

Guidelines on Knowledge Management, Digitalization, and Safe & Ethical Use of AI

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1. Introduction

NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN), representing the largest network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Nepal, of approximately 7,000 member organizations, plays a vital role in mobilizing civil society for development, social justice, democratic governance, and inclusive transformation. As NFN and its members increasingly engage in digital and AI-enabled environments, there is a pressing need for ethical, inclusive, and practical guidance to ensure the responsible use of technology.

This guideline is designed to help NFN and its member organizations protect and promote community knowledge, build digital equity and literacy, strengthen digital governance and AI responsibility, and ensure that digital transformation aligns with NFN's vision, mission, and the rights of marginalized communities. It provides a framework to guide ethical and inclusive practices in the use of digital technologies and AI, while safeguarding community agency and promoting equitable access to knowledge and digital resources.

2. Objectives

The core objectives of this guideline are to:

- Promote digital governance, promoting a paperless work culture in the NFN office, and the ethical use of AI and digital platforms within NFN and among its member organizations.
- Enhance digital and AI literacy across NFN, its staff, and stakeholders, fostering collaboration and innovation.
- Safeguard data, traditional knowledge, and community agency through secure, transparent, and inclusive practices.
- Ensure equitable access and meaningful participation in digital transformation, especially for marginalized groups, while addressing the digital divide.

3. Knowledge Management

- a) Knowledge Management within NFN should be ethical, inclusive, and grounded in community participation. It should bridge local wisdom and digital tools to support learning, transparency, and impact.

- b) NFN Knowledge Management processes must be inclusive, member and community-informed, and respect diverse knowledge systems.
- c) Knowledge resources must be accessible in multiple languages, at least in both English and Nepali, via the NFN website, social media, and offline methods.
- d) All digital content and platforms of NFN must be easy to read, user-friendly for people with low digital literacy, persons with disabilities, and visually impaired users, incorporating visual, audio, and offline formats.
- e) Offline access (e.g., print materials, local dissemination, print in local language) must be ensured for remote and marginalized groups.
- f) Local knowledge, organizational history, milestones, traditional practices, and lived experiences must be digitized, documented, and valued.
- g) All important documents of NFN will be digitized and accessible to preserve institutional memory.
- h) Participatory methods will be used to co-create and validate knowledge with member organizations, stakeholders, and communities.
- i) NFN encourages all member organizations, stakeholders, and communities to be active contributors and custodians of knowledge.
- j) Peer learning and co-creation of content will be encouraged among staff, members, partners, and communities.
- k) A focal person and section will be assigned by the Central Committee for Knowledge Management and digital archives.
- l) Digital literacy and capacity-building programmes will be implemented for the board, staff, members, and stakeholders on digital knowledge management.

4. Digitalization

- a) Technology, digital tools, and platforms will be adopted to support the daily smooth operations of NFN.
- b) Cybersecurity measures will be implemented across all digital use and activities.
- c) Digital literacy and capacity-building training and ICT infrastructure investments will be prioritized.
- d) A paperless, eco-friendly work culture will be promoted in the NFN Secretariat and its offices.
- e) Membership processes and information of the member organizations will be fully digitized, including online application and certification. Username and password will be provided to all the member organizations to access their profile and update regularly themselves.

- f) NFN Website, official digital platforms, all the knowledge management and digitalization products of NFN should ensure colour contrast, text-to-speech, alternative text for images, closed captions and/or transcripts, use of screen readers, and larger print versions.

5. Safe and Ethical AI Use

- a) AI will be used to maximize work performance and achieve the results.
- b) NFN communicates how and why AI is used in its work within NFN.
- c) Official works and communications will not be fully automated; human oversight will always be ensured as needed.
- d) Only licensed and secure AI tools will be promoted for organizational use.

