

TOWARDS A PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

2005 ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT

Submitted by the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication

I. Overview

The Philippines is one of the few countries in the Asia Pacific region without a public service broadcasting system. Philippine mass media, particularly the broadcast industry, operates under a commercial system. The Philippine broadcast media landscape therefore remains susceptible to market demands, to the detriment of developmental programming which promotes educational and sociocultural thrusts.

One option to commercial broadcast programming is alternative programming which can be made possible with public service broadcasting (PSB) system. Over the years, UNESCO has supported initiatives by its member states to set up or strengthen their PSB.

In 2005, UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, through the participation program (PP) provided a grant to the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) to support initiatives to set up the Philippine PBS. The UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines (UNACOM) provided counterpart fund to jumpstart project activities.

The envisioned PSB is not limited to the traditional concept which is limited to the use of radio and television. The PSB which may emerge from this project may include a network of small community radio stations (there are several existing nationwide) and even the use of Internet (as in webcasting and podcasting). The final contours will depend on the results of a feasibility study which can be undertaken.

This report presents the project accomplishments for 2005 for the following project components: (a) Organization and Management, (b) Workshops, (c) Research, and (d) Advocacy (focusing on Media Transformation initiatives).



II. Project Accomplishments

A. Workshops

1. The Planning Workshop for the Proposed Philippine Public Service Broadcasting System

The 10 March 2005 Workshop co-sponsored by UNESCO, UNACOM, AIJC and the Government Mass Media Group (Office of the President) was held at SEAMEO-Innotech in Quezon City. The forum was attended by 53 individuals from the ranks of broadcasters, both in the private and government sectors, media educators and academicians, community media practitioners, and members of civil society organizations.

Among the resource persons of the workshop were former senator and broadcaster Loren Legarda, Prof. Elizabeth Diaz, Dr. Florangel Rosario-Braid, and Secretary Cerge Remonde.

During the forum, Secretary Remonde of the Government Mass Media Group reiterated his commitment to transform government media agencies, i.e. NBN TV 4 and selected radio stations of the Philippine Broadcasting Service, to be the core of the proposed PSB.

At the forum, the results of the Multisectoral Survey on the Proposed PSB was presented by Dr. Braid (please see *Part B. Research Studies* for more discussion).

For the workshop, two groups presented their proposed Vision and Mission statements for the proposed PSB well as work plan to pursue the setting up of the alternative broadcast channel.

Please refer to **Appendix A** for the workshop proceedings.

2. Symposium-Workshop on Overcoming Barriers to Public Domain Information (PSB as Medium for PDI Dissemination)

The one-day forum was convened to review the perceived barriers to access to public domain information (PDI) and to recommend specific measures on how to overcome these barriers.

PDI is generally defined as information for the public interest and the common good. Many of the PDI available have not been packaged and popularized for dissemination through mass media channels. Many of these PDI are not attractive to the commercial broadcast media.



PSBs are appropriate channels for disseminating PDI. The topics of PDI are consistent with the PSB mandate and vision of providing informative and educational content.

The forum was convened on 25 January 2006 in cooperation with UNESCO, UNICEF and the Commission on Communication and Information Technology (CICT).

Background information is presented in **Appendix B**.

B. Research Studies

1. Multisectoral Perceptions on the Proposed PSB

The survey utilized a descriptive research design using mail survey. Of 145 individuals who were sent the questionnaire, only 50 (34.5%) participated by returning the completed questionnaire. The survey was done from 18 February to 04 March 2005. Over one-third of the respondents were professionals, while one-fourth were connected with government agencies. Women comprised one-fifth of the respondents. Nearly one-tenth were from education/academe and business/industry. Other respondents came from the youth sector and cultural communities.

Nine out of 10 respondents said there is a need for PSB in the Philippines. Nearly three fourths (72%) said that there is need for legislation which would mandate the setting up of the PBS. Approximately two-thirds believed that the PBS could be economically viable.

A copy of the survey results is presented in **Appendix C**.

2. Potential Network (Partner) Institutions of the Proposed PSB

This study was conducted to review programs and activities of various organizations engaged in media production, research and training and to examine how their current and future programs and activities could be coordinated and harmonized with the vision and mandate of the proposed PSB.

Out of the 39 institutions listed as potential PSB partners, only 19 responded to the questionnaire. A majority of them are government agencies (37%) while 31 percent are foundations. Others are non-government organizations (16%) and corporations (16%).



Among the major functions performed by these potential partners are: training (79%), policy advocacy (68%), publication (58%), video production (58%), and broadcast production (53%). A few are into communication (media) research and electronic media production, among others.

Almost all the organizations have expressed interest in becoming a partner of the proposed PSB, and providing their support in several ways. More than the majority (68.4%) are willing to share experts/resource persons as well as provide training courses (63.2%). Half of the institutions agree to share/exchange broadcast and video productions; and to help advocate/lobby for the creation of public service broadcasting (52.6% each).

