<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>AMIC-SIDA Seminar on the Role of the Media in a National Crisis: Colombo, May 15-17, 1991: [background and administrative information for participants]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>URL</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10220/2556">http://hdl.handle.net/10220/2556</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rights</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background And Administrative Information For Participants
Background

I. The Project

The Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) proposed to organise this regional seminar on The Role of the Media in a National Crisis to explore the role of the media in a crisis and to formulate guidelines for professionals/practitioners on reporting national crisis. AMIC has co-opted the Sri Lankan Working Journalists' Association (SWAJA) to act as its local partner institution in implementing this project.

II. Justification for the Project

The media are expected has to play a pivotal role during a national or international crisis. But most people do not have a clear idea of the nature of the role that media should play. People with different backgrounds and interests expect the media to play different and sometimes exactly opposite roles in relation to the crisis that a country is facing.

International media coverage of the pro-democracy movement in China have very eloquently articulated to the world the democratic aspirations of a significant sector of the Chinese population. Ironically, the same world-wide coverage - with its photographic and video coverage - has also led to dire consequences for the leaders and participants in the movement. The consequences of the media coverage of this particular crisis have set journalists to rethinking their roles in covering events of this nature; it has resulted in modifications to the practice of broadcasting video materials that may jeopardise the lives of people.

In general, the media should attempt to provide correct information to the people. However, even by providing correct information the media can sometimes inflame passions and intensify a crisis rather than solve it. The other side to the story, of course, is that by not providing correct information, the media leaves room for rumours, the effect of which can sometimes be much worse than that generated by fairly accurate media stories.
It is, in fact, in relation to such problems that people are concerned about the role of the media in a crisis situation. It is difficult to assign a single clear role for the media during any type of crisis. To a large extent, the role will depend on the nature of the crisis, and the day-to-day developments in the country in relation to the crisis. But what guideposts are available to journalists to explore alternative roles?

In Third World countries, it is particularly difficult for journalists and other media practitioners to arrive at a definition of their role or roles. They may not know exactly what role to play. Do they look to the political authorities? Do they turn to their personal ethics and professional insights to help them clarify their roles? Do they draw upon the experiences - past and recent - of journalists and other media professionals who have been through the same dilemma to arrive at answers?

It is in the context of such a dilemma faced by media professionals that a seminar-workshop on the role of the media in a national crisis becomes very significant. There is a lack of self-regulatory norms in this very sensitive area of reporting. The present project will try to fill this gap by giving media professionals an opportunity to reflect on the problems and issues attendant to reporting on crisis situations and offer proposals and guidelines for the profession. This will not only promote responsible "crisis reporting" but also obviate the need for statutory restraints.

III. Objectives of the Seminar

The objectives listed below also reflect the benefits to be derived from the project.

1. To bring together journalists and related media professionals to discuss their problems in reporting national crises;

2. To gather professional insights through formal sharing and discussion of experiences of those reporting on crises of national proportion;

3. To formulate guidelines that journalists and other media professionals can use when confronted with problems on reporting about national crises.

4. To publish national reports, case studies and guidelines and recommendations for the benefit of journalists and students of journalism in the region.
IV. Methodology and Structure

The seminar will feature a three-day programme with some twenty-five participants and resource persons from five South Asian countries, namely, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The first part of the programme will be a seminar where the participants will report on how they approach the issue of crisis reporting in their professional work as well as share information on formal or informal guidelines formulated in their countries on the reporting of crisis situations. In addition, they will provide instances where the media may have inflamed or defused tense crisis situations.

Following the seminar will be small group workshops where the participants will formulate guidelines to aid journalists and other media professionals in reporting national crises.
ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

We are pleased to know that you can join us for the Seminar. We look forward to your active participation in the discussions, workshops and other sessions designed to help us gain deeper insights into the role of the media in times of national crisis, and to help us in formulating a comprehensive but practicable set of guidelines on how the media could/should respond to issues and problems pertaining to crisis reporting.

To ensure that we have a smooth-running meeting, we urge you to read the following information and guidelines.

ORGANIZATION

The Seminar is organized by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC), Singapore and the Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association (SLWJA), with support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), The Asia Foundation (TAF), and the World Bank (WB).

AIR TRAVEL

With a few exceptions, participants are provided with pre-paid return economy air tickets to/from Colombo. Those who purchased tickets on their own are requested to see the Workshop Coordinator for reimbursement of air fares.

On the first day of the Seminar, please hand over your tickets to the Workshop Coordinator for reconfirmation.

AIRPORT TERMINAL FEES / DEPARTURE TAXES

Participants are requested to hand over the corresponding receipts/coupons to the Workshop Coordinator for reimbursement.

LAND TRAVEL

Participants are expected to pay for land transportation costs to/from the airports of their home countries. These will not be reimbursed by the organisers.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

Participants are requested to take a taxi from the airport to the Taj Samudra Hotel on Galle Face Road, Colombo. The cost is approximately Sri Lankan Rupees 300.00. You can claim reimbursement for this transport cost. You will also be provided taxi allowance for the departure trip to the airport.
TRAVEL INSURANCE

The organisers are not providing additional travel insurance other than that provided by carriers as part of the cost of passage.

HOTEL ACCOMODATION

Participants will be accommodated at HOTEL TAJ SAMUDRA, 25 Galle Road, Colombo 3 (Phone 546622). Room accommodations will be paid for by organizers. The organizers will not pay for other hotel costs such as telephone calls, laundry, room service, room bar, etc. Please remember to settle these bills before you check out.

PER DIEM / MEALS

The sponsors have allocated per diems for the duration of the seminar. This amount is to be spent for your breakfast and dinner.

The organizers are providing lunch and two tea breaks daily.

PAPERS / PRESENTATION

If you were not able to send your papers to AMIC, Singapore prior to departure for Colombo, please give a clean copy to the Workshop Coordinator on arrival at the hotel to facilitate reproduction.

Participants are not expected to read the entire paper during their presentation. As copies will be distributed beforehand, they need only present the highlights. This should take from 20-30 minutes. This is to ensure that there is enough time for discussion of the issues articulated in the paper.

PUBLICATION

The papers and proceedings of the seminar will be published into a book, possibly titled THE MEDIA IN TIMES OF CRISES. As such, the papers must be of publishable quality.

If the papers you are presenting are "preliminary drafts", you will be given an opportunity to update and revise them prior to publication.