



# COPASAH

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

SHARED PRACTICE. GROUNDED KNOWLEDGE.

## Governance Guidelines

### 1. Introduction

Aligned with the recommendations from COPASAH's Organization Development Exercise on October 3, 2017, this governance guidelines serves as a framework for how the Global Secretariat, Steering Committee and members share responsibility for the network's success. The governance guidelines are built on a foundation of partnership, equality, accountability, candor, and clarity — all of which are qualities of significant importance to COPASAH and align with its values. This document seeks to:

1. Define organizational structure and operations.
2. Establish standard operating procedures, paying special attention to mitigating risks of real and perceived asymmetries of power between Steering Committee members and conflicts of interests that could undermine the legitimacy of the Global Secretariat and Steering Committee decisions.

The COPASAH Global Secretariat and Steering Committee are committed to continually reviewing its governance processes (at least annually) to ensure all leadership entities are organized and coordinated as efficiently as possible.

### 2. Background

COPASAH is a platform where practitioners who share an interest and passion for the field of community action for accountability in health can: interact regularly and engage in exchanging experiences and lessons; share resources, capacities and methods; produce and disseminate conceptual, methodological and practical outputs toward strengthening the field; and participate in networking and capacity-building activities among member organizations. COPASAH was established as a result of a three-day "Practitioners Convening on Community Monitoring for Accountability in Health" event organized by the Accountability and Monitoring in Health Initiative of the Open Society Foundation Public Health Program in July 2011 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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## 2.1 Vision

Communities are actively engaged in promoting accountability and transforming health systems toward the realization of health equity and social justice.

## 2.2 Mission

Our mission is to nurture, strengthen and promote collective knowledge, skills and capacity of community-oriented organizations and health rights activists — primarily from Africa, Europe, South Asia and Latin America — working in the field of accountability and social action in health, for promoting active involvement of communities in decision making processes to make health systems responsive, equitable and people-centered.

## 2.3 Values

COPASAH believes that in order to make its vision a reality, community monitoring for accountability in health must:

- Enable communities facing inequities to assert their rights and to participate in concrete actions to bring about changes in health services and equitable distribution of resources.
- Give voice to peoples' perspectives.
- Be an empowering process where actors involved in the health system are encouraged to address power imbalances that affect people's health.
- Be linked to an action or advocacy plan which aims to influence or change health policies and programs.

COPASAH consists of members, a Steering Committee and a Global Secretariat working together to realize a common vision in support of the active engagement of communities in promoting accountability and transforming health systems toward the realization of health equity and social justice. COPASAH comprises six regional hubs and three thematic hubs. Each hub is currently managed by a member of the COPASAH Steering Committee. COPASAH's Steering Committee and the hubs are responsible for fulfilling their core responsibilities in the field of social accountability with the support of the Global Secretariat and its coordinator.

## 3. Steering Committee

Led by two co-conveners, the Steering Committee governs COPASAH as an organizational entity, provides direction and oversees strategy and objectives. The Steering Committee currently includes eight members: three in South Asia (India), one in Europe (North Macedonia), one in West Africa (Nigeria), one in East Africa (Uganda) and two in Central and South America (Guatemala and Peru). Each Steering Committee member is actively involved with one of the six regional hubs and/or one of the three thematic hubs. Each Steering Committee member may also select an alternate member from their hub to support their representation on the Committee. Alternate members do not have voting rights.

### 3.1 Mandate

The Steering Committee shall exercise strategic oversight of, and decision-making for, COPASAH. As such, the Steering Committee will:

- ④ Give voice to and represent the interests, issues, and concerns of COPASAH regional and thematic hubs members as well as general membership.
- ④ Guide the COPASAH membership by articulating an inspiring vision, building consensus and alignment, and approving the direction and priorities in line with the social accountability for health movement and the COPASAH global strategic plan to:
  - Strengthen and deepen practitioners' capacity on social accountability, including advocacy work at the regional and global levels.
  - Increase the capacity of the regional and thematic hubs to facilitate cross-regional and cross-thematic collective and coordinated action around social accountability.
  - Inform and influence global thinking and advocacy with respect to social accountability by increasing the body of evidence through dissemination of technical documentation.
- ④ Oversee and approve the selection of the co-conveners, the Global Secretariat, and the global coordinator.
- ④ Engage with the regional and thematic hubs' working groups to maintain relationships, facilitate communication, build consensus and alignment, and create stronger and more frequent linkages that catalyze cross-regional and cross-thematic collaborations.
- ④ Coordinate multilevel fundraising activities for COPASAH.