The requirements for establishing a partnership between the potential partner institutions and the proposed PSB is the drafting of a Memorandum of Agreement to be approved and signed by both parties. Most of the institutions find the need to have a full knowledge of the PSB's defined organizational structure, policy mission and vision statement, its scope of operation. For other institutions, the conduct of a briefing session on the proposed PSB appears essential even before they could identify requirements for partnership.

The findings of the study are presented in **Appendix D**.

3. Situationer on PSB in Other Countries

Essentially a desk research, this study provided an update on the status of PSB in selected countries in terms of enabling legislation, structure, program content, funding, ethical framework/norms, among others. Among the countries surveyed are: Japan (for NHK), Australia (for Australian Broadcasting Corporation), Canada (for Canadian Broadcasting Service), France (Multiple Public Broadcasting System), United Kingdom (BBC), and South Africa (SABC).

The output of the research is a Comparative Matrix (please see **Appendix E**).

In addition to desk research, additional data was also gathered from the papers presented and proceedings of the International Workshop on Public Broadcasting Best Practices: Evaluation, Monitoring and Standard held in Kuala Lumpur Manila on 07-08 May 2005. The project manager's participation in this workshop was sponsored by UNESCO Regional Office.



4. Program Analysis of Existing TV Programs

Current TV programs which can initially qualify as comparable to PSB programming will be identified and described. Criteria will be drawn as basis for selection of the TV programs. Guidelines will be prepared on how to undertake the documentation. The project will be done in coordination with the Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE) Foundation.

This research will be conducted by communication students from Ateneo de Manila University, Miriam College, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, and St. Mary's College.

The research will be supervised by selected broadcast journalism teachers from the participating schools.

Among the educators involved are Chi-Chi Robles (Ateneo), Lynda Garcia and Mary Grace Agoncillo (Miriam College), Victoria Red and Ruby Gapsin (PUP), Belen Dayauon (St., Mary's College), and Betty Lou Penera. Overall project coordinator is PACE President Gerry Josue with Prof. Elizabeth Diaz (UP-CMC) and Dr. Rogelio V. Cuyno (AIJC) as consultants.

The study is scheduled for completion in August 2006.

The concept paper for the ongoing study is presented in **Appendix F**.

5. Survey on Political and Economic Assessment of the Proposed PSB

This study complements the Multisectoral Perception Survey completed in March 2005. The respondents to this ongoing survey are policymakers (decision-makers) in government and business (including private media).

Essentially, the survey aims to generate feedback on the statement of Secretary Cerge Remonde of the Government Mass Media Group that the national government will divest itself from National Broadcasting Network (NBN) and selected radio stations under Philippine Broadcasting Service and make these two the core of the envisioned PSB. Respondents are asked to comment on whether they find such proposal politically and economically viable given current political and economic realities.

Using purposive sampling, 30 key respondents were identified. Retrieval of completed questionnaires is ongoing.



6. Status of National Broadcasting Network

Taking the line that NBN and selected radio station(s) under Philippine Broadcasting Service will be the core of the envisioned PSB, the AIJC Project Team prepared an outline for a status report which it requested NBN to complete and submit to provide additional inputs. The government TV station is now working on the report.

A copy of the status report outline is shown in **Appendix G**.

7. PSB Library

Although this activity is not part of the original project proposal submitted for the participation program, the Project Team was able to collect books and other publications/documents both in electronic and print file on PSB. Documents gathered include bills filed in previous congresses proposing the setting up of a Philippine PSB. Also included in the “library” are recent publications and papers presented in relevant fora.

The PSB collection is accessible at the AIJC library where a section devoted to the topic has been set up.

C. Advocacy Initiatives

1. PSB Advocacy

The Project Team participated in several media fora to create awareness of and generate support for the proposed PSB. These fora included Planning Workshop of NBN Channel 4 and Philippine Broadcasting System Executives (07 April 2005), Media Nation 2 (2005), National Commission on Culture and the Arts (August 2005), among others.

The Project also produced prototype information/advocacy materials particularly the PSB brochure and powerpoint presentation. These IEC materials are now being used in various occasions.



2. Media Transformation Advocacy

In response to the growing dissatisfaction with present media fare, the PSB Project convened a series of dialogues with key media players (including executives) to discuss policy options and action agenda towards “media transformation.” Dialogue stakeholders included broadcast and print media executives, officers of professional media organizations, advertisers, communication educators, representatives of civil society organizations, among others.

The initial meeting was held at the AIJC on 26 April 2005 where distinguished leaders of the media and advertising industry attended. The meeting produced a plan of action that aims to help improve quality of media programming/content. Specific tasks for participating organizations were listed during the forum.

A follow up meeting was held on 24 June 2005. This was limited to key people from the advertising industry. The dialogue focused on talking points with the broadcast industry vis-à-vis quality programming. How to achieve synergy among institutions/organizations committed to media transformation was also discussed.

Selected background documents during the media transformation meetings are included as **Appendix H**.

D. Organization and Management

In January 2005, the AIJC organized a Project Team to oversee the planning and implementation of project activities. The core team is composed of the following: Dr. Rogelio V. Cuyno (Project Director); Mr. Ramon R. Tuazon (Project Manager); Ms. Ann C. Lopez and Ms. Heloise Magannon (Project Officers) and Ms. Lorie Macapugay (Administrative support staff). Invited as Project Consultants are Dr. Florangel Rosario-Braid (UNACOM Communication Committee Chair) and Prof. Elizabeth L. Diaz (UP College of Mass Communication).

