

### Yuwalaya themes:

1. Gender and social inclusion
2. Disaster risk reduction and climate change
3. Youth and livelihood
4. Sexual and reproductive health rights
5. Young people's participation

Areas of work	कामका क्षेत्रहरु :
1. Policy level advocacy	१. नीति स्तरीय वकालत
2. Promotion of participation of adolescents and youths	२. युवा तथा किशोरकिशोरीहरुको सहभागिता प्रवर्द्धन
3. Advocacy and awareness campaigns through various media	३. वकालत र जनचेतनामुलक अभियान
4. Research (quantitative and qualitative)	४. अनुसन्धान (गुणात्मक र परिमाणात्मक)
5. Capacity building	५. क्षमता अभिवृद्धि
6. IEC materials development	६. सूचना, शिक्षा तथा सञ्चार सामग्री
7. Intergenerational dialogue	७. अन्तरपुस्ता संवाद
8. Days and events celebration	८. विभिन्न दिवस तथा उत्सवहरु
9. Promotion of volunteerism	९. स्वयंसेवा प्रवर्द्धन

## Media Monitoring on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Safe Abortion and Marriage Equality



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RIGHT HERE  
RIGHT NOW

**Media Monitoring on  
Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Safe  
Abortion and Marriage Equality**

**With the support of  
Right Here Right Now, Nepal (RHRN)**

**August 2020**

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# Acknowledgement

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The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 sets landmark in ensuring economic, social and cultural rights for all citizens of the country. It sets platform to ensure reproductive health rights for all individuals especially adolescents, women, and sexual minorities. In 2007, the Supreme Court took a landmark decision to grant citizenship to sexual minorities with their sexual identity (as others), and ordered government to form a committee to draft bill on same sex marriage. But, the committee is yet to start working on the draft bill. Nepal amended civic code in 2002 to legalize abortion in specific circumstances, and government issued national abortion policy in 2003 followed by directives to ensure basic standards for safe abortion. Nepal is amongst the other South Asian countries to formally introduce CSE in school curriculum. School Sector Development Program (SSDP) clearly mentions that there will be a provision of in-service teacher training on CSE, and also curriculum revision for out-of-school to integrate CSE contents, and ensure that the CSE contents are managed and arranged by grades, with culturally accepted information included in the curriculum.

Right Here Right Now Nepal believe that media is powerful tool for advocacy, awareness raising and generate public support. RHRN Nepal have been working with media to influence decision-makers through the media outlets that matter to them, such as newspapers, radio, television, newsletters, journals, magazines, and social media. The major strategies includes sensitization and mobilization of main stream media, media coverage on all three issues; Marriage Equality, Safe Abortion and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), social media campaign, media monitoring, and more. The aim of RHRN Nepal are freedom from stigma, discrimination and violence; access to comprehensive youth-friendly services; access to comprehensive information; and space for young people's voices.

Yuwalaya, one of the platform organization of RHRN Nepal, has been continuously monitoring the main stream print media for last three years to document progressive changes on all three issues covered by the print media and online media. Yuwalaya has finalized Media monitoring report. This report includes various news and article published on print media regarding youth sexual and reproductive health and rights especially rights to marriage of sexual and gender minorities, safe abortion and CSE. Continuous monitoring of various popular print and online media has been monitored for last 12 months and documentations has been done based on the progressive changes in terms of language, terminologies, photos, pictures published on these media.

On behalf of Right Here Right Now (RHRN) Nepal I would like to congratulate Yuwalaya for finalizing the media monitoring report.

**Rajendra Maharjan**

National Coordinator, Right Here Right Now Nepal



# Acknowledgement

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In the modern world, information is knowledge, and knowledge is power. Hence, media outlets that provide people significant information on issues of their concerns have become an inevitable part of their personal and social life. Because of an incomparable strength they hold intrinsically, the mainstream media can play crucial roles in inspiring positive changes in society.

Yuwalaya recognises this strength and makes efforts to work with the media to promote changes it wants to see in society. However, the first step to collaborate with them is understanding their coverage of the issues that we want to talk about. Media monitoring is a reliable tool to assess and understand the media coverage regarding any issue.

As a member of the Right Here Right Now (RHRN) network, Yuwalaya has been conducting an annual media monitoring programme for the past few years. This report presents our findings of the 2019 media monitoring.

We apologise for some delay in the publication of this report owing to the Covid-19 pandemic that affected each of us equally. Despite the unprecedented challenge posed by the pandemic, we have successfully completed this task now.

I would like to thank my colleagues in Yuwalaya executive committee, our staff members, consultants, interns and volunteers involved in the task. The entire Yuwalaya family is grateful to the RHRN Nepal team and all platform members for their trust in us for the media monitoring project every year. As the current term of the platform is approaching its end, we are looking forward to similar opportunities of cooperation in the future so that each of us can contribute our share to making this world a better place, for all of us.

**Santosh Maharjan**

President, Yuwalaya

## **Acronyms and abbreviations**

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
<b>CSE</b>	Comprehensive sexuality education
<b>HIV</b>	Human immunodeficiency virus
<b>LGBTIQ</b>	Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, intersexuals, and queers
<b>RHRN</b>	Right Here Right Now
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and reproductive health
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and reproductive health rights
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund

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Acknowledgement

Acronyms and abbreviations

Content

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## 1.1. Background

Sexual and reproductive health has remained a tricky issue among the youth globally because of two major reasons—which contrast each other. On the one hand, sexual and reproductive activities are considered essential parts of life across the world, but on the other, there are many taboos associated with them. Youth are discouraged from talking about the issues such as menstruation, contraceptives, and abortion.

