FAIR AGM 2011 report

Date: 30 October 2011

Section A: Operations and Strategy

New Director

Evelyn Groenink prepared relevant documents to help assist Abdullah Vawda taking over the reigns and leading FAIR into a new stage of development. These documents included a website wireframe, a standards note, an updated TI methodology paper, an updated AGM/Mew implementation report, a fundraising strategy, three new funding proposals (for a FAIR grants fund, a Rich List TI, and a specific health grants and database project with Internews), and a draft outline for our regional conferences. All these are concept documents relating to proposed activities in the business plan. Other documents drafted pertain to FAIR management: a draft register of interests, a board fiduciary protocol draft, a membership subscription system draft, organogram, a history of the employment of the peer mentor (in response to questions); new draft contracts for FAIR staff, with job descriptions, and targets/KPI’s and of course the June financials. The Board and staff wants to place on record its sincere gratitude to Evelyn for building up the organization since 2003, and for taking FAIR to recent successes. With regard to the proposal document on ‘future activities’, the Board suggested that “FAIR should make use of Evelyn’s specialized services, such as fundraising and project management.

Mission and Vision

The management team of FAIR must be deeply committed to the mission and the context in which it operates. This is highly significant in guarding against “mission drift”—when an organization begins to stray and get distracted from its crucial programs and activities by partaking in activities that do not directly fulfill its purpose. FAIR needs to develop a strategy for 2012 in closer consultation with all staff members, so that everyone can be expected to respect the mission and vision set out by the FAIR Constitution. The risk of insufficient rapportage and oversight could result in straying away from the mission. Board members also have a duty to oversee that day to day activities are conducted in line with the organisations’ constitution, mission and business plans.

Fundraising

The Board requested that all future funding proposals and budget should be reviewed by a Subcommittee, for oversight and guidance, before being submitted to the donor agency. Some Board members suggested that ‘Peer Mentoring’ projects be a support service within investigative journalism projects, and requested that “funding for Tl’s should take precedence in our proposals and operational budget”. The Board also instructed the Secretariat to prioritize Grants proposals during fundraising. Free Press grant: “The Board was happy to approve the redirection of some of the money toward the FAIR ‘Stabilization Fund’, which can be used in emergencies or for urgent meetings”. It was suggested that FAIR open a separate bank account (investment type) for the Fund

Governance issues

The board of directors governs and deals with problems that the director brings to their attention, while the executive director focuses on managing the organization and staff. In doing so, the director should
make sure that programs are being efficiently run and that the staff is fulfilling their responsibilities, whether in teams or individually. The following new governance and legal systems have been implemented by FAIR:

- Notice of Employment laws available in the office.
- Payment requisition form produced
- Draft employment contracts prepared.
- Staff appraisal form developed.
- Annual financial audit submitted.
- Protocol on outgoing payments in place.

New Proposals

Rich List:

IJ Manual: A new chapter on climate change will be published by FAIR in 2012, with the support of KAS. Some suggest the titles “Investigative Mining” or “Carbon Trading” or “Resource Extraction

FAIR Awards

An earlier ‘Awards system proposal’ sets out two options: create yearly changing judging panels for the FAIR Awards, or stick with one panel of advisors/judges but ensure that this panel has sufficient (international) IJ expertise. Our esteemed colleagues in the GIJN would be happy to participate in both options, at least Brant Houston said he would and he thought others would too. Two votes for received for option number two (extend permanent judging council). No other votes were received. FAIR will make attempts to invite GIJN colleagues to strengthen FAIR Awards judging by becoming part of our Advisory Council, and to limit the FAIR Awards judging to those on the Advisory Council who have IJ expertise.

Memberships

FAIR has publicly listed the following membership benefits, which it needs to incorporate into its planning for 2012 activities:

- Increase your exposure as an investigative journalist in Africa;
- Receive regular updates on the hottest African headlines;
- Access Helpdesk services for professional contacts and useful databases and information;
- Receive updates on events, grants, awards, fellowships and investigative projects;
- Network with colleagues in Africa and all over the world;
- Liaise with publishers, researchers and media houses;
- Access to legal and trauma support when required.

