

SASNET

Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Minutes of Board Meeting, May 11, 2010, 13.15-17.00

Venue: Room Eng 2-0024, Centre for the Humanities, Uppsala University,
Campus Engelska parken, Thunbergsvägen 3.

Members present: Gunnel Cederlöf, Staffan Lindberg, Prosun Bhattacharya, Per Hilding, Eva Hägerstrand, Per Drougge, Pernille Gooch (via Skype), Jan Magnusson (via Skype).

Root node staff: Anna Lindberg and Lars Eklund.

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

Gunnel Cederlöf was elected to chair the meeting, Lars Eklund to be the secretary, and Eva Hägerstrand to verify the minutes.

2. Agenda for the meeting; additional points

The agenda was approved. One additional item was added under point 7, regarding an extension of the current South Asian Reference group's mandate period.

3. Work Report 2009

Report by Anna Lindberg and Lars Eklund.
(Enclosure 1)

See <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/workreport10.html>

In spite of being a turbulent year for SASNET in terms of uncertainty about the network's future after Sida's funding expired on December 31st, SASNET carried out extensive work, including organizing conferences and seminars, distributing planning grants, networking with students, researchers, embassies, etc., as well as, besides improving and updating the web site and its databases.

The Board commended what the staff had accomplished, and approved the Work Report.

4. Activities 2010

Oral report by Anna Lindberg and Lars Eklund.

Also see page 6 of the 2009 Work Report, where activities at the beginning of 2010 and plans for the rest of the year are presented in detail.

The most important thing is that Lund University on March 18, 2010, decided to give SASNET SEK 830 000 as extra budget funds, in addition to the basic funding of the same amount already provided to SASNET for 2010. The additional subsidy comes from the Vice-Chancellor's strategic research funds and is earmarked for the preparation of a study of Lund University's common and long-term strategy on collaboration with South Asia. The task includes exploring possibilities to find external collaboration partners and secure new external funding for SASNET's continued South Asia-related activities. A report is to be delivered to the Vice-Chancellor by 30 June 2011. In awarding the funds, the Lund University management stated that it highly values SASNET's Internet gateway, newsletters, and data bases built up over the last ten years. These are to be kept intact and continue to be maintained.

Anna Lindberg participated in an official Lund University delegation to India during the last week of April 2010. During her visit she was involved in preparing an MoU to set up an ICCR Chair professorship at Lund University for the academic year 2010/2011. This is due to SASNET's cordial relations with the Embassy of India to Sweden, that has also funded specific SASNET seminar activities during the spring.

In March 2010, Anna Lindberg and Lars Eklund visited the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), and the Asia Research Centre (ARC) at the Copenhagen Business School in Copenhagen. The visit was part of an ongoing effort to strengthen SASNET's collaboration with Nordic institutions engaged in South Asia related research and activities.

Lars Eklund continues to visit Swedish South Asia research institutions. In March he travelled to the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), and later the Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD) at Uppsala University.

A second Nordic South Asia Conference for Young Scholars has been held 18–20 August in Höllviken. See <http://www.sasnetconference.se/>

SASNET has also continued to be involved in organising seminars and workshops in collaboration with partner institutions at Lund University and other Swedish universities. A seminar on Arsenic in Drinking Water was held at Lund University on 5 May 2010. The seminar was organised by SASNET and the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies; the Division of Water Resources Engineering, Lund University; KTH-International Groundwater Arsenic Research Group at the Dept. of Land and Water Resources Engineering, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm; and The Swallows India-Bangladesh.

During the fall 2010, a seminar on Microcredits in India and Bangladesh will be held in October, and a Sri Lanka seminar in November.

5. Financial Report 2009

Enclosure No. 2. See <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/utfall2009.pdf>

Anna and Lars presented the financial report for 2009. The net result was a surplus of SEK 243 000, to be transferred to the budget for 2010.

The Board put the Financial Report for 2009 aside.

6. The future of SASNET

Enclosure No. 3, on SASNET's current organisational structure.
SASNET's budget for 2010 was also presented.

