

Journalists as power brokers

Review of the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) and the Free Media Foundation (FMF), August 2006

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*Nothing can resist an idea, whose time is mature.
Vaclav Havel*

The Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad organised in August 2006 an independent Review Team, in order to undertake a review of South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA)/ Free Media Foundation (FMF).

The Review Team (RT) comprised:

- Alf Skjeseth, Oslo, is a political correspondent with the daily Klassekampen and a former president of the Norwegian Union of Journalists (team leader)
- Masood Hayat, Islamabad, is an experienced development consultant with skills in development planning, designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Cyril Raphael, Dehradun, is a management specialist, with experience as an adviser and consultant for a number of Indian and international development organisations.
- Eivind Lund, Oslo, is the webmaster in Norad, joining the team as an observer.

Method and procedure

The RT did its collective field work from August 14th to August 25th 2006, travelling to Islamabad, Lahore, Kathmandu and New Dehli, visiting the SAFMA chapters in Pakistan, Nepal and India, and its headquarters in Lahore. Before the field work, Mr Hayat did preparations in cooperation with the Embassy, while Mr Raphael worked with the chapter in New Dehli, including a visit to a sub-office in Mumbai. Mr Raphael did not attend the meetings in Pakistan, as Mr Hayat did not in India. All team members made their contributions to this report, coordinated and finally drafted by Mr Skjeseth. Mr Lund gives his assessment of SAFMA's website in an appendix.

The RT had extensive meetings and interviews with the SAFMA leadership, regionally and in the countries visited. We interacted with a number of politicians and figures in the SAFMA's environment, like writers and scholars, as well as media persons not connected to SAFMA. We have got access to all the relevant documents. Information has been properly provided.

Meetings were organised with the RT, national SAFMA leaders and high level diplomats at the Norwegian Embassies in Nepal and India, as the Norwegian involvement with SAFMA so far has been largely carried out by the Islamabad Embassy.

The RT has during the field work looked carefully for independent observers, in order to limit a pro-SAFMA-bias. However, since most of the programme from good reasons was organised by our SAFMA hosts in the cities visited, including the social gatherings, it is pertinent to mention that we may have missed some SAFMA critics out there, even if SAFMA contributed duly in providing a cross-section of relevant people to meet.

Executive Summary

- SAFMA is one in a big crowd of media organisations devoted to freedom of expression, access to information and media workers' rights. Still, SAFMA is a unique media body.

- SAFMA's double track approach, combining its free media endeavours and its efforts in peacemaking and confidence building, first and foremost as peace maker in the India-Pakistani relationship, is as far as the RT can see, unprecedented within the international family of press freedom campaigners.
- SAFMA seems also unique in a South Asian context, due to its ability to deliver according to plans. During SAFMA's first 4-5 years of active operations, it has produced remarkable results. These include organising a number of high level conferences throughout the region, initiatives in order to bring key players together across national, political and professional borders, running a website with comprehensive regional news and background coverage, issuing books, journals and documents and organising a think-tank covering a wide range of subjects, undertaking fact finding missions in order to defend press freedom, lobbying governments in order to improve media laws and journalists' freedom.
- Even if SAFMA's most visionary dreams still have not come through, the drive and enthusiasm of SAFMA appears significantly in contrast to a widespread bureaucracy and lack of momentum in the region. That is, beside its idealistic aims, a major reason why so many eminent people within and outside the media community are attracted to SAFMA. Its dynamic Secretary General, Mr Imtiaz Alam, is setting an example with his tireless work.
- SAFMA's role in peace and confidence building is as a catalyst and a facilitator. SAFMA's most important capital is its credibility. SAFMA is widely respected as politically and ideologically unbiased, committed to peace, understanding and press freedom. It has no hidden agenda beyond these objectives. As SAFMA has a record for succeeding in bringing even high level Indian and Pakistani politicians together for dialogue, SAFMA is facing expectations in order to provide bridges in a number of sectors.
- SAFMA's impact in easing the tension between India and Pakistan is difficult to measure in exact terms. Some leaders, notably in Pakistan, are claiming credit to SAFMA because Pakistan's general Musharraf proclaimed a ceasefire in the troubled Kashmir, as well as for opening of communication lines across the disputed border. Others, notably in India, are more cautious. Still, the former Indian prime minister, I. K. Gurjal, told the RT that SAFMA made remarkable contributions to an improved relationship between India and Pakistan. «*Development would not have been as positive without SAFMA*» (quote). However, the blast in Mumbai July 11th 2006, was a serious setback in the India-Pakistan-relationship, affecting SAFMA's activities as well.
- Even if impact in peace and confidence building is more a matter of quality than of quantity, SAFMA has a potential in order to improve its monitoring mechanisms. Today, there is still a mission mood prevailing, where every SAFMA conference or initiative are labelled as «highly successful», without parameters sufficient for assessing the real effects.
- As SAFMA's diplomatic efforts take a lot in terms of lobbying the political and social elite, warnings emerge that SAFMA should not forget its roots and core activities as primarily a media body. Even if SAFMA is not a trade union, a lot remains to be done in order to increase SAFMA's appeal among rank and file journalists. There is so far a newspaper bias, while electronic media, especially radio, seem underrated in SAFMA's activities, considering their important role as mass media in the region. However, the

electronic media conference in Karachi this year has reinforced SAFMA's ranks with members from television and radio.

- SAFMA was in the forefront defending media rights during the democratic revolution in Nepal. SAFMA has set up a monitoring system in order to get press freedom violations on record in the region.
- Now, SAFMA is pondering two huge projects for the future: Establishing a South Asian Media University and a regional public service news TV channel. These efforts may, eventually, in addition to its website increase SAFMA's relevance for working journalists, improve the quality in the media and dissemination of news, as well as enhancing SAFMA's self-sustainability in the long run. The question is whether SAFMA can provide the human and financial resources sufficient for the investments and management needed.
- SAFMA is concluding its first phase. Important strategic decisions for the future are ahead. At this crossroad, SAFMA faces some dilemmas. There is a risk that SAFMA may fall victim of its own success, as the ambitions in direction of further expansion may not correspond with resources available, while its focus may become blurred. There is a need to consolidate.
- SAFMA faces a financial crisis. Norway is at the moment its only donor, while its potential in order to provide revenue from own activities seems limited in the short term. Norway granted just above 50 % of the amount applied for in a budget period extended to March 31st, 2007. It is required in the contract with the Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad that SAFMA is seeking assistance also from other donors, so far to no avail. If additional funding is not provided very soon, a lot of activities will have to be cancelled.

