



TAIWAN FOUNDATION  
for DEMOCRACY  
財團法人  
臺灣民主基金會

Report of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy Grant

## Promoting Democracy and Human Rights through Advocacy at Grass Root Level in Nepal

**Grantee Organization:** Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON)

**Project Coordinator:** Advocate Kalyan Pokhrel

**Period of Project:** [2025, January – April]

**Date of Report:** [2025, May, 30]





TAIWAN FOUNDATION  
for DEMOCRACY  
臺灣民主基金會

## Table of Contents

	Page No.
Project Overview:	2
Funding Summary:	2
1. Executive Summary:	3
• Project Description	4-5
2. Program Activities:	6
2.1 Workshop Programs:	6
2.1.1 Bardibas District, Madesh Province.	6-7
2.1.2 Nawalpur District, Gandaki Province.	8-10
3. Interaction Programs:	10
3.1 Dhading District, Bagmati Province	10-12
3.2 Kathmandu District, Bagmati Province.	12-13
4. Publication	14
5. Lobbying Meetings	14
6. Lesson Learned	15
7. Recommendation	15
8. Acknowledgement	16



**Project Overview:**

Title of the Project	Promoting Democracy and Human Rights through Advocacy at Grass Root Level in Nepal
Project Working Area	Madesh Province, Gandaki Province, Bagmati Province and Kathmandu Valley of Nepal
Starting Date	January 2025
Project Completion Date	April 2025
Lead Partner	Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON)

**Funding Summary:**

Particulars	Total
Approved Budget	5000\$
Actual Expenditure	11312.22\$




## 1. Executive Summary

This project completion report covers progress of the 4 months (January - April 2025) project entitled '**Promoting Democracy and Human Rights through Advocacy at Grass Root Level in Nepal**' implemented by Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) with financial support from the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD).

Nepal's transition into a federal democratic republic, as established by the Constitution of 2015, presented a landmark opportunity to strengthen democratic governance, uphold human rights, and foster inclusive development. Despite this promise, the practical implementation of federalism has faced considerable challenges particularly in terms of functional clarity, institutional capacity, and inclusivity. Structural barriers and limited awareness of constitutional provisions among stakeholders at the provincial and local levels have hindered the effective realization of principles of federalism. Marginalized communities including Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, women, and indigenous groups continue to experience systemic exclusion from the state's political and decision-making processes.

In response to these challenges, the Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON), a nationally recognized grassroots organization comprising over 50,000 members, successfully implemented a four-month project titled "**Promoting Democracy and Human Rights through Advocacy at the Grassroots Level in Nepal.**" Conducted from January to April 2025. This initiative was supported in part by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) and was carried out across Madhesh Province, Gandaki Province, Bagmati Province, and the Kathmandu Valley.

The project aimed to raise civic awareness, capacity building among key stakeholders, and advocate for effective, inclusive, and accountable federal governance. A series of targeted activities were conducted, including workshops, interactive sessions, expert-led research and discussion paper development, lobbying meetings, and the publication of a comprehensive booklet. This initiative actively engaged representatives from marginalized communities, civil society organizations, and media to ensure broad-based participation and inclusivity.

Through this project, HURON contributed to enhancing understanding of federalism, promoting the rule of law, and strengthening democratic accountability at the





grassroots level. The actual expenditure for the project was USD 11312.22, with USD 5000 provided by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy.

This completed initiative has laid a critical foundation for ongoing advocacy, institutional strengthening, and civic engagement in support of more inclusive and democratic Nepal.

As planned initially, the interaction and workshop events were participated by experts, political party leaders, elected representatives of province and local bodies, leaders of ethnic communities, Dalit, Madhesi, religious leaders, human rights activists, civil society and journalists. Participation of marginalized groups, female and indigenous peoples were given high priority.

The documented outcome of the project has been forwarded to the concerned authority to make strategic changes in the policy. The overall objective of the project is to promote democracy and human rights at the Grassroots Level in Nepal which was the leading factor of this project for its successful completion.