Suggestion: Since the economic preconditions have changed – SASNET is no longer being funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, and instead is funded entirely by Lund University – the organizational structure of SASNET must also change. The Board now representing several Swedish universities (and also with representation for NGOs and other Nordic universities) should therefore be dissolved when the current term of office is over on 30 September 2010.

Discussion: Anna described the current situation, referring to the unsuccessful attempts to find alternative funding to maintain SASNET as a national Swedish network, and her contacts with other universities, etc. Instead, Lund University appears willing to keep SASNET running for at least one more year. The extra funding from LU makes it possible to carry on SASNET's work – except the distribution of planning grants – while at the same time investigating the prospects of future South Asia-related activities within the framework of Lund University.

An intense discussion followed. All participants in the meeting expressed their joy and satisfaction that by granting extra funds Lund University has insured SASNET's immediate survival. It was generally acknowledged that SASNET's fate now lies in Lund University's hands, and therefore the board thought it correct to ask the VC of LU to dissolve the board. The discussion focused on suggesting new strategies for the future, with the hope of securing new national or international funding so that SASNET regains its character of a national Swedish network for South Asian studies.

Prosun Bhattacharya recommended efforts to get support from business, and make use of possible fund raisers. Prosun also suggested that renewed contacts should be made with Sida, STINT, Vinnova, and other funding agencies, and check if any kind of support could be given. He also proposed that the use of SASNET's web site might be restricted to users willing to pay for the services. Finally, the Vice-Chancellors of the Swedish universities should be approached directly and be presented with facts about the benefits that SASNET provides.

Staffan Lindberg suggested that the Vice-Chancellor of Lund University be approached and be asked to take the initiative to hold a meeting for Swedish university representatives on the use of their budgetary funds for internationalization. It could be a way to get funding for SASNET. Staffan also proposed efforts to seek Nordic and European solutions, by collaborating with existing organizations or networks such as the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), Nordic Association of South Asian Studies (NASA), British Association of South Asian Studies (BASAS), and others, plus approaching the European Union for support.

Finally, Staffan stressed the importance that SASNET keep prospective contacts and continue to collaborate with all Swedish and Nordic universities (for example, by organizing joint seminars), in spite of the fact that SASNET's national board is dissolved.

Regarding the failed efforts to find alternative funding for SASNET, Gunnel Cederlöf pointed out that 2009 was a bad year in general when it came to applying for financial support. The proposal to make the other Swedish universities pay membership fees to fund SASNET also failed, but not so much because of university managements, but because of researchers not keen on collaboration and unwilling to pay for services they have been given for free until now.

Jan Magnusson rejected the idea that SASNET's web site should be turned into a paid website. It would harm the free networking that is SASNET's most vital feature.

Gunnel Cederlöf summarised the discussion, pointing out that the Board may only approve activities and make decisions for the period up to 30 September, when it will be dissolved. The budget for 2010, presented at the meeting, can therefore not be approved in total. Gunnel also requested Anna and Lars present the Financial results for SASNET regarding the first six months of 2010 to the board before the end of September. The Board may then have a final meeting by telephone to approve this.

Decision: The Board expressed its deep appreciation for the work that Anna Lindberg and Lars Eklund have carried out seeking alternative support for SASNET after the end of Sida's funding.

The Board also expressed its gratitude to Lund University for its commitment to

continue fund SASNET after 1 October 2010. SASNET has a support among researchers working on South Asia-related projects in Sweden. Therefore the Board members look forward to continue collaborating within the framework of SASNET in its new form with Lund University being the sole responsible authority.

Finally, the Board recommended that the Vice-Chancellor of Lund University dissolve SASNET's Board as of 1 October 2010, and let the current directives for SASNET expire on the same date.

7. Other businesses/ SASNET's South Asian Reference group

Suggestion: SASNET's South Asian Reference group (<http://www.sasnet.lu.se/asiareggroup.html>) should be dissolved at the same time as the Board is dissolved on 30 September 2010.

Decision: The Board thanks the members of the Reference Group for their good work in supporting SASNET over the years. In conjunction with the change in the nature of SASNET, the Board has decided to dissolve the Reference Group from 30 September 2010.

Lund, September 8, 2010

Lars Eklund

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Lars Eklund, Secretary

Verified by:

Eva Hägerstrand

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Eva Hägerstrand, Board Member