

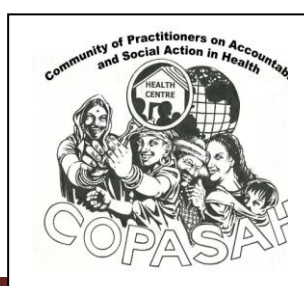
COPASAH SOUTH ASIA REGION FACILITATED LEARNING EXCHANGE VISIT- 2



JANUARY 22 – 24, 2014

HOST ORGANISATION: THAMATE (Center for Rural Empowerment)

VENUE: Tumkur, Karnataka, India



**COMMUNITY OF PRACTITIONERS ON
ACCOUNTABILITY AND SOCIAL ACTION IN HEALTH**

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Background and Context

Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health (COPASAH) is a global network of practitioners with a common interest and passion for the field of community monitoring for accountability in health. COPASAH was set up by a group of practitioners who had come together for a meeting to share experiences at Johannesburg in July 2011 and currently has a steering committee of 8 members from Asia, Africa and Latin America. COPASAH places a strong emphasis on the role of civil society to promote access to equitable, quality and accountable health services. (Please visit www.copasah.net for more details)

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 quite a lot of conversations started among participants, and as a continuation to these COPASAH organised facilitated learning exchange visits in different parts of India. These visits were envisaged to facilitate peer learning and to enable strengthening of the practitioners' forum.

The first of these visits was conducted at Naugarh, Chandauli district, Uttar Pradesh from December 17-19, 2013 with Gramya Sansthan (host organisation). The second facilitated learning exchange (FLE) visit by social accountability practitioners of COPASAH in India was conducted from January 22-24, 2014 in Tumkur (75 kms from Bangalore). THAMATE, a community based organisation (CBO) working with Dalit community and manual scavengers was the host organisation for this visit. The theme of learning was ***Dalit Communities and Challenges of Accountability Practice***. The group comprised of 18 participants from Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

Objectives

The three days learning exchange visit organised in Tumkur, Bangalore was envisaged to achieve the following objectives:

- To provide facilitated learning opportunity to practitioners within the region through visit to a COPASAH member organisation and learn from their social accountability practice
- To learn about a variety of accountability initiatives being undertaken by civil society organisations

The specific aim was to observe and learn from advocacy undertaken at local, state and national level for issue-based activities such as sustainable livelihoods, comprehensive health, and building cadres for supporting Dalits.

Day 1: January 22, 2014- Understanding the Context

After registration and tea, Edward Premdas Pinto from Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ) welcomed everyone, thanked them for taking out time to attend the three-day exposure visit and requested the participants to introduce themselves. 18 practitioners from diverse accountability practices met together at THAMATE organisation in Tumkur, a small town about 80 kms from Bangalore, which is also hailed the district of science movement in Karnataka state of India, for the second facilitated learning exchange. The participants were from about eight states of India and one participant travelled all the way from Nepal, the neighbouring country. The practitioners shared their experience and work with wide variety of marginalised communities which was very enriching. The group of 18 participants are working in the field of accountability, rights and equity in the context of gender justice, working with men towards ensuring maternal health rights, human dignity and human rights of the marginalised, dalit communities and accountability challenge, ensuring accountability from government and society, community based monitoring of the health system, sexual minority, social exclusion, and role of men in children and adolescent health.



Participants in the exposure visit

It was emphasised that we are learning here a new perspective related to the lives of dalit community and it was important to link this perspective across different themes that the participants' are working on. Advocacy work with the manual scavengers and dalit community started only recently and is particularly challenging, owing to the fact that this community has been oppressed for decades and this oppression has multiple layers- safai karmachari, manual scavengers, women's status, gender inequalities etc. Thamate has been working with manual scavengers and dalits for over twenty years. The participants

were asked to observe and learn from the struggle that the community has undertaken, the challenges that were faced around the issues of dalit community and the community monitoring initiatives that have been undertaken.

Premdas thanked the Thamate team on behalf of COPASAH and CHSJ for putting in the time and efforts to organise the learning exchange visit. KB Obalesha then introduced the agenda for the three days exposure visit. The first day encompassed formal sessions discussing about the Karnataka dalit movement and the work Thamate is doing with the manual scavengers. Guest speaker Mr. Sri Venkatesh had been invited to share about the special component plan (SCP) and discuss how they have undertaken community monitoring and accountability in Bangalore urban. Along with this sharing will be done on the last 40-45 years of dalit movement. On the second day participants will be taken for field visit to Madhugiri, Pavgada and YN Hoskode (most backward and remote area from the Andhra Pradesh border) and meet manual scavengers, safai karmchari contract labours to learn about their livelihood and working conditions. In the evening visits will be paid to coaching centers called Bheemshala, being run for children after the school in Tumkur and Pavgada. Third day will be devoted to debriefing about the field visits and discussions on the overall learning.

To overcome the language barrier, Nasreen from Sakhi was introduced as the translator to the participants.

Session: Evolving COPASAH's perspectives on principles of social accountability

The session was taken by Pravesh Kumar from Sahayog and was aimed at understanding the principles of social accountability. Accountability was described as basic necessity for an individual and a symbol of power and duty for the service provider. In India we have a constitution that lays down the basic human rights. In order to ensure that everyone receives these entitlements, government, society, as well as the individual self are equally responsible. Finally, government is the key body accountable for ensuring the basic rights to people through different programmes and policies.

Government is responsible for implementing the laws/ programmes and is accountable for ensuring that they reach all. In case it is failing to do so, the government becomes answerable as to why the entitlements have failed to reach the targeted group. This is achieved through concerned departments and administration, complaint mechanism and grievance redressal systems. Social accountability is ensured by conducting social audits by CBOs; monitoring (done by community as well as government functionaries); documenting evidence, case studies and research reports. All these together help in effectively pursuing a dialogue with the government to address the gaps and deficiencies identified.



