

<b>Institution:</b> Bournemouth University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 34		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Strengthening disaster preparedness and resilience of news media in Nepal		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2015 – 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Chindu Sreedharan	Principal Academic in Journalism and Communication	2004-current
Professor Einar Thorsen	Professor of Journalism and Communication	2010-current
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2015 – 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Bournemouth University (BU) research has widely impacted the Nepali news industry, improving disaster reporting from practice to education, and encouraging cooperation with the national government.</p> <p>Impacts of this research include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a world-first dedicated disaster journalism policy at Kamana Group, a major media house;</li> <li>• enhancing news industry cooperation with national disaster management and response planning;</li> <li>• influencing national umbrella organisations to prioritise and support disaster journalism and protecting journalists during Covid-19;</li> <li>• strengthening the work of UNESCO on disasters and climate change;</li> <li>• empowering women in media industry through government policy;</li> <li>• and strengthening national approaches to journalism education, including at Tribhuvan University, Nepal's central HE institution.</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Nepal is ravaged by approximately 500 disasters every year. Yet, as it emerged after the 2015 earthquakes, news outlets there were ill-prepared to report on such events, despite the fact that journalists have a vital role to play during disasters; facilitating accurate public messaging, holding power to account, and aiding in the national recovery process.</p> <p>Sreedharan and Thorsen's research comprises three studies on disasters and journalism in Nepal, initially following the 2015 earthquakes [R1, R2, R3] and, in recent years, expanding to cover seasonal flooding and landslides, the impact of climate change [R4], and the Covid-19 pandemic [R5]. Significantly, and for the first time, our work identified the lack of <i>editorial preparedness</i> as an area that can help transform the role of news media during disasters.</p>		

The Aftershock Nepal study [R1, R2, R4] mapped the key challenges Nepali journalists faced after the 2015 earthquakes. Designed to explore the requirements of sustained disaster journalism, the project assessed the levels of news media preparedness, and suggested good practices and culturally specific recommendations to strengthen post-disaster journalism in Nepal. Drawing from 46 in-depth interviews, and a practice-based research journalism web site that published earthquake reportage by student journalists [www.aftershocknepal.com](http://www.aftershocknepal.com), R3 analyses the non-preparedness of Nepali journalists to identify their disaster-specific training needs. We identified the cultural specificities of Nepali journalists [R1] and analysed the tensions they faced around professional, personal, and familial values [R1, R2].

In September 2019, in partnership with UNESCO Kathmandu, we published a bilingual book in Nepali and English [R4] that expanded the scope of Aftershock Nepal to also consider resilience in the context of floods, landslides, and other climate-induced disasters. The book outlined recommendations for the news industry grouped into; building resilience for journalists, building capacity for news investigations, and building resilience for the future.

In August 2020, together with the Nepal Press Institute, we published a bilingual report in Nepali and English [R5] that mapped the impact of Covid-19 on the news industry. This was based on a national survey, with detailed responses from 1,134 journalists, from all seven provinces of Nepal. Findings show 83% of journalists experienced increased vulnerability, 75% increased anxiety, and 62% grief. 38% said they had to take a pay-cut, and 6% reported they lost jobs. The report outlined 10 recommendations targeting psychological resilience of journalists: financial solutions (including specific recommendations for government-support mechanisms), health protection, and building future disaster resilience.

Publication of the report was mainstream news in Nepal, with Dr Yuba Raj Khatriwada, Nepal's then Minister of Finance, as well as Minister for Communications and Information Technology, launching it.

Further, our research on the news reporting of sexual violence and women's rights in India [R6] highlighted the unique pressures faced by women journalists. This led us to address gendered challenges in disaster journalism in Nepal, connecting with Working Women Journalists (WWJ), and being instrumental in establishing the Disaster Journalism Network, [www.disasterjournalism.com](http://www.disasterjournalism.com).

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum six references)

*R1–R6 were all subject to rigorous peer review.*

**R1:** Sreedharan, C. and Thorsen, E. (2020) "Reporting from the 'Inner Circle': Afno Manche and Commitment to Community in Post-earthquake Nepal," In: Matthews, J. and Thorsen, E., eds. *Media, Journalism and Disaster Communities*. Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: [10.1007/978-3-030-33712-4\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33712-4_3)

**R2:** Sreedharan, C. and Thorsen, E., (2018). *Voices from Nepal: Lessons in Post-Disaster Journalism*. [online] Poole: Bournemouth University. Available at: <http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/31242/1> [Accessed 11 February 2021].

**R3:** Aftershocknepal.com. (2015). *Aftershock Nepal*. [online] Available at: <https://www.aftershocknepal.com/> [Accessed 11 February 2021].

**R4:** Sreedharan, C., Thorsen, E. and Sharma, N., (2019). *Disaster Journalism: Building Media Resilience in Nepal*. [online] Poole: Bournemouth University. Available at: <https://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/32769/1/> [Accessed 11 February 2021].

**R5:** Sreedharan, C., Thorsen, E., Upreti, L. and Sharma, S., (2020). *Impact of Covid-19 on journalism in Nepal*. [online] Nepal Press Institute. Available at: <https://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/34441/1/> [Accessed 11 February 2021].

