

Transform World South Asia Meeting of the steering group 5-6 March 2011

Present

Alex Philip, India
Richard Howell, India
SP Kalaunee, Nepal
Arpana Kalaunee, Nepal
Adeel Rehmat, Pakistan
Dr Samson, Pakistan
Godfrey Yogarajah, Sri Lanka
Roshini Wickremasinha, Sri Lanka
Ivor Poobalan, Sri Lanka
Prem, Sri Lanka (SAMALI)
Craig Shugart, Diaspora
Ram Gidoomal, Diaspora
Robin Thomson, Diaspora

Apologies

Elgin Saha, Bangladesh
Sonam Lhendup, Bhutan
Prem Nair, Diaspora

Purpose

Following the conference in Kathmandu in October the steering group met every two months through a Skype conference call. Prayer requests from each country were circulated every week to the TWSA participants. The conference Report and Plans were published in January 2011 and circulated to the participants. The steering group decided to meet face to face, with the following objectives:

- To review progress since the conference in October 2009. This had shown the potential for partnership across the S Asian borders, which we have not yet been able to realize
- To seek ways to mobilize and catalyse partnerships and resources
- To seek ways to develop a South Asian identity: does it exist? Does it add value? What does it need to strengthen and express it?

We met along with Richard Howell, General Secretary of Asia Evangelical Alliance (AEA) and the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), and Godfrey Yogarajah, Director of the Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and General Secretary of the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL).

NCEASL hosted the meeting at its conference and retreat centre, Sanctuary House, near Colombo.

Ivor Poobalan, Principal of Colombo Theological Seminary, led two devotional sessions with Biblical exposition on the ministries of Jesus (Luke 4.1-44) and Paul (Acts 20.17-38).

Discussion sessions were interspersed with prayer times throughout the programme. We had updates on country situations and prayed for them.

Review of progress since Kathmandu 2009

We looked at the responses to the questionnaire sent to all participants. From these it was clear that there had been definite benefits and on-going contacts on an individual basis. The weekly prayer news had been greatly appreciated. Some partnership initiatives had been developed. Networking was taking place and the sense of a regional South Asian identity had continued to develop. But the Focus Groups had not maintained effective contact. Only one focus group leader (apart from steering group members) had responded to the questionnaire. The focus groups had not been able to set definite and clear goals during their relatively short time of interaction before and during the conference. Some areas were being effectively taken up by other networks (eg religious freedom by AEA/WEA).

It was therefore important for us to consider whether and how we should plan for achievement of the goals set in the Kathmandu conference. What would be the purpose and how should it be structured?

Is there a need for a South Asian focus or network?

Godfrey Yogarajah explained the activities of AEA and WEA and presented a concept paper on the vision for a 'South Asian Network' within the framework of these two organisational networks.

We listed other key networks with interest and relevance to South Asia, including:

- Lausanne
- Langham Partnership South Asia
- South Asian Missions Advance (SAMALI)
- TW /4-14 Window
- Asia Theological Association
- Scripture Union South Asia
- South Asian Religious Liberty Network

Is there space for the vision of TWSA and what could be its distinctive contribution?

From the discussion it became clear that there is space for a network that could work along with the existing networks and organisations to maintain the distinctive focus on South Asia and serve as a platform to exchange contributions between the countries.

Within this we also identified two areas that are not presently covered by others

- The role of the Diaspora
- The contribution of business

We identified 8 reasons why new forms and structures develop:

- People are excluded
- People are disgruntled
- People cannot say 'No'
- Capacity limitations
- Filling a gap with a unique offering
- Relationships
- Synergy that becomes available
- A genuinely new situation or disruptive event

In this context we noted that not all are included in existing networks. There is also an urgent challenge to engage with younger leaders and ensure that the older generation does not dominate or block. We also noted that some of the divisions that can be observed between some churches and organisations are caused or increased by interventions from outside. So it

is very important to have clear goals and channels of communication. Building relationships of friendship and trust is vital. This can be a key contribution of TWSA. There is also a need to catalyse new initiatives.

Business as Mission

Craig Shugart gave a presentation of this concept, which goes back to God's purpose in creation and redemption, and the needs, opportunities and challenges in the south Asian context. There is a particular need for developing 'Small and Medium Enterprises' (SME).

Resource Mobilisation Working Group

Ram gave an update on this group which is part of the Lausanne movement, with a vision to develop the understanding and practice of genuine and generous stewardship. We noted that Colombo Theological Seminary has developed one of the few courses that exist on stewardship and financial accountability, which had been one of the initiatives planned at Kathmandu 2009.

