

# The contribution of Civil Society Engagement to the achievement of Health for All (CSE4HFA)

Research undertaken by People's Health Movement with the support of  
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South Africa, India, Democratic Republic of Congo, Italy, Brazil and  
Colombia, El Salvador and global

# In a nutshell

- Between 2014-2018 People's Health Movement (PHM) undertook a large multi-centre study exploring civil society engagement in the struggle for 'health for all'
- The study was funded by IDRC
- Over four years, 130 researchers in 10 countries produced 50 research reports
- My aim in this presentation is to share:
  - What we did
  - Why we did it
  - What we found in our initial analysis
- Our subsequent reanalysis of our data
  - Why reanalyse
  - How we approached the reanalysis
  - What we found

# Research problem: Global health crisis

- ‘Health for All’ means
  - access to decent health care for all
  - living conditions (in which we grow, learn, work, play, and grow old) which enable good health for all
- There have been some measured improvements
  - technological developments and trickle down access;
  - economic development in China; but
- In absolute terms Health for All is as far away now as it was in 1978 and the health gap is widening

# The unfulfilled promise of Health for All

- Origins of HFA
  - follow up of Alma-Ata
  - link to the NIEO
- Evolution of health policy at the global level
  - the optimism of PHC and the NIEO
  - the debt crisis and structural adjustment
  - 'Investing in health' 1993
  - Uruguay Round (1986-94) leading to WTO
  - 2001 Doha ministerial
  - WHO's Macroeconomics and Health report 2001
  - MDGs and the GPPPs
  - SDGs
- What has been achieved?
  - mortality: general improvement but widening gap
  - immunisation
  - water and sanitation
  - malaria: decline has stalled
  - nutrition: stunting remains prevalent in SEA, EMR and Africa

# Social movements can influence historical change

- Civil society engagement can make an important contribution in working towards Health for All
- The 'social movement' concept provides a robust framework for describing and analyzing civil society engagement
- Iconic social movements: abolitionism, labour movement, women's movement, environment movement, civil rights movement
- Social movements in health:
  - women's health movement
  - access to medicines movement
  - the Health for All movement

# Usages

- “Civil society”
  - a domain of social action to be distinguished from the **state** and the **market**, but
  - boundaries quite blurred
- “Social movement”
  - a form of social action based in civil society
  - a voluntary assemblage of individuals, organizations and networks who share a core set of common goals, analyses and commitments and who communicate and collaborate in various ways to achieve those goals; includes
    - issue oriented social movements
    - political movements: more comprehensive program

# Globalisation as context

- Health risks (barriers to Health for All) are always local but are increasingly shaped by global structures (imperial powers with global reach, transnational corporations, trade and investment agreements)
- Global governance is largely controlled by a small political, bureaucratic and corporate elite, and that control exercised *in the interests* of that elite
- Achieving Health for All will require a *democratisation* of global governance
- Presently the global elite ('transnational capitalist class' - coherent, self-conscious, well networked) confronts a dispersed, incoherent and poorly networked assemblage of national working classes, middle classes and marginalised classes – divided by language, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender and class
- Democratisation of global governance will require a *convergence* of these disparate constituencies: stronger solidarity, richer networking, collaborative action
- The global Health for All movement reflects and contributes this convergence: listening across difference, expressing solidarity across boundaries, collaborating in action

# A framework for analysing social movement practice

- Social movement strategies are directed to influencing the large scale drivers of historical change
- The social movement operates across three fields of practice:
  - the agency of the activists and activist organisations
  - the concerns and commitments of the communities and populations who form the base of the movement
  - the structures, forces and agents with which the movement is engaging
- The effectiveness of the social movement is a function of the modalities of power it deploys
- In the era of globalization, social movement analysis must also encompass the scale dimension, from the local to the global (hence the idea of convergence)
- Movement strengthening is a key objective of social movement strategy, including developing those modalities of power and networking across scale

## Drivers of historical change

- Technological innovation
- Institutional innovation
- Political ideology
- Conflict
- Environmental opportunities and limits
- Demographic change

## Social movement strategies - influencing the drivers of change

- Policy advocacy
- Delegitimation and refusal, resistance and revolution
- Changing how we understand the world
- Institutional innovation
- Networking
- Building the movement

# Fields of practice

- Ourselves: the agency of the activists and activist organisations
- Social movement constituencies: the populations and communities who form the base of the movement
- The structures: the cultural, economic and political, field within which the movement deploys its strategies

