

## SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

By Lakshmi Nair & A S Panneerselvan<sup>1</sup>

### Chapter One: Media as Public Sphere

Having a vibrant media scene is a necessary prerequisite to human development and good governance. But, the time has come for us, media practitioners and support organisations, to accept and recognise that this is too complex to bring about on our own. It would be prudent to recognise the limitations of our sector, and create appropriate evaluation and impact assessment tools. The existing tools and methodologies are devised to give a macro picture of the overall environments but fail to clearly demarcate the roles played by various actors: state, judiciary, executive, civil society and media. Media is just one contributing factor, albeit an important one at that. Hence, it is imperative to track the spheres of influence wielded by the sector so that support organisations are not misled into tracking and measuring overall environments while attempting to quantify the impact that media support organisations have in the process of change.

German philosopher Jurgen Habermas propounded the theory of *Public Sphere* as an area in social life where people can get together and freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action. It is “a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, reach a common judgement.”<sup>2</sup>

He envisaged Public Sphere as “a theatre in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk”<sup>3</sup>. The Public Sphere mediates between the ‘private sphere’ and the ‘Sphere of Public Authority’ where “the private sphere comprised civil society in the narrower sense ... the realm of commodity exchange and of social labour”. The Sphere of Public Authority on the other hand deals “with the state, or realm of the police, and the ruling class”. The Public Sphere criss-crosses both these realms and “through the vehicle of public opinion puts the state in touch with the needs of society”<sup>4</sup>

However, this theory fails to recognise multiple public spheres; those which form separated though connected entities based on belief, faith, socio-economic status, issues, language, gender and common experience. These entities operate subtly to form several spheres within. Even Habermas after considerable deliberation, concedes: “The Public Sphere, simultaneously pre-structured and dominated by the mass media, developed into

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<sup>1</sup> Lakshmi Nair is the Regional manager, Monitoring & Evaluation, Panos South Asia; A S Panneerselvan is the Executive Director, Panos South Asia

<sup>2</sup> Hauser Gerard. Vernacular Dialogue and The Rhetoricity of Public Opinion, Communication Monographs, June 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Fraser Nancy, Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy, Duke University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Habermas, Jurgen, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society, MIT Press, 1989.

an arena infiltrated by power in which, by means of topic selection and topical contributions, a battle is fought not only over influence but also over the control of communication flows that affect behaviour while their strategic intentions are kept hidden as much as possible”<sup>5</sup>

It is this spectrum of public spheres, where free wheeling ideas collide and coalesce bringing forth debate and discussion that truly reflect in a vibrant, plural media of a region. While the burden of realising the developmental goals lies mainly with the state apparatus and other deliverable institutions, these *multiple spheres* influence societal and political change thus bestowing media with the role of an eminent catalyst.

### **Media Development Vs Media for Development**

Media is, was and remains a catalyst. Hence, media organisations’ role is that of enabling and empowering the catalyst to bring forth the *multiple public spheres* into the open. How do we evaluate the work of these media organisations that strive to bring these multiple public spheres to a common arena? In the past decade, there have been any number of attempts to create an effective evaluation and impact of communication initiatives. But, none of them recognised the intrinsic value of media development as all narratives dovetailed media development into a utilitarian idea of media *for* development. The tussle between quantitative and qualitative evaluation continues with new models often ending-up with modifications within the paradigm of *Communications for development*, without making the key quantum jump of looking at media development itself as a full-fledged developmental activity. The fulcrum of most arguments continues to be the generalised state of affairs in a particular sector, country or region in which media operates. None of them offer the crucial insights that are imperative to justify and sustain the existence and toil of smaller media development organisations. And this divide between media for development and media development is not really captured by the indicators developed by various reputable institutions. The indicators for physical infrastructure are vastly different from the indicators for conceptual infrastructure.

UNESCO’s<sup>6</sup> recent media development indicators clearly prove the point that the measurements are of physical and legalistic infrastructure rather than the conceptual world of media, dialogue and discourse.

It defines indicators of media development in line with its priority areas such as

- promotion of freedom of expression and media pluralism
- development of community media
- human resource development ( capacity building of media professionals and institutional capacity building )

The paper is structured around five media development categories:

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<sup>5</sup> Habermas, Jurgen, Further Reflections on the Public Sphere, MIT Press, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Media Development Indicators: A Framework for assessing media development, UNESCO, 2008.

Category 1: A system of regulation conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity of the media

Category 2: Plurality and diversity of media, a level economic playing field and transparency of ownership

Category 3: Media as a platform for democratic discourse

Category 4: Professional capacity building and supporting institutions that underpins the freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity

Category 5: Infrastructural capacity is sufficient to support independent and pluralistic media.

The paper's introduction concludes "It is an integral part of this analysis that the categories are taken together to create a holistic picture of the media environment." These indicators are circumscribed by the notion of a Westphalian nation state. And, all these indicators offer only a glimpse of the state of the media of particular countries. While it helps to know what the Human Development Indicators and the levels of press freedom are for the country and the region, they do not in any way offer a sense of how media support organisations are reaching out and widening their spheres of influence in making media inclusive and more democratic. These indicators only affirm what we already know through other data and indices. So by pursuing the same wheel we end up validating things that we already know.

The extant work is without doubt valuable; it helps analyse and learn post-facto. But it falls within the conformist narrative of numbers, regulating and pricing rather than organic accountability and enriching. They either come back with too generalised a picture to enable necessary conclusions or impose indicators beyond the scope of an individual organisation. While the first approach gives a bird's eye view of broad ground reality, the second approach often spins beyond measurable scope.

