



**Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year 2010**

from Anna and Lars, SASNET
Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Dear Friends,



The snow is covering our city—it looks like as a Christmas card wherever one goes. A new year is rapidly approaching, giving us pause to look backward as well as forward.

This past year has been a turbulent time for SASNET, with many wonderful events, but also some problems. Let us start with the highlights . . .

The network has grown tremendously. Our web site has presented more than 250 Swedish university departments where some form of South Asia-related research or educational collaboration projects are going on, and our newsletters reach 2,000 recipients.

SASNET's searchable database for Swedish and Nordic researchers involved in research on South Asia was updated during the year, and their graphic design was reworked by Geoffrey Gardella.

In September, SASNET's recently catalogued Mahatma Gandhi book collection was inaugurated and the Gandhi web site constructed by librarian Erik Svanström officially launched.

Successful conferences

Further, the interactive SASNET Student Forum, created by Malin Gregersen in 2008, became a more effective platform for discussion. It was especially useful in connection with the conference for young Nordic scholars working on South Asia-related projects held at Falsterbo in August. The success of the conference was such that it will be followed up with a similar one in 2010.

Another conference/workshop entitled “Women and Migration in South Asia: Health and Social Consequences” was organised by SASNET in Colombo, Sri Lanka, at the beginning of February in collaboration with the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (SJP) in Colombo, and the Division of International Maternal and Child Health (IMCH) at Uppsala University. Researchers in the field were invited from all over the South Asian region and from Swedish institutions. SASNET’s director Anna Lindberg and deputy director Lars Eklund both participated, as did members of SASNET’s South Asian Reference Group, traveling from Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. One of its members, Dr. Kumudu Wijewardena, chaired the Colombo workshop.

On his way to Colombo, Lars Eklund made a stop in the Maldives, where he met the Minister of State for Education, Dr. Ahmed Ali Maniku. Meanwhile, Anna Lindberg proceeded to Kerala, India, after taking part in the Colombo workshop. She joined in discussions about the development of the new “Sustainable Kerala Network”, a Swedish South Asian network on sustainable development. She also met with representatives of CREST, the Centre for Research and Education for Social Transformation in Kozhikode, and the NGO Kabani, based in Wayanad.

In March, Lars Eklund and Stig Toft Madsen, who worked for SASNET in the spring, participated in a brain-storming and awareness-raising workshop on “Contemporary India Study Centres in Europe”. The workshop was organised by Sciences Po/CERI in Paris.

Networking and seminars

SASNET’s networking activities within Sweden consisted of visits by Lars Eklund to the universities of Jönköping, Växjö, Skövde, and Västerås. In September, he also travelled to the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, in connection with the first consortium meeting for the new Indo-European Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window (EMECW) mobility programme “EURINDIA”, coordinated by KTH.

This EMECW programme is in addition to the much larger Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window (EMECW) mobility programme coordinated by Lund University (with Karolinska Institutet as the second Swedish partner university), a programme awarded by the European Commission in 2008 after hectic groundwork was laid by Anna Lindberg and Lars Eklund.

In May, SASNET organised a visit to Lund and Malmö by the new Ambassador of India to Sweden, His Excellency Mr. Balkrishna Shetty. During the ambassador's stay he met researchers, teachers, students, and international coordinators involved in India-related projects at Lund University. He was also the key speaker at an India seminar that SASNET co-organised with the Sweden-India Business Council (SIBC) and Ideon Research Park.

On September 29, Anna participated in a seminar with the title "India Today" arranged by Centre for Development and the Environment, Institute for Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages at University of Oslo.

Mahatma Gandhi Book Collection

In September, Ambassador Shetty returned to Lund University at SASNET's invitation to inaugurate The Mahatma Gandhi Book Collection (part of the Karl Reinhold Haellquist Memorial Collection). On behalf of the Indian government, the ambassador used the occasion to donate another 120 volumes of Mahatma Gandhi literature to Lund University and SASNET. These were either works written by Gandhi or books focusing on him. Ambassador Shetty also participated in a seminar on "The Role of Mahatma Gandhi in Today's Society", along with David Arnold, Professor of Asian and Global History at the University of Warwick, UK.

A week later, another high-profile seminar entitled "Political Transitions Affecting the Peace Process in Nepal" was organised by SASNET in collaboration with the Association of Foreign Affairs at Lund University (UPF). The distinguished participants included the Nepalese Ambassador to Scandinavia, Mr. Vijaykant Lal Karna, and Anjoo Sharan Upadhyaya, Professor of Political Science and Director, Centre for the Study of Nepal at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in Varanasi, India.

On visits to Stockholm, Anna Lindberg and Lars Eklund also met the Ambassador of Pakistan, Mr. Nadeem Riyaz, and the outgoing Ambassador of Bangladesh, Mr. Muhammad Azizul Haque, to discuss the future of SASNET and the possibility of cooperation between South Asian institutions.