### **Project Description**

#### **Context and Rationale**

The Constitution of Nepal, promulgated in 2015, heralded a new era of federalism aimed at decentralizing governance and ensuring inclusive representation. However, despite holding federal, provincial, and local elections, the practical functioning of federal structures remains filled with challenges. Tensions and confusions persist among the three tiers of government due to unclear demarcation of power and authority. Moreover, marginalized communities such as Dalits, Janajatis, and Madhesis continue to face systemic exclusion, hindering the fulfillment of democratic aspirations and constitutional guarantees.

The historical involvement of civil society in defending democratic values, particularly during the 2005-06 movement against the monarchy, underscores the importance of reviving and strengthening this sector. Currently, civil society and media face increasing suppression, making it imperative to revitalize advocacy efforts to uphold human rights, freedom of expression, and good governance.





### Objectives

**Overall Objective:** To promote democracy through sensitization of political representatives and civil society actors on effective federal governance in Nepal.

### Specific Objectives:

- To sensitize stakeholders on the legal framework guiding Nepal's federal structure.
- To promote civic engagement and advocacy for the protection and promotion of human rights.



## 2. Program Activities:

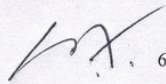
### 2.1 Workshop Programs:

#### 2.1.1 Bardibas District, Madesh Province

The Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) had organized a comprehensive workshop titled **“Discussion and Deliberation on Human Rights and Democracy at the Local Level”** on 9 May 2025 in Bardibas, Mahottari, Madhesh Province, Nepal. The program was held with the primary objective of promoting awareness, fostering dialogue, and advocating for the protection and promotion of human rights and democratic values at the grassroots level. The event was presided over by Mr. Bimal Thakur, and graced by Mr. Indra Prasad Aryal, President of HURON, as the Chief Guest. Mr. Biplav Bhatta, Ms. Tika Dangi, and Mr. Madhusudan Upadhyaya attended the program as Special Guests. A total of 54 participants, including local representatives, social activists, political leaders, law enforcement officers, and community members, actively took part in the deliberation.

The workshop began with an opening address emphasizing the importance of human rights in establishing a just and democratic society. In the interactive session, Mr. Chet Bahadur, Chairman of the Loktantrik Samajwadi Party (L.O.S.P), raised the issue of male rights, pointing out that men’s issues are often overlooked in human rights discussions. He emphasized the need for equal recognition and protection for all genders under human rights frameworks. Mr. Kaharmaan Syangba, Bardibas Rural Municipality Ward Chairperson from Ward No. 5 highlighted the critical issue of citizenship, noting that many individuals in the Madhesh region are still deprived of citizenship due to bureaucratic barriers, despite having lived in the area for generations. This, he stated, has caused significant disenfranchisement and inequality.

Honorable Nisha Shah, Maoist Central Committee member brought attention to the persistent problems of child marriage and untouchability. Despite legal reforms, these harmful practices still exist in many rural areas, driven by traditional beliefs and lack of awareness. He emphasized the need for more targeted interventions and

 6





TAIWAN FOUNDATION  
for DEMOCRACY  
台灣民主基金會

community-based awareness programs. Social activist Saraswoti Mishra discussed the challenges faced by single women, particularly the social disdain and exclusion they often face. She proposed removing the stigmatizing term “विधवा”(Widow) from public language and highlighted the issue of exploitation through informal lending systems such as ‘meter byaj’ (meter interest) loans, which often trap marginalized communities in vicious cycles of debt.

During the suggestion and feedback session, Mr. Bishnu Khadka, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, stressed the importance of organizing human rights awareness programs in every ward across the province to ensure broad understanding and protection of rights. The Ashok Kumar Yadav, Area Inspector of Bardibas pointed out that Madhesi Dalit communities, including Musahar and Chamar, face compounded discrimination due to lack of citizenship and inadequate housing. He also addressed child rights violations and child abuse, calling for inter-agency cooperation, and pledged police support for community-level human rights missions. Former HURON district member, Sujit Kapari, proposed the establishment of a Human Rights Help Desk to assist victims of rights violations efficiently and promptly. A member of the Constituent Assembly further recommended expanding such workshops to every local unit to build a culture of human rights and democratic accountability from the ground up. Mr. Ram Dular Shah, Chief of Ramgopal Nagar, echoed this sentiment, pledging support from the local government to continue and promote such workshops, recognizing their role in social transformation.