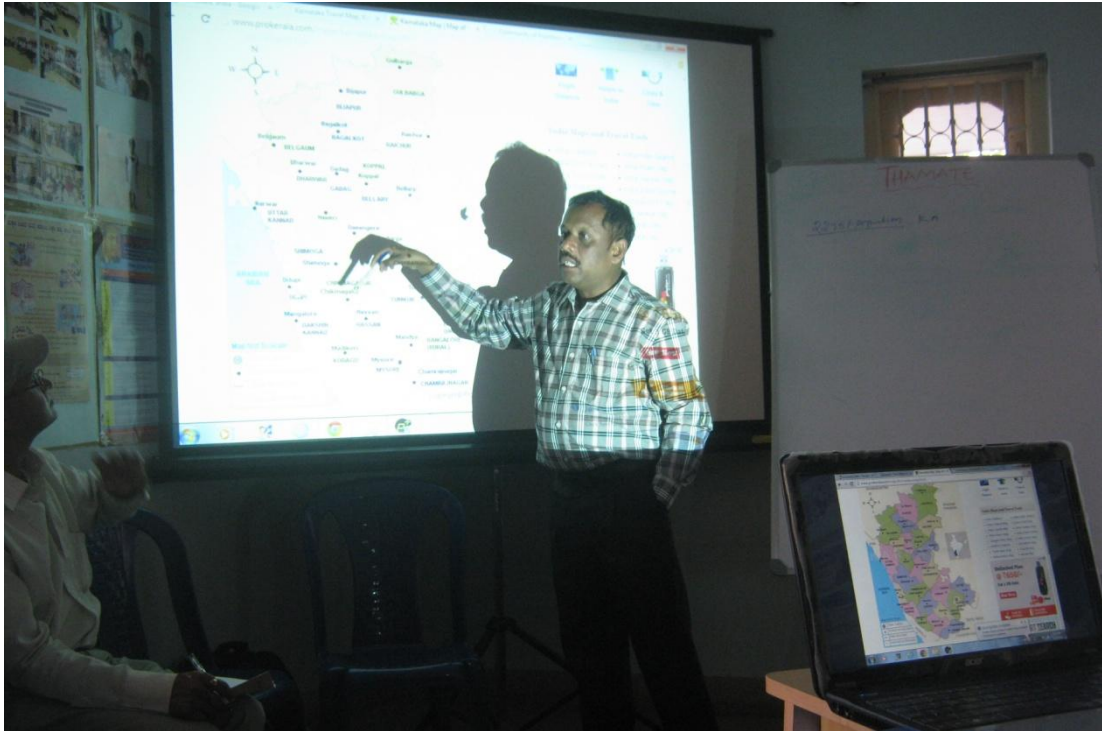
Pravesh's presentation on Accountability

Struggle is one of the important strategies in any people's movement. We also talk about negotiated space- both parties, i.e., government and community will agree upon something. Reservation is a negotiated space. SCP, public distribution system (PDS), national rural health mission (NRHM) all come under the negotiated space. Many times struggle is the first step, which gives way to negotiated space. In a negotiated space, there are greater chances of the government to hear and address the grievances. Negotiated space gives a chance to the government as well as the community to prepare and hold a dialogue so that they have a say in the decisions.

Session: Dalit communities and accountability challenge

The introduction to the accountability challenges in work with Dalit communities began with K. B. Obalesha from the host organisation, THAMATE (meaning Dalit Drum) giving an overview of the history of Dalit struggles against oppression, the rise of Dalit movement, the issues the community confronted and the work on rights and dignity of Dalits. Across India and South Asia two communities, known by different names, have been treated as untouchables and the social practice of untouchability and discrimination is pervasive in the social, economic, political, cultural and economic systems and is expressed in social exclusion. According to 2011 census in Karnataka the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population is 22% out of which 16% belong to the scheduled caste (Madiga, Mala, and others) and 6% to scheduled tribe community. There were 101 divisions among scheduled castes, out of which Madiga and Mala communities are considered untouchables within this community itself. Compared to Madiga community Mala community are still better off in terms of socio-economic status, owing to the fact that they reside mainly in and around districts near the Western Ghats and have good agriculture activities. Madiga community mainly stays in districts bordering Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra which is drought prone and where agriculture activities are less. The health indicators are poor and recent survey shows nearly 32 lakh malnourished children in this region; 90% of whom belong to the SC/ST communities. Historically, the people have been victims of atrocities perpetrated by landlords- stigma, violence and crimes, especially in Rayalseema border districts under

influence of Naxals, Reddy landlords and stone quarry mafias. For generations the Madiga community was victim of the practice of manual scavenging and Devadasi system.



KB Obalesha giving an overview of the history of Dalit struggle

But it started changing in 1970 when Prof. Krishnappa of Madiga community started the literature movement. Another event was the political influence when Basavalinga of the Madiga community became the Social Welfare Minister in Congress Party. In one of the informal meeting he issued a casual statement about the Karnataka Literature as waste ("Boosa" meaning groundnut waste). There was a wave of dissent among the privileged class and they demanded the resignation of the Minister, citing the fact that an untouchable cannot speak about the literature. This event sparked protests from the dalit community and Prof. Krishnaapa started a campaign to protect the Minister. "Dalit Sangharsh Samithi" (DSS) came into being at this time. The decade between 1970 and 1980 was the period of violence against dalits, due the growing unity and development of organised protest which was not tolerated by the dominant caste people. The growing intolerance among the upper castes came to the fore when members of a dalit family were beaten mercilessly and made to drink urine for having taken some grass and flowers from the garden of an upper caste, during the festival "Naga Panchami". This incident gave rise to a state-wide agitation and the responsible people were punished under "Prevention of Atrocities Act" and compensation was also given to the victims.

However, in 1990 the movement got split into two ideological fractions- one supporting political representation for the community and the other wanting to continue on the path of struggle. Initially Mala community supported the struggle based ideology and Madigas were in favour of political representation; but in reality Mala community acquired the

political recognition slowly by individuals making their way into various political parties and they gained power, while Madiga community still continues to struggle. The struggle that continued for twenty years is now suffering due to the formation of these fractions. The benefits of the reservation available to the community is being utilized more by the Malas and other SC communities, while the Madiga community (which constitutes the major proportion of the population) hardly get any reservation. A commission was formed by the Government for sorting the reservation issue and it recommended 6% reservation for Madigas, 5% for Mala, 3% for other SC and 1% for other minor SC. These recommendations are however, still on paper and nothing has been implemented so far.