### 3.2 Member Representation

The Steering Committee consists of 13 members selected from COPASAH's membership that direct the activities of their respective regional and thematic hubs. Steering Committee members speak for their institutions/constituencies and regional and thematic hubs. There should be increasing representation of women and young people on the Steering Committee to ensure inclusivity and participation.

### 3.3 Target Profile

To lead COPASAH in implementation of its vision and global strategic goals, the Steering Committee must ensure that appropriate representation, skills, and experience are in place to effectively execute activities and make decisions.

Individual members do not need to embody all factors; however, all Steering Committee members should be leaders in their field, knowledgeable about social accountability in health and committed to engaging strategically at the global, regional, and country levels and across themes to advance COPASAH's goals and objectives. While Steering Committee members may be affiliated with, and have specific knowledge related to, a regional and/or thematic hub, they should serve with the intent to guide the COPASAH membership as a whole.

### 3.4 Terms of Office

- ⦿ The term of office for all members is two years, renewable for one additional term as agreed by the regional or thematic hub they represent based on performance and competency.
- ⦿ Every new Steering Committee member will start in January and end in December of the next two years.
- ⦿ To ensure continuity, Steering Committee members' terms of office shall be staggered.

### 3.5 Selection of Co-Conveners

- ⦿ The Steering Committee is led by two co-conveners who represent regional and/or thematic hubs.
- ⦿ Selection of the co-conveners should be staggered. In the case of a vacancy, elections to fill the vacant slot may take place at the first Steering Committee meeting at which a vacancy exists, or prior to, by correspondence.
- ⦿ The co-conveners should be nominated from the Steering Committee members.
- ⦿ The Global Secretariat, with the approval of the Steering Committee, will facilitate the nomination and selection process, official communication, and induction.
- ⦿ Every Steering Committee member has one vote in a matter related to the selection of co-conveners and global secretariat.

### 3.6 Selection of Steering Committee Members

- ⦿ Each regional and thematic hub may define its own process for identifying and selecting its representative to the Steering Committee in line with the Steering Committee target profile.
- ⦿ While the regional and thematic hubs are responsible for the identification and selection of prospective Steering Committee members, approval or rejection of nominated candidates is the responsibility of the Steering Committee.

## 4. Global Secretariat

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This entity manages the coordination and implementation of work plans and grants/financial administration in collaboration with the Steering Committee members. It is also responsible for the overall coordination of activities in collaboration with the regional and thematic hubs. The Global Secretariat is led by a global coordinator, nominated by the Global Secretariat, and endorsed by the Steering Committee.

### 4.1 Mandate

The global coordinator is responsible for the overall management and executive functions of COPASAH in coordination with the Steering Committee, to include organizing all global events.

### 4.2 Terms of Office

The host organization of the Global Secretariat will serve a 5-year term. This term may be renewed pending review based on selection criteria in section 4.3 and approval by the Global Secretariat Nomination Task Force.

### 4.3 Selection

The selection of the Global Secretariat will be coordinated and decided by the Steering Committee. The incumbent organization hosting the Global Secretariat reserves the right to be nominated and selected for renewal each term, pending consensus from the Steering Committee.

The nomination process will commence one year prior to the expiration of each Global Secretariat term. The Steering Committee will select one member to serve as the Chair of the Global Secretariat Nomination process. The Steering Committee will also then select a special nomination task force. This task force shall be comprised of steering committee members that do not plan to self-nominate their organization as the next Global Secretariat. Those nominating their own organization (including the existing Global Secretariat host organization submitting for renewal) shall recuse themselves from this task force. See detailed selection procedure, as defined in Annex 1.

## 5. Membership

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As of 2023, COPASAH has 283 members and over 1,000 subscribers to the COPASAH listserv.

- ⦿ Members engage with the COPASAH network by participating in the regional and thematic hubs activities and global meetings and engagement such as Global Symposiums and Webinars.
- ⦿ Members may join the COPASAH network through formal application on the COPASAH website. Applications from the website will be triaged to the appropriate regional or thematic hub lead for review and approval.

## 6. Communication

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### 6.1 Platforms

- ⦿ The Global Secretariat and Steering Committee will use both email and WhatsApp to manage regular COPASAH coordination. If desirable, each regional and thematic hub may also utilize unique email or WhatsApp groups for relevant communications.
- ⦿ The Global Secretariat will be responsible for maintaining updated the COPASAH Global website, ensuring all website information is accurate and up to date.