The workshop concluded with remarks from Chief Guest Mr. Indra Prasad Aryal, who reflected on the implementation of federalism following the Constitution of Nepal 2072. He noted that while the federal structure aimed to empower local governments, many have yet to function democratically or prioritize human rights. As a result, citizens facing injustice are still forced to protest and seek justice in Kathmandu, undermining the purpose of decentralization. He called for greater responsibility and ethical conduct from provincial and local governments, emphasizing that the success of federalism depends on their ability to uphold human rights and democratic principles at every level. The workshop concluded with a shared commitment from all participants to collaborate in building a more just, inclusive, and democratic society.



7



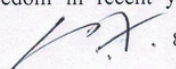
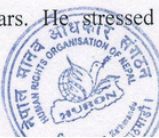
## 2.1.2 Nawalpur District, Gandaki Province

The Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) successfully organized a significant interaction program titled **“Discussion and Deliberation on Human Rights and Democracy at the Local Level”** on 10 May 2025 in Gaidakot, Nawalpur, located in Gandaki Province, Nepal. This event brought together a diverse group of 65 participants including human rights defenders, political leaders, legal professionals, civil society members, social activists, journalists, educators, and representatives from local government and Nepal Police. The program was conducted under the presidency of Mr. Hari Adhikari, the District President of HURON, Nawalpur, and honored by the presence of Mr. Indra Prasad Aryal, the president of HURON, as the chief guest. The event was facilitated by distinguished trainers and experts Mr. Biplav Bhatta, Ms. Tika Dangi, and Mr. Madhusudan Upadhyaya.

The program commenced with a warm welcome to all attendees and an introductory note on the critical need for dialogue surrounding human rights and democratic practices at the grassroots level. A lineup of experienced speakers presented their views on the present human rights scenario in Nepal, its prevailing challenges, and actionable recommendations for improvement. Among the special guests who contributed to the discussion were Mr. Babuhari Acharya from the Human Rights Governance Committee in Chitwan, Advocate Phulmaya Ranabhat, Mr. Purnachand Chapagain, Mr. Sambhu Rawat, President Tulman Gurung, and educator Mr. Devraj Neupane.

The educationist, Mr. Ramakant Sapkota, highlighted how the root causes of many human rights violations today are directly tied to political instability and an economic crisis that has left nearly 18 percent of the population in the desperate poverty. Human rights activist, Mr. Janak Ram Poudel, added that the absence of strong rule of law, a functioning justice system, and the exploitation of constitutional ambiguities have given rise to a "deep state" where mafia-like entities influence governance.

Mr. Basanta Parajuli, President of the Chitwan Journalists Federation, addressed the issue of press freedom, presenting alarming statistics that revealed 73 incidents against journalistic freedom in recent years. He stressed that without safe and

 . 8 

independent journalism, human rights cannot be fully protected or promoted. Advocate Phoolmaya Ranabhat, President of the Chitwan Bar Association, questioned the implementation of the constitution and emphasized the challenges in ensuring child rights and birth registration at the rehabilitation or correction centers.

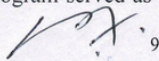
A Police Inspector, Mr. Deepak Prasad Rijal, provided data on the increase in cases of child abuse, feticide, and discrimination. Meanwhile, a representative from the Peace Society expressed concerns about the structure of federalism itself, suggesting that the problem lies not in the system but in the way it is executed.

A human rights expert shed light on broader issues such as the lack of capable leadership, political interference in legal enforcement, corruption, the failure of the education system to retain talent, and growing public distrust in the judiciary. Professor Mr. Bhimraj Adhikari, the former Registrar of Tribhuvan University, emphasized the necessity for human rights education, suggesting it be included in the national budget and mandated for local representatives.

