

Dedicated Grant Mechanism for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Nepal (DGM Nepal)

Capacity Building Training/Workshop Report Title of Training:

Empowering Indigenous Media on REDD+ and Sustainable Forest Management (SFM): National Workshop on Media Literacy and Investigative Journalism Training

Training Summary

Component	Description
Title of Training/Workshop	Empowering Indigenous Media on REDD+ and Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)
Date of Training/Workshop	April 12, 2025 (Lumbini)
Duration	1 Day
Venue Details	Lumbini Buddhist University, Lumbini Province
Number of Participants	227 participants (Female=65 and Male=162 and IPs=98% and non-IPs=2%)
Resource Persons/Facilitators	Khima Ghale, Tek Bahadur Thami
Training/Workshop Coordinator from NEA	Sadhana Sanba Limbu, Program, Communications and outreach officer
Other Participants from NEA	Kabita Tamang, Provincial Coordinator Lumbini Shakti Basnet, Procurement Specialist
Participants from NSC	Diwas Rai, NEFIN Amrit Rai, FINFI Gajurdhan Rai, FONIJ

1. Introduction

In the context of Nepal's REDD+ implementation and sustainable forest governance, Indigenous Peoples' right to access information and equitable participation remains critical. Media plays a decisive role in shaping public narratives, influencing policy, and amplifying Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) voices. However, Indigenous-led media often face challenges in accessing technical knowledge, investigative tools, and platforms to meaningfully engage with climate discourse.

This national workshop, organized under the DGM Nepal Project, responds to these challenges by building the media literacy and investigative journalism capacity of Indigenous journalists, community communicators, and media professionals. It strengthens their ability to critically report on REDD+, forest rights, SFM, and climate justice through evidence-based and rights-centered storytelling. The training contributes directly to DGM Nepal's knowledge management and

advocacy objectives, enabling Indigenous media to become proactive agents of forest transparency and governance.

2. Objectives

- To enhance Indigenous journalists' and media representatives' understanding of REDD+, SFM, forest rights, and climate justice frameworks.
- To develop skills in investigative journalism, data-driven storytelling, and rights-based reporting aligned with Indigenous worldviews.
- To strengthen the capacity of Indigenous media to monitor and report on REDD+ processes, safeguards, and IPLC inclusion.
- To promote collaboration between Indigenous media, civil society, and policy actors for transparent forest governance.

3. Contents of Training/Workshop

Media Literacy Workshop – Key Themes:

- Role of Media in REDD+, SFM, and Climate Resilience
- Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Climate Adaptation
- Forest Rights and FPIC in Climate Finance
- Ethical Communication on Indigenous Rights

Investigative Journalism Training – Key Modules:

- Fundamentals of Investigative Reporting
- Accessing Data and Legal Frameworks (ILO 169, UNDRIP, Nepal Constitution)
- Ethical Storytelling and Community Consent
- Fact-Checking and Risk-Informed Journalism
- Reporting on REDD+, Hydropower Displacement, and Forest Exclusion

4. Participation (Gender, Ethnicity, and Geographical Representation)

- The national workshop was attended by a total of **227 participants**, representing a broad spectrum of Indigenous media professionals, community reporters, youth communicators, and civil society allies from across Nepal. The participation breakdown reflects a strong alignment with the DGM Nepal Project's core objective of empowering Indigenous Peoples and promoting gender and geographic inclusivity in REDD+ and SFM discourse.

- **Gender Representation:**

Out of the total participants, **65 were women** and **162 were men**. While male participation was higher, the inclusion of a significant number of Indigenous women journalists and communicators reflects a growing trend of female leadership in environmental media spaces. Efforts were made to ensure gender-sensitive facilitation and content delivery to encourage inclusive engagement.

- **Ethnicity Representation:**

An overwhelming **98% of participants identified as Indigenous Peoples (IPs)**, underscoring the workshop's strategic focus on building Indigenous-led media capacities. Participants included members of various Adivasi Janajati groups such as the Tamang, Tharu, Rai, Magar, Gurung, Limbu, and Chepang communities. The remaining 2% comprised non-Indigenous allies from civil society and environmental journalism networks who support inclusive forest governance.

- **Geographical Representation:**

The workshop ensured equitable geographic representation by including participants from all **seven provinces**—Koshi, Bagmati, Gandaki, Lumbini, Madhesh, Karnali, and Sudurpaschim. This enabled a rich cross-regional dialogue on how REDD+ and SFM issues affect Indigenous communities differently across ecological zones, including the high Himalayas, mid-hills, Inner Terai, and lowland Terai regions.