Membership Cards

Total members in Sep 2011

Board duties

Board members each have an individual responsibility to monitor project, administrative, financial activities and all activities in general undertaken by the organization. It is therefore of great importance the Board members are provided with detailed and truthful reports by the employees of the organization – personified by the director- about these activities. Detailed and accurate information about the
organisations financial operations and management is crucial, as is oversight of the same. Existing members who cannot attend 4 meetings during their term may be replaced with new Board members.

FAIR Secretary General Theophilus Abbah formulated a “Draft protocol for Board members’ oversight functions and decision making” which was subsequently made available to Board members for review. In order to ensure that day to day operations by management continue fully whilst Board discussions and voting takes place, the Secretary General will issue directives from Board meetings and Board discussions to management on a regular basis. The objective of the ‘protocol document’ is to provide an official recommendation with regard to Board member duties and lines of communication with the Secretariat. A ‘sitting fee’ for Board members was proposed. A formal request has been submitted by Chief Bisong, on behalf the Board as follows:

The Director, FAIR, Johannesburg, SOUTH AFRICA
Dear Sir,
SITTING FEES FOR FAIR BOARD MEMBERS
In conformity with the resolution of the Board of August 30, 2011 which mandated me to formally write asking for sitting allowances for Board members, effective from this sitting and to be paid in arrears during the next Board meeting, I hereby submit the said demand. Perhaps I may not need to add here that the said resolution was unanimously supported by all Board members and this formal correspondence is to enable you make the necessary financial allocations using your own informed discretion on the amount pending a quitus from the Board during the next Board meeting due in late October or early November this year. Accept, Mr. Director, my most esteemed regards.
CHIEF BISONG ETAHOBEN

New FAIR website

During the past two months, staff at FAIR developed a new website which is available on http://fairreporters.wordpress.com/

We have completed the basic groundwork, and will be integrating podcasts, videos and other multimedia elements too. The website needs critical input from all members, to include comments about the design, layout, features, links, feeds, etc. The website belongs to all FAIR members, although it will be administered from the office.

During 2012, FAIR intends to publish a series of exclusive investigations through our website. Efforts are being made to have all content available in English, French and Portuguese. We are hoping to launch the website after the AGM. Lets build an award-winning website together!
Section B: Staff and Finance

Staff Contracts

The terms and format of new staff employment contracts for 2011 should include sections on ‘Appraisals’, etc. There are no ‘official’ employment contracts since 2009, due to relaxed governance and also board deliberations. A new employment contract template was formulated around the South African Labour Relations Act, and is awaiting Board approval. A list of activities will be drafted and approved by the Board for each staff member’s ‘duty sheet’ to accompany the contracts. The Board is requested to urgently finalize employment contracts for 2012 based on the budget plan and project activities.

Budget plan

The 2011 operational budget was revised according to recent donor contracts, where funds were allocated to specified line items. During 2011, FAIR received a total income of ZAR 1,632,125.00 from donors which include OSI, Hivos, FreePress and Unesco. For 2012, the funding situation is less than this year, with only some donors pledging to continue their support to FAIR projects and operational expenses. A budget projection has been developed which shows the organization is a healthy state despite a period of difficulty in 2011 when donor funds were paid out very late. Please refer to Annexure B: FAIR Operational Budget 2011-2012. The update was necessary to ensure all funds were being spent correctly, for both projects and Secretariat costs. Previous budget planning and subsequent payments during the period Sep 2010 – Sep 2011 were based around pledged funds from proposals, instead of actual amounts received after signing of contracts. There was no adjustment for currency fluctuation which resulted in smaller amounts received in our bank account.

Financial systems

Two proposals for accounting support were previously circulated to the Board, for review. One proposal is from Douglas & Velcich, who also specialize in auditing services for NGO’s. The other from CMDS in Cape Town. The Board agreed that “FAIR should make use of an accounting firm instead of individual consultants, and where possible implement our own system for monthly tax reporting and payments. The Secretariat is tasked by the Board to find out the cost of licensed accounting software, namely ‘Pastel for NGO’s’ and the related training support services, then seek approval from Board on the amount, followed by installation and training at the office.”