In a sector like Media, which is in itself of intrinsic value as a development indicator, what we need to track needs to be turned on its head. Given its prime value, its instrumentalist role is but purely a corollary. This change of approach is of vital importance to enable better distribution of support and assistance for the media development sector.

Several theories offered have close to Utopian goals which seem further and further away as we work towards it. The need of the hour is to scale down expectations given the truth that the impact of media related programmes take well beyond project completion to percolate and manifest. No amount of number crunching will lead to direct correlation between cause and effect attribution. The goal post needs to be realigned with media development organisations accepting humbly that

1. they can only be co-contributors to an effect
2. they can continue working towards creating more space for the *multiple spheres*
3. programme completion is the beginning of a transformation process and its impact can be assessed only with the lapse of time.

### **Plural Media Vs Proliferation of Media**

A positive and enabling environment does not automatically transpose itself into a vibrant, plural media scene. It may on the other hand, bring forth proliferation which may articulate either the dominant narrative or a particular stream of thought. There is enough empirical evidence to support this argument. Regions where data on 'enabling environment' have near perfect scores like North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, the media is fast declining.

In sharp contrast to this, there is accelerated plural growth clearly discernible in countries which do not score high on the enabling environment graph like India, Pakistan or Nepal.

The misconception that the South is a problem and North its solution, is also fast losing relevance. The American media's weak knee reaction to the Iraq War and the South Asian media's strong critique of issues of national and international importance, whether it is the Indo-US nuclear deal or the global financial crisis are clear examples which enlighten this point.

Freedom House<sup>7</sup> categorises countries as *free*, *partly free* and *not free* on the basis of indicators like the existing legal, political and economic environment. As per the lists, India is 35 on the list and Nepal is 58. Both the countries have been categorised as *partly free*. Pakistan and Sri Lanka are at 63 while Bangladesh comes further down at 66. All three countries are categorised *not free*. The Reporters sans Frontieres' Annual Press Freedom index of 2005 lists Nepal among the worst ten countries with regard to Press Freedom.

This collection of data details the existing media environment, but fails to focus on the quality and quantum of work done by the media and media development organisations under severe strife and constraints. It does not reflect how Nepal which was near the bottom of the pile as per 2005 surveys could in the same year, sparked a successful People's Revolution to mark the country's transition from an authoritarian monarchy to a Republic. Nor does such data shine light on the efficacy and impact of the media which stood firm in difficult times to reinvent itself to effect such an unprecedented political and societal transition of a country.

February 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 saw King Gyanendra declare himself absolute ruler in Nepal after dismissing the government and declaring a state of Emergency. Despite ordinances, media gags, arrests and constant harassment, the Nepali media stood up as one to take on the palace onslaught. Radio in Nepal is the most popular medium of news dissemination even in the remotest corners of this Himalayan country. Censoring and silencing could not prevent media from finding newer and newer ways to get news across to the people and the world outside. A People's movement followed; weeks of violent protests spearheaded by the media and the people of Nepal forced the King to issue an ordinance to return power to the people in late April 2006. The movement, however, would not settle for half measures and carried on the struggle till the King stepped down and democracy and press freedom were completely restored.

Moving across to Pakistan, classified *not free* by Freedom House and ranked 136 by the Human Development Report<sup>8</sup> it was the media which began and saw through the heroic struggle to restore the independence of the judiciary while also carefully orchestrating the

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<sup>7</sup> Annual Global Survey of Media Independence Freedom of the Press Freedom House 2007

<sup>8</sup> Human Development Report, UNDP 2007

shift from a military dictatorship to a democratic process. No current narrative on media impact studies give insights into these dynamics which are imperative to understand the ways in which media interventions effect varied paths of change. We believe the problem is largely created by the macro nation-state perspective employed by the studies. This leads to overlooking such big chunks of visible impact like the abovementioned crucial changes in political processes.

### **Limitations of Enabling Environments**

Ironically, media is also seen as shrinking in several developed economies with ideal legal and constitutional enablers in place. It is visible not only in the number of voices that are heard but also in wordage. From *The Guardian* and *The Observer* in the United Kingdom, *La Monde* in France, *La Repubblica* and *La Stampa* in Italy to *De Morgen* in Belgium broadsheets have become smaller Berliners. *The Independent* and *The Times* in England have also changed to a compact format. Though managements claim that content and journalistic values remain unchanged, the space crunch, without doubt will manifest in cuts in wordage and result in more compacted space for ideas and discourse. The story is essentially the same in the Unites States; *The New York Times*<sup>9</sup> paints a bleak present and an uncertain future for the media sector. *The Christian Science Monitor*, the respected century old publication has announced plans to cease publishing a weekday paper. *Time Inc* and *Gannett* together will lay off nearly 3,600 jobs. *The Los Angeles Times* newsroom today stands at approximately half the size it was in 2001.

Impact measurement models which base themselves heavily on the nation state and borders also lose credibility in a world where borders become a metaphorical construct with internet and satellite footprints making communication an almost open space sans walls. This creates a fresh crop of problems taken in tandem with the shrinkage of traditional media space in developed countries as explained above.

Even Google Chief Executive Eric Schmidt concedes that the traditional media space is fast shrinking. In his address to a recent conference of American magazines, he laments that if great brands of journalism-the trusted news sources readers have relied on-were to vanish, then the Web itself would quickly become a 'cesspool' of useless information<sup>10</sup>; the time is imminent for us, media and media development organisations to rethink our strategies to measure our influence and our existence.

