"How to engage in broadband policy and regulatory processes" four-day residential course: Report

April 5 – 8th, 2013

Bangalore, India

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Introduction

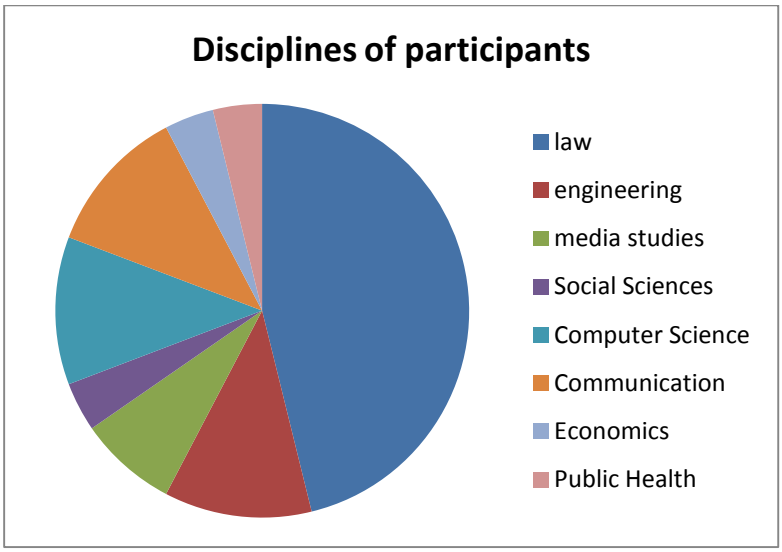
LIRNE*asia* is undertaking a multi-phase, research- and documentation-based initiative funded by the Ford Foundation to inform and engage decision makers and stakeholders in India (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, the Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, senior executives from operators, senior academics and civil-society leaders) about good practices in policy and regulatory issues affecting broadband access. The intention is to promote learning among the stakeholders and the facilitation of a policy discourse that takes into account the interests of the poor. The project will be carried out through the provision of web-based information and a series of short courses and structured conversations whereby Indian policy makers and stakeholders are assisted to evolve solutions to problems keeping broadband from the many.

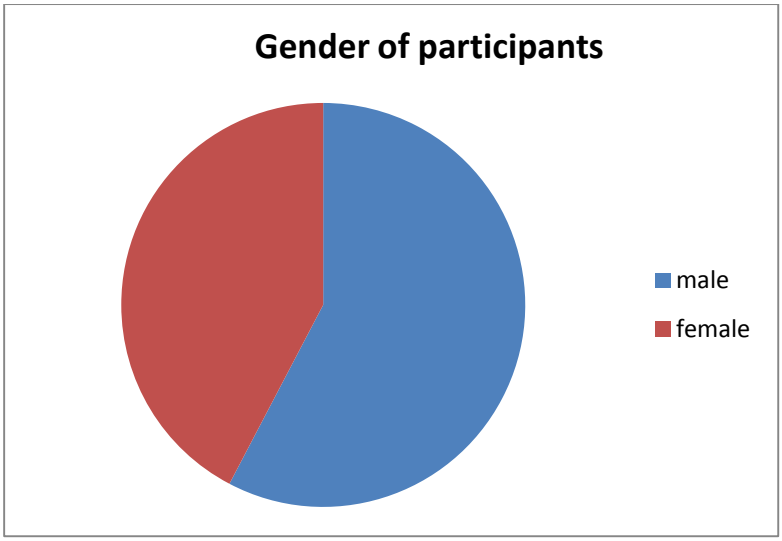
The Expert Forum on Broadband Policy and Regulation Conducive to Access by the Poor was organized by LIRNE*asia* as a first step in launching the Ford Foundation funded project. This was a small interactive event to gain insights from experts including regulators and policy makers from India, Hong Kong, South Africa and Bhutan. The topics covered included regional specificities of broadband development, contributions that could be made to an improved investment environment by licensing policies, the opportunities presented by the "digital dividend" repurposing of frequencies for broadband development and metrics to assess efficacy of broadband policies.