Session: Monitoring development budget among SC/ST communities: Monitoring and campaign for the implementation of scheduled caste sub-plan (SCSP) and tribal sub-plan (TSP) in Karnataka

The session was delivered by the guest speaker Sri Venkatesh from Dalit Bahujan Movement and he discussed about the Special Component Plan (SCP). The SCP was a policy enacted around 1979-80, and targeted at development of the marginalised communities in India- categorised as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). It earmarked development funds across departments proportionate to the population of the communities. The fund allocation was mandatory, not to be diverted and to be carried over if not used by the end of the financial year. The struggle by some of the strong activists



Sri Venkatesh from Dalit Bahujan Movement discussed about the Special Component Plan

especially Dalit Bahujan Movement led by Sri Venkatesh was shared on using the Right to Information (RTI) as a tool to unearth information on the use of SCP, now known as SC Sub-Plan (SCSP). The SCSP and RTI are powerful tools and strategies of accountability practice among Dalit communities. Cadres were trained across districts and they have been able to force adequate expenditure for the development of SC community (Dalits). For greater accountability from the government, advocacy has been successful in making the government of Karnataka enact the legislation for the proper implementation of SCSP which has penal provisions for officers: (i) who do not undertake measures for adequate expenditure and implementation, (ii) who divert funds and, (iii) who misuse SCSP funds. An advocacy move at the national level is building up for a similar enactment at the national level, so that all the states can follow this. An important learning was that when certain development scheme is implemented under a policy it is very difficult to enforce accountability measures. One could complain, agitate, name and shame the people concerned. However, when legislation is enacted, the responsibilities get fixed and consequences of inaction, adverse action are spelt out and this becomes very effective tool for accountability practitioners.

Session: Field visit plan and points for observation

The participants were briefed about the plan for field visit. The 18 participants were divided in three batches to meet the groups of manual scavengers at three different places- Y N Hoskote (125 kms), Pavagada (100 kms) and Madhugiri (50 kms). KB Obalesha gave an overview of the three areas:

- *Madhugiri*- This is a new initiative area and the work has been going on for the last one and a half years. The intervention is in the initial stages and the community is not organised properly yet. The group visiting Madhugiri will be interacting with the sweepers working in the municipality and can discuss with them and understand the challenges faced in organising them. In 2008-09 Thamate was involved in community monitoring of one primary health center (PHC). The group will be visiting this PHC and interact with the medical officer there. In the evening a visit to the Bheemshala where interactions with children of manual scavengers has been planned.
- *Pavgada municipality area*- There will be one gram panchayat level meeting with safai karamcharis and meeting with the union of municipality workers. This community has been very well organised and a lot of mobilisation has occurred. The group will also be visiting Bheemshala and interact with children of manual scavengers.
- *YN Hoskote*- The group will meet with gram panchayats, safai karmacharis and scavengers. The work with this community has been going on for a long time and the group can learn from their struggles, challenges and how were they overcome. The participants will be visiting the coaching centers, known as "bheemshala", towards the end of the day, which were being run for providing support to children of dalits.

Interaction had been arranged with the mobilised community members and leaders from this community. The men and women from nearby villages and panchayats will gather at these three centres. There have been several positive social changes in the community. Before Thamate's work they were bonded labours in the municipality and the panchayat. They were not paid regularly and were not respected. There has been a history of exploitation by the elected representatives. But a positive change has been that now they are sitting with the officers, putting forth their problems and discussing possible solutions.

Following are the groups into which the participants were divided:

Village	Madhugiri	Pavagada	Y N Hoskote
Group members	Rakshya Paudyal Naresh Kumar VR Syam Prasad Shahaji Bharti Prabhakar Siddhagangaiya	Pramod Shimpi Pravesh Kumar Mahendra Kumar Nasreen Kariappa Shettalaya	S Ravikumar Devaputra Raghu Ramaiya KB Obalesha E Premdas

Day II: December 18, 2013- Field visit and experience sharing

Session: Organisation context and introduction to Thamate's work

The second day began with an orientation to THAMATE's work and efforts to eradicate manual scavenging. The organisation has been part of the Dalit Movement for the liberation of Dalit communities from discrimination and untouchability. They identified the practice of manual scavenging as one of the darkest blot on the human dignity of Dalits. Most of the manual scavengers belong to the Madiga caste, which is one of the two untouchable castes in India. India is a caste based society where an individual's role in the society is determined by the family of birth. Madiga is a community which is dually affected



Photographs depicting the working conditions of manual scavengers (Source: Thamate, Tumkur)

by Devadasi system and manual scavenging. As a result of urbanisation, manual scavengers shifted to cities. But they knew no vocational skills.

Consequently, the responsibility of cleaning and removing excreta from anywhere in the city fell on them. There still exists a gross lack of sanitation facilities in the city. In 90% of the municipalities in small towns, the drainage is not proper and soakpits still exist in individual houses. The manual scavengers are engaged in sweeping and cleaning the open defecation areas, sweeping the streets, cleaning the drainages, cleaning manually the dry latrines (toilets without water connection), cleaning the man-holes, cleaning up the underground sewerage etc. Cleaning and removing blockage in underground sewerage leads to deaths of 600 manual scavengers each year. They are provided with no protective equipments, no health schemes or social security is available to them and they are prone to illnesses. About 10 lakh people in this occupation, and majority of these are working as daily wage workers in the unorganised sector. 60% of the manual scavengers are women and 50% sweepers are women. They are subject to sexual harassment by contractors, physical and domestic violence; and suffer from skin, gynaecological and respiratory illnesses. Thamate is working to empower, mobilise and organise the Madiga community which is primarily migrant in nature. The organisation works in 53 villages in 4 blocks- Madhugiri, Pavgada, Siri, Tumkur for eradication of manual scavenging, education of children, livelihood and empowerment of youth. The community mobilisation is done at three levels-

- For those over 60 years- social security and health schemes
- Youth- motivation and skill development to take up alternative occupation through vocational training
- Children (6-14 yrs)- compulsory education and ensuring that there are no dropouts by providing support through *Bheemshalas*



Field visit to Pavagada- With the manual scavenging community members

The legislation in 1993 prohibited construction of dry latrines. It continues, however, in practice. The safai karmachari andolan (the movement of manual scavengers) have launched pitched campaign and struggle in the past years using all possible strategies which resulted in the Manual Scavenging Prohibition and Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers Act 2013. THAMATE has been in the forefront of this struggle in the state of Karnataka.

