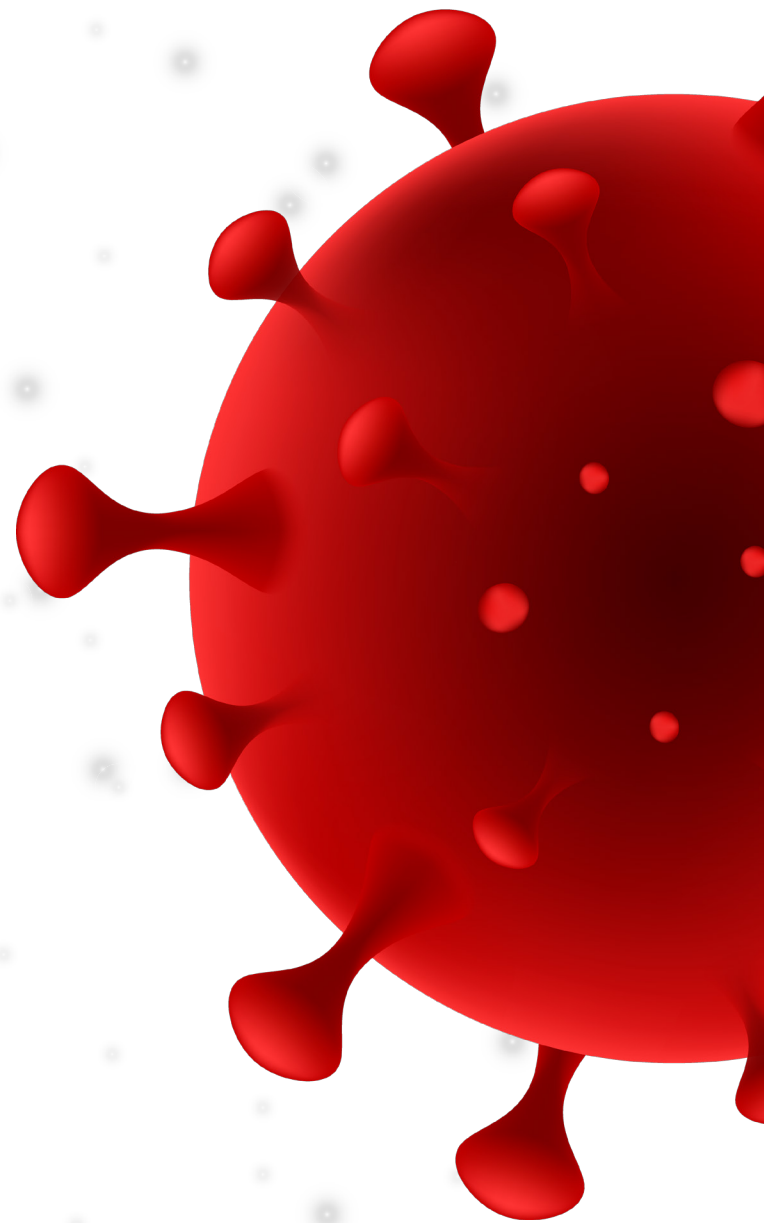


Summary of Monitoring Report

COVID-19 Impact on *Civil and Political Rights* 2020

Nepal first reported a **Covid-19** positive case on January 23, 2020, when a 31-year-old Nepali student who had returned to Kathmandu from Wuhan on January 9 was tested positive. Few hours after the second case were reported on March 24, the lockdown was put in effect from early morning of March 25 in Nepal. From March to September, Nepal went through two phases of lockdown (from March 24 to July 21) and from August 19 to September 10 (in the second phase). The lockdown started to have its adverse impacts on all walks of life in Nepal right from the day one. This study explores the impacts of **Covid-19** and Covid-19 induced lockdown on people's life, liberty, politics, economy, civil rights, health, tourism, livelihood, and many other aspects, by taking into major cases and events that occurred during the lockdown period.

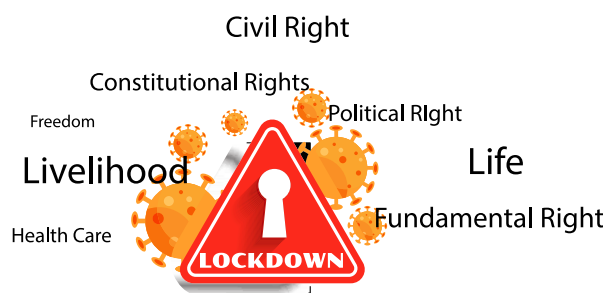


Study Methodology:

- Study on International, domestic constitutional and legal obligation,
- Government protocol in country lockdown period,
- Situation / Case studies analysis,
- Media coverage scoping,
- Interaction with survival, health workers, CSOs
- Government response on COVID-19 pandemic,
- Critical analysis of government facilities and scheme.