The diversity in participation not only enhanced peer learning but also ensured that the voices of historically marginalized Indigenous media workers—particularly from remote and climate-vulnerable regions—were included in national-level REDD+ and forest governance discourse. This inclusivity directly contributes to DGM Nepal's social inclusion and knowledge democratization indicators.

5. Training Resource Persons/Facilitators

- **Dr. Khima Ghale** – Media Expert on Indigenous Peoples' Issues. Extensive experience in climate communication, policy advocacy, and Indigenous rights.
- **Tek Bahadur (Raj) Thami** – Investigative Reporter, Media Trainer, Lecturer, and Indigenous Rights Advocate. Specialized in investigative journalism and Indigenous media empowerment.

6: Discussion Points

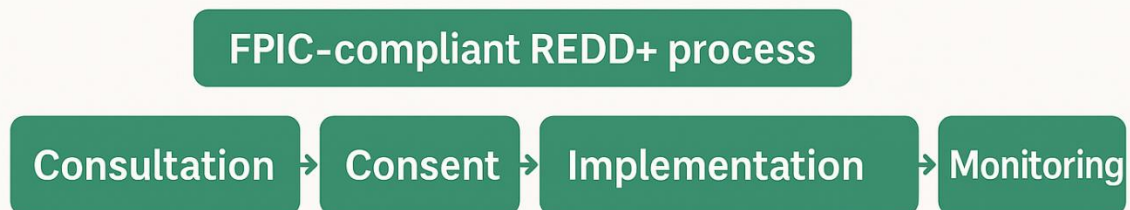
The interactive plenary sessions and thematic group discussions generated a wide array of critical insights. The participants, composed primarily of Indigenous journalists and community media actors, unpacked the systemic gaps and opportunities in climate and forest governance reporting. Key discussion points included:

1. Challenges of REDD+ Benefit-Sharing and Lack of FPIC in Project Implementation

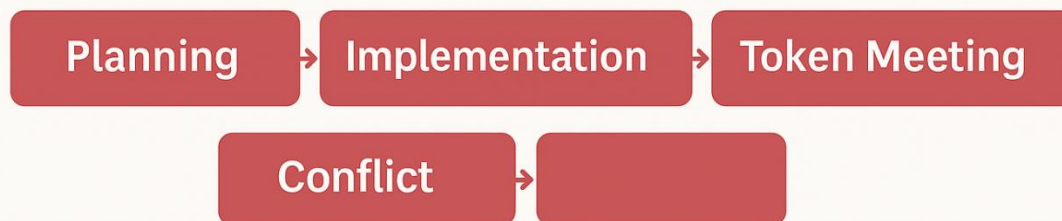
Participants highlighted the recurring exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from meaningful participation in REDD+ processes, particularly in the design, planning, and monitoring of forest carbon projects. It was emphasized that **Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)**—a right protected under ILO Convention 169 and UNDRIP—is often overlooked in Nepal's REDD+ initiatives. Several Indigenous journalists shared examples from their communities where forest-related interventions were implemented without proper consultation, leading to mistrust and non-

compliance. Participants underscored the need for sustained media advocacy to ensure equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms and enforceable FPIC processes in REDD+ and SFM programs.

WHEN FPIC IS MISSED



Typical reality in Nepal



"We hear about REDD+ in policy documents, but what does carbon trade mean for a family who has lost land to erosion? The media has a duty to translate these ideas into our realities."
- Anita Gurung, Journalist

2. Need for Localized, Language-Sensitive Media Content on Forest Governance

There was a strong consensus on the gap in media materials that reflect Indigenous epistemologies and are accessible in local languages. Indigenous journalists discussed how the dominance of mainstream narratives often overshadows Indigenous voices and undermines community knowledge systems. They advocated for the development of culturally relevant communication tools—audio-visual storytelling, community radio features, and visual journalism—that are grounded in Indigenous languages and experiences to promote informed community participation in forest governance.

Anecdotal Quote:

"How can my father or mother understand carbon credits when the radio only talks about 'carbon trading' in English or difficult Nepali scientific terminologies? We need media in our language, not just media about us."

— Lucky Chaudhary, Tharu radio producer from Bardiya

"When we report in our own language, our community listens. When we use government jargon, they turn away. We need to bridge this gap."