Consequently, youth are facing different problems related to the SRHR. In developing countries like Nepal, apparently, the amount of such problems is even higher. There are numerous examples: adolescents in rural areas of the country have not received adequate education on sexuality; access to safe abortion services is not sufficient; many people are yet to perceive marriage as a matter of their choice and freedom. Arguably, comprehensive sexual education, safe abortion, and marriage equality have remained three key issues of the SRHR in Nepal.

Comprehensive sexuality education is a fundamental aspect of human life. It promotes the principles of a young person's right to education about their bodies, relationships and sexuality. Research shows that the majority of adolescents lack the knowledge required to make decisions about their life responsibly which leave them vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancies, and confusion regarding their own bodies. The CSE should be a right of all people, regardless of their age, gender and other characteristics, to enable them to make choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction, provided their rights do not infringe on the rights of others. Thus, it promotes right decision-making regarding one's reproductive health, freedom from forced abortion, access to information and appropriate reproductive education, freedom from harmful traditional practices, and gender-based violence, and freedom to express one's sexuality.

According to a UNESCO report published in 2018, only 34% of young people around the world can demonstrate accurate knowledge of HIV prevention and transmission<sup>1</sup>. Also, in some of the worst situations, two out of three girls do not have any idea of what is happening to them when they begin menstruating<sup>2</sup>. Yet, one in every five girls is married, or in union, before reaching the age of 18, globally, according to another UN agency, UNFPA<sup>3</sup>. In the least developed countries,

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1 <https://en.unesco.org/news/why-comprehensive-sexuality-education-important>

2 <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/why-does-it-happen/>

3 <https://www.unfpa.org/child-marriage>

that number doubles – 40% of girls are married before age 18, and 12% of girls are married before age 15. In Nepal, 37% of girl children marry under the age of 18. Similarly, 10% of girls marry under the age of 15<sup>4</sup>. Child marriage is a violation of human rights, compromising the development of girls and often resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, with little education and poor vocational training reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty.

Consequences of child marriage are devastating and often end in tragedy. Young girls face tremendous health risks in childbirth, including some serious conditions such as unintended pregnancy. An estimated 323,000 abortions were performed in Nepal in 2014, according to a study conducted by Centre for Research on Environment Health Population Activities (CREHPA) and Guttmacher Institute<sup>5</sup>. This number translates to a rate of 42 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–49; among this, only 42% abortions were legal and 19% were later treated for abortion complications<sup>6</sup>. Since legalising abortion in 2002, Nepal has made striking progress in rolling out induced abortion services, establishing comprehensive abortion care at public-sector facilities, and providing safe abortion care services to Nepali women<sup>7</sup>. However, unsafe abortion still remains a health concern. Adolescents, in particular, often face challenges in accessing abortion. Barriers to accessing safe abortion care can include negative provider attitudes, fear of repercussion, the lack of access to comprehensive sexuality education, limited financial resources, third-party involvement laws, and concerns over privacy and confidentiality.

In terms of marriage equality, Nepal is still far behind. Nepal ranks amongst the most progressive nations regarding LGBT rights. But, what happens to the traditional meaning of marriage with the recognition of same-sex unions? Commonly, marriage is defined as "a legally recognised social contract between two people, traditionally based on a sexual relationship and implying a permanence of the union."<sup>8</sup> However, still, marriage as per the Nepali law is still restricted between one man and one woman. Article 12 of the Constitution of Nepal states that people have the right to citizenship that reflects one's preferred gender. Article 18 covers rights to equality and states that the state will not 'discriminate against any citizens based on origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, gender, language or ideological conviction or any other status.' The declaration is the major milestone in the history of Nepal. Yet, there is so much to done for LGBTQ rights<sup>9</sup>.

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4 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/09/09/our-time-sing-and-play/child-marriage-nepal>

5 <http://crehpa.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Fact-sheet-on-abortion-and-unintended-pregnancy-in-Nepal-English-version-final.pdf>

6 Shrestha, Dirgha & Regmi, Shibesh & Dangal, Ganesh. (2018). Abortion: Still Unfinished Agenda in Nepal. *Journal of Nepal Health Research Council*. 16. 93. 10.3126/jnhrc.v16i1.19375.

7 <https://bmcmwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-015-0175-4>

8 <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology/chapter/chapter14-marriage-and-family/>

9 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/11/how-did-nepal-become-global-lgbt-rights-beacon>

The 2015 constitution is ground-breaking as it explicitly mentions the human rights of LGBTIQ people, presents basic health care service as fundamental rights which addresses rights of women, children, and sexual minorities<sup>10</sup>. Though different formal and informal programmes addressing young people, LGBTIQ people, woman and children have been implemented, the problem seems to fade rather slowly. The bigger change is possible only when the entire nation works together to implement the actions; everyone has to bring changes on their own first. Nepal is already a few steps ahead; one step forward would be a great leap.

## 1.2. Project introduction

Media monitoring is a process of reading, watching or listening to the editorial content of media sources on a continuing basis, and then, identifying, recording and analysing the content with specific keywords or topics. A media monitoring project can incorporate contents from any or some or all of different news mediums such as newspapers, magazines, trade journals, TV and radio stations, and online news portals.

Yuwalaya, as a youth-led organisation working for and with youth, has been making various efforts to recognise and address multiple issues of the generation. So, with the support of Right Here Right Now (RHRN), Yuwalaya extended efforts to assess Nepal's key newspapers' coverage of three key issues about sexual and reproductive health—comprehensive sexuality education, safe abortion, and marriage equality—that this generation is facing.