### **Chapter Two : The Panos South Asia Approach**

The Panos Network, comprising eight institutes, embarked on a journey nearly a decade ago to explore ways to arrive at a common structure and approach to our Monitoring and Evaluation practices. The goal was to make it easier to discuss issues and share

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<sup>9</sup> The Media Equation: Mourning Old Media's Decline; David Carr; The New York Times; 29 October 2008

<sup>10</sup> The Media Equation: Mourning Old Media's Decline; David Carr; The New York Times; 29 October 2008

experiences thereby enriching the synergy and the added value of the Panos family. This, we presumed, would lead more efficacy and better tools, standardised yet flexible enough to weave in the stated vision of individual institutes. It was also envisioned to strengthen our capability to advocate and influence development thinking and also facilitate fundraising.

The first milestone in this organic exercise was a 26 page manual titled *Development Information Monitoring and Evaluation (DIME)* which was brought out by Panos London in 2002 with inputs from other Panos institutes.

Panos London moved on to emphasise the need to rigorously firm up arguments and shore up evidence to convince donors as funding for communication initiatives was slowly but steadily eroding. Two publications espoused this cause: *The Case for Communication in sustainable development* and *At the Heart of Change* in 2007.

The Panos network has agreed that an approach focussing on the *Theory of Change* would be appropriate to carry forward the work done collectively till date. It also underpins the stance that strengthening of media is in itself a self-evident development activity. There is also broad consensus that we do not expect to directly bring about measurable change at the grassroots level.

The latest Network M and E model delineates Debate as the central pillar of the shared Monitoring and Evaluation process. “Generating Debate” as a concept is part of the vision and mission of all the institutes; hence it becomes a focus which will be broad enough and not restrictive. Annual plans have been drawn up for the five year period up to 2013 with Debate as the theme of focus. This also becomes the common minimum programme that every Panos institute has undertaken to fulfil.

The Building Communication Opportunities (BCO) Alliance Impact Assessment Study 2006-2008<sup>11</sup> brought to light that the ten partners were engaged in project evaluations of their own through the project cycles, but a serious engagement with impact assessment was lacking. Discussions brought forth the multiple challenges and difficulties with impact assessment as it stands today. The milieu in which communication initiatives posit themselves make their impact assessment a daunting task, especially within short time spans.

The other difficulty is that the evidence data that is available for the communication sector, more so for the media sector, is weak. Fast changing technologies and modes of delivery also make the little available data dated and redundant, at times. The sector is grappling with various impact assessment models, all of which have been from a purely econometrist perspective.

Reality shows that development impact achieved

1. only after a certain time lapse and that too, in no absolute terms
2. cannot be irreversible, unless sustained effort goes into it.

We at Panos South Asia, while agreeing to fulfil the common minimum M and E programme of the Network M and E model also felt that it would work as a minimum requirement. However, it would still not show the efficacy and influence that an organisation like ours has in its area of operation. The need to go further was also rooted

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<sup>11</sup> The BCO Alliance comprises : AMARC( the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters; APC; DFID;D-GIS; Hivos, IICD; OneWorld; Panos London ; Panos South Asia and SDC

in the fact that unlike the other Panos institutes we dealt only with media and are made up of media practitioners. Time was truly ripe to rethink the whole issue.

### **Intrinsic Value Vs Instrumentality**

As pointed out earlier, media is an intrinsic value and its value as an instrument or vehicle is purely coincidental. It is in this fulcrum of faith that we are at variance with others. And, to embrace this, one has to leave behind the nation-state perspective and look closely at the rippling eddies created by the functioning of small institutes in opening up space for plural debate and discourse. The catalytic role of media and media organisations in facilitating change as opposed to the role of agency often thrust upon it is another point we contest.

The need of the hour is to scale down impact assessment from global feel-good indicators like poverty reduction to achievable ones like spreading awareness in a bid to help ordinary men and women make informed choices. "At its heart, development - if it is to be sustainable - must be a process that allows people to be their agents of change, to act individually and collectively using their own ingenuity and accessing ideas and knowledge in the search for ways to fulfil their full potential."<sup>12</sup>

Out of these challenges and the urge to have a home-grown understanding of our existence and worth, Panos South Asia over the past two years has been at work to document its Spheres of Influence. With no tangible deliverables and the diffused impact gestating and permeating over long periods of time, we decided to look at three frames of reference to gauge impact:

1. A decade of our existence
2. Themes where we have had a sustained engagement for over five years
3. Specific Programmes

Humbled by the fact that total and direct attributions to change is completely out of scope, we track and document our reach within the media, our ability to bring multiple voices into the open, our ability to work in tandem with Civil Society actors, our efforts to bring academia to render subjects in depth and Media on to common platforms for jointly put out informed narratives on our select five thematic areas.

With our spheres of engagement being multiple, PSA is looking to measure our spheres of influence within five categories

- a) Media
- b) Communities whose voices are articulated through PSA's programmes
- c) Civil society partners
- d) Academia
- e) State Actors/Policy makers

With newer technologies entering the media sector, PSA integrated web and New Media into our programmatic content. It now straddles Print, Television, Radio and New media. So, the widening reach of the organization and the difference its activities make to these various sectors is also charted.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Case for Communication in sustainable development*; Panos London;2007

We learnt from experience that a bottom-down or top-up approach will not yield desired results in opening up more space for debate. However well the journalists imbibe and put to use the training and empowerment that Panos programmes infuse, it will not reach the desired impact of opening up more space for diverse voices on issues until and unless the gatekeepers - the editors and owners are sensitized to the issue and allow it.

With programmes targeting all three tiers of media from cub reporters through mid career journalists to editors/publishers and owners impact measurement of particular thematic areas have been made possible. Output monitoring, quantum and quality of space before and after the engagement for the issues discussed, responses etc in print media/ viewership / listenership, timing/repeats in broadcast etc, have been documented to measure impact. Career advancement of participants who have benefited from PSA's engagements have also been tracked as the higher up the ladder they move, the more space they get for decision making and bringing forth more debate on the topics. This way we look at it from the media and media organizations' perspective.

