

Excerpt from COVA Annual Report 2003-2004

‘Partners in Victory’ Campaign

As part of the process to normalize relations between India and Pakistan, the governments of both countries agreed to organize cricket matches during March and April 2004. Though the intention was to bring the countries together, there were also apprehensions that this “battle” on the cricket ground could spill over and vitiate the atmosphere of the sub continent and further jeopardize the peace process. In order to ensure that the game is accepted in the correct spirit and the cricket series promote good will instead of generating antagonism, COVA proposed the “Flags for Peace” Campaign. The idea behind this Campaign was very simple. That as many people in the stadium where matches are being played wave flags of both India and Pakistan together instead of waving the flags of their country alone. Secondly special badges were designed bearing the legend “Partners in Victory” and flags of both India and Pakistan. This proposal of COVA was received enthusiastically by many organizations in India and more so in Pakistan. The campaigns were organized in all the cities where matches were being played in Pakistan by a number of organizations like Pakistan Peace Coalition, South Asia Partnership – Pakistan, PIPFPD, PILER and many other organizations of Pakistan who produced flags, badges, bumper stickers in large numbers for the campaign. The campaign was also organized in a number of cities like Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkatta and others.

Several noted sportspersons, peace activists and other celebrities of India and Pakistan endorsed this campaign. Prominent amongst these were Admiral Ramdas, Mr. Kuldip Nayar, Swami Agnivesh, Ms Shabana Azmi, Mr. Arshad Ayub, Mr. Gopichand Ms. Nanditha Das and Mr. Tom Alter from India and Mr. Zaheer Abbas, Mr. Saleem Yusuf (former National Cricket Selector), Little Master Hanif Muhammed. Hockey champion Iftikhar Syed and Flying Horse Sami of Pakistan. The success of this campaign was evident from the number of people who were holding and waving flags of both the countries during the matches. The media coverage was extensive and very appreciative. The impact of this simple campaign in generative positive sentiments especially