

Minutes of CommonHealth Steering Committee Meeting (Virtual)

Date: 11th October 2019

Time :3.30-6.15pm

Attended by:

Dr. Alka Barua
Dr. Arvinder Singh
Ms. Bijaylaxmi Rautaray
Mr. Kuldip Chand
Dr. Nilangi Sardeshpande
Ms. Priya John
Mr. Rajdev Chaturvedi
Mr. Rahi Riyaz
Ms. Renu Khanna
Mr. Souvik Pyne
Dr. Subhasri
Ms. Swati Shinde

Absentees

Dr. Balasubramanian
Dr. Bhuvaneshwari Sunil
Ms. Sanjeeta Gawri

| S.No | Agenda Items | Time |
|------|---|-------------|
| 1. | Introduction | 3.30-3.40pm |
| 2. | Update on past activities/ongoing activities | 3.40-4.30pm |
| 3. | Update on budget utilisation and fund status/FCRA amendments and related issues | 4.30-4.45pm |
| 4. | Discussion on modalities of hosting events/meetings | 4.45-5.30pm |
| 5. | Discussion on streamlining engagement and internal communication within SC | 5.30pm-6pm |
| 6. | Planning future activities (project/theme-wise + OD) | 6-6.15pm |
| 7. | Any other business | |

The discussion began with a small online exercise (jamboard) facilitated by the chairperson (Souvik Pyne) on reflections on:

- One top highlight about CommonHealth since the last SC meeting/positive aspect
- One other thing that could have been better /wasn't best / could have been done

The Steering committee members responses:

- Despite challenges of Covid 19, CommonHealth team was able to conduct workshops/implement activities in alternative modes through partners
- Were able to publish knowledge products in regional languages
- CH connected with its members through an online meeting to know about their challenges /response to Covid last year. There is need to connect back with the CH members similarly more frequently atleast quarterly to provide them that sharing space.
- At the grassroots level, members were able to provide support to communities especially women and were able to do advocacy even with the challenging situation of Covid to some extent.
- At the same time there were challenges in proactively meeting health care officials, having physical meetings and talk about the needs of women wrt to SRHR due to restrictions of travel/no transport etc but alternatively through online mediums continued efforts for advocacy.

KEY DISCUSSION/ACTION POINTS

Using interpretation feature in CommonHealth zoom meeting:

- Considering CommonHealth members are from diverse setting and every meeting should have option of language interpretations, it was suggested that CommonHealth should definitely plan for subscribing the language interpretation features in zoom account.

IWHC project update An update of CH project activities was presented by the coordinator and respective project theme leads.

- a. IWHC supported evidence generation on Sexual and reproductive health issues under which data on the reproductive health histories of women was collected from 5 sites from CH partners. The research teams had made presentation on the key findings in Feb-March 2020, followed by which teams worked on respective reports. The reports from 3 organizations (SAHAYOG, SAHAJ and RUWSEC) have been submitted while reports from the YP foundation and SAHELI are pending.
- b. YP foundation could not work on the report as the person looking into the research discontinued working with YP foundation and because of some internal issues no other staff could take up that task.
- c. SAHELI staff has been overworked and busy with response to sex workers community. The consultant was hired to help with the report who also could not deliver on time owing to her personal health issues.
- d. In order to ensure dissemination of the RH study it is important that all partners submit their reports based on which a synthesis report or research brief (on common findings /highlights across sites) could be prepared for dissemination at national level . A consultant can be hired for this purpose.
- e. Dissemination material: Besides the detailed report on RH study, partners were expected to work on shorter report or flyers for local dissemination of the study. It

was suggested that rather than working on a shorter report for dissemination, a 2-3 pager dissemination flyer should be published by each organization for local advocacy on SRHR.