Facts: South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA)

- An association of SAARC countries' media persons who agree with the objectives and goals of the Association and are approved by the National Unit as members.
- SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) comprises seven South Asian countries: India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan. SAFMA has so far got national chapters in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
- Established in the year 2000 as a result of South Asian Free Media Conference, 'Towards Free and Vibrant Media' held in Islamabad.
- In the 2nd South Asia Free Media Conference (SAFMC) held in Kathmandu in January 2002 the country delegates agreed on 'Declaration of Intent: Media and peace'. Also SAFMA's media agenda was put into action plan in this conference.

Facts: Free Media Foundation (FMF)

Since SAFMA is a regional association of SAARC countries' media persons, it could not be registered under the existing enactments and obtain the status of a juristic person capable of entering into contracts. Therefore, an NGO under the name and style of Free Media Foundation was formed with the objectives similar to the SAFMA, to be the implementing partner for the projects that are supporting SAFMA for achievement of its objectives.

- Free Media Foundation (FMF) has been registered under the Societies Registration Act, XXI of 1860 with the Registrar Joint Stock Companies, District Lahore, Pakistan.
- FMF is controlled by a board of governors and is regulated by its Memorandum of Association and Rules and Regulations.
- It is a not-for-profit media body dedicated to the cause of press freedom, democracy, human rights, peace and regional cooperation.
- Its accounts are audited by a firm of chartered accountants appointed by the General Body.

Donors' support to SAFMA/FMF

- Initially UNDP and CIDA (Canadian agency) funded the 1st Free Media Conference in Islamabad in July 2000 under the UNDP support for « Freedom of Information» in the South Asia region.
- The 2nd South Asia Free Media Conference was held in January 2002, funded by UNDP and Norwegian MFA.
- The first agreement to fund SAFMA programme by Norway was signed between Norway and UNDP in December 2002, for NOK 04 million for 2002-2003.
- During the year 2004 Norway signed direct agreement with FMF to fund SAFMA programme for the year 2004 and 2005.
- Other donors like Netherlands government also funded SAFMA programme in 2004-2005, but the further funding was not considered due to change in policy.
- Currently only Norway is funding the programme and grant has been extended upto 30th March 2007 through a recent addendum.

SAFMA objectives

SAFMA objectives agreed at the second SAFMC, which became part of its Memorandum of Association (Constitution) include:

- Promote tolerance, understanding, confidence building, management and resolution of conflicts, peace, nuclear stabilization, disarmament, economic and cultural cooperation and people to people contact in the region;
- Support full enforcement of universally recognized human rights, including women rights, social rights of the people and equal rights of the minorities and the indigenous people;
- Struggle for freedom of media, freedom of and access to information, including the removal of all barriers in the way of free flow of information and unhindered movement of media persons and media products across the region;
- Develop high professional standards, professional collaboration and independence of a South Asian media free of all biases and prejudices while monitoring all violations of freedom of and access to information;
- Benefit the people and the region with the fruits of information revolution by promoting interactive and collaborative media products including web-sites and magazines;
- Uphold public interest and civil society in each country and overall interests of the people of this region;
- respect decency, privacy and dignity of all citizens and be accountable readers/viewers autonomous and self-regulatory bodies adjudicating the violation of the rights of the citizens.

Strategy for achieving the objectives

- Engage all media persons who believe in the freedom of media and agree to promote SAFMA objectives;
- Establish broad-based chapters of SAFMA across the countries of the region and develop networking among various branches of media;
- Plan and work for the freedom of media and all forms of expression and freedom of and access to information in each country;
- Monitor the violation of freedom of media and free flow of and access to information;
- Develop modules of training and hold workshops for media persons;
- Work out concrete ways to promote professional collaborations in various media fields;
- Lobby with the national governments and at SAARC level for lifting of all tariff and non-tariff barriers in the way of free flow of information, including unhindered movement and exchange of media-person and media-product across the South Asian region;
- Promote as far as possible, healthy, informative, educative, objective and constructive journalism, broadcasting and electronic communications;
- Bring media professionals together in various ways and at different forums to develop better understanding of all pressing issues in the region;
- Produce joint publications/productions to promote a free and vibrant South Asia media.

SAFMA's new approach

– *Journalists cannot be diplomats. That is a matter of principle.*

This is the view of the resident editors of the Pakistani dailies Nation (English) and Nawa-E-Waqt (Urdu) in Islamabad. In these editorial offices, SAFMA has got no members. However, the editoris are rather indifferent than hostile. SAFMA is labelled as well-meaning, but irrelevant, due to its committment to lobby the elite classes without any real power.

These are objections familiar to every journalist and editor. In both Pakistan, India and Nepal the RT met top level editors and columnists, now at the helm of SAFMA's acitivites, admitting that they initially were skeptical to SAFMA's new approach, making journalists take action as power brokers and peace makers.

Among them was the highly respected M. Ziuaddin, resident editor in Islamabad for the major daily The Dawn and president of the Pakistani chapter of SAFMA. He changed his mind.

– We had a unique situation, which required new thinking. The media community had to utilize its special position as independent observers to overcome the animosity between Indian and Pakistani politicians. If not, the traditional efforts from the media organisations to dismantle barriers and improve media rights are doomed to remain fruitless, overshadowed by the Indian-Pakistani conflict. SAFMA is part of a greater cause. The politicians needed someone to break the ice. SAFMA was there at the right time, he says.

This a fair summary of the reasons why SAFMA's strategy has attracted so many influential media personalities in most of the SAARC countries.

A small piece of information regarding SAFMA's website was for the RT an expressive illustration of the spirit of SAFMA: Its policy is to refuse hate speech in every form, by

avoiding terms like «terrorist», «fanatic» etc., and consistently emphasizing dialogue rather than confrontation in its presentation.

SAFMA and the India Pakistan relationship - breakthrough in Islamabad

*Each work has to pass through three stages - ridicule, opposition and then acceptance
Swami Vivekananda*

SAFMA's untiring attempts towards establishing a dialogue on inter-state and intrastate conflicts and its contribution to the SAARC processes came of age in the "Pakistan – India Parliamentarians, Journalists and Experts Conference in Islamabad in August 2003."

It was not an easy job to bring together the elected leadership of all major political parties of the subcontinent while involving the leading media persons and experts. The timing of the conference was quite hostile to the SAFMA initiative, yet it was able to surmount the difficulties and broke the ice for dialogue and confidence building measures to be announced in the aftermath of the conference. The chapters of Pakistan and India took the responsibility to organize this conference proposed by the SAFMA Secretariat. This became possible due to the support from the political leadership across all divides, besides the facilitation provided by the establishment and the Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

The objective was to build support for the peace process across the party/country divides, develop understanding among the elected representatives of the people, explore areas of confidence-building and evaluate different options for conflict-management and conflict-resolution. The whole exercise was designed to bring the peace question on the agenda of mainstream politics and the mainstream media that was, in fact, overwhelmingly achieved, given the level of participation, massive media coverage and response from the people.

