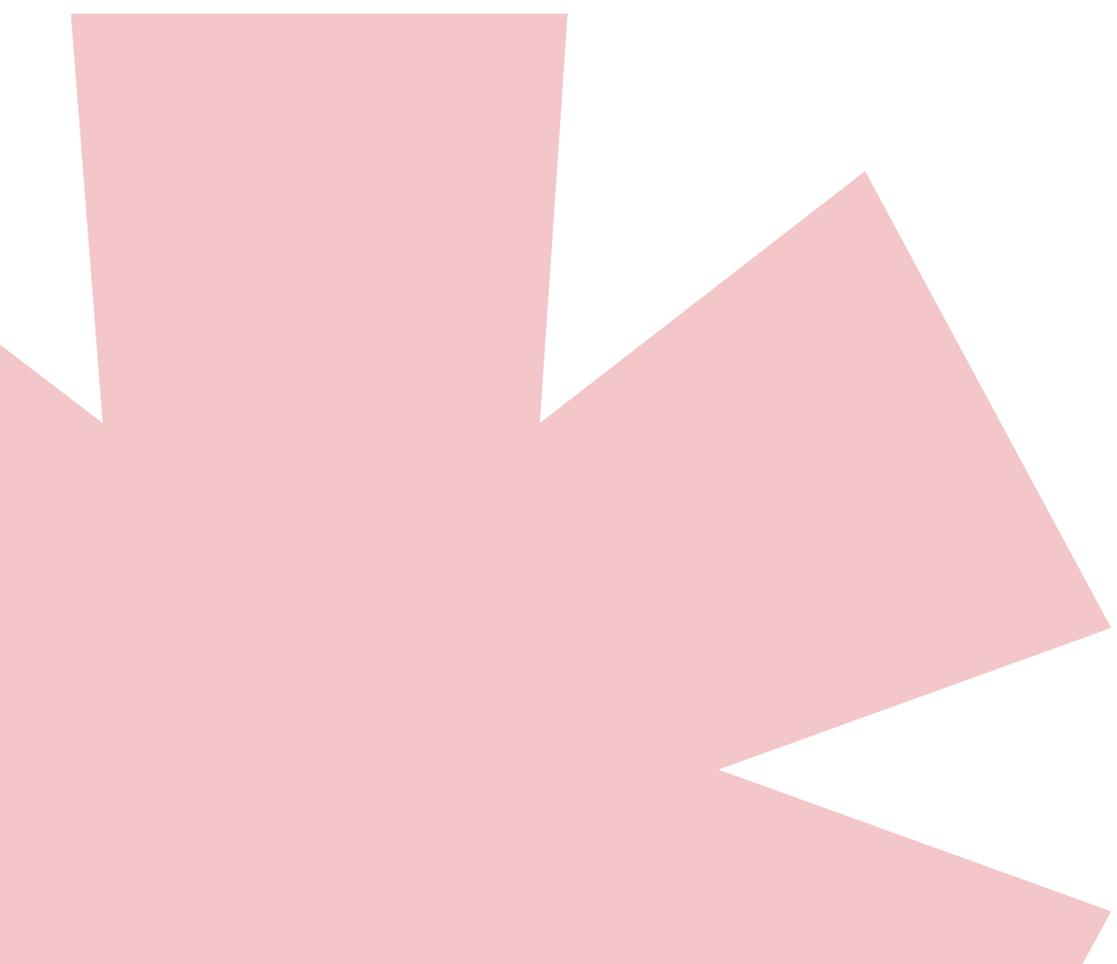
The major recommendations related to the program are:

- **CIJ Nepal needs to consider focusing investigations on a select number of themes related to the overall goals to produce a larger overall impact. The themes could be identified during project formulation to take into account the major local/ contextual issues that require to be investigated. The stories for investigation could be identified in consultation with journalist groups and people informed about the political economy and the changes taking place therein.**
- **Review website and redesign the interface with audiences to make it more user friendly as a strategy to increase and retain visitors. Continue use of social media to promote stories at regular intervals -- this would require a story production and posting policy, and a policy for engagement with audiences on the Internet sites. (One example of policy content could be to occasionally solicit story ideas from audiences/readers for investigations, which could also be the first step towards crowd-sourcing support)**
- **Consider organizing training only for women journalists and journalists from under represented groups in investigative journalism for at least a year to narrow down the gender and representation gap in Nepali journalism -- design and organize trainings for attracting women from different stages of their careers in print, broadcasting and online media. (Design trainings for women journalists of different capacities and media formats.)**
- **Introduce the practice of mandatorily preparing lesson plans and training materials and to design and plan trainings with adequate time for classwork and hands-on exercises on investigation skills, and foundational skills such as writing. Include sessions on professionalism, ethics and safety at all trainings.**
- **Include trainees with similar capacities at trainings. This would require introducing standardized pre-training tests on skills knowledge and written exercises to test writing skills, and post training tests to measuring learning.**
- **Prepare trainee selection criteria with special provisions for including women candidates and those from underrepresented groups. Such criteria could consider provisions applicable to different types of training -- basic investigative journalism, refresher trainings, training on advanced investigative skills, etc.**
- **Require each trainee to mandatorily produce a story to complete the course for certification, and discourage repeat story-support opportunities for trainees as far as possible as a strategy to provide fair learning opportunities to newer candidates.**
- **Consider doing fewer but high quality investigative stories rather than in-depth reports on issues -- that appeared to be the case. Further, CIJ should organize critical reflection sessions on stories that have been published at least once every six months involving journalists and experts not directly associated in the production to ensure quality control and performance improvement.**

- Prepare and adopt a policy to include more journalists from underrepresented groups in CIJ Nepal trainings and story production efforts. Such a policy can have fixed term intake quotas for women members from these groups.

4.2.2 Project design/formulation

- Prepare a five-year strategic plan and an action plan for CIJ Nepal, and use the plan to design projects and activities for different donors. Use planning exercise to review goals and objectives of CIJ Nepal -- supporting investigative journalism and/or producing in-depth reports, for example -- to clarify programmatic focus for the coming years.
- Prepare policies on story promotion and audience engagement on the Internet and social media as part of the strategic planning effort.
- Use strategic plan as basis for seeking and coordinating donor support for different types of investigative efforts, with regular donor coordination meetings, required.
- Plan projects with goal-output links and clear activity budgets to avoid swapping activities in the event of budget shortfalls.



Annexes

Annex-1: Terms of Reference for evaluation

Finnish Foundation for
Media and Development
(VIKES)
PO BOX 252
00531 Helsinki, Finland

26 October 2018

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR PROJECT EVALUATION

NAME OF PROJECT

Supporting Democracy through Digital Investigative Journalism in Nepal

PROJECT PARTNERS

VIKES and Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal (CIJ-Nepal)

DURATION OF PROJECT: 2017-2018

EVALUATOR(S): Binod Bhattarai and Raghu Mainali of The Writing Workshop P. Ltd

CONTACT: eeva.simola@vikes.fi, eevasez@gmail.com

PLACE: Kathmandu, Nepal

TIMING: Initiation – October 2018

Draft by December 10, 2018 (prior to presentation)

Presentation of the draft report in Kathmandu: December 17 or 17, 2018

DEAD LINE: Final version of the evaluation report by the end of January, 2019

BUDGET: 1,500 euros total

BACKGROUND

In any country, free forming of opinion and democratic development require availability of and access to independent information by the public. National and international development goals of promoting democracy and peace building, freedom of expression, right to open access to information are crucial.

Media has a strong role in supporting these processes as a publisher of information. In today's digital world, journalists must master a broad variety of skills from safety matters to searching and even making online data and other visualisation of their stories, not forgetting multimedia usage.

This project of 2017-2018 is the latest of a continuum of three varying contents with the same project partners since the early 2010s. It was initiated by CIJ by expression of interest and need, and carried out by CIJ. The project has been funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland. Throughout the projects, CIJ's partner has been the Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (VIKES).

CIJ has been teaching journalistic skills in remote areas of Nepal, starting from basics. In later phases it has added computer skills, digital and investigative methods. The latest project phase has involved multimedia and data journalism. Its aim has also been to select and train primuses from the courses 2017-2018 to form a pool of journalists who can then pass on their skills to new ones thus causing multiplier effect. Strengthening of the capacity of CIJ has also been on the agenda.

Supporting digital investigative reporting in Nepal will help foster accountability and improve the governance in Nepal where the new constitution came into effect in September 2015.