Is there a South Asian regional identity?

The consensus was that this has developed considerably over the last 10 years, both in the political and economic spheres and also in the church and mission context. It is generally seen as positive.

We should see this as an opportunity to shape and develop this identity and change the perceptions and ways of thinking in the church, so as to exploit the potential of the regional identity, while maintaining the distinctive needs and contribution of each country.

Richard Howell shared the perspective of AEA:

It is already aware of the identity and importance of different regions within Asia, including the South Asia region. He has been involved personally in recent visits to Bangladesh and Bhutan, and would like to visit Pakistan in this connection.

AEA will be very open to development of this identity, as long as there are clear goals, and is willing to collaborate with all. Both AEA and WEA are structured on functional lines and the leaders of each functional commission are the contact people for engaging with any South Asia regional focus.

Conclusions

We re-affirmed the goals of the Kathmandu 2009 gathering (Appendix) and agreed the following:

Vision

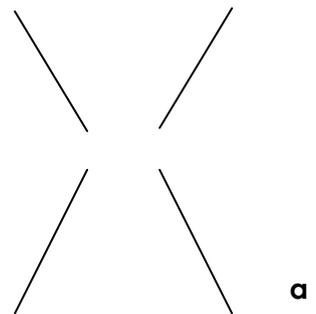
We seek to contribute to the growth of the church for the transformation of the nations in South Asia and beyond

through forming a **community of servant catalysts** which will:

- **foster a regional identity** for South Asian Christians
- build **relationships, network, share good practice, highlight problems and challenges**, so that we can go on **supporting** one another
- share **information** of what God is doing in the region
- **catalyse new initiatives** and provide a **platform for exchange** between countries, so that we can contribute in S Asia and beyond

We will **work through** national, regional and world **evangelical alliances**, and other existing networks, **providing South Asian focus** in key areas of transformation.

In particular we recognise the need for focus on



- South Asian Diaspora
- Business as Mission

Practical steps

We agreed to take the following immediate actions

1. Establish links with national and regional evangelical alliances in each country. Richard will write to the representatives in each country to introduce TWSA and ask them to make contact with TWSA steering group member in that country. Ram will follow up with letter from TWSA.

2. Establish links with AEA and WEA functional commissions, as appropriate. Richard will write to the representatives in each country to introduce TWSA and appropriate contact person from TWSA.

AEA functional commissions

	<i>AEA person</i>	<i>TWSA person or action</i>
Religious liberty	Roshini	Roshini
Muslims	Dr Gideon	inform TWSA network
Theology	Richard	Ivor (to set up South Asia section)
4-14		Alex
Women		inform TWSA network
Mission		Adeel
IT		ask to set up South Asia page on the AEA website
Youth	Isaac	Ram

3. Develop and maintain links with other existing networks and contact persons, including

- Lausanne
- Langham Partnership South Asia
- South Asian Missions Advance (SAMALI)
- TW /4-14 Window
- Asia Theological Association
- Scripture Union South Asia
- South Asian Religious Liberty Network

Focus groups at TWSA (areas of transformation / 'mountains')

Group	Follow up action
governance	
persecution and discrimination	<i>link with AEA religious liberty</i>
Church growth, church planting, new forms of church (including conversion, proselytising, social, cultural and ethical issues)	
market place, business, micro-finance, resource mobilisation BAM development and holistic transformation as part of mission	
Media and communication (including literature and translation, arts, music, new forms of praise and worship)	
Prayer	<i>alert Jimmy Joseph to contact other prayer networks</i>
Church and Mission agencies: relationships, division, unity	<i>link with AEA Missions</i>
Bible teaching and leadership development	<i>work with Richard to set up South Asia section in AEA Theology Commission</i>

3. Send TWSA 2009 report to all the AEA /other network representatives

4. Ask AEA IT commission to help set up a South Asia webpage on AEA website

5. Send prayer requests to AEA for inclusion in their monthly prayer news.

6. Request AEA to set up a 'South Asian Network' within the AEA, (sending information about aims and objectives from the UK South Asian Forum within the UK Evangelical Alliance).