- f. Phase 2 project activity includes building discourse on Maternal Health with the support from grassroots partners through consultations with women in 6-8 sites. Additionally, an expert consultation will be planned online with range of stakeholders to deliberate on the issue of quality maternal healthcare for women in view of newly rolled out midwifery model. A list of grass roots organizations has been shortlisted based on their past engagement on the topic of MH with CommonHealth. A consultant has been hired to manage the project activity who has recently worked on a background paper on Maternal health policies in India. The draft of paper has been shared for feedback within MH thematic group

Next steps /suggested actions:

| | RH study | Timeline |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Follow up | The YP foundation should take responsibility and submit the report by 23 rd of September | 23rd September 2021 |
| | Nilangi (being technical mentor) will follow-up with Saheli team and consultant to figure out how this could be taken to its logical conclusion | |
| TOR | The TOR with organizations who are engaging with CommonHealth should mention : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should be done if the organization who has taken part in project activity fails to deliver on time • Provision of alternate plan to ensure deliverables • The TOR should also clearly mention about the discontinuation clause in case of failing to deliver after repeated reminders. • The TOR should also mention that of the organization is not been able to analyze and produce report , a consultant could be hired to work with them to work on the report | |
| Selection of organisations | The selection of partners to carry out study/programme activities should be carefully done and it should be ensured that they commit to deliver. A brief assessment of their past work with CommonHealth should be undertaken before engaging with CH projects. | |
| Discourse building on MH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A methodology workshop should be conducted with the grassroots organizations before they conduct the grassroots consultations with women • SAHAJ would be interested on conducting the grassroots consultation in their field area with | |

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| | <p>women</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC programme team members to send their interest for the grassroots consultations • Thematic members should send their feedback on draft paper | |
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RFSU project : Activities conducted

Under evidence building:

- Published report based on baseline study on access to abortion, also research briefs for dissemination
- Published a report on research on Access to safe abortion services across 9 locations in India carried out during the Covid 19 pandemic/lockdown. The report was appreciated by ARROW and the infographics on the same was published by the ARROW
- Other publications include , Civil Society Recommendations on making the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill 2020 a Rights Based Legislation, the MTP 2020 Amendment Bill: anti-rights subjectivity: Published in SRHM journal, Technical guidance on decriminalisation of Safe abortion-SIAGE
- Also published several blogs on wordpress on Safe abortion theme

Capacity building:

- Value clarification workshops (2020)
- Course on Safe Abortion, Gender and Rights (CREA and CH)
 - Scoping and Needs assessment study with organization working on SRHR to assess the specific capacity development needs on abortion rights and gender (2021)
 - Conducted AGRI with targeted participants from eastern, north-eastern and southern region: July 2021
 - Building capacity of regional partners to advocate for safe abortion issues /services (recent Amendments in MTP Act/covid issues and SRHR/Safe abortion advocacy campaign)

National advocacy

- Decriminalization of abortion : To come up with a common understanding of need for decriminalisation of induced abortion, articulate our position and suggest approaches for advocacy for decriminalisation.
- Webinar series: Decriminalization of Abortion in India: Building a Common Understanding

- Establishment of Think Tank for Safe abortion rights (Nov 2020): To create an expert group, integrate their perspectives and interface with advocacy efforts around safe abortion in the country.
- 17 May 2021: Meeting to analyze existing ecosystem for identification of existing and potential barriers and opportunities for securing safe abortion as a right for individuals
- Developed IEC for Safe abortion advocacy (2 pagers on revised amendment in MTP, POCSO, PCPNDT, 10 module toolkit for advocacy for safe abortion rights, translated into 5 regional languages, Informative flyers on Covid -19 prevention and management and vaccination for Covid 19

Ongoing activities /Plan

- A one year long clinical course of reproductive justice, gender, and the law for law students. CH would work on designing the medical part.
- Course on Safe Abortion, Gender and Rights specifically for southern region (in partnership with CREA): Nov 2021
- Building capacity of Sex workers network conduct awareness and advocacy on safe abortion as a right
- Building capacity of regional partners to advocate for safe abortion issues /services especially within the COVID context, recent Amendments in MTP Act
- Planning for a short study to understand women's lived in realities related to abortion services in the context of states showing decline in contraceptive prevalence and sex ratio as per the latest NFHS
- Planning for a short study on IUD consumption /access by women and impact of it on abortion services
- To mark 50th year of MTP act , FPAI has organized a spotlight series on MTP ACT and has invited CH along with MASUM to conduct a session on Rights, work is in progress.
- SAMA has invited CH to present its access to abortion study findings in its webinar on Safe abortion on 23rd October 2021
- ARROW has hired a consultant Shveta Kalyanwala to monitor RFSU project
- Budget of ARROW that was earlier submitted will be revised based on current needs for publication for regional partners . Arrow has approved the same.
- CommonHealth will be hiring a consultant to manage its project activities