Newspapers are a less costly and easily available medium to impart and receive information. Yuwalaya chose this medium to meet the project objective. Therefore, 10 daily newspapers were subscribed and monitored with an objective of accessing the news related to the thematic areas. First, the news items related to the thematic areas were searched and selected for a comparative analysis among them, in terms of quality and quantity of their coverage.

## 1.3. Objectives

The main objective of the monitoring project is to assess media coverage of the issues regarding CSE, safe abortion, and marriage equality, which will represent the density of discussions and discourses of the age group currently undergoing in Nepal.

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[https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nepal\\_2015.pdf](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nepal_2015.pdf)

**The specific objectives are as follows:**

- To assess the priority given to the three identified themes in Nepali media,
- To document events, ideas and thoughts that discuss the issues should be advocated for/ against in the SRHR sector,
- To collect and document newspaper reports that highlight the issues regarding sexual and reproductive health rights and LGBTIQ rights including their problems and situation,
- To analyse the actions taken for the improvement in the situation of the CSE, safe abortion, and marriage equality in Nepal,
- To suggest strategies to resolve the problems identified under thematic and cross-cutting areas and issues.

## **1.4. Methodology**

In order to monitor and analyse the above-mentioned issues, Yuwalaya adopted the following five-step methodology:

### **A. Study team formation**

The formation of the study team was the first step of media monitoring. Yuwalaya, in January 2019, selected a study team to carry out the media monitoring as planned. Details regarding the team members are mentioned in an annex of this report.

### **B. Selection and subscription of newspapers**

Continuing with the previously subscribed newspapers, the study team at first selected ten daily broadsheet newspapers: four in English and six in Nepali for the study. The selection was made on the basis of their higher popularity, and widespread geographic and issue-wise coverage.

**The following newspapers have been covered in this study:**

1. The Himalayan Times
2. The Kathmandu Post

3. Republica
4. Annapurna Post
5. The Rising Nepal
6. Gorkhapatra
7. Nepal Samacharpatra
8. Nagarik
9. Rajdhani
10. Kantipur

### **C. Clipping and Documentation of articles**

First, the news items relating to the thematic areas were identified; they were clipped and documented for an in-depth analysis. The news items were separately filed and documented for future references.

Later, the study team discussed how they carried thematic issues. Further, the cross-cutting issues were identified.

The news items in these newspapers were observed and analysed from January to December 2019.

### **D. Tabulation of the reports**

The study team thematically tabulated the news reports. In addition, the geographical area (location/ province) of the reported incidents/ideas was also recorded and the progress on the issues as observed in the particular province was analysed later.

### **E. Final analysis**

Based on the tabulation of data, the final analysis and documentation of the compiled news-stories was done. Then, on the basis of information collected, the analysis was reported as the final report.

## 1.5. Research scope and limitation

This report is prepared to analyse how the thematic issues were covered in a particular group of media in a particular time period. This report is based on the published media articles and interviews. Therefore, its scope is limited by various factors and constraints:

1. It only represents the way mainstream daily newspapers of Nepal look at the issues of comprehensive sexuality education, safe abortion, and marriage equality. The positioning of other types of media, for example: FM radios or online news portals, might be different.
2. The selected newspapers were among the most popular newspapers and of highest ranks as per the Press Council classification. Yet, they may fail to represent the entire situation.
3. The findings of this report might have been affected by specific incidents of the research period (January-December 2019). The coverage of the identified issues in the media could be different in other years.
4. Nearly 10% of individual daily issues of the newspapers published in this period have been missed out from documentation due to technical and logistic reasons.
5. Editorials, opinion articles, letters to the editor published in the newspapers were excluded from the study. Similarly, the study team has not covered weekly and other occasional supplements, standalone photographs, and advertisements in its scope.
6. Overall, news stories covered and documented in this report are related to the set themes which are mentioned above. Thus, other issues, even though they might be important for the SRHR sector, might have been missed out.

## Chapter 2: Observation and analysis

Highlights of observations and analysis of individual newspapers have been discussed separately below.

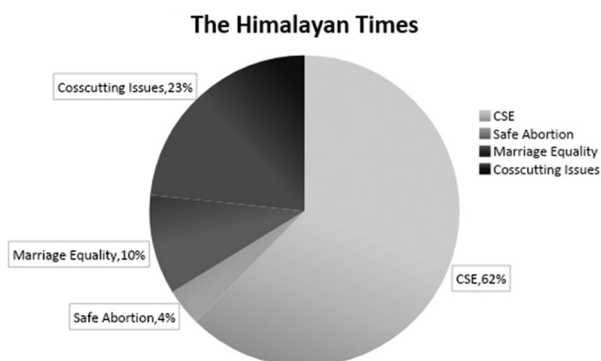
### 2.1. The Himalayan Times

The Himalayan Times covered 77 news stories about the selected themes from January to December 2019. Among the three themes, comprehensive sexuality education was the most highlighted issue in this newspaper.

Meanwhile, almost half of the stories (48) covered in this category were about rape, molestations and attempted rape cases. All of the victims in the news stories were found to be minors and marginalised girls and women who were targeted by their own husbands, relatives, nearby neighbours and teachers, including those in power. One story posted on December 15 talked about the rising cases of rape and attempted rape. According to the news, the number of rape cases almost doubled, from 1,480 cases reported in the previous fiscal year to 2,233 cases for the studied year. One of the new stories also highlights that 65% of the violence against women occurs inside their homes. Similarly, there were 10 stories about the existence of child marriage in most of the rural parts of Nepal. Also, various cases about people still following the 'Chhaupadi' system were also significantly covered. The news stories showed that even when the government has launched a campaign against the system and the practice has already been criminalised, some people are still subjected to this.