### 6.2 Purpose and Frequency

- ⦿ The Global Secretariat and Steering Committee may use both email and WhatsApp to regularly communicate with each other, as the need arises, to include planning for forthcoming meetings or sharing resources and accomplishments or requests for amplification across peers.
- ⦿ Unless otherwise requested, the Global Secretariat will send all necessary documentation related to Steering Committee business directly to the designated Steering Committee members and alternate members. In addition, each Steering Committee member may, from time to time, designate one additional communication focal point authorized to receive documentation. It will be the responsibility of the Steering Committee member, alternate member and/or the communication focal point, not the Global Secretariat, to make any further distribution of documents to constituent members or other interested parties.

- ⦿ Steering Committee members, alternate members and communication focal points should keep the Global Secretariat informed of changes to their business address, telephone, and email address.
- ⦿ An updated membership list, maintained by the Global Secretariat, can be referenced on the COPASAH website and COPASAH Google Drives.
- ⦿ The Global Secretariat is responsible for maintaining the COPASAH Global website and ensuring all information provided on the website is accurate and up to date.

### 6.3 Language

- ⦿ Communication between the Global Secretariat and the Steering Committee have historically been conducted in English. As a global network though, COPASAH leadership should make every effort to include both Spanish and French translation of all internal communications in order to enable individuals not fluent in English to reasonably be nominated and participate in the Global Secretariat and/or Steering Committee.
- ⦿ The Global Secretariat and Steering Committee members will utilize Google Translate to ensure -tri-lingual communication until a more permanent solution is identified and implemented.
- ⦿ All communications related to Steering Committee meetings should be conducted in English, Spanish, and French, where possible.

## 7. Meetings

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### 7.1 Regular Steering Committee Meetings

- ⦿ The co-conveners will call Steering Committee meetings and set the meeting schedule on an annual basis.
- ⦿ The Steering Committee is required to have no less than three meetings per year with the ultimate goal of meeting quarterly (four times per year).
- ⦿ The co-conveners may adjust the frequency of meetings as necessary to address urgent or critical circumstances, with the approval of at least half of the members of the Steering Committee.
- ⦿ The purpose of regular Steering Committee meetings is to promote, nurture, and allocate efforts to sustain timely and ongoing communication between diverse regional and thematic hubs. We are currently working in some kind of isolation, losing the opportunity of enriching our practice with lessons from abroad

### 7.2 Special Steering Committee Meetings

- ⦿ Any Steering Committee member may suggest the need for a special meeting to the co-conveners.
- ⦿ In the case that the co-conveners cannot or will not schedule the meeting, a meeting can be scheduled with the consensus of three steering committee members.

### 7.3 General Conduct

- ⦿ The Steering Committee may conduct business only when a quorum is present, i.e., a simple majority of Steering Committee members.
- ⦿ Co-conveners or a previously assigned Steering Committee member will conduct the meetings.

### 7.4 Agenda

- ⦿ Unless otherwise agreed by the co-conveners in consultation with the Global Secretariat, proposed agenda items for Steering Committee meetings should be submitted to the Global Secretariat at least a week in advance of a scheduled meeting.
- ⦿ The Global Secretariat should circulate an agenda with related documentation to Steering Committee members at least five (5) working days in advance of Steering Committee meetings. Agendas will provide background and rationale for each item. Items for decision will be clearly identified and prioritized.

### 7.5 Decision-Making Process

- ⦿ The Steering Committee shall use its best efforts to reach all decisions by unanimous consensus.
- ⦿ If all practical efforts by the co-conveners and members have not led to unanimous consensus, the co-conveners may call for a vote by a show of hands (be it physical or virtual) by the members in attendance or by email for those not in attendance. Members, including the co-conveners, may cast their vote in one of four ways:
  - Agreement: The vote is counted in favor of the full proposal.
  - Agreement, with declared reservations: The vote is counted in favor of the proposal; however, reservations are noted for the record. The group may or may not decide to reword the proposal (this does not count as a vote against the proposal).
  - Object: The vote is counted against the proposal. Reservations are noted for the record.
  - Abstain: The vote is counted neither in favor of nor against the proposal. Members may abstain for reasons such as having declared a conflict of interest or are in strong disagreement but do not want to block the proposal by objecting. Abstentions are noted for the record.
- ⦿ With respect to Steering Committee votes, in order for a proposal to pass, a majority vote is required. Votes registered as in “agreement” and “agreement with declared reservations” count as votes in favor of the proposal.
- ⦿ In the event a motion passes with declared reservations, the co-conveners may identify additional action relevant to address the nature of the reservation. However, this does not change the outcome and the motion is recorded as passed.
- ⦿ The group can modify the decision-making approach to lower the approval threshold in exceptional circumstances where:
  - All practical efforts to achieve consensus have failed.
  - The super-majority voting rules outlined above prevent definitive action on an issue (all viable options forward are blocked by minority views).
  - Failure to act definitively could cause significant harm to COPASAH and interfere with its ability to attain its goals.