KEY QUESTIONS

Key questions and themes to be analysed should focus on lessons learned and good practices

- Did we do what we said we would do? (as compared to project application, plan, LFA)
- Have we done the right things the right way? (relevance and efficiency of the project)
- What difference did we make? (impact, any evidence of contribution to the democratic development/access to independent information/public debate, and/or freedom of expression in Nepal)

Additional questions:

- Has the project improved the quality of digital investigative journalism in Nepal, directly or indirectly?
- Have the recommendations of the previous evaluation(s) been implemented?
- How well has the project or Vikés supported the capacity building of CIJ as an organisation?
- What could have been done differently?
- What could be learned from the project, especially regarding the potential future project with CIJ supporting female journalists in Nepal?
- Sustainability: Are the results of the project sustainable?

Besides analysis and conclusions, the final report shall provide recommendations for both CIJ and VIKES.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the evaluation should include a variety of methods to collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data, specifically:

- Email interviews with a reasonably-sized, selected group of trainees, using either random selection or CIJ's judgement on those who they see as benefitting from the training
- Combination of individual and group interviews of key informants, including

Editors of media

Trainees

Trainers

CIJ staff and board members

Representative(s) of VIKES

Representative of the Finnish Embassy in Kathmandu

Members of society in general who are aware of CIJ's work

Reviews of training curricula and materials, feedback on trainings, "best stories" and other content produced by CIJ, and CIJ's use of public engagement platforms (Twitter and Facebook) (material provided by CIJ as well as through random search)

Review of project documentation, including plans, reports and audits

Progress of trainees - job situation, prizes, distinctions

Gender, caste and ethnicity as crosscutting themes for the evaluation

LIMITATIONS

Since the evaluation has a limited budget and timeframe, in-person interviews with individual trainees in the district are not required. The evaluation team may also limit the number of products/outputs to be reviewed according to the resources available.

ROLE OF VIKES AND CIJ

The evaluators will brief CIJ on the overall evaluation approach and request CIJ to put together materials to be reviewed and send out motivation email to trainees, as well as provide contact information for persons to be interviewed. Both CIJ and VIKES will have the opportunity to provide their comments to the draft report as well as the final report before its approval.

Annex-2: Logframe matrix of the Nepal project 2017–2018

	Results chain	Indicators	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Overall	Increasing democratic ownership of development, freedom of media and right to open access to information. To expand reach and remain effective in the changing media landscape, Nepalese investigative journalists need advanced digital journalistic skills.	Changes in government policy or practices on the basis of quality investigative journalism. Quality means well-researched, documented and presented items in the media.	To be drawn from the partner's strategy. Independent evaluation and in-built evaluation process. Concrete pieces of work and news showing change. CPI, PFI	Project operating environment is relatively stable.
Outputs	<p>1. 12 trained senior digital investigative journalists</p> <p>1.2. Resource pool of trained digital investigative journalists to be used as trainers in the future</p> <p>2.1 24 journalists trained in 2017-2018</p> <p>2.2 network of investigative journalists developed</p> <p>3. Nepali journalists receive training in the use of digital investigative tools</p> <p>4. CIJ capacity strengthened</p>	<p>1 Completed training, all 24 finish training and assignment</p> <p>1.2 resource pool journalists (best of trainees) develop their own module and tip sheets relevant and useful for Nepali journalists</p> <p>2.1 two excelled trainees to be sent for outside training, coming back with more material to become resource persons</p> <p>2.2 contacts register available</p> <p>3. Trained investigative journalists know how to use a number of digital investigative data tools</p> <p>4 office staff has received training and equipment, international network is strong</p>	<p>2017 Project annual report, lists of participants, course outline</p> <p>To be annexed with the 2017 project annual report</p> <p>Tip sheets, training modules developed, 2018 project annual report, and evaluation 4. CIJ project annual report</p>	<p>Factors outside project management's control that may impact on the output-outcome linkage.</p> <p>Political instability and natural disasters.</p>
Activities	<p>A 1.1.1. – In 2017, training 12 senior Nepali investigative journalists by international trainer and local from around country, who already have elementary proficiency in digital journalism, in a multimedia lab Kathmandu A 1.1.2 Trainees make an assignment</p> <p>A 1.1.3 Practical work accomplished by trainees will be reviewed and evaluated by CIJ and other prominent editors A 1.1.4. Capacity building of CIJ and journalists through training the best 2 performers in internships in Asian/European media houses for 1 month, or sending to summer courses and conferences, with the aim of forming a pool of trainers who with CIJ set up training modules</p> <p>A 1.2.1 Year 2018: Select and use the pool to train 12 journalists from around the country, 2 x 5 days' training A 1.2.2 Assignment of practical work to be mentored and published online A 1.2.3 Capacity building and networking through regional or international conference</p> <p>A 2 Institutional and other capacity building of CIJ office</p>			Political instability and natural disasters.