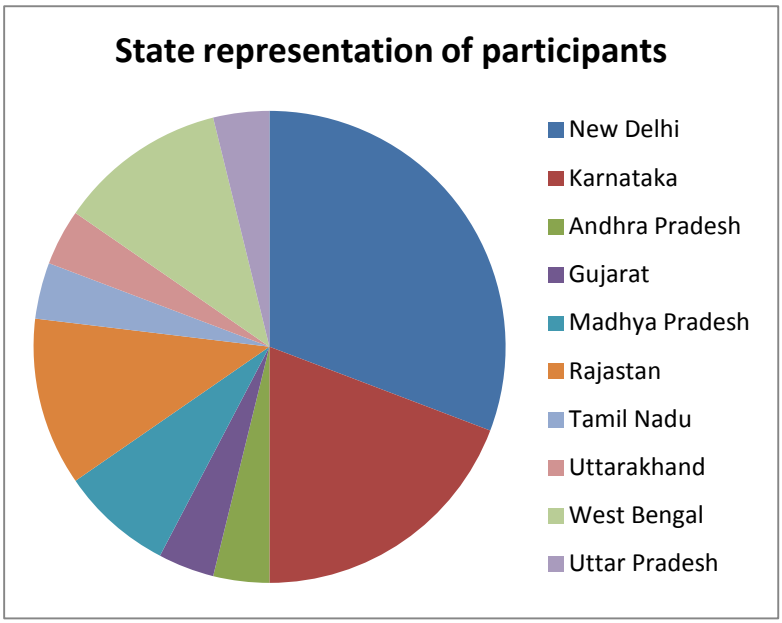
As the second step of this project, LIRNEasia in collaboration with Indian Journal of Law and Technology IJLT (National Law School of India University, Bangalore) organized a 4-day residential course on "How to engage in broadband policy and regulatory processes" at Citrus Hotel, Bangalore. The main goal was to enable members of Indian civil-society groups to marshal available research and evidence for effective participation in broadband policy and regulatory processes, thereby facilitating and enriching policy discourse on means of increasing broadband access by the poor.

Participants

Out of 88 applicants, 25 participants were selected, based on their potential to engage in broadband policy discourse, interest in the subject and previous experience. Diversity was also a factor that was taken into account as this course is an interactive course where participants are expected to learn from each other. A program manager of accessibility from the Centre for Internet and Society who is visually impaired herself was able to highlight the importance of ICT accessibility. The following charts show the participants according to their disciplines, gender and region. While 46% was from a law background, they were in different stages of the career and were studying law from diverse angles (including lawyers, lecturers, students, and those working at civil society organizations such as Centre for Internet and Society).


Disciplines of participants
law
engineering
media studies
Social Sciences
Computer Science
Communication
Economics
Public Health


Gender of participants
male
female


State representation of participants
New Delhi
Karnataka
Andhra Pradesh
Gujarat
Madhya Pradesh
Rajastan
Tamil Nadu
Uttarakhand
West Bengal
Uttar Pradesh

Course Format and Assignments

A combination of teaching formats was used to enhance collaboration, open discussion and build a thorough grounding in Broadband Policy and Regulation. Lectures, panel discussions, team work, and individual assignments were utilized as teaching tools. Following is the Course Schedule and a brief summary of the 4-day course. The presentations used for the lectures have been uploaded here

Course schedule

	Day1 (April 5)	Day2 (April 6)	Day3 (April 7)	Day4 (April 8)
0900-1030	S1 Introduction (Rohan Samarajiva RS)	S5 Interrogating supply-side indicators (RS & RLG)	S8 Indian broadband policy & regulatory environment in relation to comparator countries (Satyen Gupta SG)	S13 Research on subsidies in broadband eco system (PM)
1030-1100	Break	Break	Break	Break
1100-1200	S2 Research on significance of broadband/Internet (Payal Malik PM)	S6 Assessing & summarizing research (RS & NK)	S9 Policy/regulatory questions amenable to evidence (PM)	S14 Spectrum policy debates (SG & Moinul Zaber MZ)
1200-1300	S3 Finding research (NK)	S7 The art of media interaction (RS)	S10 Making policy & doing regulation (RS & SG)	S15 Framing issues (RS)
1300-1400	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1400-1500	A1 Group formation; Assignments explained (Roshanthi Lucas Gunaratne RLG & Nilusha Kapugama NK)	A2 Rewriting research summaries & preparing presentations	S11 Influencing policy using evidence (RS, PM, SG)	A5 Mock public hearing (RS & panel)
1500-1530	Break	Break	Break	Break
1530-1700	S4 Demand-side research (RS)	A3 Presentation & critique of research summaries (PM & RS)	S12 International policy debates on Internet and broadband (RS)	A5 Mock public hearing & critique (RS & panel)
1700-	Research	Group work	Group work	

