

SASNET

Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Minutes from the Board meeting 30 August 2005, 13.30-16.45

Venue: Conference room, Centre for East- and South-East Asian Studies, House Alfa 1, Scheelevägen 15 D, Ideon Science Park, Lund

Members present: Björn Hettne, Boel Billgren, Jan Essner, Camilla Orjuela, Neil Webster, Jan Magnusson, Birgitta Göransson, Catarina Kinnvall, Gunnel Cederlöf, and Bo Lindblad

Others: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

1. Election of chairperson, secretary and person to verify the minutes

Decision: Björn Hettne was elected to chair the meeting, Lars Eklund to be the secretary, and Jan Magnusson to verify the minutes.

2. Agenda for the meeting, additional points

The Agenda was approved without any additional points.

3. SASNET work report: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

Minutes from the previous board meeting 15 February 20005:
<http://www.sasnet.lu.se/board0501.pdf>

Overall report, work during spring and summer 2005

- a. Report on the evaluation of SASNET 2005 by Staffan Lindberg, see **Enclosure 1:** External evaluation of SASNET, dated 30 June 2005, and **Enclosure 2:** SASNET Self-evaluation, dated 14 April 2005
- b. SASNET contact journeys within Sweden by Lars Eklund, see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/newsletter53html>
- c. Internet gateway, new developments, oral report by Lars Eklund
- d. Five more Newsletters: see, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sasnet.html#newsletters>
- e. NASA Conference 3-5 June in Aarhus, presentation by Staffan Lindberg. SASNET hosted two scholars from India, presenting papers on Public Health, see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/newsletter53html>

f. Other activities

- NIAS, New Centenary Research School and a special Mari Curie Programme, SARTrain, for South Asia, Staffan Lindberg reported on the development, and that the application for SARTrain has been put on a waiting-list by the European Commission.
- Masters and PhD programme for students from Pakistan, progress report by Bo Lindblad. After the signing of the MoU between the Swedish Institute and the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, HEC, in November 2004, three important developments have taken place: Masters students from Pakistan have been accepted for Swedish universities; a high-level delegation from the Royal Institute of Technology, KTH, has visited Pakistan and signed an agreement on collaboration in research and education, and finally Karolinska Institutet decide to include Pakistan in its research training programme, KIRT, at a meeting in June 2005.
- ÖRNAST – Öresund Network on Asian Studies, see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/ornast.html>
- India/South Asia undergraduate 1-year course at Österlen's folk high school, oral report by Staffan Lindberg
- Masters programmes at Uppsala and Lund, oral reports by Gunnel Cederlöf and Jan Magnusson. The Uppsala programme is not run during the academic year 2005-06, but will start again in a reorganised fashion after a year. The Lund programme starts its third year's programme in September 2005.
- Other things. Björn Hettne and Camilla Orjuela informed about the launch of the Göteborg School of Global Studies from August 2005. CEAS, PADRIGU, the Dept. of Social Anthropology and a number of thematic and regional research centres moved into a new campus area. From the Spring 2006, the Centre for Asian Studies introduces a new course called "South Asia Today".
- Björn Hettne informed about Göteborg University's Vice Chancellor's tour to South and South East Asia. In South Asia the delegation visited Peradeniya University in Sri Lanka, Indian Institute of Science and Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, and finally Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University.
- Staffan Lindberg informed about the plans for INSTEC, a national centre for Indian-Swedish Collaboration on Technical Research and Education. SASNET has been consulted by Prof. Ramon Wyss at the Royal Institute of Technology, KTH, to find possible Swedish partners outside KTH. He (SL) also informed about the consultation going on for planning the SEK 50 million support for Environmental projects in India to be given by Sida 2006-2009.

4. Budget for 2005

The suggested budget is found in **Enclosure 3**. Strengthened by the conclusion of the External Evaluation the root node has proceeded with the planning of a new *contact journey* during November – December (see point 6 below). This means that the decision of the last meeting to distribute SEK 1 million as planning grants had to be discussed again. A new proposal was to use SEK 60 000 for the contact journey and 940 000 for planning grants.