## 8. Roles and Responsibilities

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### 8.1 Steering Committee Co-Conveners

- ④ Provide leadership to the Steering Committee, create a collegial working environment to enable consensus decision-making and mediate Steering Committee action in response to issues as they may arise.
- ④ Set agendas for the Steering Committee, chair meetings, guide discussions and facilitate decision-making. Call for special meetings if needed.
- ④ Proactively remain informed of sector and Global Secretariat activities and issues, advising on matters of strategic importance.

### 8.2 Regional and Thematic Hub Leads

- ④ The term of office for regional and thematic hubs leads will be determined by the individual leadership of each regional and thematic hub. Terms and nomination processes may differ by hub and should be referenced in hub governance guidelines.

## 9. Steering Committee Relationships

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### 9.1 Relationship to Global Secretariat

- ④ The Global Secretariat serves the following functions:
  - Implementing activities defined in the annual work plan.
  - Managing communications and information sharing.
  - Supporting the Steering Committee in mobilizing resources.
  - Acting as the financial administrator and managing direct funding relationships with the Global Secretariat.
  - Representing the Steering Committee at external meetings and events.
  - Synthesizing information into clear messages for advocacy purposes.
  - Providing other administrative support as recommended by the steering committee.
- ④ All Global Secretariat management and human resources must adhere to the Steering Committee's oversight and any regulations of the Global Secretariat's host agency.
- ④ Steering Committee co-conveners and the global coordinator (or other representative) will interact, request and share information and/or direct activities that have been previously agreed upon in the annual work plan.



## 9.2 Relationship to Regional and Thematic Hubs

- ④ While there may be times when a Steering Committee member may lead a regional or thematic hub, this responsibility will primarily be delegated to a third party in order to protect against conflicts of interest and enable Steering Committee members to focus on and function as an oversight body for COPASAH and its hubs.
- ④ A Steering Committee member may lead a regional or thematic hub when one of the exceptions are made:
  - There is a significant language barrier between the regional hub lead organization and the Steering Committee; or
  - The regional hub lead organization requires the expertise of a specific Steering Committee member, for a specific reason.

## 10. Amendments to these Governance Guidelines

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The COPASAH Steering Committee may amend these governance guidelines at any time.

## Global Secretariat Nomination Process

As an extension to section 4.3, the following list details the appropriate selection measures to be conducted by the Global Secretariat Nomination Chair and Task Force to select a new host for the Global Secretariat:

- ④ The Global Secretariat Nomination Task Force will review the short form nomination application, update the form as necessary, and launch the short form application process to the Steering Committee - providing no more than two months duration to identify, complete and submit the application.
- ④ Steering Committee members may nominate an organization (their own or another organization) by completing a short form application.
- ④ Upon the application deadline, the Global Secretariat Nomination Task Force will convene to organize the review process: each Task Force member should be assigned a primary and a secondary application to review based on predetermined criteria. In this way, each application receives review by two Task Force members.
- ④ Task Force members will convene to discuss their ratings for each nominated organization based on the predetermined criteria and select their top choice based on the highest ranked organization following qualitative discussion across the Task Force.
- ④ The Chair of the Global Secretariat Nomination Task Force will then convene a Steering Committee meeting to share their recommendation on the forthcoming host organization for the Global Secretariat.
- ④ Steering Committee members will be offered a two-week comment period to voice concerns with the proposed selected host organization. Steering Committee members may email the Chair of the Global Secretariat Nomination Task Force with concerns to be aggregated and elevated at the final Steering Committee meeting.
- ④ Following the two-week review period, the Chair of the Global Secretariat Nomination Task Force will convene a final Steering Committee meeting to discuss any comments brought to the Task Force's attention and/or to finalize the nominee (if no comments are elevated).
- ④ Should the existing Global Secretariat host organization be selected for renewal, its new term will start at the conclusion of its existing term.
- ④ Should a new organization be selected for the role of Global Secretariat, the existing host organization will begin the transition process to the new organization three months prior to the end of its current term. The transition process should include turnover of any COPASAH accounts, passwords, donor introductions, onboarding to current Global Secretariat activities and ongoing processes, etc.
- ④ For the three-month transition period, the new host organization will serve in the role of "Global Secretariat-Elect" and may act as a deputy to the existing host organization in coordinating Steering Committee meetings, activities and other functions as needed to ensure a smooth handover by the new term.
- ④ At the start of the new term, the existing host organization will fully transition out of its role and the new organization will serve as the new host organization for its 5-year term.

**COPASAH Governance Structure**