Annex-3: CIJ Nepal evaluation tools

a) Interview Guidelines

Below is a list of possible interview questions to collect information for the evaluation,

Stakeholder groups:

- CIJ (partner organization, PO)
- CIJ staff (employees, E)
- Media organizations (MO)
- Journalists (J)

Background of VIKES -commitment (perspective of PO, E)

When did VIKES get involved in supporting CIJ?

How did the support start?

Who took the initiative?

Is there a general baseline? Needs assessment? What do these studies reveal? (For the start) and also do you have a baseline and needs assessment for this round of support

What was the reason for VIKES to get involved?

How did we do the planning for VIKES participation?

Objective of the program

What is the goal of this round of VIKES support?

What is the specific objective of the project?

Did it change over time?

Was the goal / objective related to policy change, what policies did you aim to influence? How?

What are the strategies to achieve the goal(s) (Perspective of PO)

What kind of strategies / interventions / activities does VIKES support in order to achieve the goal?

How were the VIKES interventions decided?

Did VIKES support the PO to achieve policy change? How?

How does the VIKES monitor and evaluate the outcomes / results of the project? Is the PO involved in this?

Description of process (perspective of PO, E, and MO)

How did the implementation go? Or, what is your assessment of the implementation?

What activities were developed? How many? How many participants? Can you describe them in quantity and in quality?

How were the media organizations involved? What was their role in the process?

What types of difficulties were encountered? How were they addressed?

What was the response from the stakeholder groups CIJ worked with?

How was feedback incorporated in the project process?

What is the added value of the cooperation with VIKES? How do you regard the cooperation in general?

Results

(Perspective of all stakeholder groups)

What are the concrete results (data) of the program/project so far?

How would you evaluate the project?
 What are the effect/impact so far of VIKES support and the cooperation with CIJ?
 What difference did VIKES support make in terms of results?
 What kind of indicators / evidence do you have for your evaluation?
 What results / changes did the project achieve according to the participants? What difference did VIKES make according to them? (Please check training evaluation forms)

What changes did you achieve according to others? (E.g. evaluations, other’s views comments on media, new media, government recognition)
 How did the project contribute to policy change?
 How sustainable are the results?
 What did we learn?

Lessons Learned (All stakeholder groups)

What did you learn from the program/project?
 What would you advise VIKES to improve in the future?
 Is VIKES support in Nepal still necessary? Why?

Special stories (One representative of each stakeholder group)

Can you share an example or a story of change in your personal or professional life that describes how particular support of VIKES in Nepal contributed to it? In other words why was VIKES support important and what made it a success? Could you have achieved what you achieved without the support from of VIKES?

b) Project achievements checklist

i) Outcome Achievements (template)

Outcome indicators	Achievement/status	Comment on status
1.		
2.		
3.		

ii) Output Achievements (template)

Outcome indicators	Achievement/status	Comment on status
1.		
2.		
3.		

c) Performance analysis checklist

i) Relevance

- National context
- Sectoral context
- PO context: membership, transparency, governance, accountability
- Beneficiaries context: skills learnt, mentoring/coaching received
- Project design features

ii) Efficiency

- Human resources engaged
- Financial resources involved

- Budget and budget breakdown for different components
- Completion of works within stipulated time frame

iii) Effectiveness

- Did the project produce goods/service that it promised
- Quality of services
- Timeliness
- Approach or strategy appropriateness
- o Balance of interventions
- Did the service reached the beneficiaries (e.g., inclusion, gender balance)
- o Convenience, ease
- o Perceived benefit of beneficiaries
- How appropriately was implementation arranged
- o Partnership modality
- o Staffing
- o Decision making
- o Rigidity/flexibility
- Resource allocation balance

iv). Impact

- Planned and unplanned changes at the beneficiary level
- o Gender relations
- o System, laws, and policies
- o Mind-set, behaviours
- o Professional development

v) Sustainability

- Sustainability of changes in the society, other actors
- Sustainability of Partner Organization
- Sustainability of partnership relations

d) Observations checklist

- What went well
- What is promising
- What was okay
- What needs to continue
- What needs improvement
- What was missing in the project

e) Questions for trainees (2017-2018)

Name (optional):