Day 1

The course commenced with an introductory session by Rohan Samarajiva (Director of the project and Chair of LIRNEasia) on the objectives of the course, methods of teaching, introduction of faculty and effective communication techniques. The intention was to give the grounding on the first day so that the sessions on the next few days can build on the first day's sessions. Therefore importance of Broadband/Internet to a country, basic research skills such as how to find relevant research, and an introduction into demand side research were covered in the morning session. In the afternoon, participants were formed into groups of 5, and the assignments were introduced.

Assignment 1 required each participant to research a randomly assigned broadband-related topic and write the different viewpoints, it's relevance to India and their conclusion, based on existing research available online using the research skills covered in the morning session. All participants were asked to be prepared to make an oral presentation on day 2 but only 12 randomly selected participants actually speak due to lack of time.

Assignment 2 was to be performed by the formed teams and to be started at the evening of day 2. The participants were asked to imagine that the Indian Department of Telecommunications was seeking input on the question of subsidizing fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) as the second phase of the current INR 20,000 Crore (USD 4 Billion) National Optical Fiber Network initiative and was holding a public hearing. Each team was given one of the following roles and asked to prepare a policy brief and presentation based on evidence from the point of view of their team. The topics of assignment 1 were selected so that they can feed into the research for assignment 2.

The teams were:
1 Bharat BB network limited – Special Purpose Vehicle put in place to implement NOFN
2 Indiacom: New fixed broadband entrant
3 SCAI: Society for Consumer Action India
4 WAOAI (Wireless Access Operators Association, India)
5 Policy Research India (Think Tank)

Day 2

Building from the previous day, supply-side data and research were examined, and the importance of putting data in context and reading the 'small print' when researching was discussed. The importance and techniques of interacting with media regarding policy issues, as well as how to summarize research was also covered in day 2. In the afternoon session, the selected 12 participants presented their findings and the instructional team collected the research summaries to provide written feedback on all of them by the start of day 3.

Participants were asked to commence Assignment 2 in teams after the sessions.

Day 3

Day 3 started with an introduction of the Indian broadband policy and regulatory environment by Satyen Gupta who has worked with the Indian government for many years and is currently the 'Secretary General, NGN Forum, India'. Then Payal Malik introduced the subject of broadband policy issues

amenable to evidence, which was followed by two discussions on the practical aspects of making policy decisions in reality through a panel discussion with Payal, Satyen and Rohan, drawing from their experience in working with regulators, government, etc. The day concluded with an interesting talk about International Broadband Policy debates by Rohan Samarajiva, and an example of a policy debate which happened recently regarding efforts to impose the sending party network pays principle on Internet traffic.

The certificate presentation ceremony (it was decided to have the certificate presentation on Day 3 as most participants had flights out of Bangalore in the evening of Day 4) was organized at the roof top restaurant of the Hotel followed by a special dinner. Prof Hedge (specializing in International Trade and Business Law at the NLSIU) distributed the certificates.

Day 4

The morning session of day 4 started with a lecture on subsidies in the Broadband eco system. Then spectrum management and related policy were introduced as spectrum is considered a major resource needed to improve broadband penetration in India. Rohan conducted the concluding session of the course which was on framing issues, and asked the participants to give feedback on the course. The afternoon session was the mock public hearing that was part of assignment 2.