This was first of its kind of parliamentarians' conference with a mix of leading journalists and experts. With such a broad and all-sided representation of almost all parliamentary parties, represented in both the houses of two parliaments, the conference assumed the significance of an Indo-Pak parliament. Successfully held on August 10-11, 2003, at Islamabad, participation came from 30 members of Indian Parliament, officially representing 15 parties, and 35 leading editors/journalists and experts, 62 members of Pakistan's National Assembly and the Senate, representing almost all parties in the parliament, and 75 Pakistani journalists and experts. The total number of delegates was 202, whereas the observers in the opening and closing ceremonies crossed 250 participants.

In 2005, convening the 'South Asian Parliament' was not a small initiative that SAFMA undertook. A lot of research, analytical work and networking had to be undertaken and, above all, the political leadership across various divides in each country had to be taken into confidence. 83 members of parliament from almost all parliamentary parties represented in the legislatures of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, with the approval of their party leadership, besides 68 leading journalists and experts. Representing all shades of opinion in each parliament and comprising 26 leading parliamentary parties, this was undoubtedly the first authentic and representative assembly of South Asia that met for six days in Islamabad and Bhurban, Pakistan, from May 15 to 20, 2005.

SAFMA Parliamentary Forum: South Asian Parliament deliberated upon major policy areas of regional cooperation and addressed most pivotal issues in its eight marathon sessions. A

South Asian Vision, Economic Cooperation in South Asia, Water Issues and the Energy Grid, South Asian Parliament, South Asian Human Rights Code, Cooperative Security in South Asia, Right to Know and Independence of Media and Bhurban Declaration on Evolving South Asian Fraternity.

SAFMA and its Indian and Pakistani chapters have, in addition, undertaken several exercises to connect Indian and Pakistani cities and regions, notably the Mumbai-Karachi-Mumbai exchange between the commercial capitals, the Punjab-Punjab exchange, and historical initiatives in order to bring journalists together across the LoC (Line of Control) in Kashmir.

The first ever visit of journalists from Pakistan to Jammu and Kashmir (Indian side of the LoC) is recalled as a moving event. The visiting journalists, who till then had to depend on indirect sources of information, were able to have a first-hand impression of the situation. Their encounter with the representatives of various groups in were marked by cordiality, warmth and candid exchanges. Likewise, a return visit by Indian journalists to the Pakistani side created the same emotions.

The conflict in the sub-continent could be explained in terms of missed opportunities, errors of judgment and the colonial overhang in policy making – victims of a system adopted in 1947 without much thought, Indian and Pakistan need to «break free».

SAFMA feels that the best approach is to simultaneously tackle disputes without making regional/bi-lateral economic cooperation a hostage to the disputes. Conflict management, confidence-building and resolution of auxiliary issues will create necessary conditions to settle the major disputes among and within the states. Indo-Pak peace process will not move forward without replacing the respective nationalist ideologies of enmity with a new Paradigm of Detente that view bi-lateralism as mutually re-enforcing and equally rewarding.

India's position

It is just not Indo-Pak relations that are vital to South Asian progress towards an economic union, relations between India and other neighbors are also very crucial for regional amity. The Indian chapter of SAFMA is especially aware of India's special position in the region, bordering to all the SAARC countries. The Indian chapter is prepared to take on special assignments in order to assist media colleagues in troubled neighbouring countries.

Indo-Bangladesh relations are passing through yet another uneasy phase of tension. It seems that New Delhi's complaints of Dhaka's alleged 'help' to militants from India's north-east and Bangladesh's concern over India's 'refusal' to correct the trade imbalance and differences over the river-linking project by New Delhi have strained their relations.

The political conflict in Sri Lanka, that has assumed an ethnic form due to the marginalization and exclusion of ethnic minorities, cannot be resolved with a mindset of an already defined majoritarian state. Nor can a distinct Tamil political identity in north-eastern region be recognized, without ensuring equality to other ethnic and religious minorities, territorial integrity of the state and stopping human rights violation from all sides and guaranteeing the rights of minorities. SAFMA's achievements in bringing journalists together across all the divides are important symbolic gestures, even if the political impact is limited so far.

There is a need to effectively regulate Nepal-India border to stop cross-border activities that are detrimental to peace and security of the two countries. After the recent struggles in Nepal and the major role SAFMA played in restoring the freedom of the press, there is generally a mood that things are better in that country. However, everyone is aware that Nepal is in transition; people still cannot figure out what kind of democracy should prevail; there is concern that the king could come back; the tenuous relations with the Maoists may see them going back to the jungle; much hinges on the 7 party alliance dialogue with the Maoists and the divisions within this alliance, 5 parties wanting a Republic in Nepal and 2 parties leaning in the direction of a ceremonial monarchy.

Almost the whole of South Asia awaits solutions to disputes in order to tackle the real ailments. The pretext of inter or intrastate conflicts or 'war against terrorism' is being used to clip civil liberties, introduce draconian laws and suppress democratic aspirations of the people. Economic development through closer integration is not the chant of a few, it is admitting that South Asia can prosper together, as it is one geopolitical region, a region of extraordinary and interwoven cultures, languages and lifestyle.

The media has a twin task. It needs to nurture the spirit of cooperation and at the same time counter negative perceptions. This can only be achieved by operating within a framework of empathy, and by looking at issues with the sensibilities of the other. A responsible projection of issues which avoids dramatization and rejects stereotypes is an essential requirement of this process.

SAFMA can play a seminal role. SAFMA is a forum that provides an opportunity for close interaction in a cooperative framework between media persons of diverse political cultures, varied economics and societies. With such an array of peace building effort over the past 5-6 years, events in the sub-continent of the recent past few weeks – the Mumbai bomb blasts – pose new challenges for SAFMA – and opportunities to cement their relevance in the region.

As this review was in progress, it was privy to the considerations for immediate and appropriate steps that the top leadership in SAFMA began to consider to diffuse the present "pause" in the peace process. The Review Team was included in an audience with an ex-Prime Minister of India – Mr. I.K. Gujral (a respected "dove" of the region) who urged SAFMA to step in and go ahead with their plans for a group of senior Editors from both Pakistan and India to immediately engage the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India in cross visits of the Editors groups.

There have been several occasions during the RT's field work when the question was raised: Ultimately what "impact" has been achieved by SAFMA's peace building initiatives? Perhaps part of the answer comes by posing another question – what impact would there be in the region of South Asia, if no initiatives, such as SAFMA's, were taken?

SAFMA and SAARC

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has seven member states, waiting for Afghanistan to join. The region accounts for nearly 22 % of the world's population, while the region's aggregated GDP is less than 2% of the world's GDP. SAARC is, according to the magazine Pakistan & Gulf Economist, «in no way a representative organization of the peoples of its member states».