SASNET lectures

During the year, many other seminars with invited guests were arranged by SASNET, some in collaboration with other organisations. The lecturers included:

- Dr. Walter Andersen, Associate Director of the South Asia Studies Program at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., USA

- Prof. Ravinder Kaur, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, India
- Dr. Daya Kishan Thussu of the University of Westminster, UK
- Prof. Dipak Malik, Director of the Gandhian Institute in Varanasi, India
- Dr. Tabish Khair, Dept. of English, University of Aarhus, Denmark
- Tabla player Subrata Manna; classical singer Sudokshina Chatterjee Manna; and Kathak dancer Sohini Debnath. All were from Kolkata, India, and took part in a well-attended academic seminar on intercultural education research held in Malmö, in addition to performing for SASNET's audience.
- Prof. Ishtiaq Ahmed, Visiting Research Professor at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore
- Dr. Rubya Mehdi, University of Copenhagen
- Dr. Ruby Sain, Dept. of Sociology, Jadavpur University, India
- Prof. Priyankar Upadhyaya, Benaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi, India

Sheikh Hasina in Lund

The most remarkable visitor to accept an invitation from SASNET to hold a seminar at Lund University was Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Under high security, she came to Lund University on 19 December to deliver a speech on "Climate Change in Bangladesh – Facing the Challenges". She was hosted by Lund University Vice-Chancellor Per Eriksson. The prime minister's entourage consisted of a large delegation of ministers and some twenty members of the Bangladeshi parliament who had been attending the COP 15 climate conference in Copenhagen. The event was covered by several Bangladeshi newspapers and TV journalists.

Other South Asian visitors to SASNET's office in Lund included Prof. Shariff Enamur Kabir, Vice Chancellor, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh; Prof. Pradeep Mathur, Dept. of Chemistry, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mumbai, India; Prof. G.N. Tiwari, Centre for Energy Studies, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, India; and two members of SASNET's South Asian Reference Group, Kumudu Wijewardena, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka, and Mohsin Saeed Khan, Health Specialist, Islamabad, Pakistan (who is also a Ph.D. Candidate in a dual sandwich programme with the Division of Global health [IHCAR] at Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm).

Planning grants

In 2009, SASNET distributed networking/planning grants to five new research projects. Financial support was also given to three guest lecture programmes (in which a guest lecturer from South Asia was invited to visit more than one Swedish university), and two South Asia-related interdisciplinary research workshops (to be held in Sweden or South Asia). The total amount distributed

was SEK 525 000. Grants were awarded to researchers at the following universities:

- Blekinge Institute of Technology (1)
- Gävle University (1)
- Jönköping University (1)
- Karolinska Institute (1)
- Lund University (2)
- Stockholm University (2)
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) (2)

In February, two students from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Mumbai visited SASNET and Lund University. They were the winners of a Nobel prize quiz competition organised by the Embassy of Sweden in India in October 2008. The winners received a one week all-expenses paid trip to Sweden and the opportunity to visit Swedish universities and major technology companies in Lund, Gothenburg, Linköping, Sandviken, and Stockholm. SASNET arranged their visit to Lund University, which included a tour of the nanoscience laboratory at the Dept. of Physics.

SASNET also sponsored a exhibition of photographs by second-year students from Lund University's Masters programme in Development and Management (LUMID) 2007–2009 that ran from 25 May – 4 June 2009 illustrating their fieldwork in Asian and African countries.

Finally, Lars Eklund wrote an article entitled "SASNET Builds Up Indo-Swedish Collaborations" about SASNET's achievements over its nine years of existence. It appeared in the 2009 edition of *India-Sweden in Focus*, published in mid-August. The glossy magazine was produced by Krest Publications in New Delhi, India, on behalf of the Embassy of India in Sweden. The magazine also featured articles on other important Indo-Swedish collaboration initiatives in business, research, and culture.

Seeking new funding

In addition to our regular activities, we have spent a great deal of time seeking new funding to replace the subsidy that Sida/SAREC has generously provided for the ten-year period that ends this month. Despite an enormous number of phone calls, meetings, written documents, and e-mails trying to resolve this problem, our mission seems to have failed. Although we have approached every possible governmental body and have appealed for support to universities other than Lund, we have not been able to find a way to replace the Sida/SAREC funding.

On the positive side, Lund University has promised to continue their underwriting, which at present comprises about one-third of our budget. We are in the process

of negotiating with the University for additional funds. We are most grateful for their support, which makes it possible for us to keep our doors open after December 2009.

Nevertheless, due to the precarious current situation, with SASNET no longer receiving Swedish government funding and other Swedish universities unwilling to co-fund SASNET with membership fees (we had proposed that each university contribute SEK 50,000 a year – equivalent to EUR 5,000), we are sorry to inform you that it will be necessary to cut down on our web page updating activities. Hopefully this will only be a temporary situation.

Specifically, this means that after January 1, 2010, SASNET will no longer update the activities of 250 Swedish university departments (other than those belonging to Lund University) on our web pages.

In this connection, we are reminded of a New Years Greeting that Anna received from a friend in India:

I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright. I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more. I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive. I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joys in life appear much bigger. I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting. I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess. I wish you enough hellos to get you through the good-byes.

SASNET has had both sun, rain, happiness, and loss to appreciate what we still have. Now, as we look forward to a new constructive and creative 2010, we are not saying goodbye. It may not be the same SASNET in the future, but we are confident that something positive will come out of this situation!

Thank you for subscribing to our Newsletter, and thank you for using our web pages!

We wish you all a good holiday season and a peaceful New Year!

Lund 23 December 2009

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Director

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