Internal audit

The internal audit function is an integral part of the corporate governance regime of most public companies and a number of larger private companies. The primary goal of internal audit is to evaluate the company’s risk management, internal control and corporate governance processes and ensure that they are adequate and are functioning correctly. The incoming director produced an independent internal audit
based on data provided by the staff members, and resulted in the current ‘Financial Statement Sep 2010 – Sep 2011.’ (Annexure A: Financial Statement FAIR (2011-2012) This exercise was beneficial to director, Board and staff, so that all previous misconceptions and allegations about financial irregularity could be outlined and explained. The Board advised that auditing should be “a natural oversight of the Director on a daily basis.

Annual Audit

All companies, whether public or private, are required to be audited in terms of the Companies Act of 1973. FAIR has submitted financial records to an auditing company, Douglas and Velcich, to review our 12-month financial statements with supporting documents. We await the auditor’s reply.
Section C: Activities and Outcomes

ACTIVITIES

1. Two transnational investigations and two cross border projects were carried out (target was five). Additionally, FAIR Award winner Emmanuel Mayah used his prize money to carry out his own – again award winning- cross border investigation into human trafficking.

2. FAIR investigations were published by 15 media in 15 countries (target was ten)

3. 23 new professional and six new aspiring members were signed up (target was 20). Additionally, the entire FAIR network, including students, veterans, editors, trainers and network members who do not pay membership fees now stands at 180+: an increase of 80.

4. The FAIR investigative editors and publishers list now comprises twenty six media houses in sixteen African countries (target was ten and ten). Specifically, new media partners include Blantyre Newspapers in Malawi (three titles), New Vision in Zambia and five media houses in Zimbabwe (through a new FAIR peer mentoring project). Partnerships with City Press and M & G in South Africa, the Namibian in Namibia, the Daily Trust, Business Times and Next in Nigeria, The Monitor and KFM in Uganda, Joy FM, the Crusading Guide and Ghana TV in Ghana, Business Times in Tanzania, La Nouvelle Gazette in Benin, l'Intelligent d’Abidjan and Le Jour Plus in Ivory Coast, La Gazette in Senegal, Canalmoz in Mozambique, Angolense in Angola, United Nations radio in Liberia, the Weekly Post and the Standard Tribune in Cameroon, Citizen TV and the Nation in Kenya, The Nation in Uganda and The Nation in Malawi are ongoing. UK-based Insight News and Al Jazeera are working with the FAIR network internationally.

5. The FAIR network came to the assistance of the Weekly Post in Cameroon, that suffered structural as well as physical attacks because of its investigative reporting. Partially thanks to FAIR campaigning, the Weekly Post, that was closed, has started operating again. (The target was to carry out this kind of assistance. No other call for help was received)

6. Francophone translation was established at the West African regional conference and at the African Investigative Journalism Conference. This resulted in a substantial influx of new francophone members and aspiring members as expected (half of the new FAIR members are francophone).

7. Three regional training conferences were held in the run up to the AIJC 2011, resulting in increased regional representation at the AIJC.

8. Peer mentoring stints are presently being conducted with Blantyre newspapers in Malawi in southern Africa; with IPS correspondents in Congo-Brazzaville; planned with PAIR, PANOS and WAJA in West Africa and, FAIR-only in Zimbabwe and Zambia (target was one peer mentoring activity in each region)

9. Peer mentoring was also provided in the course of the TI’s and the cross border investigations

10. Participation in regional and national IJ Awards: this target was only halfway met, with a partnership with the Wole Soyinka Award in West Africa on the cards. In southern Africa, discussions with Media 24 in SA should lead to a special Media 24 Award. Contact with the Norbert Zongo Award in West Africa still to be established. (Target was to establish partnerships on all regional journalism awards in Africa)

11. FAIR participation at the GIJC in Geneva was so well received that we were invited to host the next GIJC (discussion ongoing).