Still, as a regional body SAFMA's range of activities is basically within the same framework as of SAARC. SAFMA has been recognized by SAARC as an Associated Body. When SAFMA held its journalists summit on the eve of the SAARC summit at Dhaka in February 2005, all the seven foreign ministers lined up to give their contributions. SAFMA's credentials at government level in the SAARC countries are in high esteem.

Nevertheless, the excellent relationship between SAFMA and SAARC has so far produced more speeches, promises and documents than substantial results.

SAFMA has ever since its first appearances in 2000 made numerous efforts in order to get political support for its Protocol: «Free Movement of Media persons and Media-products Across the South Asian Region». A lot of lip service has been paid, including from the most high-ranking politicians, but to no avail so far. Still, there are a lot of restrictions and rules obstructing free flow of information and media's movement within the region, especially between India and Pakistan. SAFMA's most important demand towards SAARC is that journalists shall be granted the right to travel freely in the region without visa regulations.

Now, the SAFMA's leadership hopes that these demands will be met during 2008, which will be a Media Year in SAARC. That will, eventually, be SAFMA's most important achievement as for media rights so far, but the outcome remains to be seen. Patience is a quality badly needed in dealing with SAARC, as well as for efforts made by the national chapters in order to amend media laws.

By bringing the elected representatives of the people at the centre stage of making a New South Asia, as was achieved at the Indian-Pakistani parliamentary meeting and the South Asian Parliamentary Forum, SAFMA has also done a most remarkable job in promoting the SAARC process itself. SAFMA has taken the responsibility to convene Second South Asian Parliament in May 2007, coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the War of Independence.

South Asia Media University (SAMU)

SAFMA has embarked on establishing South Asia Media University (SAMU) in Lahore, as a substantial expansion of its headquarter's activities. This is an important, although extremely demanding step in order to fulfill SAFMA's dedication to develop media skills, enhancement of media standards, promoting of knowledge and improving media education in South Asia.

Regarding this project, we have to bear in mind that the «university» concept is very different in South Asia compared to Norway. Single subject universities in limited scale are quite common in the region. The SAMU model seems more like a parallel to the Norwegian Institute for Journalism (IJ) than to the academic institutions for training and education.

The need for institutions able to improve education and training for journalists in the region, cannot be questioned. The RT met a lot of harshly worded criticism of the existing education, both in public and private sector, notably in Pakistan and Nepal. Even in India, where the education system is in a somewhat better shape, there is support for building up a regional university based in Pakistan.

SAFMA is planning the building of SAMU in two phases. Phase I will extend from January 2007 to December 2009, where SAMU will provide workshops for training for media professionals. The facilities will be located in a building acquired in Lahore, also designed for

the SAFMA's central secretariat. During phase II, commencing in 2010, SAMU and SAFMA will need much more space and heavy investments. Land may be provided free from the Punjab government. From 2011, SAMU intends to launch its Masters degrees programme, in addition to workshops, seminars and diploma courses.

The major question, also raised by central figures within SAFMA, is whether this project is too demanding to handle for a body like SAFMA, in terms of financial as well as human resources. Even with optimistic estimates as for generating revenue from SAMU, professional consultants stipulate a shortfall in the construction phase 2007-2009 in the neighbourhood of NOK 40 million.

Even if there are good reasons for objections to the dimensions of the SAMU project, the RT feels that establishing an enterprise like this could be a major step in order to increase SAFMA's relevance and appeal to the rank and file journalist community, eventually in cooperation with existing institutions in the education field. There is from a professional point of view an awful lot to be done in this field, and nobody else is likely to do it. Building of a centre with proper facilities as outlined in the SAMU project, could also benefit the remaining SAFMA core activities and generate certain synergies.

Defending free media and journalists' rights

SAFMA has since 2003 published annual media monitor reports, with comprehensive documentation of the press freedom situation in the region.

The development in Nepal had the main focus during the last couple of years. SAFMA has, regionally and nationally, scrutinized the situation carefully, with fact finding missions reaching every corner of the country and high profile appearances in defending media freedom. The media have played an instrumental role in the democratic struggle in Nepal, as the RT also was told by diplomatic observers in Kathmandu.

Since the former government in Nepal challenged the SAFMA's interventions in Nepal as breaches of the procedures in SAARC, SAFMA decided to organise South Asia Press Commission (SAPC) as a subsidiary, taking care of the media monitoring.

SAFMA's Media Monitor for 2005 was published already January 4th, 2006. Several organisations operate in this field around the globe. In April, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) published its annual report for South Asia, partly overlapping the Media Monitor. As the trade unions and other organisations assure there is no climate of rivalry between them and SAFMA, the RT feels that it should create positive effects regarding resources and impact if SAPC and other networks of media rights campaigners join forces by a closer cooperation.

In Pakistan, the SAFMA leadership describes its contacts with the politicians as a love-hate-relationship. SAFMA has easy access to politicians at the highest level. These politicians do frequently attend SAFMA conferences. At the same time, SAFMA has no mercy in criticising governmental failures in media matters. Prime minister Shaukat Aziz was a keynote speaker at SAFMA's workshop reviewing electronic media in Karachi in June 2006. Outside the conference venue, he was met by SAFMA demonstrations demanding investigation of the disappearance of a journalist.

SAPANA Think tank and South Asian Journal

SAFMA has organised the think tank SAPANA (South Asian Policy Analysis Network), and is issuing the quarterly magazine South Asian Journal for the last three years. These are examples of SAFMA's efforts in upholding an overall interest of the people and the civil societies in the region.

SAPANA summons high level scholars and experts in the SAARC countries in order to undertake research and publish books in 14 crucial areas for development in the region. Only one of these areas is media related.

SAPANA, as well as the South Asian Journal, is in its nature cross-disciplinary and multi-themed. The RT met numerous academics, highly regarding these SAFMA initiatives as filling gaps in the region's research and range of publications. These should be considered as twin projects, as the journal will be instrumental in dissemination of SAPANA's research results.

Given its quality reputation and the apparent lack of academic magazines covering the region, the South Asian Journal should have a substantial potential in increasing its circulation. Even if magazines like these are not designed for mass circulation, its current number of subscribers seems extremely low - 140 subscribers in giant India, and less than 500 all together. Not even a very favourable subscription rate for SAFMA members, as substitution for membership fees, has been able to raise these marginal numbers so far.

Gender

SAFMA has, according to Secretary General Imtiaz Alam, determined as gender objectives that at least 20 % of the participants at SAFMA conferences and seminars shall be women, with at least 30 % female members in the governing bodies. Since media in the SAFMA countries still are dominated by men, this looks like realistic aims at the present stage. These aims are, however, mostly not achieved. The picture varies from country to country.

