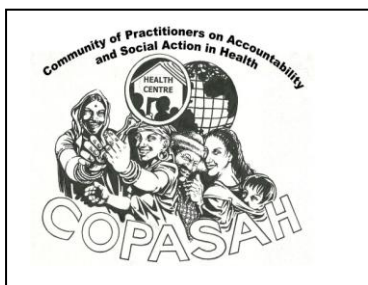


FACILITATED LEARNING EXCHANGE VISIT- 1

December 17 - 19, 2013

HOST ORGANISATION: Gramya Sansthan

VENUE: District Chandauli, Naugarh Block,
Uttar Pradesh, India



COMMUNITY OF PRACTITIONERS ON
ACCOUNTABILITY AND SOCIAL
ACTION IN HEALTH

COMMUNITY OF PRACTITIONERS ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND SOCIAL ACTION IN HEALTH- FACILITATED LEARNING EXCHANGE VISIT

December 17 – 19, 2013

Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health (COPASAH) is a global network of practitioners that places a strong emphasis on the role of civil society to promote access to equitable, quality and accountable health services. South Asia region workshops were conducted in Mumbai in February, 2013 and in Delhi in September, 2013 to promote this perspective. Subsequent to these workshops COPASAH plans to organise three facilitated learning exchange visits in different parts of India. These visits are envisaged to facilitate peer learning and to enable strengthening of the practitioners' forum. These learning exchange visits aim to provide practitioners an opportunity to visit a relevant organisation's work and learn from their social accountability practice using a common set of principles. The visits are an extension of the principles and concepts discussed during the south Asian region COPASAH workshop in September, 2013.

The first facilitated learning exchange visit under COPASAH was organised from December 17-19, 2013 in district Chandauli, Naugarh Block, Uttar Pradesh with Gramya Sansthan as the host organisation. The participants visited three villages- Karwaniya, Majhgai and Dumariya; and got an exposure to the functioning of the Mahila Swasthya Adhikar Manch (MSAM). They learnt from the women's struggle for community monitoring of maternal health rights. As per the participants the learning visit was an enriching experience and they got an opportunity to observe the various principles of community monitoring and accountability in practice. The group also visited a village (Nainvat) where MSAM is not active. Discussions with residents of this village revealed a stark contrast vis a vis the status of essential health services.

On the third day of this exposure visit, the participants shared their observations, learning and future plans to implement the learning in their own practice. The group comprised of 13 participants from Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

A few glimpses from the visit are given below:

Day 1- Understanding the context



Rakesh Sahu, SATHI who was a resource person during the south Asian region COPASAH welcomed everyone and took the first session of the day. He discussed the concepts of community monitoring and accountability. The participants also contributed to the discussion by articulating their understanding of the two concepts.

Jagdish Lal, from CHSJ talked about the values and principles that are inherent to any community monitoring process. He called on the group to share their perspectives as well. The group could relate to many of these in the work they were engaged in.



Bindu Singh, The secretary and director of Gramya Sansthan gave a presentation on the the history, work and organisational context of Gramya Sansthan. The organisation is working districts Chandauli, Sonebhadra, and Varanasi. Its focus is on networking/ participating at state and national level on the issues of women's health rights, violence against women, child rights, labourers' rights and rights of marginalised tribals.

Sadiya Siddiqui from Sahayog, Lucknow gave a presentation on the Mahila Swasthya Adhikar Manch- why it was formed, the objectives of this platform, the issues it takes up and described women's health rights and accountability practice for ensuring betterment of health services.



The participants were briefed about the plan for field visit and were divided into three groups. Field visit was planned for three villages where MSAM is active- Karwaniya, Majhgai and Dumariya. They were also told that towards the end of the day they will also be visiting one village where MSAM was not functioning. Sadiya moderated this session and together with the participants' inputs listed down points for observation during the field visit.