After the presentations by the five groups the judgment panel consisting of Satyen Gupta, Payal Malik, and Sunil Abraham (Executive Director, Centre for Internet and Society) deliberated and gave their final judgment. The winning team was the 'Wireless Access Operators Association, India' based on their content, argument, evidence presented and presentation technique.

The final judgment by the panel was the following.

Authority reserved the final decision, as it may require internal deliberations based on the new inputs provided by stakeholders and therefore suggested that the interested party should look out for the final determination in the next few days on their website.

However, main contours of the outcome are announced to be;

i.) Subsidy for access network will be provided in a technology neutral manner, through a least cost subsidy auction to only one network per Gram Panchayat. No exclusivity to the access network provider who wins the auction, it will have to operate in an open access manner, as the costs have already been defrayed and there are no investments to protect.
ii.) Backhaul bandwidth will be provided by BBNL at a subsidized rate (tariff to be determined by the regulator), treating the Capex on NOFN as Sunk cost by USOF.
iii) There is no case for direct transfer of subsidy to end users as focus is on Infrastructure creation.

Faculty

Rohan Samarajiva, PhD

Rohan Samarajiva was the founding CEO (2004 - 2012) and is Chair (2004 – onwards) of LIRNEasia.

Previously he was the Team Leader at the Sri Lanka Ministry for Economic Reform, Science and Technology (2002-04) responsible for infrastructure reforms, including participation in the design of the USD 83 million e Sri Lanka Initiative. He was Director General of Telecommunications in Sri Lanka (1998-99), a founder director of the ICT Agency of Sri Lanka (2003-05), Honorary Professor at the University of Moratuwa in Sri Lanka (2003-04), Visiting Professor of Economics of Infrastructures at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands (2000-03) and Associate Professor of Communication and Public Policy at the Ohio State University in the US (1987-2000). He was Policy Advisor to the Ministry of Post and Telecom in Bangladesh (2007-09).

He serves as Senior Advisor to Sarvodaya (Sri Lanka's largest community based organization) on ICT matters. Samarajiva is a Board Member of Communication Policy Research south, an initiative to identify and foster policy intellectuals in emerging Asia. He serves on the editorial boards of seven academic journals.

Payal Malik

Payal Malik is a Senior Research Fellow of LIRNEasia and an Associate Professor of Economics at the Delhi University. She is currently on deputation to the Competition Commission of India. She is also associated with National Council of Applied Economic Research and Indicus Analytics. She received her Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.), and MA in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics and BA in Economics from Lady Shriram College, University of Delhi. She also has a MBA in Finance from the University of Cincinnati.

She has several years of research experience on the issues of competition and regulation in network industries like power, telecommunication and water. In addition, she has done considerable research on the ICT sector. Recently she has been actively engaged in competition policy research. At LIRNEasia, she has led research on measuring India's telecom sector and regulatory performance, including a study on Universal Service Instruments. She has written both for professional journals as well as for the economic press. Currently she is a regular columnist for the Financial Express, India and a referee for the Information Technologies and International Development journal published by University of Southern California.

Satyen Gupta

Satyen Gupta is the founder and Secretary General, NGN Forum, India. Previously he was the chief of Corporate Affairs, Sterlinte Technologies Ltd and headed the Regulatory and Govt. Affairs for BT global Services for SAARC Region and handled licensing, regulation, compliance, competition and Industry Advocacy issues. He is also a member of the Advisory Board of Creation and Implementation of National Optical Fibre Network for the government of India (2011 onwards). From 2000-2006 he served as the Principal Advisor, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India at the level of additional secretary to the government of India and headed the fixed network division. He is the author of "Everything Over IP-All you want to know about NGN" (2011).

He has conducted and taught many courses on telecommunication technologies, policy and regulation. He is also a Govt. Affairs and Regulatory advocate. He graduated with Honors in Engineering in 1979 from NIT, Kurukshetra University and went on to complete his post graduate studies in Electronics Design Technology at CEDT, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Nilusha Kapugama

Nilusha Kapugama is a Research Manager at LIRNEasia and manages the electricity component of the 2012-2014 IDRC Project on 'Achieving e-inclusion by improving government service delivery & exploring the potential of "big data" for answering development questions'.