India constitutes the rear guard as far as gender is concerned. Its SAFMA chapter is heavily dominated by mostly senior male newspaper editors and columnists. In the National Executive Committee, 3 out of 29 members are women, which is only just above 10 %.

SAFMA's Regional Executive Body comprises 21 members - the Secretary General and 4 members from each national chapter. Five are women; less than 25 %. In the Board of Governors of the Free Media Foundations (FMF), a body based in Lahore, 2 out of 7 members are women.

India is the only chapter providing only men to the Regional Executive Body. This is a paradox which should be dealt with, given the march of women into India's media industry over the last years.

Gender equality seems in best shape in Nepal, with 32 % female members in the National Board, and two ladies running the daily activities. At the SAFMA headquarter in Lahore, several ladies are among the officials. Ladies hold central posts in the Pakistani chapter as well.

SAFMA programme implementation arrangements

Since SAFMA being a regional association could not be registered under any of the existing laws operating in the countries of the region, it was unable to attain the status of a legal entity capable to enter a valid contract.

To overcome the situation, an NGO was formed under the name and style of Free Media Foundation with the objectives similar to SAFMA and with the intention to develop broad-based networking of media-persons through the vehicle of SAFMA and other media bodies, experts, public leaders and representatives of civil society. The Free Media Foundation signed the contract to implement the project «Conflict Reduction in South Asia through Media Collaboration: Media, peace and Governance», initially with UNDP and then with Norway.

Financial management issues

Since Free Media Foundation (FMF) is supporting SAFMA in its programme implementation and is the signatory of funding agreements with the donors, the financial management issues though also impacting SAFMA, mainly relate to FMF. Accordingly, the following paragraph discusses the financial management situation prevailing in FMF:

- The Rules and Regulations of the Foundation provide for review of the performance of Foundation by the General Body in annual general meetings. The annual report of the Board of Governors and annual accounts of the Foundation are also presented to and approved by the General Body in its annual meeting. The General Body is responsible to appoint a chartered accountants firm to audit the accounts of the Foundation.
- The Board of governors meeting is held twice a year and can also be called at any time by the President or can be requisitioned by three members of the board of governors as per exigency of work. The Board of Governors makes policies/approves changes in the policies, approves plans and supervises implementation of its decisions and work done by the Executive Director and his staff. Investment of funds, change in the Management and Administrative Rules is made with the approval of the board of Governors.
- To ensure transparency, budgets and annual accounts are published in SAFMC Reports.
- Accounts are being maintained on a comprehensive double entry book keeping system.

Institutional strengthening

Institutional development efforts of FMF/SAFMA encompass adoption of UNDP's Project Cycle Operation Manual and its redesigning according to their organizational requirement.

The Manual had been helpful in providing sound systems and procedures to implement the organizational policies as well as human resource development through staff trainings and capacity building in the use of the Manual. Some of the areas focused by the Manual include:

- Work Planning
- Personnel Management
- Procurement
- Subcontracting
- Financial Management
- Monitoring Reporting and Evaluation

Training and capacity building of media-persons is a felt need of the organization for which a plan has been made for formation of a 'Media University' and a feasibility study in this regard has been prepared by involvement of consultants. However, no activity could be noticed where FMF/SAFMA had made use of the existing media training facilities in SAARC countries for training of their member media-persons.

Work Planning/financial planning

FMF/SAFMA has been using the activity planning and financial planning system, which improved by passage of time. Currently a comprehensive document is produced every year that includes annual progress against the previous years' plan of operations, next year's plan of operation and financial budget projections. FMF also has the capacity to produce long-term plans and budgets, which is evident from its proposals to donors for longer periods than a single year.

However, FMF/SAFMA has so far has given limited priority in preparing Logical Framework statements, that form integral part of the present day project proposals and are very helpful in monitoring the project's progress and growth. It is suggested that capacity building of the project staff in this area would produce positive results.

Fund raising

FMF/SAFMA has the capacity and experience of project proposal development and of interacting with donors for raising of funds. However, all these efforts have remained focused on UNDP, Government of Netherlands and Norwegian MFA. Small amount of funding was obtained from some other donors, which was only for a short period.

Currently only Norway is funding the Project, from whom expectations are very high. It is pertinent to mention that all the above-mentioned funding was generated in Pakistan, while SAFMA offices in other countries of the region could not locally generate any mentionable amount of fund.

Since SAFMA is a regional association of media-person having its existence in many countries of South Asian region, it is proposed that efforts should be made to generate local funds to support the programme of National Units. This will not only reduce the dependence of the organization on a single country donor but would generate funds to expand local activities of the National Chapters of SAFMA.

Information/reporting systems

In the area of financial reporting, management, members and donors FMF/SAFMA has shown a good strength. It is a strength of FMF/SAFMA that their auditors and donors are satisfied with their financial reporting and no adverse opinions surfaced during the review mission.

Adequacy of inputs

Generally sufficient funds have remained available to undertake the activities agreed with the donors. However, being dynamic organizations, FMF/SAFMA have the tendency of expanding their activities in certain new avenues. During the initial development phase this strategy had been gainful for expanding the project to undertake activities as per mandate of the organization. But with the project completing its fifth year of operation, it is the time to consolidate and strengthen the achievements.

Cost efficiency

There is no second opinion regarding the cost-efficiency of the project. Review of the accounts shows that a conservative allocation was made for administrative overheads, while most of the focus remained on programme implementation.

The implementers of the project have endeavored to exercise economy at all levels, therefore, no expenditure on acquisition of vehicles was made and programme and administrative staff was either hired on part-time basis or on very reasonable salaries.

Sustainability issues

Sustainability of a project is comprised of two elements: (i) institutional sustainability (ii) financial sustainability.

The institutional sustainability of FMF/SAFMA is ensured by the professionalism, capacity and volunteerism of their members. Additionally, the structures created during the Project e.g. Annual Media Monitor, Quarterly South Asian Journal, SAFMC, South Asia Press Commission and South Asian Policy Analysis Network can sustain with the professionalism/volunteerism of SAFMA members and injection of some funding.

Pertinent administrative and financial management systems are available with the adoption of UNDP Project Cycle Operations Manual, which will also facilitate institutional sustainability. The capacity of SAFMA/FMF in preparing project proposals and interacting with the donors is yet another element of organizational sustainability.

In the area of financial sustainability, SAFMA/FMF face problem as being single donor dependent they face the danger of cessation of funding with a change in the donor's funding policy. Further ratio of self-generated income is very meager in comparison to the cost of the activities being undertaken.