Discussion: The discussion focused on the proposed contact journey and several members of the board expressed their readiness to agree to it, even if the cost might slightly exceed the 60 000 mentioned. More on the discussion, see under point 5.

Decision: The board approved the revised budget for 2005, and accepting that the costs for the contact journey might exceed what was originally planned.

5. Contact journey to Northeast India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal during November - December 2005

Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund has planned the journey in detail, *see Enclosure 4*. Total cost estimated to be SEK 60 000.

Discussion: While praising the detailed planning presented, Bo Lindblad still missed vital information on the overall aims behind the journey. Gunnel Cederlöf pointed out that a contact journey should not be an isolated phenomenon, but must be linked to the ongoing work of SASNET. Björn Hettne added that this is the third (and last) of a number of journeys in order to cover all the South Asian countries. Hereafter a second phase of consolidation should come, meaning that journeys in the future should have a more specific target.

Staffan Lindberg explained that the aim behind the contact journeys is to spread information about SASNET, and higher institutions of learning in Sweden, in order to promote researcher cooperation and student exchange. A great number of universities and institutes are visited and meetings arranged with members of all faculties who may be interested in this type of exchange. In planning journeys Staffan and Lars rely upon researchers they have already met and interacted with. One important aim is to deepen our relations with these persons for possible future collaboration, visiting scholarships, guest lecture tours, etc. During meetings focus is put on those institutions within the SASNET network in Sweden, which are most interesting for the audience. As for students, they are informed about the various possibilities for masters and PHD studies in Sweden.

Jan Essner and Boel Billgren questioned how representative the selection of institutions to visit during the coming journey is. Jan Essner suggested that Staffan and Lars write a summary of the aims behind the journey, and a list of the people they will meet in South Asia. This should be sent out along with the SASNET newsletter.

Decisions: The board approved the contact journey. Information about it should be disseminated, as suggested by the meeting.

6. Distribution of Planning Grants

See *Enclosure 5*: List of applicants. The evaluation made by the Reference group, consisting of Knut Jacobsen, Neil Webster and Malin Åkerblom, was available at the meeting.

Discussion: The reference group had met the same morning. Its decisions were presented at the board meeting. The reference group had selected nine projects/programmes out of the 29 applications. SEK 500 000 were distributed.

Decision: The board thanked the reference group for its work, and approved its decisions, as follows:

Planning grants for continued research programme

- Baboo Nair, Department of Applied Nutrition and Food Chemistry, Lund Institute of Technology, Lund University: "Creation of data base and interactive website for SASNET-fermented foods (Swedish South Asian network for fermented foods), plus organising second International seminar on fermented foods."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 40 000

Planning grants for research programmes/projects:

- Bhattacharya, Prosun, Division of Land and Water Resources, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm: "Arsenic contamination in groundwater in South Asia, and sustainable drinking water options."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 55 000

- Wilk, Julie, Dept, of Water and Environmental Studies, Linköping University: "Defining a Water Poverty Index through stakeholder participation."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 60 000

- Höglund, Kristine, Dept. of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University: "Mediators, Monitors, and Donors: Nordic Involvement in the Sri Lankan Peace Process, 2000-2005."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 60 000

- Jansson, Christer, Dept. of Plant Biology & Forest Genetics, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala: "New Rice cultivars with improved endosperm properties – a collaborative project between SLU, Sweden, and IBMBB, Sri Lanka."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 55 000

- Singh, Nandita, Division of Land and Water Resources, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm: "Relevance of socio-cultural context in realization of the human right to water: An insight from gender perspective."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 50 000

Planning grants for educational programmes/projects

- Ekborg, Margareta, School of Teacher Education, Malmö University: "Development of biotechnological education programs and information packages in Nepal."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 55 000