The UNACOM Communication Committee members serve as advisory committee to the Project Team.

The project organized a network of 20 organizations committed to the setting up of a PSB in the Philippines. In subsequent meetings of the network members, three committees were organized with corresponding chairpersons selected: Committee on Research, HRD and Programming (Mr. Ed



Santoalla, Isla Television), Advocacy and Public Information, Governance and Organization (Prof. E. Diaz, UP CMC), and Infrastructure and Finance (Mr. Eric Canoy, Radio Mindanao Network).

These Committees convened committee meetings. The Project Team provided the administrative (secretariat) support in the convening of the meetings.

A copy of the minutes of committee meetings is shown in **Appendix I**.

Meanwhile, to facilitate interaction among network members, an e-group (philippinepsb@yahoogroups.com) was created also administered by the AIJC Project Team. The e-group also provided a venue for sharing of latest documents on PSB.

III. Issues and Concerns

1. Recent economic, socio-cultural and political events in the country highlight the need for a PSB. The continuing political crisis emphasizes the need for a broadcast channel that is free and independent from vested interests of either government or its perceived opponents and from other sectors, e.g. business, church, among others. The public should have access to objective, accurate and timely information that will enable them to understand the real state of the nation.

The recent occurrence of natural and man-made emergencies and disasters has demonstrated the urgent need for channels for continuing public information and education in times of crisis.

2. **Of the project activities listed in the Participation Programme Proposal submitted to UNESCO, only the crafting of a draft PSB Charter was not achieved.** The proponents realized the need to conduct a feasibility study as requirement for the crafting of the charter or draft bill for the proposed PSB. The feasibility study will define the contours or parameters of the charter including organization and management, programming, facilities and infrastructure, and financing.
3. The various research activities of the project are able to provide useful inputs for the feasibility study particularly in terms of social desirability and programming. Still, a distinct feasibility study is desirable.

4. Is the national leadership (still) committed to give up NBN and some government radio stations in favor of the proposed PSB? Recent political events, i.e., alleged coup attempts, may force the national government to reconsider its earlier pronouncement of converting these government media establishments into PSB as it may perceive these broadcast stations as important resources in disseminating government pronouncements during crisis situations.
5. Still, there is ambivalence on the use of existing government media as core media channels for the envisioned PSB as expressed in the several fora conducted with various sectors. Government media channels are perceived to suffer from an image problem that dates back to its propaganda function during the Marcos regime. In transforming NBN and parts of Philippine Broadcasting System into PSB, the new organization will still have to contend with the task of reengineering management and the reorientation of personnel of existing government networks.
6. The AIJC undertook (and in most cases completed) several activities that are not part of the Participation Programme Proposal submitted to UNESCO but are essential to achieving the project goal. Among these are the survey of potential PSB partners/networks, forum on public domain information, survey on the political and economic viability of a PSB and documentation of selected TV programs, and PSB library. These activities were undertaken without additional cost to UNESCO.

IV. Recommendations

1. The AIJC Project Team will submit proposal to possible funding agencies to support the conduct of the feasibility study. Such a study will not be limited to the use of national radio and television stations but will be open for use by other media platforms such as network of small community radio stations, Internet (webcasting and podcasting), among others.
2. The advocacy to set up a PSB should be linked with other related advocacies that seek to rationalize the communication media sector in the Philippines. These advocacy areas include calling for greater awareness of the need for a coherent National Information Policy, Public Domain Information, among others, which are also priority concerns of UNESCO. In crafting a National Information Policy Framework, references should be made on PSB as a channel to facilitate access to developmental information.

3. As mentioned earlier, a feasibility study should first be conducted prior to the crafting of the PSB bill as the results of the study may describe the appropriate features and parameters of the PSB. An important document in the preparation of such a bill is the **Model Public Broadcasting Law** prepared by Toby Mendel of Article 19. Another useful reference is the UNESCO-supported study, **Public Service Broadcasting: A Comparative Legal Survey** also conducted by Mendel.
4. A possible effective strategy in advocating for a PSB (especially among legislators) is to provide them with sample PSB programs (produced and aired by existing PSB stations worldwide, e.g., BBC, PBS, ABC). Another option is to produce indigenous prototype PSB programs. The AIJC Project Team in cooperation with its network organizations can pursue prototype development with support from UNESCO and other organizations.
5. Meanwhile, the AIJC-PACE research on analysis and documentation of existing TV programs which exemplify PSB programming is a good beginning in the absence of funds to produce the proposed prototype broadcast materials.
6. As part of its social responsibility and as media reform advocate, the AIJC shall pursue the PSB Project regardless of available resource support. It shall mobilize the support and participation of its PSB network members to ensure the fulfillment of the goal of setting up a Philippine PSB. Ongoing activities, e.g., survey on political and economic viability and documentation of selected TV programs will be pursued and completed.