Interactions with the community and learning from field visit

Following this session the participants were divided into groups and taken for field visit as per the groups decided the previous day. The interactions and discussions with the community highlighted the plight of manual scavenging community. The day for manual scavenger woman and man begins at 4.00 a.m. They work till 10.00 a.m. and then go home for food. At 1.30 p.m. again their work starts and continues upto 5.00 to 6.00 p.m. For a manual scavenger woman the day is almost 16 hours long with the addition of household work, washing clothes, cleaning the vessels, feeding children etc. the groups met some women who have lost their husbands at quite a young age due to illness and infection while working as manual scavengers. A woman, Shubadramma, 35 years old, still cleans the dry latrines of the Panchayat in Y N Hoskote, a growing town. She cleans it twice a day with bare hands as she is not provided gloves, protective masks and other equipment. She is paid barely Rs.1700/ per month (USD 34). She is having skin allergy over her hand and legs. Though she is working since 10 years, she is a wage worker as she is not registered as an employee. Now after the new law has come, she has made several petitions to recognise her manual scavenger and has demanded an identity card. But the district authorities who are keen to declare that there is no manual scavenging in the district, have refused to refer to anyone as manual scavengers; thus making the new law and ineffective for them.



Municipality employed sweepers at Madhugiri sharing experiences with participants

There is not a single file of their work record either in the local panchayat or at the district office. They don't receive any compensation if they die performing their work or otherwise due to the hazards associated with their work.



The groups interacting with community people at Pavagada and YN Hoskote

The efforts to eradicate manual scavenging targets the youth to provide alternative skills, and children by relentless effort to see that children are in schools and do not drop out. One of the ways to motivate children and build quality in their education has been by providing supplementary tuitions in the evenings. The children of manual scavengers gather from 5.30 pm to 8.00 pm at the house of a volunteer to study, most of whom said that they want to be teachers or doctors in future.



Interactions with children at Bheemshalas (Coaching centers)

Day III: January 24, 2014- Debriefing, Discussions and Reflections on Learning

Session: Principles of Community Monitoring

The third day of the exposure visit was marked with group discussions, presentations and sifting out learning from the accountability process.

The day started with a discussion on the principles of community monitoring by E. Premdas. He explained that we have to look at accountability from the people's point of view, especially those who are socially deprived. The accountability process has to be

people oriented. It is a continuous process and can't be a one-day event. For accountability practice some principles are essential, which are not laid down anywhere. Premdas said that some of the common principles have been put together from experiences of community monitoring and accountability. The important principles of community monitoring that were discussed included-

- Participation
- Empowerment
- Rights based approach
- Capacity building
- Data / evidence building
- Public official accountability
- Long term process

Beneficiary/ target group are problematic terms when we talk of accountability. Beneficiary is a relational word. A person becomes a beneficiary when something is being given, and the giver is always at a higher level. The relationship is never of equals. This poses a challenge to answerability because the person receiving the benefits faces difficulty in asking questions. Hence, there is no empowerment in giving charity. Target is also not an empowerment word- targets are in military to hit upon. Therefore, as a matter of principle let us now call them people- they can be deprived/ disadvantaged/ marginalised/ dominant/ subjugated/ subalterns.



E. Premdas discussing the principles of community monitoring

He further added that people's participation in any movement is essential. Participation means complete involvement, not merely being present. Moreover, accountability practice is not merely filing a complaint and receiving an order in your favour, because it will be short lived. Empowerment is an essentiality for sustainability of any process and empowerment is not possible without participation. People should have the power and

capacity to fight for their rights. It has to be rights based to ensure that services are delivered in a proper manner and nobody is discriminated against. And to make this sustainable more and more knowledge, information and skills are important. All empowerment process is a long process because work with the community needs a sufficiently long time, capacity building and sustainability of efforts. Data and evidence collection are equally important as they feed into participation, empowerment and capacity building.

Session: Debriefing and interactive session

After an initial orientation on principles of accountability processes with communities the three groups formed for the community visits had discussion in their respective groups. The presentations by three groups brought out rich learning experiences based on observation, discussion on the principles and analysing the lessons learnt. The challenges of accountability in the most marginalized communities of manual scavengers due to their poverty, caste related discrimination, caste related occupation of manual scavenging into which their life-circumstances have pushed them, non-recognition as workers even after 20 – 30 years of work as manual scavengers, challenges of women from this community and the vulnerability of the community as a whole due to the caste, class, gender issues emerged as important challenges for the ongoing accountability processes.



Group discussion for presentation of observations and reflections from the field visit

The common principles that emerged as part of the discussion and group presentation are the following:

- Participation- through formation of groups, attending meetings, financial help for each other by savings in the cooperative, engagement with PRI
- Empowerment- holding dialogues with authorities
- Rights based- the community people have started recognising their rights and demand for protective equipments, health facilities, food, daily wages, provident fund etc.