Update on project expenditure and budget

- Utilisation of project budget is a concern, both in IWHC and RFSU. IWHC project grants were received last year in October and it's been one year, there was hardly any utilisation. There were challenges due to the Covid 19 pandemic but now for the next year there is an opportunity to plan project activities well and maximize the utilisation. It is also one of the criteria for disbursement of next instalments from the funder
- Need immediate attention for planning and utilisation of budget

- FCRA issues: There is lack of clarity on FC related Amendments and the same has been followed up with Auditors. Non-compliance by NGOs on FC rules is affecting the renewal of FC accounts. In this context too underutilization might pose risks to the fund holding organisation
- Validity of old registration of FC account is now extended till December 2021. In case FC is non renewed there is provision of receiving money from funders and the same has to be utilised within the one year of receipt. With this background and understanding, the funders are open to release the money which they with held due to FC amendment and regulation.

Consultancy cost for CH: decisions

- The consultancy rates for both SC members (for their contributions to CH project implementation) and CommonHealth consultants need revision
- The office bearers should refer the document (where reference to rates was mentioned) and propose new rates and circulate it with larger SC group for further discussion. The SAHAJ team share the background documents with CH SC.
- The CommonHealth SC will review the proposal and take a decision

Systematic planning of project activities to ensure fund utilisation:

- The thematic lead (FRSU and IWHC) should propose a one hour activity and budget planning meeting along with the thematic group for reviewing the activities for the next quarter (Oct-December 2021) where the group can give their inputs
- Coordinator should share estimated expenses /activity plan for next quarter with group before the meeting
- Coordinator should work on a calendar of tentative activities/meeting and circulate with SC group
- Coordinator to set up call with theme members for review of activity plan (next 10 days)

Modalities of meeting

- A quick round of situation wrt Covid in members state was discussed following which it was proposed that CH SC should take a call on any in-person meeting in November end.
- The agenda of the meeting could be to review and plan the activities proposals and also discuss any additional ideas from partners
- Given that every state may have different set of rules/regulations for Covid , the hybrid mode (in person plus online) of meeting is a best option to carry out project meetings
- December end a physical meeting could be planned in Baroda/Mumbai.

OD processes

- Chairperson proposed OD exercise should be planned through an external facilitator

- As a first step, it was proposed that members should volunteer /self -nominate themselves to take responsibility of specific components of CH project activities (Research, Coalition building, Advocacy, Media advocacy, knowledge products etc). This will ensure steady progress of activities and ensure systematic engagement. The members could be also from outside the SC group.
- Souvik will share a spreadsheet of activities and people can nominate them for the activities they would like to engage with
- Explore SLACK platform (alternate networking platform) which can archive conversations which otherwise get lost in WhatsApp groups. It has What App like feature calling, uploading, sharing documents. In order to refer back to conversations on specific topics, this platform can help.

RESPONSIBILITIES

| Person | Task |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Theme lead and Financial advisor | Plan one hour meeting with thematic group members-Discussion on project planning and budget utilization |
| Chairperson | Share spread sheet for CH SC- for self nomination of responsibilities in Coalition project activities/goals Plan for OD exercise /December end meeting with SC |
| Office bearers | Propose new rates of consultancy (SC members and external consultants) |
| Coordinator | Share quarterly activity plan with theme group members Share calendar of activities that are planned for a quarter /6 months Explore Slack platform for use Set up calls with thematic groups based on their availability |
| Nilangi | Follow up with Saheli team on report of RH study and report back |
| Souvik | Submit report of RH study by 23 rd October |