Day 2- Field visit and experience sharing by leaders and members of MSAM



The learning exchange visit participants discussed and learnt from the experiences of MSAM leaders. The members and leaders also shared their stories of struggle. These women voiced their opinions confidently and were well aware of their rights and entitlements.



The members of MSAM were not shy of asking us what we were doing and to know more about community monitoring processes being followed in our respective areas of work. These discussions provided an insight into the struggle that they had to go through and also their tremendous willpower in facing the odds.



The MSAM leaders also related that reaching this far has not been easy. They have had to struggle a lot and faced a lot of apathy. At times the resistance from the people in authority was to the extent that their families too had to bear the consequences. But now the things have improved and the change that they are now witnessing is motivating them to take this process ahead. The MSAM membership badge has given them recognition and is a symbol of power and strength for MSAM members.





A visit to the Anganwadi center revealed that even though the ANM and ASHA are serving the duties expected of them, there is a lack of infrastructure to support them. Here they are sitting in the premises of a primary school and the Anganwadi centre is in a state of complete neglect. The ANM said that MSAM women have been closely working with them and this has helped them to reach out to a greater number of women and children. However, there is still a gap between the demand and availability of essential supplies and infrastructure from the state system.



The anganwadi center was in a state of complete neglect and the anganwadi worker was not on duty, despite it being the immunisation day



Group discussion with residents of Nainvat village (where MSAM is not active) revealed the apathetic condition of services. Conversation with the women who assembled for the discussion made the contrast even more evident. The women related that they have to pay money to get the services and were not even aware of the free healthcare facilities they were entitled to. Even a substantial percentage of the Janani Suraksha Yojana money that they were getting for institutional deliveries was being taken away by the service providers. A few women also said that they had to borrow money to pay for the services.



Home cooked traditional food and some sightseeing to end Day 2 of the visit

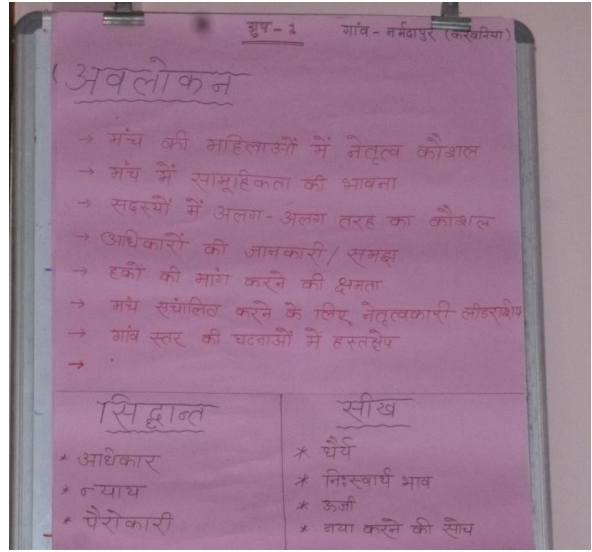
Day 3- Debriefing, Discussions and Reflections on Learning



The participants were asked to discuss in groups and prepare charts for presentation of their field visit experiences the previous day. They were asked to prepare their presentations keeping in mind the following broad headings- their observations about the functioning of MSAM, the principles of community monitoring that were being implemented, their learning and how they intend to implement the same in their area of work.



Group Work: The participants preparing charts for presenting experiences and learning from their field visit exercise



Above and Below: Presentation from each group



Some of the MSAM leaders and members had been invited to the Gramya Sansthan office in Chandauli on day 3 to further clarify any questions or doubts of participants. After presentations by each group a panel discussion was conducted with Neetu Singh as the moderator.



The learning exchange visit participants asked their queries from the MSAM leaders during the panel discussion. The women said that now that things are improving and people are receiving the services they are entitled to, they feel that their struggle is rewarded. Gramya Sansthan's association has been instrumental in creating awareness, mobilisation and providing technical support. The women told that they want the next generation of leaders to take forward what has been achieved so far and are preparing them for taking this movement ahead.