12. FAIR increasingly participates in global media development and IJ challenges debate (three FAIR debates were reflected on the Global List)

13. FAIR also participated in researching new IJ funding models (IJ Apps, SMS subscriptions). This research is under way and reaching project stage.

14. FAIR also participated increasingly in the global debate on media development in Africa.

15. Particularly its Transnational Investigations on soccer corruption (Killing soccer) and Robin Hood-type development (Social bandits) led to feedback in the global network and to international publications. As an extra result, we now have relations with HIVOS, the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association and the Commonwealth Foundation, Unesco and –once again-
Freevoice/Press Now. We have also started to approach the European Commission, in partnership with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. *Increasing sympathy and goodwill from funders and partners reflect the impact of FAIR's input*

16. New African-based CSO partners include WAJA and MFWA in Ghana, PANOS in Senegal, the Institute for Journalism in Nigeria, MISA, Humanitarian Information Facilitation Centre and Media Centre in Zimbabwe, REDD in the DRC, Makerere University in Uganda. Earlier partnerships with the Wole Soyinka Institute, the University of the Witwatersrand, Angolan women journalists association and Cipmoz in Mozambique are ongoing.

17. Qualifying entries for the FAIR Awards went up from 25 in 2009 to 39 in 2011.

18. Local and regional IJ output sent to FAIR from the network came up to 27 published stories of good IJ standard over the project period, i.e. an average of slightly over two per month. In comparison: in the period 1 June 2009 to 1 June 2010, 15 samples of passable IJ standard were received. This does not necessarily mean that FAIR was able to capture all African IJ output during the project period, or that no other African IJ output was produced. FAIR is aware that many media in Africa produce, for example, regular stories about corruption, that have investigative components. The increase, however, does mean that an increased number of colleagues in Africa wish to comply with FAIR standards and seek FAIR endorsement for, and showcasing of, what they do. There is also a tangible increase in quality of African IJ work sent to FAIR for endorsement and showcasing. (This is not counting the FAIR award entries. If we combine results 16 and 17, the numbers go up from 40 African IJ stories sent to FAIR in 2009, to 60 in 2010: an increase of 50 %.)

19. There were no individual FAIR grants allocated in 2011. This is due to the collapse of our former grant funder, Freevoice. (In this light, the result of 60 good African IJ stories (that we know of) produced during the project period, is even more impressive. Its shows that the ‘IJ spark’ is catching on. It is to be expected that with the reinstating of the FAIR grants, the African IJ output by individual African IJ’s for their own media houses, will again go up significantly.)

20. FAIR increased its own revenue by US 7 000 as a result of publications sold and by US 2 000 in membership fees.

21. FAIR investigations’ effect on civil society movement has not been surveyed, but it is gauged from incidental reports that ‘Killing soccer’ led to social debates, involving many media and citizens, in Ivory Coast and Cameroon; that FAIR work on human trafficking is used by civil society organisations for a better understanding of the phenomenon and that ‘Social bandits’ has done its bit to increase awareness of African developmental processes both in Africa and globally.

**OUTCOMES**

FAIR membership services, FAIR Awards, FAIR peer mentoring and FAIR team investigations, as well as the international showcasing of ‘best African investigative journalism’ have led to:
- Growth of the FAIR network and FAIR as an organization
- Impact of African investigative journalism and FAIR itself in media in Africa and internationally
- Impact of FAIR in the global media development debate
- Impact of FAIR in the global debate on African development

**Way forward**

An important new situation is created by FAIR’s growth and its extended prospective funding base. Until now, FAIR could be managed—and was managed—by a small core of idealists, where energy and passion made up for a lack of other than journalism and ‘basic common sense’ skills. Now that FAIR is becoming a multi-sourced institution with an increased range and scope of activities, more formal and established management is needed to sail the ship. In the upcoming period, FAIR plans to ensure that the core management needs that come with a more developed organization are met—without losing sight of the energy, values and passion that made the organization what it is today. That must stay, too: investigative journalism is all about values and passion, after all.