The sustainability plans proposed by the project implementers e.g. Media University and South Asia Television Network require heavy initial investment of US \$ 14.2 million for Media University and US \$ 5 million for South Asian Television Network. Further, the feasibility study of Media University though prepared needs a serious review by some experts and South Asian Television Network's feasibility study needs to be prepared.

Recommendations

- **SAFMA has during its first years of operation more than complied with the expectations realistic to a body of its nature. A solid fundament is established. SAFMA has proved to be a worthy recipient of donor's funding.**
- **After embarking on a wide range of activities, there is time for SAFMA to consolidate. SAFMA should stick to its roots as a media association engaged in peace building; not emerge as a diplomatic lobby group with some media related activities.**
- **SAFMA's policy for building a quality membership should not lead to the creation of a self appointed elite within the media community, as tendencies are today. SAFMA should expand its membership by recruiting more female and young media workers, and expand its membership in the electronic media and non-English publications.**
- **In order to increase its relevance for rank and file journalists and contribute to higher standards in the media, as well as strengthening its long term sustainability, SAFMA's visions for establishing a regional media university and a regional TV news channel should be pursued. In that case, separate feasibility studies must be undertaken. SAFMA should as well explore the possibilities to link up to existing media education institutions in the region, as an alternative to build up its own.**
- **SAFMA should keep up its good work in media monitoring and lobbying the SAARC and national governments in order to ease restrictions for media workers and media products across the borders, as well as amending media laws. A closer cooperation with other press freedom campaigners and media networks in the region is recommended, as well as with other relevant institutions regarding activities outside the SAFMA's core operations.**
- **SAFMA should be even more active in fund raising, as long as its own activities cannot provide financial sustainability. For the time being, SAFMA is far too dependent on Norwegian grants only. SAFMA may be forced to adjust its very strict policy as for which donors are acceptable. Funding from activities has to increase.**
- **SAFMA should improve and formalise its monitoring mechanisms, in order to produce more exact assessments of the real impact of its endeavours.**
- **SAFMA should decentralize its activities where possible, in order to strengthen the national chapters. If Norway decides to grant further funding of SAFMA, it should be considered to expand to a regional project involving several Embassies, given the nature of SAFMA's activities. There are some practical and professional difficulties by organising the cooperation with a body like SAFMA from the Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad only. The Delhi Chapter is, in particular, requesting greater flexibility as for allocation of the funds available for SAFMA.**

Oslo / Islamabad / Dehradun, India, September 28th 2006

Alf Skjeseth

Masood Hayat

Cyril Raphael

Appendixes:

1. SAFMA website
 2. Governance structure of SAFMA
 3. Terms of References
-

Appendix 1**Review of www.southasianmedia.net – the website of SAFMA**

By Eivind Lund, web editor of Norad

Numbers:

2.000.000 visits per month
100.000 users per month
5.000 feeds per month
10 (+/-) full time journalists

The number of users has not increased significantly the last years. But the visits has increased dramatically, to a level where each user visits the website 20 times a month, which is an unusually high number. The number of journalists related to the number of users is normal or maybe even a bit high – which of course is a good thing, as this promotes quality.

Objectives:

The website www.southasianmedia.net has two main objectives:

1. To allow the people of South Asia free access to information
2. To promote peace and harmony in the region

As one of SAFMA's main objectives is free flow of media, the website is one of their most important tools to achieve it (due to the lack of availability of TV and newspapers across the borders). Every day the web journalists read, cut, edit and publish news from most of the English newspapers throughout the region on the SAFMA web site. This gives the visitor a unique instant access to online news from all of South Asia. The journalists actually edit all the stories and replace words that is not neutral or is biased – sometimes they even rewrite the text or at least change the headlines – to promote peace and harmony.

This way of doing journalism is to the western media culture highly unusual, if not controversial – but still perhaps as valid and legitimate as the western “conflict approach” to the news. The truth should of course not be hidden, which the SAFMA journalists are very aware of. However, in every story a journalist is writing, there are questions of: what to focus? what shall be the headline? what is the story about? Where many journalists focus on conflicts, disagreement and biases, the SAFMA web journalists do focus positive stuff. An example: After the “Mumbai blasts” this summer, the Indian government quickly responded with two statements: 1 “This is an act of terrorists from Pakistan”, and 2 “This will not stop the peace process between Pakistan and India”. Most newspapers all over the world used the first statement as their headline and approach to the story. The SAFMA website used the second. They are both right, of course, but while many media institutions tend to focus the conflict or the bad news in every story – to sell – the website rather focus the good news – to promote peace.

Content:

The website contains a rather impressive quantity of information. The quality also seems to be high.

However, what seems to not have been given much consideration, is the fact that very few people actually prefer to read long stories on a screen. Rather than reading, people are scanning the page, looking for “info keys”; headlines, links and other visually outstanding words that provide them with answers to the crucial question: Is this worth reading? If they don’t find such indicators, the chances are low that they take the time to read. The lack of “info keys” is a problem that can easily be solved, but it takes some priority, as it will take a few editing minutes extra for every story to be published. A main issue regarding the content, is the Full storie’s tendency to be really, really long. As mentioned, due to the low resolution of the screen compared to paper, almost nobody enjoys to read long stories on screen. The news stories in general should be edited and tightened a whole lot more. At least there should be some kind of more detailed extract than the front page text between the front page and the full story, providing just enough information for the reader to decide whether or not he is interested in reading it all.

Apart from that, the “Print it” feature is not working, but it should be. Some of the long stories are excellent reading, and given the opportunity to print it and read it in another context than sitting at work in front of the screen surely would encourage an increased number of readers to actually read. Still, even with info keys added, a new step between front page and full story and better print opportunities as well, a lot of the stories could and should be improved by cutting and editing. Without losing quality, a lot of the information provided could be written in a more efficient way.

Redesign in progress

The website is undergoing a rather excessive redesign process, which is good. So far, the project seems to be very well conducted. Three different web companies has been contacted for to get the best offer, user surveys has been conducted, and the specs are leaning towards prioritizing usability rather than cool design. The project is aiming at making the website accessible for a wide range of technical equipment, and is also looking into the possibility of offering audio- and video services/streaming.

Access

The SAFMA website seems to suffer from technical problems somewhat more often than usual. Several times a week (in the period I have tested it, july-september 2006) it’s not showing properly for some minutes. This should be looked into.

The website is in some ways accessible for partially sighted people, but seem to not meet the needs of blind people. Text sizes can easily be changed (although the site doesn’t actually offer this, which it maybe should do), but the repetitive use of “Full story” as the standard link phrase and the lack of alt.texts (texts that tell the computer what the picture is of, will show when the pics are not showing) gives no help to people using screenreader software. This should be taken on as one of the (minor) tasks in the new redesign project.