The newspaper carried only eight news reports about marriage equality, and three about safe abortion. Even then, they tell a lot about the gravity of the situation: more than 500,000 cases of unwanted pregnancies annually in Nepal. One of the stories talks about the strongly held preference to a male child among the Nepalis, highlighting the young women are put under pressure by their mothers-in-law and husbands to try conception repeatedly with a hope of having a son. It is remarkable that, according to World Health Organisation, the natural sex ratio at birth is 105 males per 100 females. The sex ratio of Nepal as of 2015 was 110 males per 100 females.

Meanwhile, the remaining 18 news reports were crosscutting; they have covered two or three themes at once.



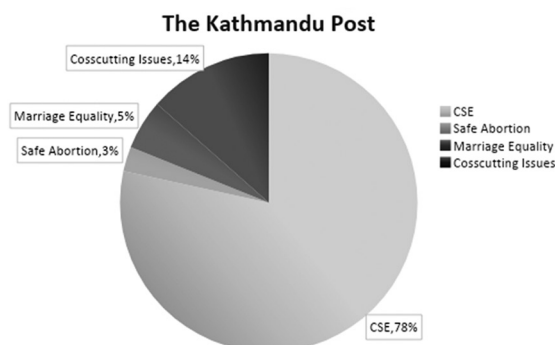


## 2.2. The Kathmandu Post

The Kathmandu Post has covered the total of 37 news items relating to the themes from January to December 2019. Among them, 29 stories were directly linked with the CSE, five covered cross-cutting issues. There were only two stories about marriage equality, and one about safe abortion.

Similar to The Himalayan Times, The Kathmandu Post also posted several stories about rape and attempted rape cases. Some of the stories were also about human trafficking and rescue of the victims. Two of the stories were about wives being murdered by their husbands. There were four stories about child marriage and awareness against it. One story posted on December 26 reveals that

19% of women in the Achham district of Sudurpaschim gave birth before they turned 20. There were five reports about the 'Chhaupadi' tradition. One of them reported one person being arrested for the suspicion of forcing a woman to stay in 'Chhau Goth'. It was apparently the first arrest since the tradition was criminalised in August 2017.



The story about safe abortion highlights that Donald Trump's anti-abortion 'Global Gag Rule' was creating a state of dystopia for Nepali women. The American government's decision to ban the US funding for NGOs that provide abortion counselling or referrals has had an impact on Nepal also, according to the report.

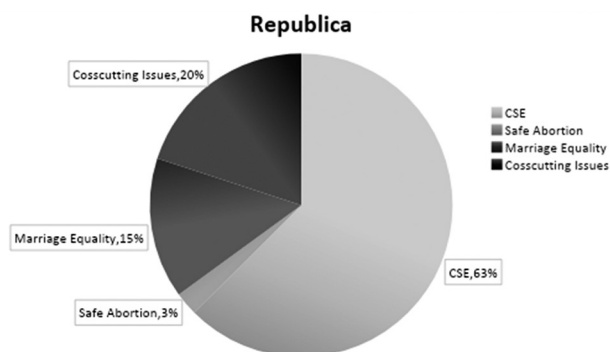
## 2.3. Republica

Republica, from January to December 2019, covered 40 stories on the thematic areas. Of them, 25 were about the CSE, eight were crosscutting, six about marriage equality, and one about safe abortion.

One of the cross-cutting stories highlighted that free condoms available at a health post were left untouched. Two of those stories were about the deaths of women in the Karnali province due to delivery complications.

On September 7, the newspaper published a news report explaining youth in Rolpa were resorting to unsafe abortion instead of contraceptives. According to a study done by Guttmacher Institute in 2014, out of the total maternal deaths in Nepal, seven percent deaths were caused by unsafe abortion.

Similarly, the newspaper published reports about child marriage cases in Rolpa and Okhaldhunga, even after the introduction of the new Civil Code. One of the interesting stories about this particular topic was how lawmakers themselves sought measures to reduce marriageable age back to 18. Also, the newspaper published a news report about a parliamentary committee studying and preparing a report about the Chhaupadi tradition without any of the members reaching the affected region.

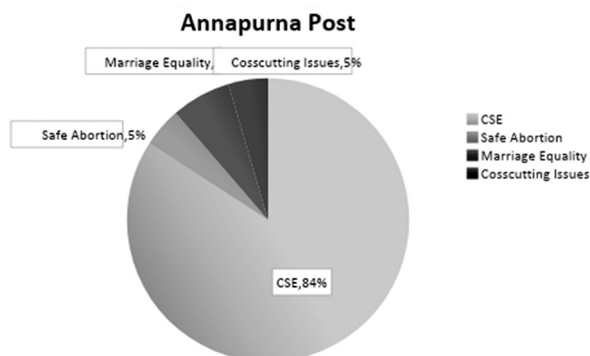


Likewise, under marriage equality, the newspaper covered an incident in Sarlahi where inter-caste couples were still facing social stigma. All other stories covered were about marital rape, and murder of wives by their husbands and family members due to the reasons related to dowry. There was one suicide case reported due to the unbearable torture from in-laws, also due to dowry.

## 2.4. Annapurna Post

Annapurna Post published 44 news stories connected to the thematic areas. The study team studied direct and indirect connections of all news stories to thematic areas to find that 37 stories were about the CSE. While some of the covered stories highlighted the government's planning at various levels to end child marriage, others shed light on existence of child marriage in various parts of Nepal, especially in Terai region. Six of the news stories were about the Chhaupadi practice. One of the stories on Chhaupadi stressed how some teachers themselves were following this ill system. There were altogether 18 news stories about rape cases. Most of the victims of those rape cases were minor, young girls, many of whom were differently-abled. They were victimised by their own fathers, teachers, relatives, and colleagues.