- Capacity building- opportunities for learning, skill building training with the youth
- Facts/ Evidence collection through surveys, photo documentation, right to information, media sensitisation
- Decentralisation- each year new men and women members are elected in the collective
- Public official accountability- meeting and demanding provident fund from the district collector, official letter to panchayats for safety equipments



Presentation of observations and reflections from the field visit

The points arising out of the presentations from the three groups are as follows:

VILLAGE	OBSERVATION	PRINCIPLES	LEARNING
Pavgada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wages given to safai karmacharis are neither standardised nor it is given on time • Lack of education • Addiction to alcohol • Lesser wages for work for dalit women • They have to face violence, esp. women • The job is temporary and there is no guarantee for protection of health and life • Not benefitted by government schemes; others take advantage of these schemes • No equipments/ resources from the government for cleaning activities • No representation in panchayats and government committees • Non-dalit ANM/ ASHA still not providing services to the dalit community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation- formation of group, attending meetings, financial help for each other through savings in the cooperative, engagement with PRI • Empowerment- holding dialogues with authorities • Rights based- the community people have started recognising their rights, like, protective equipments, health facilities, food, daily wages, provident fund etc. • Capacity building- opportunities for learning, skill building training with the youth, Bheemshala, scholarships • Facts/ Evidence collection through surveys, Id cards, right to information, media sensitisation • Decentralisation- each year new men and women members are elected in the organisation • Public official accountability- meeting and demanding provident fund from the district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If temporary labourers associate with permanent labourers, the strength of the group will be increased • Need for a resource center at the district and state level • Panchayat and committees need to be sensitised on this issue • Need for building leadership among community people • Got an opportunity to understand the problems and issues of the dalit community
Madhugiri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safai karmacharis working in Gram Panchayats are non-permanent, low-waged • There is no retirement age and the 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habituated to their living conditions • Lack of local leadership • Eager to change to other jobs, but know no other skills and are afraid of leaving

VILLAGE	OBSERVATION	PRINCIPLES	LEARNING
	<p>job gets transferred to the next generation when a person can no longer work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No other vocational skills • Health complaints- skin and respiratory illnesses • Older generation wants to continue with the same occupation, but the younger generation is open to alternative opportunities <p><u>PHC VISIT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People centred approach of the doctor and development of leadership skills among the hospital support staff • Health awareness programmes are being run in villages in the evenings once a month after the PHC timings • Well managed PHC with effective utilisation of limited resources, effective utilisation as well as documentation of available funds • Waste management is effective • Proper management of drug procurement and storage <p><u>BHEEMSHALA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A combined strength of 52 students, tutored by 2 teachers (LKG to standard 8th) 	<p>collector, official letter to panchayats for safety equipments</p>	<p>their job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No demands for higher salary, but want regular salary • Older generation willing to educate their children • Space to engage with younger generation for change (capacity building, development) • Need based approach • Skill development for teachers is needed

VILLAGE	OBSERVATION	PRINCIPLES	LEARNING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted in teachers' residence • Monthly meeting with parents • Children are ambitious and not interested in their parents' occupation 		
Y N Hoskote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer wages and no security. It is similar to bonded labourer. They are over worked and over burdened without being paid adequately • Considered even lower than fourth class workers • Government considers them as safai karamcharis not manual scavengers • Economic conditions are poor- below the standard conditions of work • All the workers face numerous health problems- skin, respiratory, gastric • Lack of awareness about their rights • No alternate job opportunity • Untouchability is still practiced and they are still doing caste based work • The children have no opportunities for higher education 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to strengthen the organisation • Effective functioning in the field • Linkages between community and government • Problem solving and skill development

The learning from the visits at the three places has been an understanding of the way advocacy has been carried and tide over the challenges faced by the marginalised communities. When certain development scheme is implemented under a policy it is very difficult to enforce accountability measures. However, when legislation is enacted, the responsibilities get fixed and consequences of inaction, adverse action are

spelt out and this becomes very effective tool for accountability practitioners. The marginalised communities mostly become habituated to their living conditions and therefore it is necessary to build leadership among community people, ensure their participation at every stage, empowering them to ensure sustainability in the long run through capacity building, collection of facts and evidence (through surveys, right to information) and media sensitisation. Building and maintaining relations with public officials is equally important to ensure appropriate action and accountability.



Sri Chandrashekar discussing on the Devdasi system

This was followed by an input session by Sri Chandrashekar, Dalit activist and a PhD scholar on the issue of Devadasis (Jogini), an age-old practice where Dalit women are dedicated to the gods/goddesses in a sort of marriage with god, thus legitimizing the sexual exploitation of Dalit women by men of powerful and dominant caste. It was an eye opener to all of us on the cultural-political-social dimensions of exploitation of Dalit women. It triggered an interesting discussion on the issue of gender justice and Dalit community. The activists believe that manual scavenging and dedication of young and beautiful Dalit girls as Devadasis are the two extreme forms of oppression of the Dalit community.

Session: Reflection and plans for implementing the learnings in participants' own Practice

The participants were asked to share their thoughts about the whole experience of exposure visit. The participants were happy with the content and all of them felt that the learnings provided them with useful answers on accountability. All the participants strongly felt that the sessions were related to their work and were content with the sessions. They

highlighted the principles of participation that focused on involving the community to raise their voice and demand their rights, empowerment, rights- based approach, capacity building, importance of data/evidence and public official accountability that resulted in some good examples at the community level.

Below are comments and feedback from the participants:

- The whole of manual scavenging community, Devadasi system and the plight of the women suffering from this, Special Component Plan and its provisions, history of dalit struggle is an entirely different concept and new for many of us. The three day visit was very thought provoking and provided a lot of insights about the issues faced by the Dalit community.
- It is important to work with the communities to identify their problems, and planning with them to address their specific needs
- The visit to the primary health centre was a model example of how resources be best utilised for the benefit of the people
- Networking with district, state and national collectives is impertinent for the success of any advocacy initiative. Using the various data sources- acts, government pamphlets, systematic documentation, photographic evidence is equally important for this networking
- Community participation is important for the success of any initiative meant for the people's benefit. This provides them with a common platform for creating awareness, mobilisation and hand holding support
- The concept and module of this visit was the best for any person to understand about the community based monitoring process and accountability mechanisms
- The learning exchange visit showed the way how people's movements have taken place, how demands have been addressed, and the positive changes in the people's lives after that. Therefore the approaches and strategies that were learnt through the visit will help in discussing further about it in any organisation and would be involved to initiate the process in our working community too
- The learning methodology key strengths were simplicity, clarity, team work, dedication and hard work. Face to face interaction with the community to understand the struggle over the last 20 yrs and the changes it has brought gave an insight into the hardships the community is facing. The only limitation was language barrier which was overcome to some extent with the help of translators.