Social movement strategy is directed to strengthening the movement as well as achieving structural change

- Numbers
- Organisation
- Networks
- Commitment
- Material resources
- Information and knowledge
- Skills and ideas

# Social movements operate at different levels of scale

- Convergence (solidarity, networking, collaboration)
  - from local and specific issues and identities
  - to networking and collaborating on common issues across different constituencies
- Macro-micro: Addressing the local in ways which also contribute to redressing larger scale forces

# Research questions

- How does civil society engagement influence social change, in particular, towards achieving Health for All?
- What are the conditions for successful civil society engagement for Health for All (CSE4HFA) in the era of globalisation?
- What is good practice?
- What principles might guide social movement strategists

# Research strategy

- Five domains of activist practice provide the main themes of this research
  - Movement building and networking
  - Campaigning and advocacy
  - Capacity building
  - Knowledge generation and dissemination
  - Policy dialogue and engaging with governance (national and global)
- Overlapping, interdependent, synergistic
- Participatory action research
  - stage 1 – describe and evaluate one or more ‘episode/s’ of social movement practice
    - reflect and discuss (locally and in regional workshops)
  - stage 2 – embark on a new engagement, drawing from such reflection and discussion
    - document, reflect, discuss and learn from the new engagement

# Data collection

- Six PHM country circles recruited as research partners
  - researching ‘episodes’ of civil society engagement in accordance with the logic of participatory action research
  - adapting broad research framework to local priorities
  - recognising research as movement building and capacity building
- Global studies
  - literature review of social movements
  - historical review of the global ‘HFA movement’
  - evaluation of Global Health Watch
  - evaluation of International People’s Health University
  - evaluation of WHO Watch
  - analysis of personal narratives from long standing activists within PHM
- Specific one-off projects
  - review of sequence of IPHU’s in El Salvador
  - review of Ghana experience in policy dialogue around global governance
  - Review of Nepal IPHU

# Program logic narratives

- Generic program logic narratives developed for each theme:
  - movement building
  - campaigning and advocacy
  - capacity building
  - knowledge generation, dissemination, access
  - policy dialogue and governance
- Researchers asked to
  - adapt the generic program logics to the local situation and to the activism being researched, and
  - structure their data collection around those logics

# Analysis of data

- *Principles of practice* (insights into practice) are the main form of knowledge to be produced
- Principles to be available as *a library of insights* to be drawn upon by practitioners in accordance with circumstances and judgement
- Principles to be drawn from PAR case studies through *inductive* and *interpretive generalisation*
- Studying the *five domains in parallel in six countries*, guided by common program logics, provides the basis for induction
- *Interpretation* is framed by the world view (subject position) within which the research was originally conceived
- The *value* of the generalisations is understood to derive from their *usefulness in practice* in particular settings
- Principles (insights) must remain *tethered* to the case studies; generalisations tied to contingency

Summary of findings from first  
round of analysis

# Movement building

- Attend to all levels of the movement: individuals, relationships, communities, organisations and networks
- Understand the pathways to activism
- Community building, including mutualism, is part of movement building (community based service programs or demands for state action)
- Collaboration with the state: a matter of judgement
- Social movements have deep roots; know your history
- Leadership is necessary but so is accountability
- Build constructive links between the HFA movement and broader political movements
- Convergence (solidarity, networking, collaboration) is key element of movement building in era of globalisation

# Campaigning and advocacy

- Campaign strategies bring together theories of change, forms of action and response to contingency
  - strategy is contingent
  - theories of change inform strategy
  - many different forms of action
  - planning for action: various considerations
  - resources (people, information, money)
- Balance policy advocacy with structural critique
  - policy analysis: packaging demands which are implementable
  - addressing the configurations of power
  - addressing the immediate issues in ways which will also contribute to structural change
- Networking for campaigning is empowering but requires investment and compromise
  - networking can extend the reach and impact of the campaign
  - but networking can be very challenging
  - clear objectives are important but they are not always self-evident, can change over time and may be subject to disagreement among campaign partners

# Capacity building

- Beyond individuals, think relationships, think organization, think culture
- Think about capacity building in relation to pathways to activism
- Build on informal learning opportunities as well as organizing formally structured training programs
- Link curriculum planning to practice opportunities
- Bringing 'body knowledge' into discourse (through popular education and 'systematization of experience') makes such knowledge available for sharing and building upon
- Avoid expert domination: value trust, reciprocity and dignity