Civil society representative, Mr. Janak Bahadur Baniya, noted that human rights violations also stem from social and cultural confusions, misaligned responsibilities, patriarchal norms, and the lack of proactive awareness among communities. Dr. Ravi Mohan Kopila explained that global power rivalries and pointed to international dynamics, particularly the race for nuclear armament, are undermining human rights globally and locally.

The program concluded with a powerful closing address by chief guest Mr. Indra Prasad Aryal, who underscored that despite adopting federalism under the Constitution of 2072 at both provincial and local level governments, Nepal has failed sufficiently to institutionalize the democratic practices and protect the citizens' rights. He acknowledged that increasing public demonstrations in Kathmandu reflect a growing mistrust in the current federal system. Mr. Aryal urged all levels of government to have their commitment towards the justice, transparency, and democratic values for restoring the faith in federal governance and redressing human rights concerns effectively.

Overall, the interaction program served as a crucial platform to share the grievances.





share expertise, and voices, and to propose collaborative strategies aimed at strengthening democracy and safeguarding human rights from the ground up.

### 3. Interaction Programs.

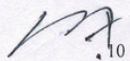
#### 3.1 Dhading District, Bagmati Province

On 12th May 2025, the Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) successfully conducted an interaction program titled **“Discussion and Deliberation on Human Rights and Democracy at the Local Level”** in Dhading Besi, Bagmati Province, Nepal. The program aimed to initiate a constructive dialogue on prevailing human rights challenges and democratic issues at the grassroots level. A total of 63 participants, including representatives from civil society, local government officials, legal experts, social activists, and human rights defenders, took part in the event.

The program was presided over by Mr. Krishna Raj Adhikari, District president of HURON, Dhading. With Honorable Mr. Gobinda Lamsal gracing the event as the Chief Guest. Indra Prasad Aryal, President of HURON, along with Biplav Bhatta, Tika Dangi, and Madhusudan Upadhyaya, attended as the special guests. The event began with a warm welcome and an introductory presentation by the president of HURON's Dhading District Chapter, which outlined the current human rights issues and democratic concerns at the local level. The presentation provided a detailed analysis of the systemic challenges affecting the effective implementation of human rights policies and democratic practices in the local governance.

Key concerns were raised during the interaction. Mr. Rajaram Sharma, the outgoing President of the Federation of Nepali Journalists, gave the light on several critical issues. These included the failure of local governments to formulate necessary laws, lack of initiative in addressing local concerns, labor exploitation, child marriage, sexual abuse, ill-treatment of prisoners, and abuse of female students in schools. He further pointed out that criminal investigations often lack impartiality and transparency, and the local judicial committees are plagued by bias and inefficiency.

Mr. Hari Bahadur Shrestha, Ward Chairman of Nilakantha Municipality Ward No. 4, highlighted the difficulty in implementing policies due to the absence of clear

  
10



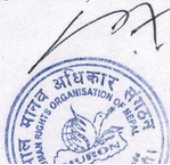
guidelines and policy direction. Similarly, Sitaram Adhikari, INSEC Representative, expressed concern that human rights violations are being committed not only by the government but also by various advocacy organizations that claim to protect rights. He emphasized the existence of crime protection networks to prevent the erosion of justice.

Ms. Bhagwati Upreti, a women social activist, discussed the urgent need to strengthen education, health, and judicial sectors at the local level. She brought forward pressing women's issues such as challenges in acquiring citizenship, polygamy, marriage complications, and the ineffectiveness of judicial committees in addressing gender-based violence and discrimination.

A teacher from the School for the Intellectually Disabled made an emotional appeal by pointing out the prevailing injustice in society, where perpetrators receive protection while victims are denied justice, and laws are treated as commodities that can be bought and sold. Similarly, the Chairman of Dhading Bar raised concerns over wage discrimination between men and women, poor implementation of local-level decisions, and the urgent need to appoint legal experts in judicial committees. He also called for increased funding for human rights education and mass awareness campaigns.

In his keynote remarks, Honorable Gobinda Lamsal, the Chief Guest, stressed the need for changing the prevailing mindset of elitism and arrogance among policymakers. He emphasized the importance of making inclusive and representative laws, critically evaluating the selection of candidates under reserved quotas, and fostering democratic culture at all levels of government.