7. Define responsibilities of steering group members in each country – not setting up a parallel structure but more informal and relational, with SA focus)

- Link with counterparts in other countries and build relationships
- Communicate with people in their own country
- Report on developments in their own country
- Build relationship with representative of country Evangelical Alliance and other networks, eg Lausanne
- Contact those who have attended TW events and encourage them to develop their focus group involvement
- Participate in bi-monthly Skype conference call (last Thursday of the second month 0730 GMT)
- Send prayer requests for the weekly prayer circulation
- Provide strategic guidance, technical support and leadership to develop annual plan of TWSA

- Review activities and performance against plans

8. Continue steering group's bi-monthly Skype conference call (last Thursday of the second month 0730 GMT)

9. Continue to circulate weekly prayer requests for each country to all participants.

Goals for 12 months up to March 2012

(we will give preliminary updates in our next conference call on 4th May)

1. Establish website platform Alex to contact TW and AEA
2. Two BAM seminars in the region for business people and church leaders in order to promote the concept of Business as Mission Craig
(seek to bring people together from different countries)
3. Identify and engage with 5 new BAM businesses in the region Craig
4. Promote the CTS teaching material on stewardship Ivor
5. Promote the South Asian regional identity among church leaders through conferences, at least 1 in Pakistan Dr Samson
(includes
 - * clarifying the concept of partnership
 - * encourage 'South Asia focus' training programmes eg
 - for people from all SA countries together
 - using SA resource people to teach in other SA countries)
6. Intentionally build relationship and establish links with national/regional evangelical alliances, and also with other networks: Ram
7. Encourage at least 8 mission trips between countries SP
(Includes exchanges and contributions, eg in relief/development/health)
Pakistanis to go to Nepal to work with M there
8. Have two people from each country in the steering group Ram
9. Music: identify artists and production for music that will communicate across the region Ram
10. Promote fundraising training seminars in South Asia (Barbara, TWR), either visiting different countries or combined Ram
11. Seek input from other countries for cross-cultural training centre in Pakistan (6 organisations working together). Adeel
12. Promote to people from South Asian countries the PhD in Christian Studies (theology and mission) from Sam Higginbotham Agricultural University, which is recognised by UGC Govt of India). Richard is on the Academic Committee, with Boaz Johnson and others.
(inform TWSA participants and advise them to contact Richard).

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| 13. Promote CTS book on introduction to doctrine | Ivor |
| 14. Share information about 'Print on demand' technology | Craig |
| 15. Share good practice and experience of after care for MBBs from the SA countries (inform TWSA participants about AEA Korea conference) | |

Kathmandu 2009

Transform World: South Asia 2009 seeks:

- 1) To praise God for His transformational initiatives among the nations.
- 2) To facilitate transformational connections among national and global servant catalysts for national and global transformational streams and Focus Group and sphere development.
- 3) To provide information, inspiration and constructive interchange on transformational initiatives around the world.
- 4) To form a community of servant catalysts for the transformation of the nations in South Asia and beyond, through:
 - fostering a regional identity for South Asian Christians
 - building relationships, networking, sharing good practice, highlighting problems and challenges, so that we can go on supporting one another
- 5) To facilitate mutual learning and interaction between global and South Asian leaders.

Through the Transform World 2009 South Asia conference we sought to:

- Discover** what God is doing in the different regions of South Asia.
- Work together to **develop new initiatives** both locally and across the region.
- Ensure that what God has given us is being **deployed efficiently** and implemented for building His Kingdom.

Affirmations from Kathmandu 2009

We affirm

- That God is on a mission of transformation which extends beyond our own individual country representation to all the nations of the South Asian region, calling us to participate in His mission
- That we recognise and express commitment to serve the Church within our own countries in her own journey of transformation and also to **serve each other between our different countries**, giving and receiving as faithful stewards.
- Our commitment towards **developing a South Asian regional identity** which calls the Body of Christ from countries represented here and also the Diaspora scattered across the globe.
- That as we call our peoples to salvation in Jesus Christ alone, we recognise that our transformational journey includes **intentional engagement** with national, political, cultural and other influence and opinion makers within our region.

□□ Our recognition that in certain contexts of South Asia, the Church is **facing intense pressure** for the sake of Christ and we pledge our solidarity, assistance and prayer on her behalf.

□□ That **prayer** is the undergirding of our service and ministry; and we therefore commit ourselves to sustained individual and collective prayer.

□□ The contribution of the **Diaspora** towards our identity as South Asian followers of Christ and we welcome gladly our ongoing engagement together.

□□ That we need to continue strengthening our personal and corporate **relationships** in the Body of Christ across cultures and national boundaries.