Conclusion

The three day learning exchange visit ended by thanking THAMATE – centre for rural empowerment for giving an occasion to COPASAH members for meeting with the community members. Participants from Nepal and about 8 states of India unanimously said

it was one of the most touching experiences of their lives to learn about the struggle of this community. Most of them indicated ways of incorporating the learning from this visit into the accountability work which each one is doing. The principles of accountability processes from the perspective of the marginalised communities were discussed in great detail during the visit. These are being evolved from the experiences of community monitoring of health systems in India. The hope, the determination to struggle, ability to cope with most adverse circumstances, a unanimous resolution to eradicate manual scavenging as an occupation of this community strongly indicated hope for the accountability process.

ANNEXURE 1

Participants List

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12	Ramaiah TS			9916319986

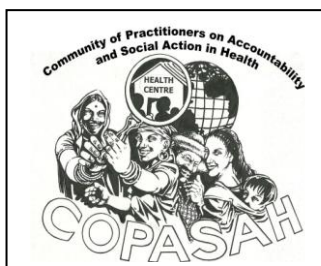
13	H. Shahaji	Grameen women development organisation	sudhakargwdo@gmail.com	8722034490
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ANNEXURE 2

Concept Note and Agenda

COMMUNITY OF PRACTITIONERS ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND SOCIAL ACTION IN HEALTH FACILITATED LEARNING EXCHANGE VISIT- 2

January 22-24, 2014



Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health (COPASAH) is a global network of practitioners with a common interest and passion for the field of community monitoring for accountability in health. COPASAH was set up by a group of practitioners who had come together for a meeting to share experiences at Johannesburg in July 2011 and currently has a steering committee of 8 members from Asia, Africa and Latin America. COPASAH places a strong emphasis on the role of civil society to promote access to equitable, quality and accountable health services. (Please visit www.copasah.net for more details)

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 quite a lot of conversations are happening among participants, and as a continuation to these 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.

The first of these visits was conducted at Naugarh, Chandauli district, Uttar Pradesh from December 17-19, 2013 with Gramya Sansthan (host organisation). The second facilitated learning exchange (FLE) visit by social accountability practitioners of COPASAH in India is scheduled from January 22-24, 2014 in Tumkur (60 kms from Bangalore). THAMATE, a Dalit CBO working with Dalit communities and manual scavengers will be the host organisation for this visit. The theme of learning will be ***Dalit Communities and Challenges of Accountability Practice***.

Objective: To provide practitioners within the region, an opportunity to visit an organisation's work and learn from the same using a common set of principles.

Profile of organisation

THAMATE (Center for Rural Empowerment)

Address: No 128,4th cross, Belekahally Layout, IIMB Post, B.G.Road, Bangalore-560076

Mobile No. 9742586468, Email: thamate2005@yahoo.co.in; obaleshkb@gmail.com

Contact Person: KB Obalesha, Thamate c/o Rangappa, 2nd Main, 1st Block, Kuvempu nagar, Tumkur-02, Karnataka; Mobile No 9742586468

Context of the community

In the caste-ridden Indian society, untouchables are one of the most oppressed communities. Madigas in Tumkur, Pavagada, Madhugiri and Sira blocks are migrant agriculture laborers, who have been treated as outcastes for thousands of years. They were forced to undertake work generally considered impure, like sweeping, cleaning the village, dispose-off the dead animals and process animal skin. The same community is now working as manual scavengers, sweepers and manhole workers in rural and urban areas. Basic human rights like housing, drinking water, healthcare & education are not in their reach. Local money lenders and dominant caste people exploit them in day to day lives. They live on pavements and slums having fear of demolition at anytime.

Tumkur district is located around 75 km from state capital Bangalore in Karnataka. In Tumkur town, scavengers live in around 10 slum areas. Each slum area has a population of minimum 100 Madiga families. They work for Rs. 1000–2000 per month for cleaning of one housing / commercial society (approx 150 houses). There are no other sources of income among them. While around 1842 Madiga men and women are employed directly (permanent and on contract) by the Tumkur & Pavagada Municipal Corporation, rest of them are working in the unorganized sector cleaning housing societies, hospitals, commercial complexes, multiplexes and schools, etc. Their conditions of work are unjust, environment is unhygienic and they are rarely given less labor intensive and hygiene promoting equipments. Their social security is also not taken care of.

Thamate's work

Thamate (Centre for Rural Empowerment) was initiated in 1995 as first step to educate, mobilise and organise Madiga community in Tumkur and Pavagada city. Thamate works in 4 blocks (Tumkur, Pavagada, Madhugiri and Sira), 4 Municipalities (Tumkur municipal corporation, Pavagada municipality, Madugiri municipality, Sira city corporation) and reaches out to 53 villages in Pavagada and Madhugiri blocks.

