

COPASAH Communiqué, Issue 16

Editorial

COPASAH, the Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health, was initiated as an idea of global solidarity of practitioners in accountability in 2011. We are completing eventful five years in December 2016! It is a time for celebration as well introspection.

Over the five years COPASAH has grown as a community of over 600 practitioners from across the globe. It also has been able to establish itself as a dynamic Community of Practice with a very strong communication mechanism for sharing of practice. The practice of practitioner to practitioner- exchange has built a case for a bottom up and peer based learning and participatory knowledge building process as an important contribution of COPASAH for field building. Linking ground level practice to that of knowledge making is an important feature through which COPASAH stands out. The idea of accountability, including the important component of social accountability is now an acknowledged approach in international development including in the field of health. The field of practitioners is organized in COPASAH through three regional practice nodes in South Asia, East –Southern Africa and Latin America. Relationships have developed with organisations in Eastern Europe. The COPASAH presence and inputs at the Fourth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research (GSHSR) in November 2016 served as a platform for the convergence of energies for the future of COPASAH.

The field of accountability is fast changing and the issues calling for accountability are also changing colours. These changes set a challenging context for COPASAH. Positively, the core principles of participation, transparency and accountability have gained credibility and traction in the field of health. Focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides a unique opportunity for COPASAH to foreground the factor of accountability in multiple SDGs to strengthen an inclusive health governance agenda within the overall framework of health interventions. Despite the lofty goals of achievement, accountability towards these goals at the international and national level still remains an unanswered question. The strategic meeting of a think -tank of COPASAH organised in November 2016, reconfirmed the need for a southern global platform like COPASAH with its unique strategy of linking the field of practice and policy.

As we step into the fourth phase of COPASAH (COPASAH IV) in 2017, we hope to continue strengthening the work that has begun. Accountability is important and it cannot be thrust upon in top-down manner, neither can it be a research tool alone for the experts. The accountability, ultimately, has to be to the ‘citizens’ and to those individuals and communities who are considered ‘non-citizens’ or lesser-citizens. Accountability has to be understood as a medium and a process for a shift in the ‘power balance’ between state authorities and the communities. Some strides can be made in this when the voice of the citizens and communities become articulate and audible. Through the grounded practice and a robust global solidarity, COPASAH would like to pursue determinedly the processes of influencing the global policy processes to centre stage social accountability and citizen engagement both through the community empowerment processes and institutionalizing effective participatory and community-centred governance mechanisms.

About the author

E. Premdas Pinto-Edward Premdas Pinto is the Global Secretariat Coordinator for COPASAH. As an Advocacy and Research Director at Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ), India, he facilitates the thematic area of social accountability with a special focus on processes of community monitoring and accountability in health. He also coordinates the South Asia region for COPASAH. He is a Human Rights advocate and Public Health practitioner- scholar, actively engaged in processes and social justice issues of the the communities of Dalit Women, rural unorganized labourers and other disadvantaged communities for the last 22 years.

To know more about the work of CHSJ and COPASAH please visit, www.chsj.org and www.copasah.net