**R6:** Sreedharan, C., Thorsen, E. and Gouthi, A. (2019), "Time's up. Or is it? Journalists' perceptions of sexual violence and newsroom changes after #MeTooIndia,". *Journalism Practice*. 14:2, pp. 132-149, DOI: [10.1080/17512786.2019.1682943](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1682943)

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Sreedharan and Thorsen's research identified post-disaster development and training as key priorities for Nepali journalists. Our interventions to address these needs had the following impacts:

##### **Changes to policy and practice of news organisations, UNESCO, and Nepal government**

**Kamana Group**, one of Nepal's biggest media houses, with a daily audience reach totalling 850,000 people [E1], adopted a disaster-specific editorial policy across all its publications. To our knowledge, this is the world's first editorial policy of this nature, and is a direct response to BU's research recommendations [R4, R2]. According to Kamana Group, the policy has "without doubt enriched our work environment, not only providing staff members a new confidence and clarity on what the organisation expects of them, but also what they can expect of the organisation. [T]he policy has made me aware of the specific needs of our journalists during disasters and my own responsibilities as CEO and Publisher" [E1]. It also brought changes to "how we are approaching the pandemic situation and, importantly, in the mental preparedness of our journalists" [E1].

BU research [R4, R2] strengthened **UNESCO's** planning on disaster journalism capacity-building and "contributed to [the] climate-change recommendations and policy-level lobbying that UNESCO is engaged in with the Ministry of Communication, Information and Technology" [E2].

BU research [R4, R2] specifically recommended that news organisations be involved in national disaster management planning. These organisations have now been included in the [Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Plan of Action 2018-30](#) (published in 2019) for the first time as 'supporting agencies' (p. 65). Contributors and key stakeholders in this report participated in the launch and briefing dinners associated with BU outputs [R4, R2, E3].

BU research [R5] made a "valuable contribution" to policy research in **Nepal's Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens**, providing "rich insights", and influencing "thinking on gender mainstreaming and women empowerment in the media industry" [E4].

##### **Changes to policy and practices of three national umbrella organisations**

BU research prompted the **Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ)**, the umbrella organisation of media professionals in Nepal (13,000 members), to make disaster journalism a strategic priority [R4, E3], supported by new safety guidance on Covid-19 [R5, E3], for which the FNJ President drew on BU research in his "capacity as member of Nepal's national Disaster Risk Disaster Committee" [E3].

**Working Women Journalists (WWJ)** is the national organisation of women journalists in Nepal, with 650 members working in print, broadcast, community radio, and digital media. WWJ based its capacity-building activities for 2020/2021 around BU research [R1, R2, R4, R5, R6], so far producing training workshops, community events, and news outputs, which directly allowed more than 60 journalists to "access professional medical help [and brought] relief for our members... during the terrible time of Covid-19" [E5].

**Centre for Investigative Journalism in Nepal (CIJ)**, part of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, was persuaded by BU that disaster-specific investigations “are critical in strengthening disaster resilience in a nation such as Nepal” [E6]. Following BU recommendations, the CIJ investigated the impact of Covid-19 on Nepali society [R1, R4], since published in 15 news outlets in English and Nepali to an estimated audience of 3,600,000 [E6].

#### **Capacity-building for 105 journalists and curricula and pedagogical changes**

**Nepal Press Institute (NPI)** is the national industry training body for journalists in Nepal. BU research impacted NPI’s lobbying of the government for Covid-19 support for journalists [R5, E7]; being instrumental in NPI “adapting [their] training delivery and curriculum to meet the present pandemic climate”, with 76 journalists to date trained in disaster reporting [R4, E7].

**Disaster Journalism Network (DJN)** was established in 2020 by six community news organisations, in direct response to BU recommendations to bolster disaster resilience by creating collaborative networks [R4, R2]. To our knowledge, this is the world’s first ‘multi-room collaborative to strengthen disaster journalism’. Through its activities and journalism, the DJN “helped with the physical safety of 40 journalists [and helped] more than a dozen community members to have their voices heard by politicians” [E8].

**Tribhuvan University (TU)** is the Central University of Nepal, 12th largest in the world in student enrolment (600,000 students, 60 campuses, 1,084 affiliated colleges). After observing the impact on students of participating in [www.aftershocknepal.com](http://www.aftershocknepal.com), TU is “currently revising [their] UG journalism curriculum to include disaster journalism lessons” [R5, R4, R2, E9].

**Kantipur City College** has initiated curriculum changes to its courses, based on BU research [R5, R4, E10]. “KCC has incorporated [disaster journalism] in different subjects including Media Theories, Public Communication, Media Management, non-credit courses and other academic activities as seminar and workshops” [E10].

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

**E1:** Kamana News Publications. (2020). Testimonial letter, 23 October.

**E2:** UNESCO. (2020). Testimonial letter, 8 April.

**E3:** Federation of Nepali Journalists. (2020). Testimonial letter, 20 May.

**E4:** Nepal Government Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens Private Secretariat. (2020). Testimonial letter, 15 October.

**E5:** Working Women Journalists. (2020). Testimonial letter, 11 September.

**E6:** Centre for Investigative Journalism. (2020). Testimonial letter, 14 September.

**E7:** Nepal Press Institute. (2020). Testimonial letter, 20 October.

**E8:** Disaster Journalism Network. (2020). Testimonial letter, 25 September.

**E9:** Tribhuvan University. (2020). Letter, 12 June.

**E10:** Kantipur City College. (2020). Testimonial letter, 23 May.