(Please provide your only name if you would like to see it quoted in the evaluation report)

1. How did you learn about CIJ training?
2. Why did you decide to enrol for the training?
3. What 3 specific things do you thin you've learnt from the training?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

4. What did you find most effective in the training? (1=poor, 2=satisfactory, 3=good, 4=excellent)

- a. Curriculum
- b. Selection of trainees
- c. Trainer quality
- d. Follow-up support/mentoring
- e. Hands-on work on stories
- f. Others (please describe):

5. What did you find could be improved?

- a. Curriculum (please explain)
- b. Selection of trainees (please explain)
- c. Trainer quality (please explain)
- d. Follow-up support/mentoring (please explain)
- e. Hands-on work on stories (please explain)
- f. Others (please describe):

6. How many investigative pieces have you done after the training?

- a. None
- b. One
- c. Two
- d. Three
- e. More than three

7. How has the training helped your personal development as a journalist?
(Please explain)

8. Overall, please write a few sentences on what you think was a very good aspect and what could be improved by CIJ in the future in terms of training?

f) Checklist: Review of stories

- i) Adequacy of data
- ii) Relevance of subject choice
- iii) Completeness of investigation
- iv) Policy influence/change
- v) Adequacy of sources
- vi) Sequencing and presentation (writing)

g) Questions to editors

- i) Do you remember the story by CIJ that you have published/broadcast?
- ii) How has CIJ contributed to overall improvement in journalism?
- iii) What specific story done by CIJ trainees do you think was exceptional?
- iv) How do you compare stories your reporters produce that those done by CIJ trainees?
- v) Have you sent a reporter/s for CIJ training?
- vi) What do you think has changed in terms of professionalism of the reporter after CIJ training?
- vii) Would you send your reporter/s to another CIJ training?
- viii) What aspects of investigation do you think CIJ must improve to produce better IJs

i) Questions to Board/staff

- i) What would you think are major achievements of CIJ in terms of stories produced by trainees?
- ii) What are the aspects of training that make CIJ stand out among other journalism training institutes?
- iii) What aspects of CIJ training needs improvement? Why?
- iv) How do you evaluate VIKES support to CIJ over the years?
- v) Who are the other donors that support CIJ other than VIKES?

Annex-4: Summary of Twitter analytics

	Engagement rate	Average				
Total impressions	Highest	Engagement	Link clicks	Retweets	Likes	Story summary
8000	1.3	8.6	53	21	25	CIJ training announcement
31100	17.4	3.6	581	123	133	Indian pensions/ national security
16600	5	1.2	118	57	59	CIJ training announcement
16900	4.6	1.8	114	59	110	Mobilization costs (construction)
27900	9.9	1.9	235	89	118	Political analysis of local election (Madhesh factor)
13200	3.7	1.2	116	31	34	Construction aggregates (crusher)
17100	8.9	0.9	187	28	63	Exposure visit
32900	6.9	1.8	236	120	188	Fact check of election manifestoes

2018	Month	Total impressions	Highest	Engagement	Link clicks	Retweets	Likes	Story summary
	January	31400	7.6	1.6	412	95	155	Construction contracts
	March	33900	7	1.3	286	58	175	Chief justice
	September	20900	7.6	1.1	132	48	85	Local tax-governance
	November	6100	9	0.9	38	17	33	Maoist-land deeds

Annex-5: List of trainees

CIJ Nepal Training List 2017 (13 males, 2 females)

S.N.	Name of trainee	Address	Remarks
1	Basanta Pratap Singh	Bajhang	
2	Bhushan Yadab	Parsa	Absent II phase
3	Jitendra K. Jha	Saptari	Absent II phase
4	Krishna Acharya	Kathmandu	
5	Krishna Gyawali	Kathmandu	
6	Manoj Satyal	Kathmandu	Attended 2 days of phase II
7	Nawaraj Mainali	Kathmandu	
8	Pramod Acharya	Kathmandu	
9	Raju Adhikari	Jhapa	
10	Sagar Ghimire	Kathmandu	Absent phase I
11	Sanjeev Sharma	Kathmandu	
12	Sudarshan Sapkota	Kathmandu	
13	Tikaram Dhakal (Sabin)	Kathmandu	
14	Ms. Binu Pokahrel	Kathmandu	Attended only phase II
15	Ms. Pragya Timsina	Kathmandu	

CIJ Nepal Training List 2018 (7 males, 7 females)