Our programmes work on a multi-pronged approach of training programmes, fellowships and Gatekeepers' retreats for editors and owners. To make the monitoring and evaluation model flexible to incorporate the impact of different components that different thematic programmes use to reach their set goals, several options have been provided.

For programmes like Public Hearings and symposia where state actors who are the final makers of policy changes, Civil Society organisations and activists who lobby for the change and Media which facilitates open debate thus catalysing the change are brought together.

For Fellowship programmes however, it is an engagement between Expert advisors and Journalists that Panos South Asia mediates and facilitates. So, for thematic areas we look at the quality and response to outputs, testimonials from fellows on their experience, monitoring of the fellows' progress through the project cycle,

Our Thematic Areas also coalesce into each other organically. For example outputs on access to treatment in regions under strife cannot be restricted to Conflict or Public Health.

From there, we move on to look at the impact of our partnerships with five groups as to how they help create more space for the multiple Public Spheres

- Our engagement and influence on media.
- On groups and communities whose voices find space in the public sphere, thanks to PSA's programmes.
- On Civil Society partners, like minded organisations who help us plan, develop and implement our vision thereby becoming stake holders.
- Academia who helps clarify issues, guide and give more teeth to arguments that gets placed in the public domain.
- With state actors like the policy makers who finally make the 'change'.(Though in this process, PSA humbly claims to be one of the contributors to the cause, as it would be pure bombast to claim the change is solely due to our interventions or programmes.)

In its decade long engagement, PSA has engaged with 38 languages across the region. We then went on to map and document the language impact with specific focus on the different types of media we engage with: Print, Radio, Television and Web media.

While Monitoring and Evaluation of programmes have life during the project cycle, PSA strongly believes that impact assessment in the areas we deal in can be fruitful only after the lapse of a certain period of time. Immediate impact assessment not only negates the imperative need for long term investment; it also defeats the basic purpose.

So for a particular programme, we will go by the popular mandate of monitoring through the project cycle and evaluating on completion but impact assessment will be done after allowing enough time for the permeation to take effect.

To monitor fellowships in print programmes, we do look at the number of outputs, the languages in which they are published, with clearly documented data on circulation figures and readership. To make the quantum we deal with more credible, we take ten percent of the readership /circulation as our minimum assured readership while standard readings even by the Advertising sector take it as fifty percent. Mapping it on a bar graph showing languages, circulation, readership and the minimum assured readership gives the quantitative analysis picture of the programme.

We also gauge efficacy by tracking the advisory panel to participant ratio in each of the programmes to ensure that it does not get spread across thinly and retains programmatic intensity. When it comes to new technology communication initiatives like Radio and New media, the ratio of technical trainer to content trainer to participant is tracked.

However, for impact assessment of the same fellowship programme, with the lapse of time, there is more data to work with as in

1. increased journalistic expertise translating into higher quality media outputs
2. increase in space/ time for debate on the topics in mainstream media
3. these leading to better public awareness and increased involvement in the Public spheres
4. awards/ recognition for the outputs,
5. career advancement of the Journalists
6. our engagement outputs as a source for other actors
7. legislative/ policy changes

For training workshops also all these come into play along with regular questionnaires and follow-ups. Testimonials from stakeholders at various points on the project graph also give key pointers to the impact. Interviews with stakeholders and detailed desk review of project documentation worked towards closing gaps.

As all our projects fall within a well worked-out framework of five thematic areas, we look at overall programmatic impact of the various components like training, workshops, fellowships, media retreats, facilitating international coverage, exchange tours etc.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation, Impact Assessment**

PSA’s monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment distinguish clear phases in and after the project cycle. Our approach to Monitoring and Evaluation has strong roots in existing models and practices that are in use across the Panos network. However, it is in impact assessment that we differ conceptually from models in use. The difference is in the scales of measurement, the timelines and the ultimate goals. We staunchly believe in the catalytic role of media as opposed to being an agent in eradicating poverty or removing illiteracy. The impact we map is measurable and scaled down; the focus is on Media as the beneficiary and we look at impact after a certain period of time has lapsed after project completion. The analytical data available post-evaluation of a programme becomes our baseline to track impact.

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
Monitoring	Throughout the project cycle	Stated objectives as per log frame on track; time lines adhered to	Programme Officers reviewed by M and E Officer
Evaluation	Mid-cycle and on completion	Mid-course corrections to challenges by change in strategy and methodology; Stated objectives, outputs achieved;	Senior Management and M and E Officer in discussion with stakeholders; External Evaluators
Impact assessment	At least two years after project completion	Track Spheres of Influence of the programmes and the organisation. Map intended and unintended outcomes that flow from a programme.	M and E team in discussion with stakeholders and beneficiaries

### **Monitoring**

- This objective process has life through the project cycle from clearing the concept to the final report and tracks whether the
  1. Why
  2. What
  3. How
 are being followed as was conceived in the detailed Log Frame
  
- A participatory start-up workshop to determine details of activities, resources and sustainability helps.
- Systematic documentation and follow-up of activities
- Assess verifiable indicators in relation to achievements, constantly reverting to the project purpose and results

### **Evaluation**

- Has both Qualitative and Quantitative components where the number of activities, outputs as well as their quality is assessed.
- Looks at challenges and effects mid-course corrections so as to fulfil the stated objectives by even changing tools, if needs be.

In media where external factors play a key role, the circumstances at the beginning of a programme is most likely to change by the time the programme is implemented.