- Kabir, Zarina Nahar, Dept. of Neurotec, Karolinska Institutet Medical University, Stockholm: "Nurse training for geriatric care in Bangladesh."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 60 000

• Tomson, Göran, Division of International Health (IHCAR), Dept. of Public Health Sciences, Karolinska Institutet Medical University, Stockholm: "Networking in research and training for better health administration and management (NHART)." The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 65 000

7. Evaluation of SASNET

See **Enclosures 1 and 2**. The evaluation report was prepared by the three external evaluators: Prof. Ghanshyam Shah, Ahmedabad, India; Prof. Carla Risseeuw, Leiden University, Netherlands; and Mr. Lennart Wohlgemut, Director of the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala. The content and budget in the application to Sida SAREC for funding during 2006-2008 was discussed at the board meeting.

Points that have been stressed in the external evaluation:

Positive points: overall appreciation of SASNET activities, the Internet Gateway, arrangements of various kinds, the success of the Planning grants, etc.

Issues to take up during the discussion:

- Fewer SASNET activities – too many at present?
- How do we activate more nodes in the network
- More active contact with and involvement of scholars in South Asia: funding of lecture tours, guest researchers, etc.
- The value of SASNET root node arrangements: workshops, conferences and contact journeys
- Focus on the promotion of inter- and multidisciplinary research
- More objective criteria and transparency in the distribution of Planning Grants? The purpose, network activities or research?

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg made an introduction, complimenting the good work the external evaluators had made in such a limited time, and for suggesting further improvements of SASNET. Björn Hettne and Bo Lindblad agreed and commended the high quality of the evaluation report. The board then turned to the specific issues pointed out by the evaluators.

Gunnel Cederlöf argued for the importance of decentralisation (suggested by the evaluators) by setting up **local SASNET nodes** at different Swedish universities. Staffan Lindberg said that the proposed guest lecture programme in the budget for 2006-2008 could be set up as a local node. This programme would benefit all Swedish universities, and could be administered from another node than Lund.

Björn Hettne argued for the **introduction of a chat forum** through SASNET's Internet gateway (also suggested by the evaluators). Gunnel Cederlöf said that it should be organised as a discussion forum, but it will need constant supervision from a person who can remove improper postings. Jan Essner agreed to the urgency of introducing chat pages as a means of stimulating and widening contacts between researchers and the surrounding society. In combination with SASNET's organising of seminars in different places of Sweden it may broaden contacts between institutions and authorities, between researchers and practitioners. Essner said that this is important since today there is no platform for common research areas, involving government, private sector and NGO's.

Bo Lindblad identified three core issues for SASNET in the future, pointed out by the external evaluators. 1. Concentration on in-service training (kompetensutveckling). 2. Decentralisation of activities. 3. Inter-curricular research. One way to fulfil these aims could be to form a **group of senior, recently retired, professors** within SASNET's network, at the universities in Stockholm, Göteborg, Lund and Uppsala. As a model, Lindblad told about a similar group formed by senior professors in Paediatrics (including himself). Such a group would be a valuable resource in discussing inter-curricular research and in-service training. Staffan Lindberg appreciated the suggestion and said that senior researchers within the network, has a role to play at their respective university. However, the group should not be selected too narrowly. It should not be restricted to professors only, Lindberg argued. Gunnel Cederlöf supported this, saying that professors are not always the only persons to work with when it comes to local activities.

A discussion on the issue followed. Björn Hettne said that the important thing is that a supporting organisation is formed, and Catarina Kinnvall added that SASNET should support researchers who are working all alone on South Asia related projects in their departments. Boel Billgren also commented on the proposed professors group, saying that it is important to involve departments that form strong South Asia related research environments, even if there is still no professorship at the particular department. Bo Lindblad agreed to this, and changed his proposal to be a group of senior heads of departments, whether professors or not. The board asked Lars Eklund to prepare a list of relevant people within SASNET's network, as a basis for the formation of such a group.