The program concluded with remarks by Mr. Indra Prasad Aryal, who provided a broader perspective on the implications of federalism as outlined in the Constitution of Nepal 2072. He stated that despite constitutional provisions, both provincial and local governments have failed to institutionalize democracy and protect human rights effectively. Citizens, deprived of justice at the local level, are compelled to travel to Kathmandu in protest, seeking justice and visibility. He highlighted that trust in federalism can only be established if local and provincial governments practice fairness, uphold democratic values, and take responsibility for addressing human rights violations.



Overall, the interaction program provided a meaningful platform for dialogue, reflection, and commitment towards improving the human rights situation and democratic practices at the local level. The program concluded with a collective agreement to enhance cooperation among stakeholders and work collaboratively towards justice, transparency, and human dignity in Nepal's evolving federal structure.

### 3.2 Kathmandu District, Bagmati Province

On 22 May 2025, the Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) successfully organized an impactful interaction program titled **"A Broad Citizen-Level Discussion on The Impact of Transitional Justice on Human Rights and Democracy"** at Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Bagmati Province, Nepal. The program was convened under the presidency of Mr. Indra Prasad Aryal, Central President of HURON, with Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, former Prime Minister of Nepal, gracing the event as the Chief Guest. The interaction brought together 191 participants, including conflict victims, human rights defenders, political representatives, civil society members, journalists, and representatives from national human rights institutions.

The event commenced with welcoming remarks and an overview of the program's objective by the facilitators Mr. Biplav Bhatta, Ms. Tika Dangi, and Mr. Madhusudan Upadhyaya. The primary aim was to provide a platform for citizens and stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussion on the state of transitional justice in Nepal and its implications for human rights and democracy.

Prominent personalities were invited as Special Guests, including Dr. Ganesh Dutta Bhatta, Mr. Padam Bahadur Shah, and Dr. Gangadhar Adhikari—all of whom are former or current commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Also present were Hon. Ms. Bishnu Devi Sapkota (MP, Upper House), Hon. Ms. Maina Karki (MP, Lower House), and Dr. Dinmani Pokhrel, Former Attorney General of Nepal.

The discussion intensified following the keynote address by Dr. Bhattarai, who made contentious remarks on the casualty figures during the Maoist conflict. His statement that "millions die in revolutions, and only 17,000 were killed in Nepal" evoked strong emotional responses from the victims present. Many expressed deep resentment, interpreting his words as dismissive of the suffering they endured. Tensions escalated further when Dr. Bhattarai advocated for general amnesty, which the victims felt undermined the principles of justice and accountability.

Conflict victims, some physically disabled or having lost loved ones, vocally opposed Dr. Bhattarai's views, labeling him as a perpetrator and urging HURON to refrain from inviting such figures in the future. They lamented the lack of justice and





criticized the transitional justice mechanisms, particularly the formation of commissions that, in their eyes, failed to consult with or represent victims meaningfully. The commissions, they claimed, are not resourceful, are politically influenced, and remain disconnected from victims' needs.

Other notable interventions included remarks from Journalist Ms. Kusum Bajracharya, who highlighted threats and pressures journalists face in addressing transitional justice issues, and Mr. Charan Prasai, who criticized the Chief Guest for undermining the victims' voices. Similarly, Murari Kharel, representing the Nepal Human Rights Commission, acknowledged the structural and political challenges in implementing transitional justice and committed to advancing the victims' issues by informing relevant bodies.

Hon. Ms. Maina Karki, herself a conflict victim, criticized the former Prime Minister's remarks and underscored the urgency of forming a credible commission with the victims' consent. Hon. Ms. Bishnu Devi Sapkota reaffirmed her commitment to advocating for justice from within Parliament. Victims shared heart-wrenching stories, including a man who had lost both hands during the war, emphasizing the state's negligence in ensuring justice and rehabilitation.

