



# RESEARCH



One of the objectives of SOCHARA is to promote research in community health. Since 2008, after the Community Health Extension Unit (CEU) moved beyond tsunami response and with the evolution of health movement in Tamil Nadu, involvement in research began. Following the principle of SOCHARA, the CEU team always works with other like-minded groups in a collaborative research process which also supports dialogue and collaborative action. The unit also supported young professionals for their internship/fellowship research on various themes such as maternal and child health, equity and social justice, community health, community processes, health system and public health nutrition.



## Research to strengthen public health system

In 2009 – 2010 the Unit conducted a survey in eight Primary Health Centers (PHCs) and two District Hospitals for a public report on health as a part of project implemented by Council for Social Development. A team member was a Principal Investigator for a Cochrane Review on “the interventions to reduce corruption in health sector” with experts. The team supported Child In Need Institute (CINI) to study untied funds - an element of communitisation process in National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). In 2010, after a unilateral policy decision to shift child immunisation to PHCs rather than in sub-centres or villages, the team along with Makkal Nazhavalvu Iyyakam, initiated a study on vaccination coverage and sociological implications of policy change using 30x7 cluster sampling method, reaching 4000 mothers in Tamil Nadu. Along with other contributing factors this research and dissemination of findings helped in reversal of policy decision. In 2013, a guide was developed for 104 helpline to assist the Government to understand the probable questions people might ask in the helpline.



## Research on community processes

In 2011 – 2012 the team conducted participant observation to assess the extent of skill building among Village Health Water Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHWSNC) members thus assessing the quality of training, thereby providing strategies to improve Community Action for Health (CAH) training process. In 2012 – 2013, an expert team conducted participatory evaluation of CAH process. The team studied the functions and weaknesses thereof in VHWSNCs at the end of CAH project and evolved a conceptual framework on VHWSNC functions. Numerous rounds of community monitoring and

planning data was analysed to review the various spectrum of changes required in health services in Tamil Nadu. The team supported a study on social justice and health including enquiries into the functioning of CAH from a community perspective. From 2013 onwards SOCHARA–CEU supported an implementation research on strengthening VHWSNCs in Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan in partnership with Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and National Health System Resource Centre (NHSRC). In 2014, researchers from COPASAH network interviewed SOCHARA–CEU team to identify the ethical issues within the context of CAH process in Tamil Nadu. Themes explored were accountability of civil society organisations, partnerships with communities, and state – civil society – community relationships and fed into a paper on ethics of community accountability. The team shared their experiences of the community monitoring initiative in Tamil Nadu for a case study documentation process carried by Advisory Group on Community Action of NRHM. The Unit also supported the University of Heidelberg in their study to understand CAH process through providing inputs on community participation, monitoring, planning and community led action for health. The Unit conducted a participatory action research on community perception and functions of Pazhaverkadu Government hospital in Tiruvallur.



## Research on Social and Public health concerns

In 2012 – 2014, the team provided technical assistance to a researcher from PHFI (CHLP Alumni member) to study the adherence of Anti-Retroviral Therapy among women and children living with HIV / AIDS. In 2013 – 2014, DHVANI, a partner organization of SOCHARA – CEU was supported to conduct a research on unorganised women workers from a socio – political, economic and cultural angle, to develop a road map for long term intervention. The study covered 1000 women workers from 8 unorganised sectors spread across Tamil Nadu. Alcoholism being a major social and public health concern SOCHARA supported PHFI to study the excise policy implementation in Tamil Nadu. As a part of Community Health Environmental Skill Sharing process (CHESS) the team supported Corporate Accountability Desk (CAD) in assessing the impact of sulphur di-oxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) produced by Sterlite Industry in Tuticorin. The Unit also supported action research on environmental and human right violations by Chemplast Sanmar and MALCO Ltd, Mettur and initiated lay epidemiological strategies to prevent industrial pollution in SIPCOT, Cuddalore.