Jan Essner initiated a discussion on the **future funding of SASNET**. The evaluation recommends Sida/SAREC and Lund University to increase the funding for the period 2006-2008 by 50 %, but Essner pointed to the fact that SASNET could not continue to be mainly funded by Sida funds, since they are primarily intended for development assistance work. Essner asked for a discussion about what could be done to interest other funders to take over the financial responsibility in the future (today Sida/SAREC covers 75 % of SASNET's budget, and Lund University 25 %). He also questioned whether SASNET should keep on distributing planning grants forever, or whether the money used for planning grants instead could be used to increase SASNET's activities within Sweden. Essner mentioned that the chances for South Asia related researchers to get planning grants and other forms of support from other sources have increased. Besides funds available from Sida/SAREC itself and Swedish Research Links grants, both Mistra and Vinnova are more willing than before to support South Asia related research.

Bo Lindblad supported the idea of sometimes skipping the distribution of planning grants and instead use the money for focused multidisciplinary activities e.g. within the fields of Water and Children's health.

Staffan Lindberg agreed to the need to secure funding from other sources than Sida/SAREC in the future, and informed about the contacts he has had with e.g. STINT and the Ministry of Education. He stressed the importance of attracting the private enterprise, NGO's and others. He also said that a part of the planning grants might be used for other focused purposes. Resources and time should be allotted to arrange multidisciplinary conferences every year.

Björn Hettne added that it is necessary to broaden the financing, and he also warned that SASNET should avoid being trapped in area studies, since the trend is to

integrate regional studies, as has been done just now at Göteborg University, where Asian studies have been made a part of the School for Global Studies.

Boel Billgren warned against relying too heavily on public funding, as it should not be expected that the state delivers much more in the future. Instead contacts should be established with university people connected to private enterprise (at Lund University e.g. Charles Edquist, Director for the Centre for Innovation, Research and Competence in the Learning Economy, CIRCLE). SASNET must also act in a way to attract interest from the surrounding world.

Staffan Lindberg finally initiated a debate on the **guidelines for distributing planning grants**, referring to a discussion that was held in the reference group earlier in the day. The criteria for the evaluation of applications include the relevance for South Asian Studies and/or relevance to South Asia; the scientific or educational quality of programme or project; and the quality of the proposed network. Jan Essner asked about the criticism found in the evaluation report regarding the constitution of the reference group. Staffan Lindberg responded to this, pointing out the broad competence of the sitting reference group and how difficult it would be to replace these members once their six-year term ends. He also said that SASNET would strive at wide publication of the criteria used for selecting projects. Some points in the criteria would be further clarified.

Staffan Lindberg summarised the fruitful discussion on the evaluation report, and concluded by saying that SASNET should make use of the suggestions put forward in it to the best of its ability.

8. 2005 Application to Lund University and Sida SAREC for funding during 2006 – 2008

See **Enclosure 6**. Our plan is to ask for an additional one million SEK, 25 % from Lund University and 75 % from Sida SAREC. The total budget for SASNET would then be 3.2 million SEK. This will suffice to keep the current activities going with 1 million devoted to Planning Grants and 150 000 to an annual workshop/conference, etc.

Decision: The board accepted the application to be sent to Sida/SAREC

9. Appointment of webmaster/deputy director of SASNET during 2006 - 2008

Lars Eklund is interested to continue his work in this position. He has already served in this capacity for five years (2001-2005). It is suggested that he is re-assigned in this position for 2006 – 2008. Last time the webmaster position was announced in 2002, the board decided to suspend the announcement procedures and reassign Eklund for a new two-years period (board meeting 28 January 2003, point 9).

Decision: The board decided to recommend Lund University to reappoint Lars Eklund for the position. The final decision is taken by Lund University.

10. Date for next board meeting

Decision: Next board meeting will be held on Tuesday 14 February 2006.

Lund, 15 September 2005

Lars Eklund

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Lars Eklund, secretary

Björn Hettne

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Björn Hettne, chairman

Verified by:

Jan Magnusson

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Jan Magnusson