S.N.	Name of trainee	Address	Remarks
1	Ms. Bageshwori Shah	Kanchanpur	
2	Ms. Bidhya Rai	Kathmandu	
3	Bikash Parajuli	Rupandehi	
4	Ms. Diwa Bhattarai	Bhaktapur	
5	Mahesh Kumar Sharma	Rolpa	
6	Nimendra Shahi	Bajura	
7	Ms. Rabina Bohara	Baglung	
8	Ms. Rima B.C. (Bhandari)	Argakhanchi	
9	Dinesh Subedi	Rolpa	
10	Ranjit Tamang	Kavre	
11	Ms. Sabina Devkota	Kathmandu	
12	Sanjeev Nepal	Kathmandu	
13	Ms. Smita Adhikari	Kaski	
15	Shiva Silwal	Dhading	Did not attend phase II
15	Prabhat Kumar	Rautahat	Did not attend phase II

Annex-6: Trainers interviewed by evaluators

- i) Sharad Chandra Wasti
- ii) Mohan Mainali
- iii) Ujjwal Acharya
- iv) Shiva Gaunle

Annex-7: Editors interviewed by evaluators

- i) Sudhir Sharma, Former Editor, Kantipur Daily
- ii) Kiran Nepal, Editor, Himal Weekly Magazine
- iii) Subash Ghimire, Editor, Republica Daily

Annex-8: CIJ Board and the team interviewed by evaluators

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| i) Namrata Sharma | President |
| ii) Rajendra Dahal | Former President |
| iii) Ramji Dahal | General Secretary |
| iv) Indra Shresta | Treasurer |
| v) Shiva Gaunle | Editor |
| vi) Saurav Kolakshyapati | Program Manager |

Annex-9: Review of stories

The evaluators reviewed the content of two of eight stories selected by CIJ-Nepal as part of the assessment. The review was based on a checklist that included relevance of subject choice, adequacy of sources and of data/information, completeness of investigation, policy influence/change and writing (sequencing and presentation). The analysis was done qualitatively. Two stories that were closely reviewed were headlined, '31 couples employed in a single government office' and 'Supply of children from Bajura to Kathmandu' ... children as household help. The findings of the analyses are discussed below.

STORY 1: The story on couples employed in a single government office suggested that it was a place used by both politicians and staff to hand out jobs to family and relatives. Nepali: <http://cijnepal.org.np/ctevt/> (English: <http://cijnepal.org.np/31-couples-employed-single-government-office/>)

Relevance of subject choice

As a subject the reviewers found the story to be of general interest -- because people are interested in stories about other people. The story was about disregard fair competition, conflict of interest and corruption at a public institution and therefore worth investigating. Another reason why the subject choice was justified was that there had been reports on irregularities at the institution also in the past.

That said, while staffing could have been a problem, there possibly were also other issues within that might have been affecting the quality of delivery of technical education, to which the story also makes some references but does not explore.

Adequacy of sources

The major sources of information used in the story were as follows:

Sources of information in story	No. Used	Remarks
Those accused/ people named for wrongdoing or identified in story	2. Many named but not consulted	Accused (former CIAA investigation official, retired) was consulted. None others of many accused identified/named were consulted, including staff still working there.
Responsible authorities interviewed	1	Public Service Commission official whose quote suggested that the rules at the time allowed that. Also raises questions why Education Ministry/Department officials were not consulted
Documents	Used	Story mentions Right to Information request, but the types of documents obtained are not described which could have provided clarity on data type, volume, etc. and added to the story's credibility
Eye-witnesses	N/A	
Analysis of raw data		Apparent, but the type of used data not mentioned.
Unnamed source	1	Director (still working there)
Experts	2	However, selection of quotation could have been considered as information from the experts was not very informative on the problem being investigated
Possible other sources (not used)		
Lawyers		Are there legal implications? Does the law bar this (could have been an expert source)
Donor agency representatives		How has the staffing affected performance of their projects?

Completeness of investigation

While the story does inform readers on the number of couples working there, and provides indications about how they possibly got jobs there, the information provided is often abruptly conclusive with no information on the process. For example on one instance it says that an accounts officer has recruited his wife and relative there. Such a sentence would be difficult to establish because accounts officers do not normally have recruitment powers and that too not in a government agency. Information on 'how' or the process that was adopted could have made this information more tenable. From reading the story, it cannot be concluded if the reporter had the information and did not include it or it was lost in the editing/writing process. There were quite a number of such sentences in the story: another instance refers to a person who joined in 2054 and is supposed to have "conveniently/very nicely" recruited his relatives. This story does not say what the position of the recruiter was or how it was done. Further, there were no indications in the story on if those recruited actually had to take some exams/interviews before recruitment and whether or not they were qualified for the positions they were hired for. Further, because the story does not say how the relations were verified, documents used for the purpose, the number of interviews carried out, etc. it also leaves some questions unanswered.

