

THE NEED TO STIMULATE COMMUNITY ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION

ORGANISED BY COPASAH THEMATIC HUB ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & ACCOUNTABILITY:

Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ)

March 22-24, 2018 at Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi, India

UPDATES



DAY 1 – March 22, 2018

COPASAH's Thematic Hub on Reproductive Health and Accountability, which is anchored by Centre for Health and Social Justice kick-started its Round-Table Discussion Themed: The Need to Stimulate Community Action and Accountability in Reproductive Health in New-Delhi on March 22. The thematic hub coordinator Sana Contractor set out the tone for the Roundtable Discussion and outlined that the roundtable aimed to explore and deliberate upon the current knowledge and practice around community participation and accountability efforts in reproductive health globally, and in different regions apart from drawing learnings for the practice of accountability and community participation, from grassroots efforts that have attempted to strengthen bottom-up accountability in reproductive health through involving communities. Connecting the agenda to the practitioners centric COPASAH Global Symposium to be held in 2019, she contextualized the deliberations aiming to propose future directions of work for the COPASAH RH hub around strengthening the practice of community participation and bottom-up accountability, building evidence on existing efforts and influencing global policy processes. This Roundtable brought together group of civil society actors, researchers, practitioners Peru, Chile, Belgium, Geneva, Nigeria, Tanzania, Nepal, Bangladesh and India.

SESSION I: Community Participation, Accountability and Reproductive Health – Laying the ground

This session outlined the key concerns in the current discourse around reproductive health, community participation and accountability. Putting up a right based focus to health; Abhijit Das COPASAH Global Convener traced the evolution of reproductive health policies and programmes. Vicky Boydell from PopCouncil deliberated upon the emerging discourse and evidence on accountability in Reproductive Health. And Renu Khanna from SAHAJ, laid out the historical perspective of women's health movement

engagement in reproductive health and social accountability India and out areas where action is required in order to re-politicise “community participation”.

SESSION II: Rights-based concerns around reproductive health and efforts to engage communities: Regional perspectives from South Asia, Latin America, Africa

Moderated by Jashodhara Dasgupta this session saw discussions on regional specificities and experiences around rights-based feminist reproductive health concerns and the practice of community participation and accountability. Inputs by Ariel from Peru, Wilson from Nigeria, Michelle from Chile, Shireen from Bangladesh and Reena from Nepal outlined the regional Reproductive Health and sexual health rights including FGM, abortion, contraception, obstetric violence etc. In the session cross cutting issues across regions like under resourced health systems, lack of accountability culture, high corruption levels in health systems and the private sector capturing the discourse etc. were also discussed.

SESSION III: Community participation and bottom up accountability – Experiences from India to address reproductive health concerns

Moderated by Asha George this session presented examples of practice of communities engaging meaningfully in both - framing the reproductive health concerns and in devising strategies for addressing them. Building on previous sessions, we will attempt to draw out how some of the concerns raised in the earlier sessions can be addressed through more “political” practice.

Different presentations were made in the session on :

- Organizing women to demand Maternal Health Rights in Uttar Pradesh– Y K Sandhya (SAHAYOG)
- Legal and Social Accountability to realize the maternal health rights of tea garden workers in Assam – Jayshree Satpute (Nazdeek)
- Negotiating accountability in family planning programs –Sandhya Gautum , NAMHHR
- Blowing the lid on un-indicated hysterectomies in Karnataka – Akhila Vasan/Teena Xavier (Karnataka Janarogya Chaluvalli)
- Dalit women’s organizing around health rights – E.Premdas , Jagrut Mahila Sangathan

The Day 1 of the Round Table Discussion ended with a collective reflection on sexual health and reproductive rights and accountability and the role of community.

UPDATES

DAY 2 – March 23, 2018

The second day of the Round Table Discussion started with COPASAH Convener Abhijit Das setting the context for the day.

SESSION I: Linking Local Efforts with Global Advocacy: Opportunities and challenges

This session mapped the avenues of global advocacy and focus on how local evidence generation and accountability efforts can feed into global accountability mechanisms such as the PMNCHA, IAP, FP 2020 etc. Moderated by Ariel, this session saw Azra from ARROW and Aparajita Gogoi, saw the panelists – reflect on questions like what are the opportunities/platforms for global advocacy vis a vis RH and the potential for using these platform and how can local data/information/efforts be linked to these platforms.

SESSION II: Group work – Moving Forward

The second session for the day involved group work wherein the participants deliberated on the key point of how should COPASAH engage with social accountability and Community Participation in the domains of Practice, Advocacy and Documentation and collectively discussed on the practical steps of going ahead. Within all groups the participants also deliberated on how different individual participants wanted to contribute.

- 1) **Practice** – The group anchored by E. Premdas saw the group members reflect on what needs to be done to strengthen COPASAH's core mandate of strengthening practice - capacity building, peer-to-peer learning, disseminating bottom up models community action, seeding new interventions - within the RH domain
- 2) **Documentation** – Under the anchorage of Masuma this group deliberated on what kind of evidence documentation is required and how can it be achieved with participation of partners?
- 3) **Advocacy** – This group was anchored by Ariel and under his leadership the group discussed about different kinds of avenues available for COPASAH to collaborate with advocacy organizations/networks to influence the global advocacy agenda in RH. The group also deliberated upon what should COPASAH's role be in this regard?

SESSION III

Moderated by Renu Khanna, the last session of the day summed up the group work discussions and pointed out that the responsibilities were identified by the three groups, the collective tasks of re-writing the concept note of the charter of the Reproductive Health Thematic Hub, apart from the collective responsibility of the three groups of consolidating the agenda.