- Assimilate the best practices into a feedback mechanism to facilitate shared learning and add value for future programmes and the network.
- Take stock of the challenges, their cause and course and record it to prevent recurrence in future programmes.
- Looks at efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.
- Evaluation Report serves as the baseline for the Impact Assessment which in a sector like Media and Communication takes time to permeate to even show up diffused results.

### **Impact Assessment**

- Taking the Evaluation Report as the baseline, track the pathway of change to which our programmes have been co-contributors by assessing as many of the following as is relevant to the programme:
  1. promoting access to information and resources
  2. raise public debate on thematic issues
  3. the defiance and departure from the dominant narrative
  4. media's efforts to defy any form of censorship thus rendering media a site for democratic dialogue
  5. questions raised in the Parliament and State legislature and legislative changes brought about by the outputs of our engagement
  6. policy changes at local/ state / national level which have been effected
    - a. where no policy existed and new policies got framed
    - b. where clauses which gives more teeth and relevance to policy has been included
    - c. at the policy implementation level
  7. change on the ground
  8. bringing in multiple voices, especially those often unheard, into the public domain
  9. bridging gaps between the grassroots level and policy makers
  10. building awareness on peoples' rights
  11. encourage and empower initiatives that use media for empowering economically and socially weaker sections of society
  12. career advancement of our fellows and participants, thereby opening up more decisive space for the issues in question
  13. reviews/ letters to the editor/follow-up articles and studies/republished/ reprinted
  14. citations / awards/ recognition for fellows for their work.
  15. growing partnerships encouraging linkages between media, academia and civil society fraternities.

Analysis of this data will help arrive at a doable, realistic Impact Assessment of how the engagements with stakeholders like media, academia, civil society organisations, and activists lead to increased visibility for the organisation and its activities. These Spheres

of Influence in turn translate into growing credibility for the organisation to engage in its catalyst mission of empowering media to herald change.

### **Chapter 3: Spheres of Influence: A glimpse into PSA's experience**

Panos South Asia is a decade old.

We deal with five thematic areas, Conflict, Public Health, Environment, Globalisation and Media pluralism. The primary focus being media, the methodology employed for programmes are varied.

Training programmes, fellowships, retreats, media dialogues, peoples' assembly, oral testimony, exchange visits, internships, study tours, facilitating international coverage, publications and toolkits for best practices are the mainstays of our methodology.

In this decade-long period, we have engaged with nearly 4000 journalists spread across five countries. This sustained engagement has seen media outputs in 38 languages. Nearly 25 media houses across the region have been vertically integrated by PSA programmes; with the engagement being across the board from editors/owners/publishers through mid-career journalists to young journalists. The outputs find regular and prominent positioning in print and prime slots in broadcast media.

We bring you a glimpse of the work in progress to assess Panos South Asia's impact in the region over the past decade to substantiate the feasibility of a few of the broad indicators for impact assessment listed.

#### **Radio**

"The availability of cheap radio sets, the spread of FM radio coverage to about 70 percent of the country's population and contents in some 16 languages mean that radio has become the most accessible mass medium for the citizens of Nepal. Radio contents have become a relatively cheap resource with which the Nepalis can think about issues that concern their lives and the life of the nation at large."<sup>13</sup>

"BCO's study of radio and recent events in Nepal confirms that radio stations played a significant part in creating a climate of opinion and public debate there that favoured movement towards a new political order, displacing the monarchy in favour of alternate political structures."<sup>14</sup>

This media has been of intrinsic value to the transformation of Nepal and effected the 2006 People's Movement that took the country from monarchy to a multi-party republic. Panos South Asia works on the premise that providing access to information and communication resources and capabilities to people plays a strong role in enabling them to take decisions which affect their lives, both personal and political.

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<sup>13</sup> Radio and the recent political changes in Nepal: An investigation Report submitted to ICT Development Associates Ltd, UK; Pratyoush Onta; 2008

<sup>14</sup> The Challenge of assessing the impact of information and communications on Development; David Souter; Building Communication Opportunities Alliance, 2008

With this vision, PSA has engaged with radio at all levels, from support in content, technical training and production to networking production houses and radio stations. PSA Board members Bharat Dutt Koirala and Kunda Dixit were at the forefront of Nepal's radio revolution. Their strong belief that radio transcends literacy helped the setting up of local radio stations. Koirala was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay award for journalism, literature and communication in 2002 for his contribution to developing professional journalism and promoting mass media in Nepal. Panos South Asia has trained nearly 450 people in 25 workshops to facilitate better radio reportage and production in the past five years.

#### **PSA and Radio**

**25 workshops/133 radio stations/ 450 radio journalists  
nearly 500 radio capsules : 18 Jeebika/ 52 Godawari Sherophero/52  
Badlido Nepal/ 10 Pani ki Kahani/50 Panoscopes and DDs/26 Banki  
Khushi/208 Haka Haki / 80 Kishor Vani**

#### **Policy changes / action at local/ state / national level effected.**

1. A pro-women policy drafted and implemented within a month of airing a radio capsule on issues faced by Nepali women labourers abroad.
2. A five year plan on Tourism for rural poverty alleviation drawn up in Solukhumbu district of Nepal after a radio programme exposed gaps between policy and implementation.
3. An airing on the plight of Makawanpura village hit by food shortage immediately resulted in a policy decision for additional allocation of food grains to the village.
4. In the Panos sponsored radio project for adolescents by adolescents, Kishor Vani in Rajasthan in India, a special report on the Public Distribution System was aired. The children recorded deliberations of the village council. This included a complaint of ration grains being diverted to another village. The village chief agreed live on air to rectify the anomaly. The module was aired and the village has since been getting its supplies.
5. An on-air discussion of constant electricity shortages in Satlera village elicited a promise from concerned authorities leading to adequate power supply for the village.
6. A founding member of the Community Radio Forum in India, Panos South Asia is now on the Government of India's screening committee panel which scrutinises applications for Community Radio licences in the country.