Findings of study

The study has found that during the period between March 24 and July 21, 2020—the first phase of lockdown—and between August 19 and September 10 (the second phase of lockdown) nearly all the *political, civil, and fundamental rights* to which the citizens of Nepal are entitled by the domestic as well as international laws and conventions were curtailed. Nepali citizens were not able to exercise those rights and their *civil, political, and constitutional rights* were violated. People had to compromise with their rights related to *life, livelihood, health care, income, and freedom*, among many others or these rights were in the state of temporary suspension.



1. Mobility was restricted: _____

People coming home from various parts were stopped at the border and they were not allowed to enter the home country. Most were migrant workers. When Nepali authorities did not allow the returning migrant workers to get back to their homes due to pandemic spread fear, some of such people were forced to risk their own lives—to cross the frontier and get into the country. People with hunger and left without proper care and shelter forced to swim across the **Mahakali River**. As transportation facility came to a standstill, people had to walk for three days to reach their home. Thousands of Nepalis who had obtained labor permit and students who had got study VISA to go abroad for employment and study were deprived. Both *domestic and international flights* came to a halt.

2. Restriction in Assembly and Expression: _____



Various political and civil organizations staged protests to raise voice to pressure the government to ensure accountability and transparency in matters related to treatment and prevention of Covid-19. Youths were in fast-unto-death protest. But the government resorted to arrest of these youths instead of addressing their demands. Those who raised the voice for greater accountability in **Covid-19** response were put under persecution. Police used water cannon and fired teargas at demonstrators in Baluwatar. People who came to protest the government of India for encroachment of a Nepali territory at Lipulek arrested. Youths from various organizations, political unions were arrested.

3. Unemployment: _____

Many informal and unorganized sector's people lost their jobs, some lost their lives, others committed suicide. **INSEC** has reported that in 54 days of lockdown, 23 women were murdered. In 67 days between March 24, 2020 and May 30, 2020, total of 1105 persons committed suicide, according to Nepal Police. Even people from formal sectors got affected vastly. Other survey reports of **Nepal Rastra Bank** and **UNDP** (United Nations Development Program) shows almost the same conditions and facts of the people who lost their job. No other sectors got unaffected by this pandemic, hotels and restaurant sector remained the highest.

4. Health Rights : _____

According to the **Family Welfare Division of Ministry of Health**, total of 33 pregnant and postpartum women lost their lives across the country after the lockdown due to lack of timely treatment. As per an unpublished report of **Department of Health**, 101 children had died in Chaitra and Baisakh of last fiscal year, the number reached 204 for the same months this year.

According to The **Lancet Journal**, the lockdown has halved health facility births and increased stillbirths and newborn deaths. The risk of neonatal death increased more than 3-fold, from 13 per 1,000 livebirths to 40 per 1,000 livebirths during the lockdown.

5. Food Security: _____

Food security and food sovereignty came under huge threat during the lockdown. According to the study conducted in 46 communities in five districts of **western Nepal** (*Baitadi, Bardiya, Dadelhdura, Kailali and Kanchanpur*) by Practical Action and Mercy Corps, 60 percent of the respondents attributed scarcity of food as a greater challenge than **Covid-19**. The spectra of hunger was clearly visible in Kathmandu too. Hundreds of poor people lined up in open ground of Kathmandu to receive the food provided by social service organizations. The number of hungry people was increasing.

6. Quarantine facilities were found unsafe for women: _____



Nepal Women Association (**NWA**) and Collective Campaign for Peace (**COCAP**) claimed that women faced *violence, abuse and human right violations* in quarantine across the country since the lockdown started. According to **INSEC** report, within the first 54 days of lockdown, 502 women and children became the victims of violence. Five early marriages and 12 multiple marriages took place.

Many of the health facilities across the country were found skipping their duty of treating the **Covid-19** patients because of acute shortage of medicine and equipment. Other Patients were deprived of health care facilities too. *The health workers, doctors and nurses hassled, abused at the hands of house owners, neighbors and landlords.*

7. Education: _____

Education was disrupted by the **Covid-19** pandemic. The *SEE examination* was to be started from March 20, 2020. The government decided not to take *SEE exam* until further notice on March 19. Initially it was said postponement. The government had already decided to close all schools, colleges and universities until April 12, but was pushing ahead with the *SEE* saying any delay could hamper the academic calendar. A total of 482,219 students who had registered for the examination found themselves in the state of uncertainty. And when the nationwide lockdown started on March 24, the state of uncertainty further increased.

8. Journalism: _____

The **Covid-19 lockdown** hit the journalism sector hard. It witnessed *loss of jobs, untimely payment* and even *non-payment* during the pandemic. Many journalists were left unemployed because of **Covid-19**. According to the inspection carried out by Federation of **Nepali Journalist** (**FNJ**) in 14 districts and 51 media institutions, journalists had to fight with various types of obstacles during the lockdown. Some were not paid salary on time,

were not paid for months, paid reduced amounts, other dismissed or laid off the journalists, some were asked to stay in *unpaid leave*, and many publications had not even ensured the insurance of the journalists.