Throughout the program, participants echoed a shared sentiment: that the government's approach to transitional justice remains superficial and politicized. The victims and civil society participants demanded accountability, transparency, and inclusion in every step of the process.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Indra Prasad Aryal emphasized that HURON remains steadfast in its mission to institutionalize democracy and uphold human rights as enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal. He warned that growing disregard for federalism and democratic norms is detrimental to human rights. Mr. Aryal stressed that ending impunity and promoting the rule of law, transparency, and accountability are vital for democracy and human rights to flourish. He acknowledged the emotional expressions and disagreements voiced during the event as part of a healthy democratic dialogue and assured that such forums would continue to ensure that the voices of the victims and civil society are heard.

The program concluded with a collective appreciation to HURON for organizing a timely and significant platform for citizen engagement and reaffirmed the need for more inclusive and justice-centered dialogues in the days to come.



#### 4. Publication:

The discussion papers have been compiled along with the queries and opinion expressed by the participants and the responses or answers provided by the experts and consultants. It has been printed total 500 copies and distributed to the executive and legislative bodies at federal and provincial level political parties, activists, media, civil society and other stakeholders.

#### 5. Lobbying Meetings:

HURON conducted 10 events of lobbying meetings to discuss the outcomes of interaction program with the participation of ruling and opposition parties, human rights activists, civil society members and other stakeholders. The main objective of the lobbying meetings is to draw attention of the concern authority and other stakeholders towards the shrinking civic space in order to protect and promote democracy and human rights in the country.

During the meetings, the delegation members shared the queries, problems and challenges raised during the interaction program to the senior leaders of the ruling and opposition parties and the law and policymakers. The outcomes of the interaction programs were discussed during the meetings. Suggestions and recommendations were delivered from the part of human rights activist and civil society members for making necessary changes in the existing policies or in the formulation of new laws and policy. The authorities visited by the delegations expressed their commitment to discuss the issues at the decision-making level and to recommend positive changes in the existing laws and policies



## 6. Lesson Learned:

This project highlighted the critical need for deeper civic awareness and robust local engagement to strengthen Nepal's federal democratic framework. While the Constitution of 2015 provides a solid foundation for inclusive governance, the lack of clarity in roles, limited capacity of local institutions, and continued marginalization of vulnerable groups remain significant challenges. Interaction programs revealed that local governments often struggle to address human rights issues due to political interference, inadequate resources, and weak implementation of laws. Voices from marginalized communities especially women, Dalits, Madhesis, and conflict victims demonstrated the urgency of responsive governance and victim-centered transitional justice. The project reinforced that sustainable democratic change requires coordinated efforts among civil society, media, government actors, and grassroots communities. Future initiatives should focus on institutionalizing human rights education, building local capacity, and ensuring victim participation in policy processes. A rights-based, inclusive, and accountable approach is essential for realizing the true spirit of federalism and justice in Nepal.

## Recommendation:

Being mindful of the success of the project in 2025, this project should be expanded to all the seven provinces of the country. The stakeholders consulted and the people HURON team met during the programs give feedback that modality of the program and issues covered by the project were highly relevant for the future engagement. Therefore, the stakeholders and participants highly recommended that program needs to scale up and expand in more districts and more frequently in all 7 provinces of Nepal in the next phase in the future.



## Acknowledgement

---

This is a report of a project that was supported by a grant from the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD). The Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) agrees to acknowledge the sponsorship of the Foundation and print the approved Foundation logo where feasible and practical in project proceedings or similar publications and reports and on conference banners, program materials, and any other significant forms of publicity, including periodic public reports and press releases.

In addition, the HURON consents to the use of the content of this report and any accompanying photographic and/or video documentation materials in future publications or publicity materials of the Foundation.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to TFD for their financial support and for providing continuous guidance from the starting to completion of this project. Without its support the project would not have been successful.

Despite facing various challenges, implementation of the project was completed with participation from political party leaders, representatives of the government of Nepal, activists and representatives of civil society at the central as well as the local levels. Therefore, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all of them.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the experts and consultants for devoting their precious time, knowledge and experiences required to make the project successful. Similarly, we are also thankful to the volunteers as well as the participants for their support and great presence during implementation of the project.