6. Partnership and Advocacy

- a) Community-based digital and AI literacy materials will be developed in Nepali and local languages using relatable local examples.
- b) Partnerships will be formed with ethical technologists, tech groups, CSOs, and like-minded actors to ensure equity in tech practices.
- c) NFN advocates for inclusive digital governance and engages in relevant policy forums to reform the policies.

7. Standards and Practices

- a) Community data ownership will be respected, ensuring consent in data usage.
- b) Data types and sensitivity levels will be classified; roles for access and protection will be clearly defined.
- c) Secure data storage, access protocols, and sharing systems will be maintained.
- d) Access to digital platforms will be granted through written agreements that outline digital rights and responsibilities with defined roles and responsibilities, where needed for special data access.
- e) NFN will maintain independence in digital partnerships, especially with corporate actors.

8. Digital Governance

- a) NFN publications (e.g., reports, manuals, policy papers) and all the organization's information will be made publicly available through accessible platforms.

- b) A dedicated Focal Person and section for Knowledge Management, Digitalization, and Use of AI will be appointed.
- c) Training and capacity building on digital governance will be provided regularly.
- d) Underrepresented groups (e.g., Women, Minority groups, Indigenous, disabled, and rural communities) will be included in digital systems and policy forums.
- e) All staff must use official equipment; all official equipment should be password-protected and connected to central systems.
- f) All the official communication should be through official emails and names. Sensitive communications will use password-protected, secure channels.
- g) A consistent digital branding strategy of NFN will be followed across platforms.

9. Data Protection, Ethics and Safeguarding

- a) Digital platforms used by NFN will be secure, intuitive, and adaptable to low-connectivity settings.
- b) Safe open-source tools can be used; licensed platforms will be promoted for official work within NFN.
- c) Data protection and safeguarding are collective responsibilities of all staff and members of NFN.
- d) Privacy and data protection will follow global standards and be the responsibility of everyone involved.
- e) The Executive Committee will determine what remains confidential based on the existing policy provisions.
- f) Protocols for data collection, storage, and updates will be developed by the Executive or Management Committee as needed.
- g) Sensitive knowledge (e.g., personal data, community vulnerabilities, victims and survivors' information) will be strictly protected.
- h) Data protection, ethical use, data handling, knowledge management, and consent protocols training will be provided to staff and the NFN team.
- i) NFN administrator and management should protect the public, members, and employees from accessing sites deemed inappropriate, such as chat rooms or sites containing offensive materials.
- j) NFN administrator and management examine each web page attempting to be accessed and block those that do not meet the strict digital security criteria.
- k) Inappropriate words or site names should not be used, visited, or googled by employees or members on official devices and for official work.

- l) Digital tools will be assessed for risks such as misinformation, surveillance, exclusion, or hate speech.
- m) Informed and voluntary consent will be obtained for data use.
- n) NFN will ensure the safety of all users from online and offline digital-related harms.
- o) NFN upholds a zero-tolerance policy for abuse and misconduct on digital platforms.
- p) Internal mechanisms will be developed for ethical review and oversight of digital tools.
- q) Only official emails will be used for all official communications.
- r) Official phones will be used by key leadership, senior management, and focal persons for external communications.

10. Implementation and Monitoring

- a) Local tech innovators will be promoted to develop sustainable, contextual solutions.
- b) Hybrid approaches will be used to ensure digital inclusivity as required.
- c) Ongoing capacity-building will be provided for board members, staff, and member organizations.
- d) Feedback and grievance mechanisms will be integrated into all digital platforms.
- e) Annual reviews and audits of digital and AI systems will be conducted with emphasis on access, equity, ethics, and governance.

11. Conclusion

NFN must remain proactive and ethical in the face of accelerating digital transformation. This guideline provides a living framework to support equitable, rights-based, and context-sensitive use of knowledge, digital systems, and AI. Through careful implementation, NFN and its member organizations can lead Nepal's civil society in responsible digital governance and transformation that upholds justice, dignity, and inclusion.