Meanwhile, two news stories had a direct connection to safe abortion. Both the stories were about two minors, below 14, who were impregnated during rape cases. In one case, the rapist had forced her to abort the baby after learning about the pregnancy in the fourth month. The report highlighted the dilemma in the girl as she would be physically and mentally unsafe and troubled in either of her choices—giving birth to the child or aborting.

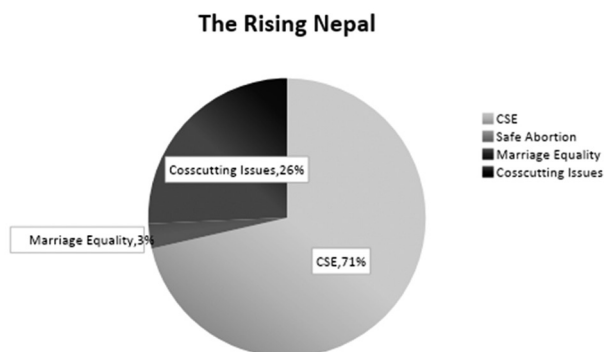


Likewise, three of the news stories were connected to the theme of marriage equality. The stories highlighted problems of domestic violence faced by women. It stated that the marriage was still the same as before; it was not about connecting two lives, but connecting with the gifts and money the groom would get from the bride's family. One news story explained that women were suffering less after the government decided to destroy home-brewed alcohol in various places. According to the news, 120 women were murdered by their own family members in 2018. Similarly, 1,632 cases of domestic violence were reported.

## 2.5. The Rising Nepal

The Rising Nepal covered 35 news stories connected to the thematic areas. Of them, 25 stories were about the CSE. Even among them, five highlighted child marriage and the government's plans at various levels to end child marriage. Likewise, four covered the Chhaupadi tradition. One particular story posted on November 6 said eight women died in the recent past due to the evil system whereas more than 1,000 are still subjected to it.

There were three stories on domestic violence, six cases of minors including girls from marginalised communities being molested and raped, and how they still struggled to get justice when the protector himself turned the offender.



The team found eight crosscutting issues which were closely linked with the themes. The news stories talked about the governmental and non-governmental bodies prioritising the issue of gender discrimination, full literacy rate of Bajura, and so on. There were a few other stories which talked about dowry and how women were seen as objects to bring prosperity to the men's families.

## 2.6. Gorkhapatra

Gorkhapatra covered 44 stories directly or indirectly connected with the thematic areas. Gorkhapatra reported 37 stories directly linked with the CSE. While most of the stories were about rape cases one story posted on March 24 provided a clearer picture on the scenario. According to the news, from the reported cases, 141 victims were raped by their own family members living under the same roof. Likewise, 48 were raped by relatives, 26 cases by teachers, 730 by friends and neighbours, 692 by distant relatives, and 404 by strangers.

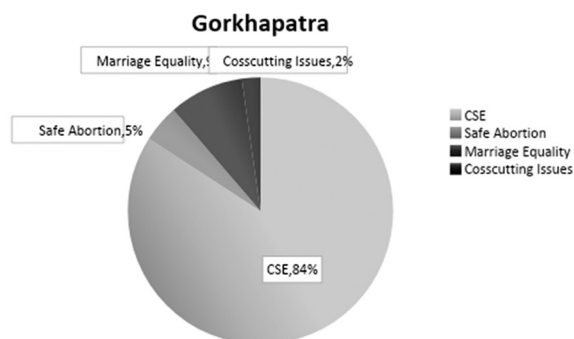


Figure 6 Coverage of thematic issues in Gorkhapatra

Another story covered women's perspective on domestic violence, as per which, most of the women thought domestic violence to be a husband's right. Two of the stories were about the rise in divorce cases. They highlighted that young couples who married early later realised it to be a mistake. While some divorced men went for a second marriage, the women on the other hand were left in the lurch.

Gorkhapatra published one news story on safe abortion. The story explained how young girls sought help from local pharmacies for a permanent solution to pregnancies, which showed how unaware the general mass is about the safe abortion service providers. Also, this showed the ongoing practice of unsafe abortion among many girls and women, whose cases are reported only when their conditions became worse.

Gorkhapatra covered four stories under the theme of marriage equality, one of which was about the brutal murder of a woman by her own husband. Other three stories were about inter-caste marriages being appreciated and LGBTQI couples opening up about their relationships.

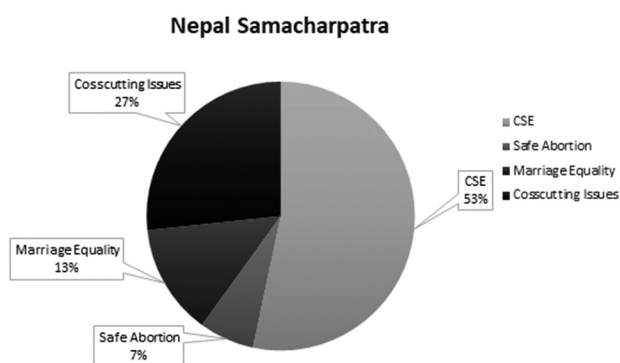
## 2.7. Nepal Samacharpatra

Nepal Samacharpatra published 30 news stories based on the thematic issues. Out of these, 16 stories were connected to the CSE as they discussed child marriage, menstrual health issues and measures to solve the issues, reproductive awareness, and the Chhaupadi system among others. Also, there were some stories related to child marriage, highlighting efforts put forth by the local level governments and different organisations towards its end through awareness and other needful policies and their implementation.

