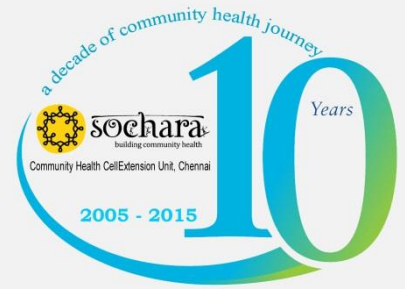# Community Action for Health

Community Action for Health (CAH) is a process envisaged under the communitisation aspect of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). In this Village Health Water Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHWSNCs) monitor the local health services and evolve Village Health Plans. This is then discussed with the public health system and action is taken by all concerned to ensure that the plans are implemented. This process of monitoring, planning and action leads to more engagement between health system, panchayat system and community; increased accountability of health system to community and overall health system strengthening. In Tamil Nadu there was a pilot phase, supported by the Government of India, between 2008 and 2009, and further supported by the State government between 2010 and 2012. In all, the process covered 446 panchayats across 14 blocks of 6 districts (Kanniyakumari, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Vellore, Dharmapuri and Thiruvallur).

SOCHARA along with other civil society partners including Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF), Dharmapuri Voluntary Agencies Network Initiative (DHVANI), Catholic Health Association of Tamil Nadu (CHAT), Tamil Nadu Voluntary Health Association (TNVHA), D. Arul Selvi Community Based Rehabilitation (DAS-CBR), Voluntary Health Association of Kanniyakumari (VHA-K) have been involved at various stages of the development of the model, developing the guidelines and tools for the model at the national and state level, and with various activities related to the dissemination of the process at the national and international levels.

Pre Pilot-Phase – National Level

- Dr. Thelma Narayan, Secretary, SOCHARA is a member of the Advisory Group on Community Action (AGCA), a standing committee of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare which evolved the concept and initial proposal for the pilot process on CAH (then referred to as the Community Based Monitoring and Planning).

- One of the team members of SOCHARA was subsequently invited onto the Technical Advisory Group of the AGCA – this group finalized the Implementation protocol and the generic tools developed for the pilot process.

Pilot Phase – State level

- SOCHARA team was the key initiator of the process at the state level and hosted the first meeting of civil society groups at the state level to introduce the concept. SOCHARA members also led the team of civil society representatives that met the Government of Tamil Nadu officials to support the pilot phase.

- Team members of SOCHARA supported the implementation of the pilot phase which was led by Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF).

- Subsequent to the pilot phase SOCHARA team members were part of the discussions with Tamil Nadu government to support the further roll out of the process, and along with the Director of Public health and Mission Director authored a Joint Note which formed the basis of further roll out of the project.

Implementation of CAH in Tamil Nadu

- After the pilot phase the Tamil Nadu government agreed to support the implementation of the CAH process through the Program Implementation Plan and Government Order was issued. SOCHARA was made the State Nodal NGO for the implementation.

- SOCHARA facilitated various meetings of the implementing groups that facilitated a participatory ethos and functioning of the process. These included;
    - Joint learning workshop in Chengalpattu after the pilot phase.
    - Dissemination workshop with various levels of government staff.
    - Joint Vision-Mission development workshop.
    - Conceptual model development workshop.
    - Regular Joint Learning workshops during the implementation process.

- Subsequent to the stoppage of funding by the state government SOCHARA team has had numerous meetings with the government officials for continuing the work.

Dissemination of the CAH process at the National and International Level

- Presentations were made by SOCHARA staff at various fora at the national level including at AGCA, Planning Commission and national conference on UHC at Delhi in 2012 & various meetings on accountability and governance in public systems.
- Presentations were made at the 2nd and 3rd Global Symposia on Health Systems Research at Beijing (2012) and Cape Town (2014) respectively.

- Presentations were also made as part of the workshops that led to the formation of the Community of Practitioners on Social Accountability and Health (COPASAH).