#### **Raising Public Debate**

1. 52 timely episodes of Badlido Nepal (Changing Nepal) raised plural voices and public debates to strengthen democracy at a time when the grassroots level citizen did not understand the political process involved.

2. 208 modules of Haka Haki, an interactive programme initiated development debates in 56 districts of Nepal. 200 listeners' clubs sprung up; 3 listeners' clubs published wall newspapers based on the programmes.

3. Panos Radio South Asia airs a module every week on issues of thematic and contemporary importance taking care to bring in as many voices as possible on air. The unique visitors' numbers to the Panos Radio website has recorded an average of 20849 per month till November 2008. The unique visitors' numbers measure visitors who actually listen to the programmes online, without just surfing.

4. Kishor Vani saw socially disadvantaged young girls in a patriarchal society question taboo issues like sexual equations, early marriage and inequality in education.

5. Banki Khushi(Remaining Happiness) raises debates on accountability, participation and ownership in response to HIV/AIDS. The broadcast covers 85 % of Nepal's population.

### **Media and Reproductive Health Fellowships**

This fellowship programme which ran into three cycles was initiated with the objective of creating a cohort of journalists committed to writing on reproductive health and gender issues.

#### **REPRO HEALTH**

**3 Cycles, 28 fellows, nearly 150 articles in 10 English and 9 Language dailies.**

### **Policy changes / action at local/ state / national level effected**

1. Shivananda Kalave's article *Village of the deaf* led to the state Child Welfare Director calling him for an inquiry; this in turn led to the formation of a medical team visiting the region.
2. The Punjab government issued a directive to investigate female foetus abortion cases in depth and not to harass the mother after Manisha Bhalla's edit page articles on female foeticide in *Dainik Bhaskar*. The newspaper published a front page box column stating that the government directive was following the report.
3. The same article also initiated a State Human Rights Commission inquiry into the case of a woman forced to abort her female foetus in the last stages of pregnancy totally ignoring the risk to the mother's life.
4. Sreelatha Menon's story on the use of cycle pumps in sterilisation camps in Uttar Pradesh was followed by a report in *The Week*. The National Human Rights Commission issued a notice in February 2003 to the Uttar Pradesh State Government asking for a report on the same within a month. After submission of the report, the Chief of the State Innovation in Family Planning Services Agency (SIFPA) in Uttar Pradesh was changed.
5. Dharendra Jha's report on the disease Kala Azhar in Digaipur village in *The Pioneer* led a government medical team to visit the area. Detailed investigations were ordered and the affected settlement of 200 households was shifted to a safer and elevated site.

6. Om Prakash Bhat's reports on lack of access to maternal and child health facilities in the hilly areas of Uttaranchal state highlighted an incident where the doctor refused to conduct the delivery of a woman citing orders to attend a sterilisation camp elsewhere. The District Magistrate ordered an inquiry in December 2002.
7. Bhat's report also resulted in a lady doctor being appointed in Gopaleswar District Hospital for maternal and child care

#### **Awards/ Recognition for fellows' work**

1. Rajshri Dasgupta's work on Quinacrine sterilisations was appreciated by Canada's MacGill University which invited her to be part of their six-nation study on the subject.
2. Manisha Bhalla won a National Foundation of India fellowship to carry forward her work on Women's issues.
3. Bhalla was also invited to speak at a media workshop on sex selection and pre-natal diagnostic techniques organised by the Centre for Women's Development Studies and Centre for Advocacy and Research.
4. Narjis Hussain was awarded the prestigious Shankar Guha memorial award 2003 for her piece on the health of women workers in Khurja's pottery industry.
5. Hussain was also invited to the National Labour Institute as a guest speaker to debate Gender discrimination and women's rights
6. Sreelatha Menon's articles on the use of cycle pumps in sterilisation were widely circulated as resource material to journalists at a UNFPA workshop in December 2002.
7. The article and the issue was again the topic of discussion at a conference held by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in January 2003

#### **Reviews/ Letters to the Editor/follow-up articles and studies/republished/ reprinted**

1. TK Rajalakshmi's pieces on health of women workers in export promotion zones was picked up by Panos Features.
2. A trade union magazine republished her articles and trade union leaders personally congratulated her.
3. Rupa Chinai's articles on the Naga tribes of the remote Northeast India were translated into Marathi and Assamese and were displayed prominently. Four of her articles were also republished by the journal *News you can use*.
4. KPM Basheer's two part series *Where teenage marriages trigger mental illness* generated much debate and discussion including four letters to the editor, a rare feat in the leading national daily, *The Hindu*
5. Three of Samanthakamani's pieces on women workers were adapted for use on a website 'indianinfo.com'. Her articles also led to the Sudha weekly, Prajavani and Samyukta Karnataka asking her to write pieces on the issue for their publications.
6. Population Communications Information, New York and All India Radio commissioned Samathakamani to write a mega serial on the issue.
7. Hemraj Bagul's reports on the individual and social impact of drought in Maharashtra in *Sakal* led to several stories on the issue in the state's local newspapers.
8. After Jha's story on *Grass widows of Bihar*, 6 NGOs in Bihar joined hands to address the health problems of the women left behind by migrant agricultural labourers.

9. Other dailies in Uttaranchal started highlighting maternal and infant deaths in the state following Om Prakash Bhat's articles on the issue.

10. Narjis Hussain's piece on health issues of women workers in Khurja's pottery industry was republished in *Samaj Kalyan*, a publication of the Social Welfare Board. Several Hindi Publications like Amar Ujala, Ajit Samachar, Jansatta, Diler Samachar, Dainik Jagran and the online edition of Rashtriya Sahara picked up her reports.