About safe abortion, the newspaper published two stories. One such story talked about an increase in the ratio of Nepali women using contraceptives for family planning.

Four of the news stories published in Nepal Samacharpatra were about marriage equality, and they highlighted the cases of women being tortured and even murdered by husbands and in-laws because of dowry. Also, they talked about women being banished from their homes for belonging to the Dalit community.

There were eight crosscutting stories, some of which explained the situation of maternal health and safety due to unsafe roads and lesser facilities provided in the existing health posts. Two stories covered how skill-based training helped marginalised communities uplift their situation by increasing the literacy rate.



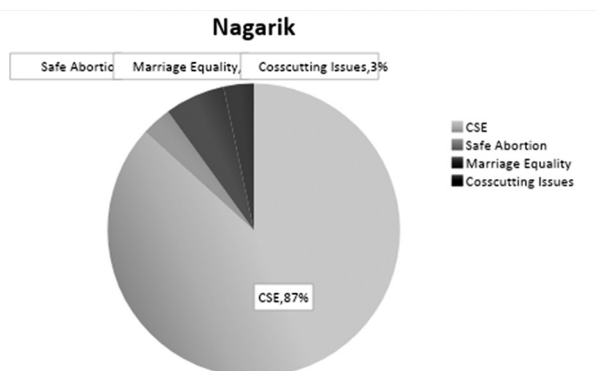
## 2.8. Nagarik

Nagarik has published 30 news stories related to the three themes. Of them, 26 stories were related to the CSE. These stories touched several issues. One of the stories explained how students, especially the girls, got leaves during their menstrual period every month when the schools were unable to provide them basic facilities such as proper toilet and sanitary pads. A few other stories explained the schools providing sanitary pads in school. Two of the stories covered the importance of awareness programmes to eliminate the Chhaupadi system. Under the similar theme, one story explained how the LGBTQI community is opening up to a wider mass of people

via various communal activities. Four stories talked about young girls giving birth before they turned 20. Two such news articles published in April and July reported that mothers in around 30% births recorded in particular regions were below 20.

Similarly, under safe abortion, one story covered the rise in the cases of unwanted pregnancy.

Under marriage equality, there were two stories; one of which talked about the inter-caste couple struggling even after ages of marriage, and the other covered the story of a woman who was murdered by the family for not bringing a bed as dowry.

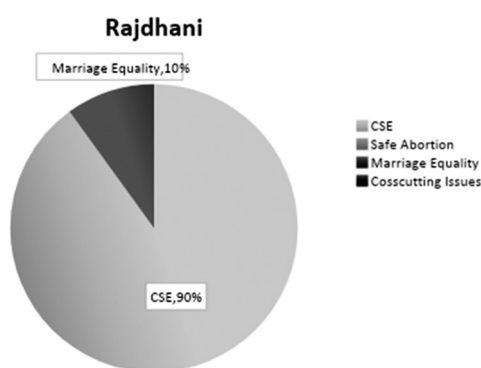


## 2.9. Rajdhani

Rajdhani published 20 news reports about the selected themes. Interesting, 18 of these items were related to the CSE and two to marriage equality. There was not any report about safe abortion or crosscutting issues.

One of the stories under the CSE explained how a belief in witchcraft had an impact on female students and teachers at a particular location. Most stories talked about minor girls being the victims of rape by their own close relatives. One story from Province 2 highlighted that 77 rape cases were reported within a span of six months. Another case was about a man killing his own daughter for money.

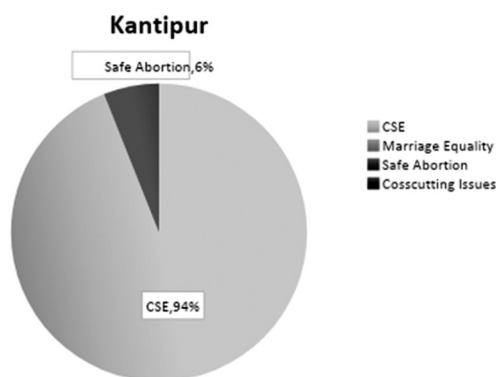
On marriage equality, both news stories represented the women in the family being the victims of domestic violence and marital rape.



## 2.10. Kantipur

From January to December 2019, Kantipur published 33 stories directly connected to the thematic areas. Among them, one news story talked about women opening up about torture they have been going through. Some of the complaints were about husbands not having proper conversation. Also, some other stories covered the news of schools providing sanitary pads to girl students. Likewise, there were other news reports about students facing mental pressure as they had to travel to other places for their Secondary Education Examinations (SEE) as they had to face new challenges in the new setting in case they had periods, for example. According to one story published in Kantipur, an SEE invigilator snatched away sanitary pads from an examinee, making her unable to concentrate on her answers.

Another news item talked about the decreasing number of girl children due to the preference of sons by the parents and other family members. Many women even aborted unborn children when they found out they were carrying female fetuses. One news item on maternal health highlighted the situation that many women were still suffering due to the traditional belief that touching newly born and the mother for certain days after delivery might make their god unhappy, ultimately resulting in their own sickness.

