

# **SASNET workshop 2006 on The role of South Asia in the internationalisation of higher education in Sweden**

*Presentation by Ulla Rylander, Swedish Institute (SI)*

## **Recruitment of South Asian students in hard sciences in Sweden**

### ***Swedish Institute supported exchanges with South Asia and cooperation with Higher Education Commission of Pakistan***

First some words about the SI.

Swedish Institute is a public agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the task to inform the world about Sweden and to organise and support exchanges with other countries in the spheres of education, research, culture and public life in general. These have been the tasks since SI's foundation in 1945.

The tools used for supporting exchanges in higher education and research are primarily individual scholarships and support to institutional cooperation together with the marketing of Swedish HE to broaden the knowledge about Sweden as study destination.

Most of the support programmes are financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which means that there are often considerations of foreign policy behind the establishment of the different scholarship programmes.

That is why cooperation with the former Soviet block has been granted the largest budget for cooperation. Here SI can offer both individual scholarships and large grants for institution to institution cooperation. Unfortunately, there are no such grants for cooperation with South Asia.

However, students and researchers from South Asia can apply for scholarships within the **Guest Scholarship** programme run by SI and established in the beginning of the 1970-ies. This is the most global of the SI scholarship programmes and it is open for all countries in the world, exclusive of the Nordic countries.

The Guest scholarships are intended for studies that with preference should be conducted in Sweden. This means that the scholarships are granted for advanced academic studies or research and not for undergraduate studies. Formally, there are no restrictions as to subjects, but since the programme to its larger part is financed from the budget for development assistance, studies within subjects which can benefit the development of the countries are given priority.

The scholarships are strictly individual. This means that all applications are made directly to the SI and that no authorities in the applicants' home countries are involved in the selection and screening procedure. Since students from all countries of the world, in

principle, can – and do – apply for the scholarships one task of the SI is to see to it that the scholarships are distributed in a fair way between applicants from different countries and between applicants within different subject areas.

The maximum scholarship period is three years. This means that we cannot support a whole education leading to a PhD degree. But PhD-studies where part of the education is pursued in Sweden are something that often get support from SI. (The sandwich model.)

To illustrate the extent to which SI has been able to support exchanges with South Asia through the Guest scholarship programme, here some statistics:

During the last 10 years close to 100 students/researchers from South Asia have spend a period in Sweden as guest scholarship holder. Mostly the scholarship has had duration of one academic year or more.

To be exact, there have been 97 scholarship holders. Of these

15 were from Bangladesh  
39 from India  
15 from Nepal  
16 from Pakistan and  
12 from Sri Lanka.

29 of these 97 grantees were women.

Most of the scholarship holders were within the hard sciences. 35 studied Medicine, 26 Natural Sciences, 19 Technology and 2 Agriculture.

It goes without saying that the distribution of scholarships is always dependant on the applications received. The outcome as to country, subject and gender distributions is thus a consequence of the application pattern.

I would also like to mention another scholarship possibility through SI.

Sida, the Swedish development assistance authority, finance some scholarship programmes that are administered by SI. One of them, the so called

### **Master for Key Personnel, or MKP**

is of interest in this connection.

These scholarships are open to university graduates, who are citizens of a developing country and have several years of relevant work experience.

The aim of this programme is to help grow special competencies in targeted countries. Eligibility is thus restricted to candidates from specific countries seeking admittance to approved programmes at Swedish universities. Because Sida has identified different developmental needs in different countries, the citizenship of a person determines which programmes are available for scholarship support.

Priority is given to applicants who can secure a leave of absence from their jobs which allow them to return upon completion of the studies.

This autumn the second group of scholarships holders started their studies in Sweden within this programme. So far the programme has included 15 students from South Asia (6 from Bangladesh, 1 from Bhutan, 4 from Nepal and 4 from Sri Lanka).

Before I stop I would like to mention something about our

### **Cooperation with Higher Education Commission of Pakistan**

SI has signed an agreement on scholarship cooperation with the HEC. It is a programme that is entirely financed by Pakistan. In fact, two programmes. One for PhD students and one for Master students.

These two programmes are part of the Pakistani venture to develop and modernize its HE sector. The persons who benefit from the scholarships and acquire a degree in Sweden are supposed to continue to work as university teachers after completion of their studies in Sweden.

Applications are made to the Higher Education Commission and screening of the applications and tests of the applicants are made there before nominations are sent to the SI.

The role of the SI is to assist in the placement of the scholarship candidates at Swedish universities and the monitoring of the study progress of the students. The agreement between the Swedish Institute and the Higher Education Commission is valid for 7 years.

Pakistan has similar agreements with some other countries in Europe.

The first scholarship holders came to Sweden this autumn. They are around 15 PhD students and approximately the same number Master students. In full operation the programmes can extend to a maximum number of 200 students per year.

You can learn more about our scholarships from our website:

<http://www.studyinsweden.se>

**/Ulla Rylander**