11. Freelancer Alka Arya's reports on the conditions of women prisoners in India found ready audience and *Hindustan*, a leading Hindi daily requested her to do a detailed and comprehensive report for their newspaper.

12. The best of the articles of the three cycles were compiled as a book *The Unheard Scream... Reproductive Health and women's lives in India*. The book was widely disseminated and two panel symposia were held along with the book launch: One in association with Zubaan Books in Delhi and the second at the Asian College of Journalism in Chennai.

13. There were six reviews in leading newspapers and journals in South Asia; the book has been on the resource list of organisations like Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition awareness. The book is currently into its seventh print run and the publishers are now bringing it out in paperback.

14. A leading women's college in Delhi used the contents to script a one-act play on women's issues.

### **Media and Peace-building in India and Pakistan Programme**

A comprehensive multi-pronged programme under the Conflict theme, this programme is Panos South Asia's successful attempt at media diplomacy.

#### **Promoting access to information and resources**

1. The programme has created a platform for exchange of journalistic writings on Panos' working themes of Conflict, Public Health, Environment and Globalisation.

2. Brought Gatekeepers and journalists from the varied language media of the two countries into the exchange process

3. With limited physical presence of Pakistani journalists in India and Indian journalists in Pakistan and stringent visa regimes, the media was earlier mainly dependent on wired agency outputs for news from either country. Journalists established networks through the Panos fellowships, exchange visits and retreats which facilitated exchange of news. During calamities and emergencies like the Kashmir earthquake, Benazir's assassination, the change of guard in Pakistan and the tsunami in the subcontinent, sharing of information and emergency preparedness was made possible across the borders.

4. Exchange of live video footage between media houses on either side of the border has also become a reality. Geo TV, Dawn TV, Aaj TV and ARY in Pakistan have been exchanging and airing footage with NDTV, Star, CNN-IBN and UTVI in India.

5. Indo- Pak media monitoring on the website The Hoot is widely tapped into as a resource base by journalists in both countries. The Hoot has recorded an average of 30,000 visitors and 20,000 page views per month.

### **Media's efforts to defy any form of censorship thus rendering media as a site for democratic dialogue**

1. Bringing together voices from both sides of the border and initiating an internal critique of both countries' media and governments, these retreats have managed to energise and also be part of a very important shift in perception among media practitioners in both countries. Instead of looking at media from across the border as part of the enemy camp, they started looking at each other as peers, besieged by the same set of problems.
2. Through the past seven roundtables, we discern palpable increased openness and willingness to set aside exclusive nationalist positions and to question one's own state establishment.
3. A small but significant beginning was made when most of the gatekeepers at the Istanbul retreat agreed to use *Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Indian-administered Kashmir* instead of *Pakistan-occupied Kashmir* and *Indian-occupied Kashmir* in their publications from then on.

### **Raising Public Debate on thematic issues**

1. News organisations have encouraged the trend of exchange visits by their journalists across the border to see for themselves, understand and place in the public domain as to how the other country lives and functions.
2. At the time of the first meeting at Nagarkote, there was massive mobilisation of forces along the border and India and Pakistan were on the brink of a war. Even amidst such an atmosphere of heightened hate and mistrust, the first meeting set the tone for the coming retreats; it also proved that the voice of sanity, reason and forbearance would be able to penetrate even ultra-nationalist rant of the highest volume.

We at Panos realise that even amidst continuing and ever changing international and domestic challenges, there is a permanent place for reasoned debate and mature deliberation in the Indo-Pak dialogue. At the end of the first phase of seven retreats, there has been consolidation of rationality in place of ultra-nationalist jingoism. The content of the edited transcripts of the conclaves together stand testimony to the possibilities of long-term peace in the subcontinent through discourse, mutual empathy and a lowering of the nationalistic guard on both sides, at least as far as the fourth estate is concerned. The transcripts of the retreats' proceedings can be accessed at

[http://www.himalmag.com/Panos-Himal-Roundtables\\_dnw78.html](http://www.himalmag.com/Panos-Himal-Roundtables_dnw78.html)

### **Change on the Ground**

1. Several of the participants of the high profile retreats control the news disseminated to wide tracts of the Indian and Pakistani population in local languages. For example the Dainik Bhaskar has a circulation of nearly forty lakhs with an estimated readership of two crore people every day in India. We believe the tempering of hostility in news presentation will steadily work towards effecting trust between the two countries.
2. New media dynamics is in place with pieces on issues with regional impact like happenings in Nepal after the royal takeover in 2005 getting published simultaneously in India and Pakistan. For example, eminent Nepali journalist Kanak Mani Dixit's pieces were published simultaneously in *The News* in Pakistan and *The Hindu* in India.

3. Nearly 25 Indian journalists have been writing for Pakistani media and 20 Pakistani journalists can now be read in the Indian media. Our Indo-Pak Media Monitoring report done by an external evaluator corroborates this.

#### **Policy changes / action at local/ state / national level effected**

1. K. Rajendran's report recorded the plight of the stranded people in Kerala, India who went to Pakistan at the time of partition but wanted to stay home in India. With no visas or citizenship, they were being deported from India from time to time. A Vijayaraghavan, Member of Parliament from Kerala raised the issue in Parliament. The government responded swiftly. The Minister of State for Home Affairs, Sriprakash Jaiswal said the people would be granted long term visas in order to enable them to apply for Indian citizenship.

a. At least 500 persons from Kerala in India holding Pakistani passports would be granted long term visas.

b. At least 50 of them, who had already been given deportation notices, were allowed to stay since the notices were no longer valid and their visas were extended.

c. Their applications are under consideration by the Government of India for citizenship.