— Language rights activist, Radio Journalist, Ramechhap

3. Strategies for Uncovering Forest and Land Rights Violations Through Investigative Reporting

Participants explored practical strategies for evidence-based investigative journalism, including the use of **Right to Information (RTI)** requests, satellite imagery, and community mapping to expose illegal logging, land grabbing, and forest encroachments. Emphasis was placed on verifying sources, protecting whistleblowers, and collaborating with civil society watchdogs to strengthen the credibility and safety of journalistic work. Case studies were shared on how investigative reporting had led to policy reviews and accountability in local forest user groups and provincial forest offices.

4. Role of Indigenous Journalists as Watchdogs and Knowledge Transmitters

The discussion reaffirmed the unique position of Indigenous media practitioners as both cultural custodians and public interest watchdogs. They serve as bridges between communities and national decision-making processes—translating technical forest policies into community-relevant narratives while also documenting and relaying local grievances to national and global forums. Participants stressed the importance of empowering Indigenous journalists not only with technical knowledge but also with political literacy on REDD+, climate finance, and environmental justice frameworks.

"Reporting from Karnali, I see how media houses focus on Kathmandu-centric stories. But the forests are here, the displaced are here. We need space to report from the margins."

— Radio coordinator from Jumla

5. Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting on Trauma, Displacement, and State Policy Violations

Participants reflected on the ethical complexities of reporting on sensitive issues such as forced displacement, environmental injustice, and caste- or ethnicity-based discrimination. The need for **trauma-informed journalism** was discussed in-depth, highlighting how media practitioners can minimize harm while amplifying the lived realities of affected communities. Journalists emphasized the value of community consent, contextual framing, and editorial independence in navigating state scrutiny and societal backlash.

8. Training Evaluation

Participant feedback from the national workshop revealed a strong alignment between the training content and the practical needs of Indigenous journalists working in forested and climate-vulnerable regions of Nepal. The workshop was evaluated through both oral reflections and a structured post-training feedback form. Key evaluation highlights include:

- **Relevance of Content:** Participants overwhelmingly expressed that the training topics—REDD+, SFM frameworks, FPIC, and climate justice—directly addressed the gaps in their

current reporting capacities. Case-based learning and discussions around real-world forest governance issues were particularly appreciated.

- **Improved Terminology Confidence:** Many Indigenous media practitioners noted increased confidence in using technical terms like “carbon credit,” “benefit-sharing,” “forest tenure,” and “FPIC” while contextualizing them in community-relevant language.
- **Appreciation of Practical Tools:** Participants valued the introduction to investigative methods (e.g., Right to Information use, geo-mapping, trauma-informed interviewing) and called for more in-depth modules in future trainings.
- **Demand for Continued Support:** There was a clear and recurring demand for:
 - **Mentorship programs** with senior journalists and media trainers
 - **Story fellowships** to support in-depth, Indigenous-centered investigative pieces on REDD+ and forest governance
 - **Local language training replication** at the provincial level to build capacities of community radio journalists and grassroots media networks

“We need someone to walk with us beyond the training—an editor who understands the forest, not just the newsroom,” remarked one participant from Parbat.

9. Conclusion and Way Forward

The national workshop marked a strategic milestone in strengthening the role of Indigenous media in climate governance. It fostered not only knowledge acquisition but also critical reflection on media ethics, rights-based reporting, and the intersection of Indigenous identity with environmental advocacy.

Key Outcomes:

- Journalists are now better positioned to **translate complex REDD+ and SFM policies** into accessible, community-informed narratives.
- A growing network of Indigenous media professionals is emerging as **watchdogs, knowledge bearers, and policy influencers** in the climate justice movement.
- The initiative directly contributes to DGM Nepal’s project indicators on capacity development, knowledge dissemination, and advocacy for IPLC engagement in forest governance.

Way Forward – Strategic Recommendations:

1. **Launch a REDD+ Investigative Fellowship Program** for Indigenous journalists to produce in-depth stories with mentoring and editorial guidance.
2. **Develop a modular training curriculum/manual** in Nepali and Indigenous languages for replication at the provincial and district levels.
3. **Establish a network of Indigenous Climate Journalists** under DGM Nepal to facilitate peer learning, joint advocacy, and collective storytelling.
4. **Collaborate with CFUGs and local governments** to create regular information-sharing platforms between media, forest officials, and IPLC representatives.

5. **Integrate media literacy into broader IPLC capacity-building efforts** to ensure that communities themselves can hold REDD+ implementers accountable.

This workshop has demonstrated that with the right tools and support, Indigenous media can serve as powerful agents of forest governance transparency, climate adaptation advocacy, and culturally grounded resilience-building.

10. Annex

- Registration Sheets
- Event Photographs