

Research Roundtable on
Social Movements and Accountability Processes:
“Comparative research on citizen participation
and social accountability processes”



Co-hosted by - COPASAH – T/A Initiative
September 28-29, 2015
Hotel Silver Ferns, Saket, New Delhi, India

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Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health (COPASAH) and Transparency and Accountability Initiative (T/A Initiative) jointly held a two day research roundtable on the theme of SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES, formulated as a roundtable on “Comparative research on citizen participation and social accountability processes” on September 28-29 in New-Delhi, India.

The experiences and expertise from across eight countries were represented in the roundtable from diverse fields of practice such as right to food campaign, right to information, right to health, social exclusion (Dalit & Manual Scavenger and Roma movement) and that of accountability. The delegates in the round table included practitioners and activists from different social movements, practitioners engaged in the field practice of transparency and accountability, representatives of funding organizations, foundations and INGOs, and these comprised of representatives from G-Watch –Ateneo School of Government (Philippines),GOAL-Uganda, National Alliance for Maternal Health and Human Rights (India), Centre for Health and Justice (India) COPASAH, International Budget Partnership (India), Engine Room, T/AI, Institute of Development Studies, MKSS (India), People’s Health Movement(India), Amalipe Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance- Bulgaria; Karnataka Dalit Movement&Safaikarmachari KavaluSamithi (India),Right to Food Campaign and PRIA (India).

The round table dialogue was premised upon the understanding that the contributions and role of social movements in various sectors of social accountability is not given due recognition. This roundtable was a continuum of discussions carried out by T/AI with different stakeholders earlier. The participants at this roundtable attempted to create a social movement’s oriented

knowledge agenda on social accountability and draw upon the contributions of various social movements for the accountability sector through a series of group discussions and group activities.

COPASAH at the roundtable: COPASAH was also introduced to the members at the roundtable where COPASAH global coordinator, E. Premdas deliberated upon the global network and its outreach and different peer based strategies and capacity building activities pursued by COPASAH. COPASAH knowledge products including COPASAH issue papers, case studies, brief on COPASAH, COPASAH Communiqué were also showcased at the roundtable and these were well received by the participants.



COPASAH global coordinator E. Premdas introducing COPASAH to participants at the roundtable

A systematic understanding was developed on the social movements through group work by the participants in the two days of the roundtable. Participants through examples of Right to

Food Campaign, Question of Education Campaign being implemented by MKSS in Rajasthan India, People's Health Movement (India) and Dalit Movement in Karnataka (India), consolidated the learnings on contributions of these social movements around transparency and accountability processes and their structures, strategies, successes and challenges in movements, strengths in mobilization and around momentum building, their key outputs, relationships between the social movements and actors, supporters, co-travelers in the accountability ecosystem etc.



Participants taking part in group exercise

It discerned through the discussions that base of the movements revolved around issues and constituencies and these movements were largely not funded and the membership base was varied. The systematic structural anatomy of the example of the social movements suggested that the movements did not follow a structured membership. It surfaced that the movements have had their trajectory of highs and lows, but their contributions have made impact at variegated levels in system, policy, legislation, advocacy processes etc.

Brainstorming group discussions and group work on the type of methods used by social movements led the participants to carve out knowledge agenda of the social movements oriented knowledge agenda on themes like the impact, leadership, tactics, effectiveness, external support, relationship with accountability ecosystem of the social movements etc. The practitioners and activists zeroed on some question frames for knowledge agenda like How do social movements build mobilizations/ base and constituencies, how does leadership contribute to social movements, how do social movements measure success, how significant are the external agents/factors in social movements, how do social movements ensure sustainability etc.

The roundtable saw the practitioners agreeing to explore to continue the engagement and broadening to other actors and stakeholders in the social movement arena and social accountability processes.