2. After his India visit as part of the Saneeya Hussain fellowship, Shaukat Piracha produced and aired on prime time television, a feature on the plight of Indian prisoners in Pakistani jails and Pakistani prisoners in Indian jails. Post-airing, the two countries set up a high level committee of ex-judges to look into the issue. The committee held its first meeting in Delhi in February 2008 and has put up recommendations to the government for the welfare and early release of the prisoners.

3. Saneeya Hussain fellow Mehmud Sarfraz researched and wrote on the Left Movement in India. In September 2008, Mehmud joined ranks with like-minded friends in Pakistan seeking to establish a national political party in Pakistan subscribing to left-leaning, social democratic principles.

#### **Manchar Peoples' Assembly**

The Peoples' Assembly tool has been a very effective one, especially in Pakistan, as it creates space for the poor to engage in policy debate. With raising debate and bringing unheard voices into the public domain forming an important part of our mandate, Panos South Asia in association with Shirkat Gah and the Save Manchar Coalition organized a Peoples' Assembly at the Manchar Lake in Dadu District in Sind province of Pakistan in January 2007. PSA, keen to amplify the power and potential of people's voices and their testimony of poverty embarked on this unique journey as a follow up to the Oral testimonies of poverty collated in partnership with Panos London. This initiative brought together nearly 1,500 people whose lives are linked directly or indirectly to the Manchar Lake.

#### **Raise Public Debate on thematic issues**

1. Residents of Manchar and its surroundings gathered to raise their voice against the steady pollution of the lake waters and the resultant degradation of their livelihoods. Five newspapers, four in Sindhi and one in Urdu published long reports about the event.
2. the assembly proceedings were recorded and telecast by Aaj TV
3. a follow-up debate on the issue comprising policy makers, NGO representatives, agriculturists, environmentalists and affected communities were recorded and later telecast on Aaj TV.
4. A 20-minute interactive play detailing the impact of the degradation of Manchar Lake on the fishing and farming communities was staged in several places.
5. Two radio documentaries of ten minutes each was broadcast on three channels.

#### **Policy changes / action at local/ state / national level effected**

1. A group of fishermen from the Manchar Bachayo Ittehad were called to the Governor's residence where the Governor of Sindh Dr. Ishrat ul Ibad approved a dowry fund for 400 persons in the Manchar area.

#### **Bridging gaps between grassroots level and policy makers**

The impact created on the communities of Manchar has led to three Union Councils, namely UC Jhangara, UC Boobak, UC Shanni expressing interest in holding a People's Assembly in their Union Council. The Jhangara *nazim* went ahead to endorse his interest, by writing a letter to PSA's partner Shirkat Gah. In a letter to addressed to Zubeda Birwani, the Senior Project Officer at Shirkat Gah, Bashir Noohani wrote (in Sindhi): "The People's Assembly is a new experience for our community and we were happy to see the problems and issues being portrayed. I thank you for organising this event, and would like you (Shirkat Gah and PANOS) to organise a similar programme in UC Jhangara for our community's benefit."

#### **Follow-up articles/ Republished**

1. 2 issues of Hamara Mahol (Our Environment) detailed the degradation of the Manchar Lake and its implications.
2. BBC Online Urdu correspondent Mohammad Ishtiaq who participated in the Peoples' Assembly put out a longish feature where he also interviewed the Minister of State for Environment, Malik Amin Aslam.

#### **RELAY**

The RELAY programme aims to communicate research and place information in the public domain. Various institutions do conduct research, but very little of it reaches the public sphere. PSA's Relay project has undertaken several exercises that help to build bridges between the research and media communities, thus facilitating greater access to research and dissemination of toolkits for journalists on issues of land and rehabilitation, and scoping/mapping of research.

#### **Questions raised in Parliament/ Legislature and legislative changes brought about by our engagements**

1. Panos South Asia collaborated with the Calcutta Research Group to prepare and release a comprehensive report on the lives of displaced people living in camps in South Asia. The report release was followed by a journalists' tour of the camps. For nearly a week, all major dailies in the state of Assam carried editorials and articles from the field on the subject of displacement. The issue echoed in the State legislative assembly, where the media reports and our research material were used as primary evidence to elicit the government's response. The government was then forced to announce 50,000 Indian Rupees as immediate relief to people living in the camps.

**Promoting access to information and resources**

1. Study tours have emerged as the most effective way to allow researchers, journalists and advocacy groups to interact. The greatest lesson learnt from our study tours is the depth it adds to local knowledge production. Reportage following the study tours is infinitely more informed because of inputs provided by alternate sources, research data and also from people on the ground.

**Raise public debate on thematic issues**

1. PSA's programme, *Northeast India and its trans-national neighbourhood* proved to be a confluence of new ideas, scholarship and creativity on Northeast India. It drew large numbers of performing artists, researchers, scholars, authors and poets who even went on a week long study trip to the Indo-Burma and Indo-China border areas with the PSA team.

2. PSA's debate forums condense a diverse and critical discourse on the themes we work with. They prepare the ground for opening up of small but important space in the public domain. The deliberate stance to conduct debate forums where participation is a must but not consensus has proved to be hugely successful. And with most of our thematic issues having the potential for polarised opinion, this approach made alternate opinions also conducive to dialogue.

Our impact measurement tools have been in the smithy just over a year; we have used shared experience and our own resources to fund its forging. Data gathering and research are ongoing. We at Panos South Asia strongly believe a home-grown, within-the-sector approach is indeed necessary to gauge the essence, spirit and impact of small media development organisations like ours. It is a long journey; but we are confident of results with the help of like-minded organisations.

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