9. Tourism: _____



Tourism sector was perhaps the worst hit sector. By July 22, the tourism sector was already estimated to bearing with the loss of Rs 41 billion. A joint study **committee of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal and Nepal Tourism Board**, formed to assess the loss in the tourism and aviation sectors due to the **COVID-19** pandemic, estimated that the sectors in the country are losing Rs. 10 billion every month. Around 800,000 people were directly or indirectly employed in the sector were affected. Tourism sector had employed 250,000 people in pre-coronavirus period.

Consequences

Fear of starvation

As a rule Nepal produces enough food to feed the Nepalese but most of the people consume and depend only on rice that is called here in Nepal *bhatmari* (tendency of eating only rice), this tendency can lead us to the scarcity of rice, balanced diet, nutrition and chain. Most importantly it can challenge to food sovereignty in Nepal. If balance is struck the risk can be avoided.

The Diseases

Usually pandemic takes lives of millions of people but **Covid-19** seemed to be different. It has infected many people instead of killing them. It has raised the prospect of loss of economy, mental problems including *stress, depression* and *anxiety*. It has vastly affected the people who has other diseases like *tuberculosis, diabetes, kidney* and *lungs* as well as elderly people, children and the pregnant and postpartum women. This will definitely generate a serious other health problem and crisis.

Poverty

- The Nepal food security monitoring system of the World Food Programme conducted in May this year had shown that 8.4 million Nepalis have been left in huge crisis because of the lockdown.



- The studies by **Australian National University** and **Kings College** of London has drawn the conclusion that Covid-19 could result in addition of 500 million poor in the global population.
- According to the statistics unveiled by the **World Bank** in June last year, 45 percent of the people who have just come out of the poverty line could revert to poverty line any time.
- According to the official estimate of the government, there are 5.5 million Nepalis who are below the poverty line, which means 25.2 percent of the total population.
- **Covid-19** has pushed millions of people out of work, millions of others have not been able to work due to lockdown, many others have lost the purchasing power, and there is no investment climate in education, health and industrial sectors.
- All these are extremely likely to trigger spike of poverty.

Minimizing the Damage

The adverse impacts of the Covid-19 can be minimized, if not avoided, if certain measures are taken from all sides.

What the government can do

The constitution has envisioned Nepal as a welfare state and thus *saving life* should be the first priority of the government during the time of pandemic. Every possible measure should be taken for treatment, prevention and awareness of Covid-19 and people should be properly informed about the safety measures.

All the health facilities need to be kept equipped with all kinds of resources. The frontline warrior the *doctors, nurses and police, cleaners and media personnel* should be provided the necessary incentives and their rights to life and livelihood should be secured. **The government** needs to be mindful of the fact that it has no right to impinge on or curtail the *political, economic and civil rights* of the citizens.

What NGOs can do?

The social organizations, such as **NGOs** and **INGOs**, are there in the first place to reach out to the people and places where the government has a weak presence because of various factors. Such organizations therefore have the duty to reach out to the places with weak government presence or having less effective role despite the government presence, devise programs accordingly, raise awareness. They are as accountable and responsible as the government for emerging out of this crisis abiding by the rules and regulations of the government.

CSOs

Civil Society Organizations (**CSOs**) represent the people and draw the attention of the state authorities to address their problems. They need

to provide *specific guidelines* to the state authorities, various organizations and common people. They need to identify where these organizations failed on their duties and offer recommendations because they are usually trusted more by the people. Thus constant monitoring and alert should be the main responsibility of **CSOs**.

The citizenry

There is a widespread belief among the common people that getting infected by **Covid-19** automatically leads to death. The truth of the matter is that **corona infection** results in minimal death. According to a statistics, seven out of 100 infected people are likely to lose their lives due to the virus. The common people can contribute to saving their lives through two main way: *Staying at home* and *following the instructions and guidelines* provided by the **Government of Nepal**, and they need to focus on boosting their immunity.

Conclusion

The **Covid-19** pandemic induced lockdown affected people in a fundamental way. First the *lockdown* was announced for only a week and therefore many people thought that life would be normal within a week's time but as the cases of infection rose, with it the number of deaths too, *life, livelihood, access to health, business, tourism, economy* every sector was affected. In other words, not a single sector and not a single individual was spared up effective preparedness measures, the situation could probably have been different from what was observed in this study.

The shocks of **Covid-19** could probably have been better managed if the government had taken up better preparation approach regarding *relief distribution, management of the quarantine facilities, providing services* to bring back stranded migrant workers from various countries and how to conduct health and education services during the pandemic. If the government had provided the information to the people on time and taken up effective preparedness measures, the situation could probably have been different from what was observed in this study.