She is also working on a systematic review looking at the economic impacts of mobile phones. Previously she managed the Knowledge Based Economy project at LIRNEasia, which looked at the information and knowledge gaps in agriculture supply chains. She also worked on CPRsouth, LIRNEasia's capacity-building initiative to develop Asia-Pacific expertise and knowledge networks in ICT policy regulation. She has also done research on broadband quality indicators and national regulatory authority (NRA) website indicators. She has also worked on LIRNEasia's Virtual Organization Project. She has experience organizing international conferences and training courses.

She holds a master's degree in development economics and policy from the University of Manchester, UK.

Roshanthi Lucas Gunaratne

Roshanthi is a Research Manager at LIRNEasia and is currently managing the Ford Foundation Funded project on Giving Broadband Access to the Poor in India.

She is also contributing to the IDRC Customer Lifecycle Management Practices Project by conducting research on customer lifecycle management practices in telecommunication sector in Bangladesh.

Before joining LIRNE*asia*, Roshanthi worked at the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Geneva, Switzerland as a Strategic Information Officer. She contributed to the process of defining the Global Fund Key Performance Indicators, and also worked on improving the performance measurements of their grants. Prior to that, she worked as a telecom project manager at Dialog Telecom, and Suntel Ltd in Sri Lanka. As Suntel she managed the design and implementation of corporate customer projects.

She holds a MBA from the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, UK and a BSc. Eng (Hons) specializing in Electronics and Telecommunication from the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.

Moinul Zaber

Moinul Islam Zaber is currently pursuing his doctoral studies on telecommunication policy at the department of Engineering and Public Policy of Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, U.S.A. His research is focused on ascertaining the economic and technological consequences of various regulatory decisions on the telecommunication market and the decision-making processes obtained by the regulators. He is currently on study leave from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, where he is an assistant professor at the Department of Computer Science and Engineering.

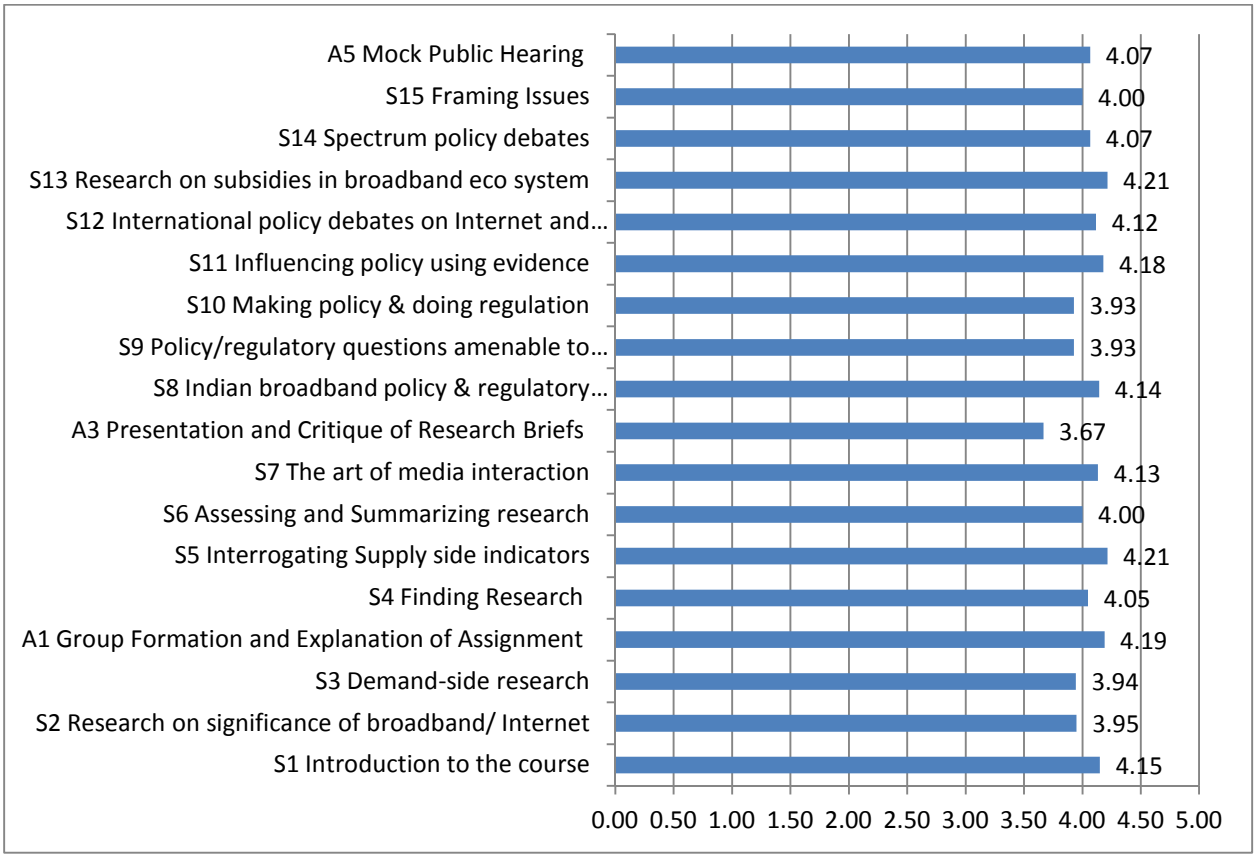
Mr. Zaber's research interest encompasses telecommunication policy, diffusion of technology, complex network analysis, new media and social networks. At LIRNEasia Moinul is engaged in the capacity building project for the telecommunication industry regulators focusing broadband diffusion.

