ANNEXURE I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

1. Do you believe that print journalists are susceptible to armchair reporting?
   Yes / No

2. If yes, please mark the reason / reasons for such inclination?
   a) Lack of adequate resources for undertaking ground reporting
   b) Manipulation by sources such as political parties or their leaders
   c) A pre-dominantly urban audience whose probability of checking the veracity
      of contents / news items on rural issues like the panchayat elections is much
      less
   d) Lack of adequate space in daily newspapers
   e) Policy of the news organization to undermine news reports on rural issues

3. The importance of newspapers or other media of communication is less in local
   elections when compared to the state or national elections?
   Yes / No

4. If yes what, according to you, is the reason behind the reduced importance of
   mass media in local elections and local politics?
   a) Strong inter-personal relationship between community members, which
      includes both election candidates as well as voters
   b) Insensitive outlook of the mass media as evident from the reports preceding
      panchayat elections on the working of the panchayats in West Bengal
      prompted the audience (both voters and candidates) to give less importance
      to mass media
   c) Focus of newspaper reports rarely on issues pertaining to the panchayats or
      on the performance of panchayat bodies or status of its members but rather
      on the poll equation between political parties, violence in the lead-up to the
      panchayat elections, policies undertaken by the State government vis-à-vis
      the panchayats and administrative measures relating to the panchayat
      elections.

5. Who, according to you, is more authentic and credible as a news source?
   Grassroots panchayat member / Leader or spokesperson of a political party
6. News on panchayat elections concerning the activities of panchayat bodies, participation quotient of grassroots members and the political empowerment of the rural masses fail to generate interest among the dominant urban readers of mainstream newspapers?

Yes / No

7. If yes, is this a determining factor for selecting news on panchayats for these newspapers?

Yes / No

8. While collecting and disseminating news for their newspapers, reporters and editors are bound to tread the line earmarked by their organization

Yes / No

9. If yes, do such regimentation result in the standardization and homogeneity of news content presented by the mainstream newspapers

Yes / No

10. If the above is a reality then the possibility of hearing the alternative views or the dissenting voice is

None / Once in a while / Never