Since its inception in 2006, Thamate has addressed following issues:

- Eradication of manual scavenging
- Alternate employment for scavenging community
- Education for children of scavenging community
- Social security of sweepers and manhole workers
- Health entitlements
- Accessing government schemes and programs

Agenda


The aim of this learning exchange visit is to observe and learn from advocacy undertaken at local, state and national level for issue-based activities such as sustainable livelihoods, comprehensive health, and building cadres for supporting Dalits. Discussions will also be held to reflect on the work being done by the organisation and how to apply this context in the participants' own practice. The proposed session plan is as follows:

Date	Time	Session
22/01/2014	12:00-01:00	Registration and round of introduction
Wednesday	01:00-02:00	Lunch Break
	02:00-03:30	Introduction to community monitoring and social accountability and principles of community monitoring and social accountability in the context of most Marginalised Communities (Dalit Communities)
	03:30-04:00	Tea Break
	04:00-06:00	Background: Karnataka Dalit movement and struggle for dignity by Dalit communities (Devdasi system) Thamate's work with Manual scavenging community and the campaign for the eradication of manual scavenging
	06:15-07:15	Monitoring Development Budget among SC/ST communities: Sharing on Monitoring and Campaign for the Implementation of scheduled caste sub-plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub-plan (TSP) in Karnataka
	07:20-08:00	Planning for field visit – communities of manual scavengers
23/01/2014		Thamate field visit: Team 1: Pavagada (100 km from Tumkur) Team 2: Y.N.Hosakote, pavagada Thasil (130 KM FROM Tumkur) Team 3: Madugiri Thasil (50 km from Tumkur) <i>A visit to the scavenging community children's educational coaching centers in Tumkur town (evening)</i>
24/01/2014	09:00-10:30	Preparation for presentation
	10:30-11:00	Tea break
	11:00-01:00	Debriefing and interactive session
	01:00-02:00	Lunch break
	02:00-03:30	Reflection and plans for implementing the learnings in participants' own practice Filling up of the report format by each participant
	3:30-04:00	Tea and vote of thanks

ANNEXURE 3

Live Updates on Listserv

[COPASAH] COPASAH SOUTH ASIA: The Second Facilitated Peer Learning Visit - Day 1 Inbox x

 **E. Premdas Pinto** e.premdas@chsj.org via [googlegroups.com](https://www.google.com/groups)
to [copasahconnect](#) Jan 22 ☆ ↶ ↷

LIVE UPDATE: 22nd January 2014

COPASAH SOUTH ASIA: The Second Facilitated Peer Learning Visit
Theme: Dalit Communities and Challenges of Accountability
Tumkur (Karnataka, India)

Eighteen practitioners/COPASAH members from diverse accountability practices today met together at THAMATE organisation in Tumkur a small town about 80 kms from Bangalore which is also hailed the district of science movement in Karnataka state of India for the second facilitated learning exchange. The participants are from about 8 states of India and one participant has travelled all the way from Nepal, the neighbouring country. Some of the participants had travelled 36 hours by train.

We spent time in knowing each other. The practitioners shared their work experience and work with wide variety of marginalized communities was very enriching. They represented accountability practices in Gender justice, maternal health rights, health system, sexual minorities, Dalit communities, slum dwellers' union, work with men for gender equality, children's rights, environmental challenges and young women from marginalized communities.

The introduction to the accountability challenges in work with Dalit communities began with K. B. Obalesh, from the host THAMATE (meaning Dalit Drum) organisation giving an overview of the history of Dalit struggles against oppression, the rise of Dalit movement, the issues the community confronted ad extra and ad intra and the work on rights and dignity of Dalits. The meaning of Dalits and the issues of community were clarified. Across India and South Asia two communities, known by different names, have been treated as untouchables and the social practice of untouchability and discrimination is pervasive in the social, economic, political, cultural and economic systems and is expressed in social exclusion. The experiences were shared on these areas of exclusion and discrimination.

THAMATE works with Dalit communities and works with a special focus on the Dalits who are doing manual scavenging and who are still engaged as contract workers for sweeping streets, cleaning sewerage, and for cleaning dry latrines in towns and rural areas.

The Special Component Plan (SCP) was a policy for the development of which was enacted around 1979-80 for the development of the marginalized communities in India categorized as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). It earmarked development funds across departments proportionate to the population of the communities. The fund allocation was mandatory, not to be diverted and to be carried over if not used by the end of the financial year. The struggle by some of the strong activists especially Dalit Bahujan Movement led by Sri Venkatesh was shared on using the Right to Information (RTI) as a tool to unearth information on the use of SCP, now known as SC Sub-Plan (SCSP). The SCSP and RTI as powerful tools and strategies of accountability practice among Dalit Communities. He has trained cadre across districts and they have been able to force adequate expenditure for the development of SC community (Dalits). For greater accountability from the government, the entire advocacy also has been successful in making the government of Karnataka enact the legislation for the proper implementation of SCSP which has penal provisions for officers who do not undertake measures for adequate expenditure and implementation, who divert funds and for those who misuse SCSP funds. Examples were cited were officers who have been already suspended for their unauthorized action on this.

An advocacy move at the national level is building up for a similar enactment at the national level, so that all the states can follow this. Great learning was that when certain development scheme is implemented under a policy it is very difficult to enforce accountability measures. One could complain, agitate, name and shame the people concerned. However, when a legislation is enacted, the responsibilities get fixed and consequences of inaction, adverse action are spelt out and this becomes very effective tool for accountability practitioners.

All have felt quite enriched by inputs by practitioners. Tomorrow (23 Jan), the participants will disperse in three groups to interact with the Dalit Communities organised by THAMATE and will spend the entire day in the field. This will include travel to far away villages, meeting the communities, dining with the community and interact with them. A visit to evening supplementary education centres to Dalit children is too in the plan.



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to copasahconnect

Jan 24



LIVE UPDATE: 23rd January 2014 (THURSDAY)

COPASAH SOUTH ASIA: The Second Facilitated Peer Learning Visit
Theme: Dalit Communities and Challenges of Accountability
Tumkur (Karnataka, India)

Learning from the Field – A Peep into the life of brethren who are engaged in Manual Scavenging

The day 2 of this learning visit was quite a long day which began with an orientation to THAMATE's work and efforts to eradicate manual scavenging. The organisation has been part of the Dalit Movement for the liberation of Dalit communities from discrimination and untouchability. They identified the practice of manual scavenging as one of the darkest blot on the human dignity of Dalits.

Manual scavengers, most of them belong to the Madiga caste, which is one of the two untouchable castes in India. they are engaged in sweeping and cleaning the open defecation areas, sweeping the streets, cleaning the drainages, cleaning manually the dry latrines (toilets without water connection), cleaning the man-holes, cleaning up the underground sewerage etc. The legislation in 1993 prohibited construction of dry latrines. It continues, however, in practice. The *safai karmachari andolan* (the movement of manual scavengers) have launched pitched campaign and struggle in the past years using all possible strategies which resulted in the Manual Scavenging Prohibition and Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers Act 2013. THAMATE has been in the forefront of this struggle in the state of Karnataka.