Accessibility for nonreaders is at the time non existent. Given the high illiterate rate of the region, one should really consider making easy-to-use graphical and soundbased pages on the website, where one could point-and-click-navigate to audio and video files etc.

Usability

All over, the usability of the SAFMA-site is not at all bad. It is easy to navigate, the way of structuring the information and the links is mostly consistent and to some extent the usual web standards has been followed. The menus, the structure of the site and the search engine is mostly good enough. However, with just a few adjustments the usability could be greatly improved:

- Some of the top menu items is not working properly (i.e. Major issues). This should of course be fixed. There should also be some kind of routine for controlling this once in a while – the problem has been there for quite some time. The same goes for all the bottom menu-features (print it, email it etc). The placement of the features (esp. mail it and print it) is not perfect, they can be pretty hard to find.
- The left menu changes when one enters the country descriptions. This is bad, because the user very quickly will get lost if he uses the menu to navigate.
- The usage of various fonts and styles is not such a good idea. Most of the fonts used works fine on the screen, but the various colours and sizes might cause some confusion and actually lowers the site's readability.
- Links: Too many ways of linking are used, and when you finally figure it out, you learn that the link is not always a link after all. The common ways of linking are as follows: Blue headlines, and blue, underlined text lines. On the SAFMA website, more ways of linking are used, which is considered bad usability. Also, the colour blue is sometimes used to indicate a link – and sometimes not. This is worse.

Conclusion

www.southasianmedia.net is not a complex website in technical terms, but the great amount of text pages still makes it a difficult task to keep it easy to use. The web journalists and editors are working very hard to provide as many news stories as possible, and the staff's idealistic willingness to do whatever they can to promote peace in the region is truly impressive.

Given that the redesign project takes care of most of the usability issues mentioned above, in my opinion the main challenge for the website now is to give the visitor the same actual content with using perhaps 1/3 of the words.

One other thing should be looked into: Technical stability is crucial. Broken links, features not working and lack of meaningful error messages must be fixed even before the project finishes, and I strongly recommend that routines for frequent testing of links and features are established as soon as possible.

Appendix 2

Governance structure

SAFMA has evolved a unique governance structure in view of its status of a regional association of South Asian media practitioners.

Member: Any media-person from the member countries of SAARC who agrees with the objectives and goals of SAFMA can become a member of the Association by submitting the membership application, subject to its approval by the National Unit.

Delegate: Every member is entitled to become a delegate to the General Body of the National Unit and South Asia Free Media Conference (SAFMC), participate in their activities, elect office bearers and freely express his/her opinion on all matters in National Unit and SAFMC.

National Unit: There exists a National Unit in each SAARC member country with a National Executive to be elected by the General Body consisting of all members.

General Body: It consists of all members in a National Unit that will set the direction, frame rules and elect office-bearers of the National Executive.

National Executive: The National Executive consists of five office bearers: a President; a Vice President; a General Secretary; a Joint Secretary; one treasurer, and as many executive members as decided by the General Body. This is the executive arm of the General Body, which reports all matters to the General Body. The National Executive has the power to form branches in the country according to assessed need and is responsible for achievement of the objectives set by the SAFMC and set by it according to the local conditions.

National Executive takes decisions by consensus and majority-decision is binding on all the members. The National executive is obliged to follow the decisions taken by the SAFMC, Regional Executive Body and the Secretary General, SAFMA.

Regional Executive Body (REB): It consists of three members from each National Unit including the president, general secretary and one member. The Secretary General elected by the SAFMC is also member of the Regional Executive Body by virtue of his office. The tenure of the REB extends to the holding of next SAFMC. The Secretary General and the Central Secretariat working under him takes guidance on all matters from the REB. For disposal of business REB meets from time to time and can also interact through the internet. The meetings of REB are presided over by the Chairperson and decisions are taken by broad-based consensus.

The Central Conference: The South Asian Free Media Conference (SAFMC) is the highest decision making body of SAFMA that sets direction, makes rules and elects the Secretary General. It comprises of the delegates from all National Units, of which ratio is determined by the Central Secretariat and list of delegates is finalized by the National Units from their respective countries. Secretary General on behalf of the Regional Executive Body and in consultation with the host National Unit convenes the Conference.

The Central Secretariat: It has been formed by the Secretary General to assist him in managing the organizational matters of Central SAFMA. The Secretary General takes decision on all matters concerning Central Secretariat.

The Chairperson: The President of the National Unit hosting the South Asian Free Media Conference will be the Chairperson of SAFMA and will remain in office till the holding of next SAFMC. The Chairperson presides over the Regional Executive body Meetings and South Asia Free Media Conference and follows the advise of the Secretary General in organizational and other matters.

Appendix 3

Terms of Reference

Review of the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) and the Free Media Foundation (FMF)

1. Background

In December 2002, the Norwegian Government signed a Cost-Sharing Agreement with the UNDP to support a project regarding “Conflict Reduction in South Asia through Media Collaboration; Media, Peace and Governance” amounting to NOK 4 mill. Later, Norway has chosen to support FMF and SAFMA directly, first through a contract signed in March 2004, then with subsequent addendums dated September 2005 and April 2006. The direct support to FMF/SAFMA amounts to NOK 14.884.000. A possible further support to FMF/SAFMA should be subject to a review of the organisation, and with subsequent recommendations and conditions for such support.

Starting with the regional Free Media Conference “Towards Free and Vibrant Media” in Islamabad 2000, and followed by several conferences in other South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, the SAFMA has emerged (according to UNDP) as the leading and most dynamic mainstream media body of the region. The Pakistan-India Parliamentarians, journalists and experts conference in Islamabad in August 2003 is termed among the highly successful arrangements by SAFMA; contributing towards the arrangement of the SAARC meeting in Islamabad early January 2004.

Besides “Conflict Reduction through Media Collaboration; Media, Peace and Governance,” FMF/SAFMA has extended its goal by adding “to support and strengthen efforts for peace, stability and cooperation in South Asia and access to and free flow of information through media collaboration, besides mobilising the mainstream media to work for human rights, rights for minorities, democracy and good governance”. A long list of specific objectives and activities are parts of the SAFMA approach. Together with the dynamic leadership of the organisation, the activities and strategy have brought considerable success for SAFMA. Still, both in order to provide advice for the organisation’s strategy ahead, and also regarding Norwegian support, a review of the programme should be finalised within the nearest few weeks.

2. Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the Review Mission is to assess various aspects related to the strategic approach and implementation of the SAFMA activities, and particularly in Pakistan and India during the supported programme period both through UNDP and directly through FMF, in order to provide advice and recommendations for the future life of the programme. As such, the Review Mission shall assess relevant aspects of capacity within the SAFMA headquarter in Lahore and the national chapter in Dehli relevant for planning, implementation and monitoring of a programme of this kind. Special attention shall be given to assessing the

capacity to engage in the relatively large number of Specific Objectives and Activities as presented in the Programme Document.