Writing (presentation)

The use of words and language can influence meanings conveyed. The story had some words that overstated meaning, often bordering sensationalism (bhartikendra/ recruitment centre, for example). In another instance is talked about freewill or hali-muhali of related employees that numbered about 10% of the organization's total

workforce indicating that the staffs with relations were very powerful within, without examples to substantiate this. In another instance, there was use of a word that borders judgment (as against being neutral and presenting the facts) -- a reference to someone being able to “very nicely/conveniently” (ramrai) employ relatives. Further, because the recruitment process, policies, laws are not discussed anywhere in the story it is difficult to make sense of what could have actually happened. The story is also repetitive with names and more names, which after having made its point could begin to confuse readers. The graphical presentation of a story does not relate to the gravity or seriousness of the issue discussed and the animation used (in this and other stories, where the image moves back and front, zooming in the process) was anything but pleasing.

The story had made a reference is made to a Ministry of Education investigation committee report that accused the institution of ‘arthik chalkhel’ a word that could mean anything to anyone because it is broad and even clichéd because of its overuse in media. The report could have said what exactly was said in the report to assist the understanding of readers/audiences.

Impact/policy influence/change and follow-ups

CIJ Nepal did not indicate a particular impact from this story.

STORY 2: The story discussed how individuals had sent children from a village in Bajura district to work as household help in Kathmandu and other parts of Nepal. Nepali link: <https://cijnepal.org.np/snowball/childsupply/>

Relevance of subject choice

Generally issues related to children are important subjects for an investigative story, mainly because they cannot articulate their concerns and also because their voices are seldom covered by media. This was a story how young children were being sent to Kathmandu and other parts of Nepal for working as household help and therefore it was a story that deserved an investigation. It is a sad story as parents do not willingly send children away, therefore it would have been relevant to speak to more parents on the compulsions of sending them away -- mainly because it is largely based on reports of two Ward Chairman one of who said that a larger percentage of better-off families had sent their children away compared to poor families.

Adequacy of sources

Like the story discussed above, this one also named a number of people who were accused of sending children to Kathmandu and other parts of Nepal to work as household help but they were not consulted (as their version does not appear in the text). Further, the main source of information was a report compiled by the two ward secretaries, and not an investigation by the journalist.

Sources of Information	No. Used	Remarks
Those making the accusations	Two ward chairpersons mainly	None of the individuals accused of sending children and working as 'middlemen' have been given an opportunity to respond in the report (The report said one of them was abroad) but others were seemingly still around because the story was silent and said nothing otherwise or on their whereabouts. One ward chair accused a teacher of having trafficked most children but the story is silent on if an effort was made to talk to the teacher, and also his whereabouts. One of the accused is said to have confessed his "mistake" to the reporter.
Responsible authorities	4	CDO, Ward Chairs, Child welfare Committee: Quote of CDO was used but selection was an issue as what he said was that the individuals should be prosecuted but the reporter did not seem to have asked, who should do that (because the CDO is the chief administrator). One Ward Chair made an accusation against an individual but the accused does not get an opportunity to respond
Documents	Yes	It seems that data collected by the ward was the main source of information -- but it is not described in the story.
Children's parents	2	One father is interviewed in story who said he was away when his daughters were sent. The story did not interview most other parents of children named in the story. The story had made an attempt to reach one of the employers (Dist. Education Officer) of the children but does not say why others were not contacted, or if an effort was made.
Analysis of raw data		The report is based on information collected by ward chairpersons. Difficult to say what data was obtained or analysed.
Children	3	Two returnees and one who was still in KTM. However, the telephone recording only provides pleasantries except one paragraph where she narrates the work she did. Not clear why the voice recording was placed on the site because it had no information that would have made a major contribution to the story forward.
Possible other sources		
Police, women and children activists, parents of the parents who did not provide telephone numbers to Ward Chair; the poor families (a small number of them).		Report suggests criminal activity but police does not seem to have been consulted; parents who did not provide telephone numbers; other poor families could have been additional sources to understand the problem in its depth.