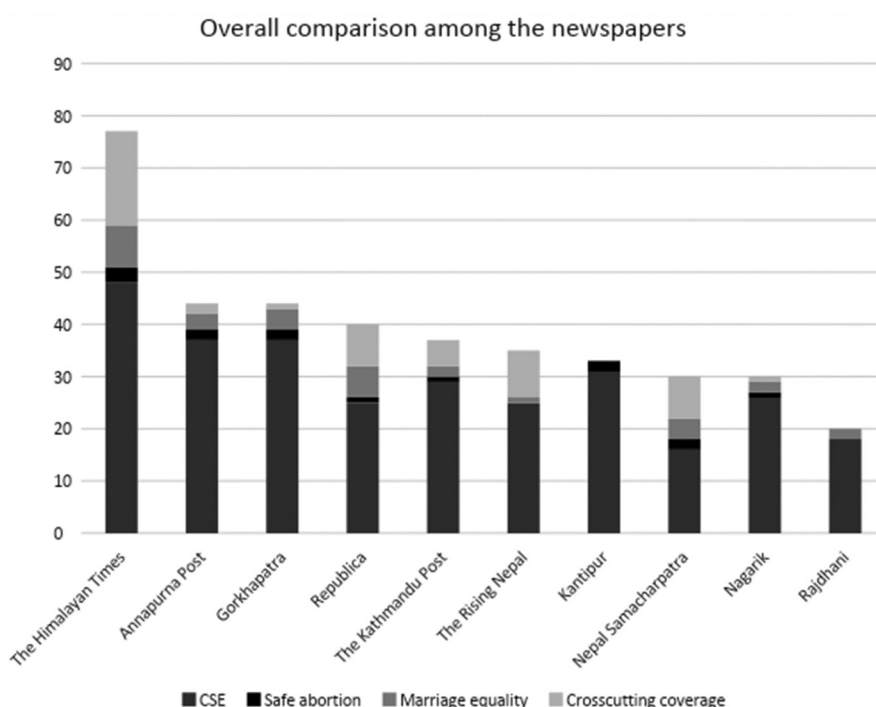


There were stories on LGBTQI, both of which highlighted that the LGBTQI communities were opening up to others, and there was a report of a movie about a transwoman in the making.

## Chapter 3: Major findings and discussion

### 3.1. Comparative analysis of the newspapers' coverage

Of 10 newspapers studied, The Himalayan Times is found to have published the highest number of news reports (77) on the selected themes whereas Rajdhani the lowest (20). Except these two newspapers at two ends, each of the other eight published 30 to 44 news items on the themes. The comparison shows, in general, almost all newspapers have accorded an average level of priority to the SRHR issues.



**Figure 11: Overall comparison among the studied newspapers**

More than half of the clipped news items were related to comprehensive sexuality education for each of the newspapers. Among the 390 news items studied in this project, a considerable section (52) also covers cross-cutting issues that cannot be categorised into one among the CSE, marriage equality, and safe abortion. On the other hand, the numbers of stories on specific themes of marriage equality (32), and safe abortion (14) are lower, which show the coverage of SRHR issues should be made more specified in the days to come.



## **3.2. Thematic analysis**

### **1. Comprehensive sexuality education**

In total, 292 news stories were published under the topic of CSE in the studied 10 newspapers. This theme has been the most prioritised one among the three studied themes for all the newspapers. The news reports covered several issues that have direct or indirect links with the idea of comprehensive sexuality education. The highest number of the stories (48) among the 10 newspapers were covered by The Himalayan Times.

Several of the reports related to the CSE discussed rape case, the Chhaupadi practice, child marriage, menstruation and menstrual hygiene, and reproductive health information. Some had highlighted the reason behind all these ill-treatments were due to the inability to utilise the viability of technology and the support of the public to go against these issues.

### **2. Safe abortion**

Only 4% of the total studied news contents (14 among 390) were related to safe abortion. These stories discussed the rising number of young girls resorting to abortion, in some cases after rape. Likewise, the news reports also highlighted the prevalence of sex-selective abortion in Nepal with many women aborting after female foetus after knowing its sex.

Among 14 reports related to safe abortion, eight were related to abortion after forced conception as in the case with rape whereas four articles were about sex-selective abortion. The articles also talked about the 'unsafe' abortion services being provided illegally by various hospitals and clinics as well as the sale of unregistered pills by pharmacies. One of the articles was about the government taking measures to address sex-selective abortion in Nepal.

### **Challenges in access**

Under this theme, difficulties faced by women in accessing safe abortion services due to unavailability of service providers was also discussed significantly. There are some other challenges also; young people are hesitant to seek safe abortion services due to a fear of being judged by others. Some of the articles also mentioned the lack of awareness and education on abortion to be one of the barriers to access safe abortion services.