The Review Mission is however not expected to address all of the actual activities and performance within SAFMA's wide range of objectives and activities. Neither shall all national chapters be visited. The geographical focus is expected to be on the headquarter and national chapter in Pakistan; i.e. the Lahore based office, but also including the Islamabad office. Furthermore, the national chapter in New Dehli, India, shall be visited. If and when the Review Mission finds it necessary to follow up closer on issues related to the national chapters in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, information shall be sought through electronic media and/or phone.

SAFMA's attempts towards establishing a dialogue on inter-state and intra-state conflicts are considered being of major priority and importance within their activities, and should therefore be addressed. With geographical focus on India and Pakistan, the conflict related to Kashmir and SAFMA's interventions on this issue shall be addressed. Also other SAFMA activities relevant for the two countries' internal relations should be addressed.

SAFMA's contribution to the SAARC processes needs to be addressed, especially the arrangement of the Pakistan-India Parliamentarians, Journalists and Experts Conference in Islamabad in August 2003, which has been termed among the highly successful arrangements by SAFMA; contributing towards the arrangement of the SAARC meeting in Islamabad January 2004. How and to what extent did SAFMA contribute towards the mentioned SAARC meeting, and thereby getting the SAARC process "on track" after several cancellations/delays in arranging the meeting? Media's role and contribution, especially in India and Pakistan, shall be part of this assessment.

A free press and achieving media rights are central in the SAFMA context. The organisation is actively engaged in promoting free media. To what extent are they successful; what changes have been achieved that can be attributed to SAFMA's activities? Linked to the same issue; the fourth specific objective listed in the project proposal also includes "access to information, free movement of media persons and products across the border", and shall be addressed through the review. Likewise; SAFMA's affiliation to the national printed media (or rather vice versa), esp. in Pakistan and India, should be assessed. How does SAFMA function in their relation with media in general? –And vis-a-vis the bureaucracy and lawmakers that regulate media and the freedom SAFMA works for? In short; SAFMA's networking with main stakeholders; be it parliamentarians and policymakers; government officials and bureaucrats, should be assessed.

SAFMA's many activities involves running a web-site which is recording large numbers of daily hits. SAFMA also publishes the South Asian Journal and other publications. The review will assess the relevance and quality of these publications/activities in the context of goal and objectives of the organisation.

SAFMA's main secretariate in Lahore has the responsibility for administrative and financial management of the organisation. Reviewing this shall not be a main issue in this context (as the Embassy does so through an audit company which is reviewing its partner organisations; including FMF/SAFMA). Still management and administrative issues should be an area that shall be included in the review, but mainly with the purpose of getting an overall impression and without going into details.

3. Scope of Work

The review is expected, but not limited, to cover the following:

- Assess the overall performance of the SAFMA, specially linked to activities of the headquarter and national chapter in Pakistan, and the national chapter in India. Special attention shall be given to the capacity to implement the large number of activities according to the programme document and work plans of SAFMA. The capacity, role, responsibilities and performance of the headquarter in Pakistan as well as the established national chapters in the two countries shall be addressed regarding relevance and ability to follow up their assigned tasks as implementing body of defined parts the programme. Focus of the assessment shall be on the following general areas:
 - SAFMA's role and influence in inter state conflict, esp. between Pakistan and India.
 - SAFMA's role and influence in intra state conflicts.
 - SAFMA's role in promoting free press and achieving media rights, including free movement of press across borders. SAFMA's ability to establish and strengthen regional network(s) shall be seen in this context.
 - SAFMA's contribution to the SAARC process in general.
 - Relevant aspects of financial management & cash flow/transfer mechanisms to National Chapters being important for the implementation of the programme.
 - SAFMAs networking with main stakeholders, like parliamentarians, govt. officials, policy and opinion makers, etc.
- Assess the work and influence of SAFMA's subsidiaries, particularly the South Asian Journal, the website "South Asian Media Net" and the South Asia Media Monitor.
- Moreover, along with analysing the programme organisation with the objective of identifying areas for improvement and where strengthening of capacity is needed, the review team shall also include an assessment of areas of strength which will positively contribute towards not only the implementation of the programme, but also towards achieving the goal and objectives of the programme.
- Address areas of weakness/limited capacity where interventions, e.g. reorganisation or other efforts in e.g. form of Technical Assistance may strengthen the SAFMA programme.
- Assess the future plans and strategies for SAFMA, particularly towards establishing a media university regarding the relevance and benefit such plans, and eventually; such an institution, will have for SAFMA as an organisation.
- Address the issue of corruption and corrupt practices if and when found relevant.
- The Gender issue shall be addressed; both related to the goal hierarchy of the programme document, and related to FMF/SAFMA's follow up on this issue inside it's own organisation, i.e. in terms of staffing, and also when it comes to female representatives in governing bodies.

5. Methodology

The Review will be undertaken by three consultants; one from Norway, one from India and one from Pakistan. In addition, there will be a relevant person from Norads Information Department assigned to the team as observer. They will be facilitated by the Embassy and the FMF/SAFMA. The Review will be based on an analysis of various relevant documents and consultation with key informants, hereunder the central secretariate and offices, including local chapters of SAFMA. Besides main stakeholders like parliamentarians, govt. officials, policy and opinion makers, also relevant media institutions in the two countries, including printed press, radio and TV should be met. The consultants will be required to undertake field visits and obtain information through interviews and discussions, -in particular with stakeholders indicated above. This may also include institutions/departments engaged in implementation of specific project components through physical verifications of activities implemented and relevant correspondence, if required.

Discussions and interviews will pertain to all stakeholders, i.e. persons/institutions involved in supporting, implementing and benefiting from the programme.

6. Time Frame

Expected period of commencement is August 2006, with the entire exercise completed within a 5 weeks period from the date of initiation. The review period should in total take 3 weeks, including 02 days of desk studies/preparation, 2-weeks mission to the field, and 03 days of report writing. After comments the team will have 01 day to summarize the comments from the Embassy and stakeholders.

7. Reporting

An outline of the report and main findings and recommendations shall be presented to the Embassy before departure of the team members.

Prior to finalisation, a Draft report shall be submitted to the Embassy, followed by a 2 weeks period for comments from the Embassy and respective stakeholders.

Thereafter the Final Report shall be completed within 2 weeks. The report is to be concise (not exceeding 15 pages), to be structured in accordance with the ToR and to include an Executive Summary and Recommendations to the FMF/SAFMA, the Norwegian Embassy and other potential donors/partners.

Islamabad, 12 July 2006

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Chargé d' Affaires a.i.
Royal Norwegian Embassy