He holds an M.S. and a B.S. degree in Computer Science and Engineering from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Evaluations

The course evaluations were positive, with only 1 session (A3 – Presentation and critique of research briefs received 3.67)[1] out of 18 sessions receiving an average score below 3.9 on a five-point scale as can be seen from the diagram below. All the topics and speakers were highly rated.

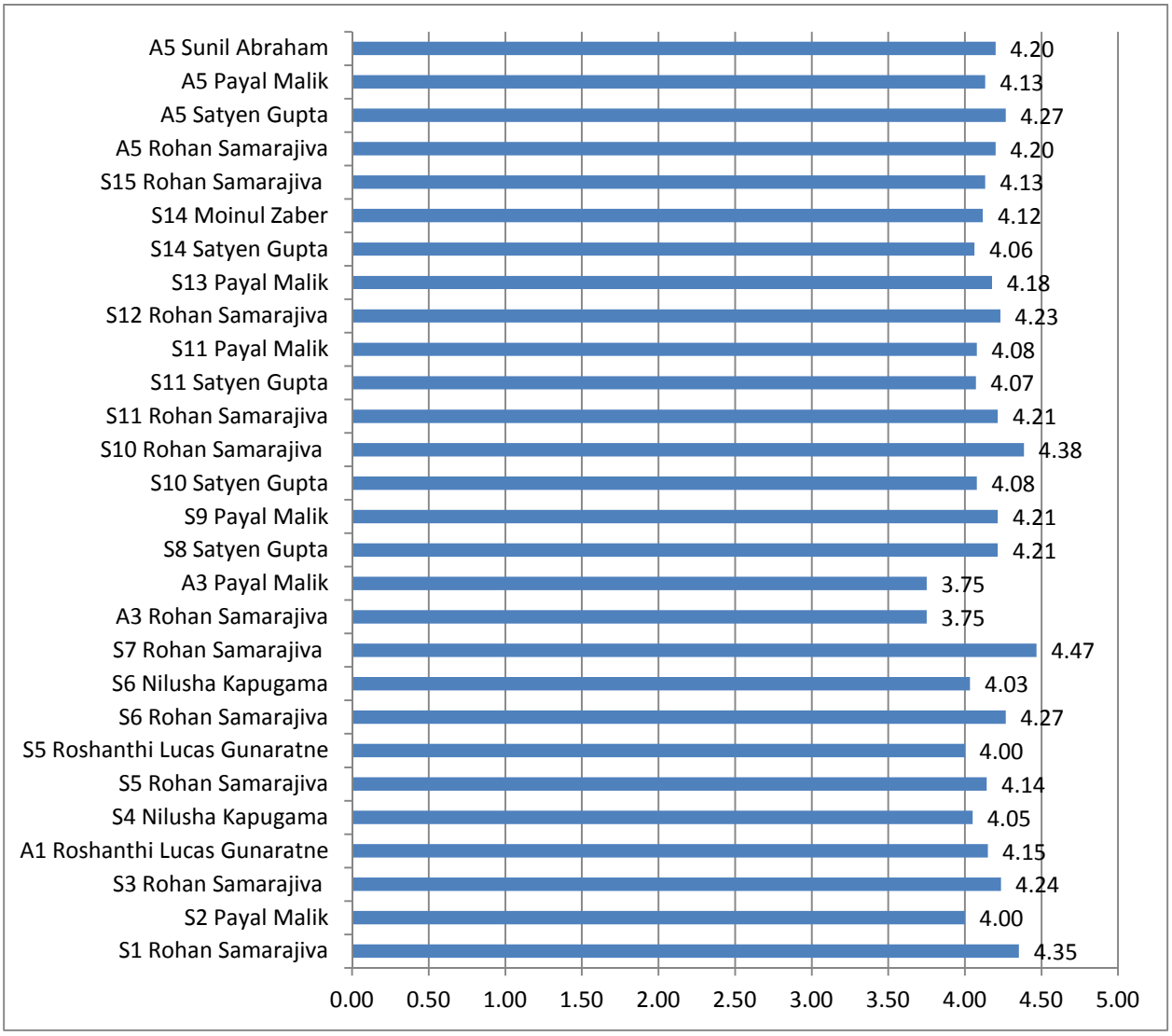
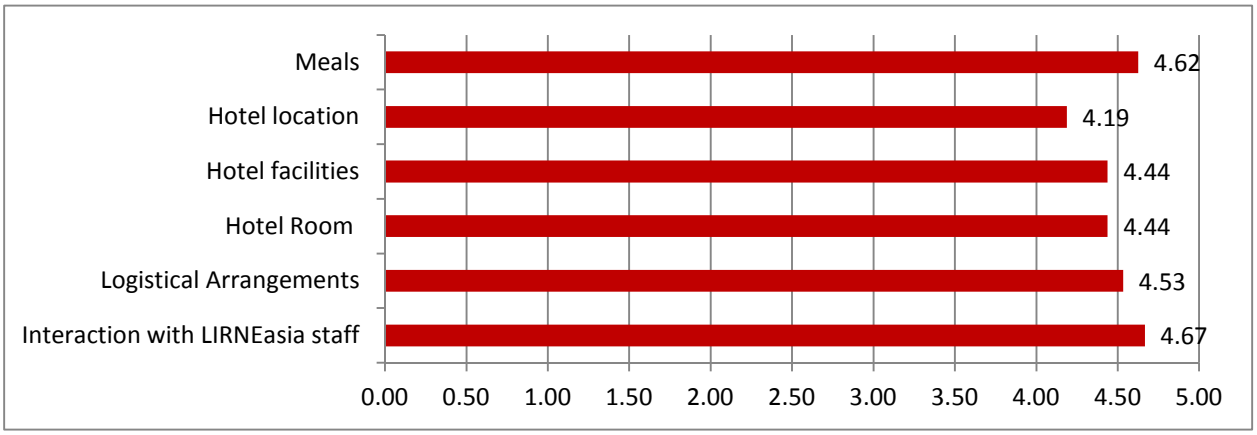
Session Ratings



As evidence of the utility of the course, at the end of day 1, one participant asked permission to invite his daughter working at Tata Consultancy for days 2-4 (with the participant paying for all additional expenses) as he thought she would benefit from the course as well.

[1] This was the first assignment where the participants were divided into 2 groups with Rohan Samarajiva being the facilitator of one group and Payal Malik facilitating the other group. Only 6 out of the group of 12/13 were randomly selected to present their findings. When answering the evaluation sheet, most people have given the same rating for both facilitators, even though they only worked with one. Therefore the results were most likely flawed by a design issue in the evaluation form.

Speaker Ratings



Logistical Ratings