18 of us were divided in 3 batches and left to three different destinations to meet the groups of manual scavengers. Y N Hoskote (125 kms), Pavagada (100 kms) and Madhugiri (50 kms). The teams had intensive interaction with the mobilised community members and leaders from this community. The men and women from nearby villages and panchayats gathered at these three centres. The interactions and discussions highlighted the plight of manual scavenging community. E.g. a woman, Shubadramma, 35 years old, still cleans the dry latrines of the Panchayat in Y N Hoskote, a growing town. She cleans it twice a day with bare hands as she is not provided gloves, protective masks and other equipment. She is paid barely Rs.1700/ per month (USD 34). She is having skin allergy over her hand and legs. Though she is working since 10 years, she is a wage worker as she is not registered as an employee. Now after the new law has come, she has made several petitions to recognise her manual scavenger and has demanded an identity card. But the district authorities who are keen to declare that there is no manual scavenging in the district, have refused to anyone as manual scavengers thus making the new infructuous and ineffective for them.

The day for manual scavenger woman and man begins at 4.00 a.m. Before people get up they would have half the streets. They work till 10.00 a.m. and then go home for food. At 1.30 p.m. again their work starts and continues upto 5.00 to 6.00 p.m. For a manual scavenger woman the day is almost 16 hours long with the addition of household work, washing clothes, cleaning the vessels, feeding children etc. We met some women who have lost their husbands at quite a young age due to illness and infection while working as manual scavengers.

Having fought for the new law, the ruling class and bureaucracy is already finding ways to circumvent the law. The manual scavengers and THAMATE are now strategizing to face this challenge by invoking the human rights commission.

The efforts to eradicate manual scavenging targets the youth to provide alternative skills, and children by relentless effort to see that children are in schools and do not drop out. One of the ways to motivate children and build quality in their education has been by providing supplementary tuitions in the evenings. It was lovely to see the children of manual scavengers gather from 5.30 pm to 8.00 pm at the house of a volunteer to study, most of whom said that they want to be teachers in future. THAMATE runs five such centres.

It was a day to have a peep into the lives of those who keep our villages, towns, drainages clean while calling upon themselves all infections and dirt. The prize the society offers them is not even paying minimum wages and not even recognizing them as workers. The batch of 6 people who began work as manual scavengers in 1990 has put in 24 years of work and have not a single file of their work record either in the local panchayat or at the district office. Two of the six have already died and have not got any compensation.

The bruised and wounded lives of safai karmacharis depressed us. However, their fight for dignity, determination and hope along with the smiling children who said they want to be teachers made us smile.

ACCOUNTABILITY..... it's a long way ahead for the last and the least. We shall reflect on the challenges of accountability practices in the discriminated communities tomorrow.

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Jan 25 ☆



LIVE UPDATE: 24th January 2014 (FRIDAY)

COPASAH SOUTH ASIA: The Second Facilitated Peer Learning Visit
Theme: Dalit Communities and Challenges of Accountability
Tumkur (Karnataka, India)

Debriefing, Reflection and Internalisation

The day 3 (24th January, 2014) of the FLE – 2 was marked with group discussions, presentations and sifting out learnings from the accountability process.

After an initial orientation on principles of accountability processes with communities the three groups formed for the community visits had discussion in their respective groups. The principles of accountability processes from the perspective of the marginalized communities are being evolved from the experiences of community monitoring of health systems in India. Through the peer learning processes, COPASAH South Asia is planning to develop these principles of accountability further through illustrations from the practice. The presentations by three groups brought out rich learning experiences based on observation, discussion on the principles and analyzing the lessons learnt. The challenges of accountability in the most marginalized communities of manual scavengers due to their poverty, caste related discrimination, caste related occupation of manual scavenging into which their life-circumstances have pushed them, non-recognition as workers even after 20 – 30 years of work as manual scavengers, challenges of women from this community and the vulnerability of the community as a whole due to the caste, class, gender issues emerged as important challenges for the ongoing accountability processes.

The hope, the determination to struggle, ability to cope with most adverse circumstances, a unanimous resolution to eradicate manual scavenging as an occupation of this community strongly indicated hope for the accountability process.

The input session by Sri Chandrashekar, Dalit activist and a PhD scholar on the issue of *Devadasis (Jogini)*, an age-old practice where Dalit women are dedicated to the gods/goddesses in a sort of marriage with god, thus legitimizing the sexual exploitation of Dalit women by men of powerful and dominant caste was an eye opener to all of us on the cultural-political-social dimensions of exploitation of Dalit women. It triggered an interesting discussion on the issue of gender justice and Dalit community. The activists believe that manual scavenging and dedication of young and beautiful Dalit girls as Devadasis are the two extreme forms of oppression of the Dalit community.

The day ended with an informal evaluation of the processes of learning, report writing and thanking THAMATE – CENTRE FOR RURAL EMPOWERMENT for giving an occasion to COPASAH members for meeting with the community members. Participants from Nepal and about 8 states of India unanimously said it was one of the most touching experiences of their lives to learn about the struggle of this community. Most of them indicated ways of incorporating the learnings from this visit into the accountability work which each one is doing. One of the COPASAH members, Syam Prasad who is working in Bangalore (70 -80 kms.) offered to contribute one day in a month to come to THAMATE and build the capacity of teachers who are running evening coaching centres to the children of manual scavengers.

ANNEXURE 4

Photo Gallery- Some snapshots from the exposure visit



Children in Bhemshala (coaching center) at Pavagada presenting a song to the visiting group



Community members at YN Hoskote played the drum and presented local songs before the group



Group discussion with community members at Pavagada



The participants in the exposure visit were taken for dinner at a theme restaurant



Participants in the Learning Exchange Visit