Completeness of investigation

Despite being an important subject and a good report based on the investigation by the ward officials, the report reflects very little investigation on the part of the journalist. One ward chair used the term "selling" children as an accusation, but the story had no information on the money exchanged. The story does not have information on what the police had to say on the matter, nor does it tell if the village/ward had a police office. The ward chairs have not been asked if they have filed formal charges.

Writing (presentation)

Language use was an issue with this story. For example, there is the use of the term bichauliya (meaning middlemen, and indicating that money could have changed hands) even though there is no information on the money exchanged, if any. Further, if there

had been no exchange of cash, then this story would be a case of false accusation and one-sided reporting because people have been accused of the same. According to the story the ward chairs had compiled their work in 2074 Poush (Dec. 2017), and because there was no information on when the story was published on the site, it makes it difficult to understand it in context. Particularly, because another paragraph that talked about the National Human Rights Commission letter reaching the village in Asoj 2074 (Oct 2017). The story had an official saying that said children would return to the village by Baisakh 2075 (April 2018). Without a date on when the story was posted, such timelines can confuse readers/audiences rather than assist in understanding the story in context. According to CIJ Nepal the reporter was recognized for the work by the municipality as many children had been returned but the story on the web did not have this update.

Another observation about the story is the videos used. There are three video interviews (two with the ward chairs and one with a girl's mother). These interviews essentially repeat what was there in the text rather than add to the story.

Impact/policy influence/change and follow-ups

CIJ Nepal did not indicate a particular impact from this story. There was a follow up story on the return of some children.

General review of other stories

There was a story on the misuse of social security funds in Humla District that discussed the situation using information obtained from the District Coordination Committee. It had interviewed a number of people named and was therefore credible. However, it did not say what the rules said about undistributed social security funds that could have been explained upfront to facilitate greater understanding? The story could also have benefitted with what the law on forgery and the sanctions. The story used the term *bramhaloot* (an adjective) rather than state the fact -- the amount stolen. Stealing public funds would have been a better alternative because the information in the story said had indicated that. While the story was rich in details, it was difficult to grasp the big picture. For example, how much was stolen (in total) from 6 VDCs according to the reporter's finding? The story does not talk to politicians who were accused of providing political protection, or tell if an attempt was made to do the same and it had failed.

There was another story on post-partum deaths of five women at Bharatpur Hospital, and the story said the reason for the deaths was negligence of doctors. The use of the photographs could have been discussed before publication because some readers might find the photographs used offending, and might have involved some ethical considerations. While the story cited an official report that confirmed the lapses it did not actually describe what the report said (it could have said that it was unable to get details, otherwise -- and showed that an effort was made to get the information). The story talked of negligence of nursing staff but none were consulted (nor did it mention an effort to do the same). There was a segment of an audio recording of an interview on the site with the head of the hospital that was aggressive and resulted in a denial of response. The doctor interviewed accused the journalists of coming there with wrong intentions, suggesting that the meeting was confrontational from the start rather than one intended to seek answers. Further, the questions asked were not clear. From the story it was apparent that reporters had obtained a copy of a Health Ministry report on the deaths, and if that was the case the reporter/s could have tried using an expert doctor to explain its contents. The story does not say if any of the families had filed police reports accusing death due to negligence. It said one family had protested and the hospital had reached a settlement... Finally, the story is very long and repetitive, because

the details discussed earlier are almost repeated towards the end, suggesting there could have been more editorial control.

A trainer consulted during the evaluation said that CIJ Nepal used to have what he called an editorial board to discuss stories prior to publication, which he said had been discontinued for some time. Having such an arrangement can assist quality control. The trainer added the CIJ has done some ground-breaking reports by seasoned journalists, and more of such investigations (such as that of the chief justice and courts, and taxes, and public spending on construction, etc.) rather than more stories can produce larger impact.

Another trainer interviewed said that feature writing and investigation skills are two basic skills that a large number of Nepali journalists lack. Good, classical investigative journalism training is still needed, along with skills in story telling because more and more stories seem to follow a pattern/style, with little or no effort to try something new. He added that more effort needs to be put in mentoring and one way to do that would be to associate the names of mentors with the stories produced and do them as joint stories. Another trainer/mentor said he had edited stories by trainees for up to 4-5 times and sent it back for finalization, which also suggests need for intensive writing courses


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