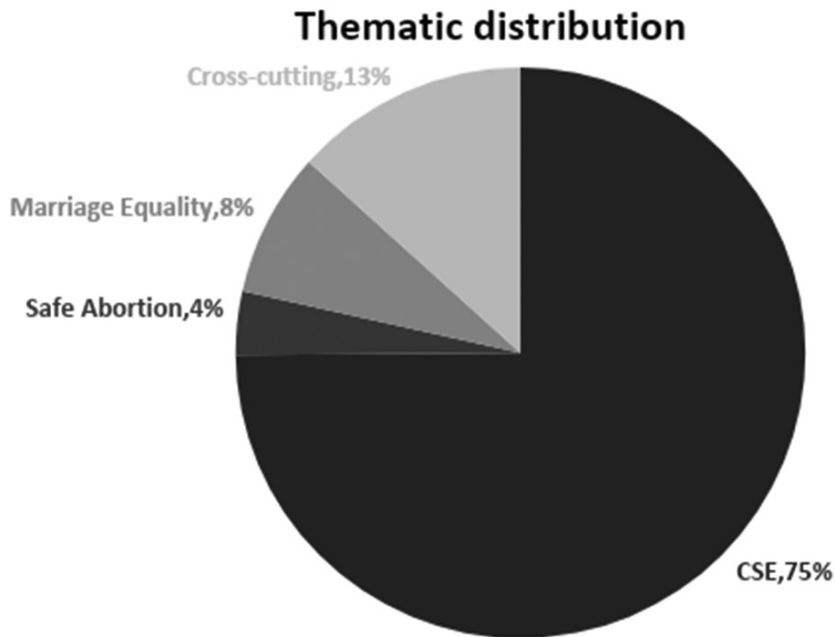
### 3. Marriage equality

Under marriage equality, 32 news stories (8% of the total) were reported in the 10 newspapers. The situation of the LGBTIQ community was not much highlighted under this section. Moreover, there were hardly any stories which talked about the same-sex couple and their right to marriage.

Although not considered issues related to marriage equality per se, the newspapers raised serious concerns about people's right to equality in terms of marriage as they highlighted stories about violence against women on dowry issues, problems of inter-caste couples. There were several reports about marital abuse and harassment.

### 4. Cross-cutting issues

Some of the news reports have been found directly related to more than one issues of the focus have been listed in this category. Among the 390 clipped stories, 52 (13%) were crosscutting in nature. Some of the cross-cutting issues were about the women not getting maternity allowances, and facing trouble to look after themselves and their newborn babies. Also, some of the stories were about the deaths of pregnant women due to the lack of timely care and needful treatment.



### 3.3. Additional observation

While the media content related to women, children, and their rights is abundant, the articles focusing on concerns of the LGBTIQ people are scarce. Moreover, the publication of the content related to concerns of men regarding the SRHR is also rare. It is equally important to listen to and understand the problems faced by youth of different categories including the LGBTIQI and come up with possible solutions, which the media outlets have failed to realise.

Sexuality is a fundamental aspect of human life. This topic should be given more priority as it is directly connected with various problem like child marriage and its more severe impacts. Thus, providing comprehensive sexuality education to youth could benefit not just in reducing the problems like child marriage but also help young people to take their stand in pressured situations and take better decisions and create less confusions regarding their own body.

The newspapers have reported dozens of rape cases in the year. Effectively, they could have been prevented if all the people in society had been provided with comprehensive sexuality education by appropriate means. Moreover, most of the victims were minors whereas the attackers are their family members, neighbours, relatives and teachers. Such issues could have been solved by expanding and enhancing comprehensive sexuality education.

Another similar issue is child marriage. Though criminalised by law, child marriage is still rampant across the country. In Nepal, it is driven by a complex web of factors, but key among them is gender discrimination, especially when combined with poverty. A lot of child marriage cases are never even reported. It is deeply harmful for a child as they are usually dropped out of school and end up with early pregnancy. Also, most of the couple who married early are also most likely to divorce early or have multiple spouses. Deep down, the lack of comprehensive sexuality education might be promoting such cases.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion and recommendations

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### 4.1. Conclusion

Studying the media content related to sexual and reproductive health rights, such as education, gender equality education, sexual and reproductive information, concerns of gender and sexual minorities, legalisation of same-sex marriage, safe and unsafe abortion practices, etc, it has been clear that the sector is filled with problems galore. Despite legal provisions, people do not have adequately enjoyed their right to comprehensive sexuality education, marriage equality, and safe abortion. It means concerned government and nongovernment agencies need to do many things in order to improve the situation.

In the meantime, most of the issues and incidents related to these themes are underreported. The media outlets have also not given sufficient priority to them. For evidence, the number of abortion-related news items can be considered. In one long year, 10 'top' newspapers of the country published only 14 news reports related to safe abortion. Apparently, the issues are not discussed in the mainstream media as much as they should have been. The media's focus is required to be distributed among all dimensions of sexual and reproductive health such as education, gender equality, sexual and reproductive information, consequences on lack of sexual and reproductive, gender and sexual minorities, legitimisation of same-sex marriage, safe and unsafe abortion practices, etc.

Media are considered mirrors of society. They reflect what exists in their setting. However, they also have an additional responsibility to guide the society towards positive changes. There, they should be more active in sensitively demonstrating problems of society and leading to their best possible solutions.

## 4.2. Recommendations

Based on findings of this study, the following recommendations and suggestions can be given:

### To media

- The media have not adequately reported on why comprehensive sexuality education is important to create a healthier and happier society. Their coverage of the CSE should increase.
- Whereas media's prioritisation of gender empowerment and social inclusion, and child marriage is noteworthy, they should expand their coverage on other significant issues concerning sexual and reproductive health rights, safe abortion and issues relating to the LGBTQI community. They should extend support in advocacy against discriminatory marriage law and establish an equity-based society.
- The media personnel should reach out to the organisations, government and nongovernment, working on safe abortion to create more informative and progressive content to support and be part of the advocacy being done to make abortion safe, quality, accessible, stigma free, and youth-friendly.
- Because youth have the greatest responsibility in developing any society, they should be the priority audience group of media. Media should produce appropriate contents targeting youth and help them get engaged in activities concerning them.

### To youth, youth organisations and youth activists

- Youth organisations and activists should take interest in media as much as possible in their regular and special activities so that media will also prioritise and promote their issues.
- One should not just give up or feel discouraged even if the media do not give priority to their activities, but continue working until their words are heard by the needed authorities.
- They should carefully study media contents about issues they are working on and engage themselves in constructive conversation with the media so that both the sides can give the best support possible to each other.



## Annex 2: Study team

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