

Building social sector alliance to realise health - Campaign



Campaign against the closure of Public Sector vaccine production units – 2009 to 2012

In 2009 many people's movement and civil society organisations in Tamil Nadu launched a campaign "Save the Children" against the Union Government for cancelling the license of three premier vaccine producers in public sector. Tamil Nadu Health Development Association led this campaign along with the MNI constituents. SOCHARA supported and played an important role in various activities including state level public protest meeting, Human chain in Chennai, memorandum to Tamil Nadu Governor, mobilising support of elected people's representatives, district level public meetings, media advocacy and post card campaign. SOCHARA-team also disseminated the issue among many academicians and institutes. In 2012 the government revoked the suspension of licences of all the three units.

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Campaign for Village based Immunisation in Tamil Nadu 2008 to 2011

In 2008 after the death of four infants following measles immunisation, the State took a unilateral policy decision to shift child vaccination only at Primary health centre rather than villages or Sub centres which led to drop in immunisation coverage among marginalised communities. MNI facilitated a campaign for reversal of this policy in which SOCHARA-CEU played an important role and organized press releases, post – cards and telegram campaigns as well as series of awareness building workshops on the issue all over the state.



The team also did field work to assess the situation, addressed the protest organized by Village Health Nurse association, human chain on children's day and participated in a meeting with the Governor of Tamil Nadu.

After an initial campaign the MNI decided to conduct a study on immunisation coverage and sociological implication of the changes, supported by CMC Vellore, to document the issues in the field. The study was done using 30x7 cluster sampling method covering 4000 mothers in over 11 districts. The study revealed reduction in coverage compared to DLHS III and NFHS III survey, increased community demand for immunisation of the child in village itself, considerable amount of people seeking immunisation service from private sector, high inequity in coverage among districts, huge out of pocket expenses since a child had to make 6 PHC visits to receive all vaccines.

MNI released the study findings with considerable media coverage which helped the issue to be kept in the limelight which along with various other factors contributed to reversal of the policy decision in 2001 with the restart of the village based immunisation.

3i campaign – 2010

Despite inadequate PHC facilities the government established targets to increase institutional deliveries in Tamil Nadu. This issue along with the attempts to move the discourse from "*institutional delivery*" to "*safe delivery*" was the focus of a series of activities by MNI. Policy decisions related to vaccines (PSU vaccine unit closure, PHC based immunisation policy 2009 of Tamil Nadu) taken by the Union and State governments during this period were not people centric approach and indicative of top-down approach, hence MNI took up vaccine related issues as its core campaign agenda. In addition Tamil Nadu government also introduced Insurance based public health care scheme for life saving procedures. MNI viewed this scheme as supporting the private health care industry with public money, and as a way to weaken the public health system and part of larger privatisation policy.

In order to address all these three issues, MNI launched the 3i campaign (Institutional Delivery, Immunisation and Insurance schemes) in 2009-10. The campaign activities included state level orientation meeting for MNI activists, article on Insurance by MNI steering committee member organisation TN-FORCES, a workshop (along with Common Health) to evolve an evaluation tool for assessing quality of deliveries in Tamil Nadu, followed by district level meetings and media advocacy including press releases.



Free Binayak Sen Campaign

SOCHARA–CEU supported the larger coalition formed in Tamil Nadu to demand the release of Dr. Binayak Sen and organised public meetings in Chennai, a candle light vigil and a meeting in Chennai. The team also did this in its capacity as a convener of Medico friends Circle (MFC) and through this forum it also supported national level campaigns.

Campaign against Pentavalent vaccine

During the year 2012-13, pentavalent vaccine was introduced in Tamil Nadu on a pilot basis. SOCHARA team supported the position of MNI against the introduction of pentavalent in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP). MNI questioned the necessity of using expensive pentavalent in UIP, which is being pushed by the Global Alliance for Vaccine Initiative. SOCHARA on behalf of MNI wrote a note on this issue, press released and campaigned for people based vaccine policy.

Support to anti-privatisation campaign of Voluntary Health Services (VHS) hospital

SOCHARA-CEU provided support in solidarity with TNHDA and employees of VHS against the privatisation attempts by VHS management.