# Knowledge generation, access and use

- New information flows can be empowering, including:
  - scientific, technical and legal knowledges, and
  - indigenous knowledges, such as Central American indigenous cosmovision, provide resources for new ways of understanding ourselves in the world.
- Producing the knowledges that the activists need is a core social movement strategy, including:
  - academic research,
  - research synthesis,
  - learning from activist practice,
  - bringing lived experience into discourse, and
  - re-appropriating history, culture, identity.
- Knowledge sharing is a core social movement strategy, exemplified by
  - Global Health Watch, but attention is needed to
  - media, methods and language, and awareness that
- Knowledge sharing is embedded in relations of solidarity and relations of power

# Policy dialogue and governance

- Critical policy engagement at the national level deals with
  - national issues *and*
  - issues which have international ramifications
- Critical policy engagement at the global level
  - linked to complementary advocacy at the national level
- WHO Watch
  - usefulness to L&MIC delegates and HFA activists
  - funding and accountability of WHO
  - participation in WHO Watch as a pathway to activism
  - capacity building
  - networking
  - critical policy engagement at the national level
  - cost effectiveness
  - practical improvements in arrangements and procedures (physical presence, liaison with officials, regional committees)

# Broader conclusions

- The Health for All movement is making a difference;
  - changing political environments means that the efforts of health activists vary between resisting backslide and achieving positive net improvements
  - attribution of influence among different agents is uncertain
  - the movement could be more effective; we can learn from our experience
- Analysis and strategy must attend to all ‘fields of practice’:
  - ethical and cultural work for ourselves
  - understanding and solidarity with our constituencies
  - political economy in relation to the structures
- ‘Convergence’ (solidarity, networking, collaboration) is a key element of movement building in the era of globalisation:
  - listening to the lived experience of ‘the other’
  - developing shared analyses and synergistic strategies
  - overcoming divisive preconceptions (racism, sexism, xenophobia, Trumpism)
- The ‘macro micro principle’ (addressing the local in ways that contribute to redressing the broader, longer term, structural forces) is difficult (levers, agency, understanding)
- Political movements also contribute to historical change; need to have regard to the relationships between social and political movements

# Epistemology matters

- Participatory Action Research (PAR)
  - creates knowledge which is rooted in the experience and agency of the subject
  - supports organisational learning
- Popular education (systematising experience)
  - capacity building *and*
  - knowledge creation
- Caution regarding dualisms
  - mind and body
    - received knowledge and body knowledge
    - algorithmic practice and embodied practice
  - truth and metaphor
    - objective science and technological hubris *versus*
    - buen vivir, gaia, mother earth

Reanalysis

# Why reanalyse?

- Principles often not referred to in strategy development
  - Importance of embedding active organisational learning in our organisation as a way of continuous reflecting on 'principles'
  - But action learning needs to reflect on why we did what we did as well as what we did
- So can we reanalyse our data to explore the conceptual tool kit that movement organisation strategists draw from in making sense of challenges and developing strategy
  - 'theories of change'
  - 'realising agency'
  - 'pathways to activism'
  - 'convergence': the 'coming together' of different social movements in relation to common threats and adversaries (in particular those arising from neoliberal globalisation), notwithstanding different identities, priorities, analyses and contexts?

# Method

- Case definition
  - 31 cases
- Data extraction
  - Standard template structured around
    - The wrongs being addressed
    - The context in which those wrongs arose, global dynamics and local circumstances;
    - The strategic concepts which may have informed the activists' analysis, strategy and practice;
    - Activist strategy, directed to achieving social change); directed to organisational development; and directed to movement building; and
    - Estimated outcomes of activist engagement.
- Analysis
  - Imputing strategic concepts from activist strategy in context

# Theories of change

- Leveraging/ affirming rights
- Refusal and resistance
- New information flows
- New alliances
- State action
- Delegitimation
- Institutional innovation
- Conscientisation
- Movement building
- Capacity building

# Agency

## Barriers to agency

- Lack of resources
- Power of established narratives
- Repression (incl. violence)
- Decision structures limit participation
- No access to levers
- Corrupt institutions
- Weak activist leadership
- Issues complex & obscure
- Community division
- Patriarchy
- Oppressive class structures
- Discouraged by failure to progress
- Isolation (I am alone)

## Realising agency

- Rights discourse
- Positive experience of struggle
- New stories
- Institutional innovation
- Supportive alliances
- Solidarity (we are not alone)
- Inspirational cases (if they can ...)
- Conscientisation
- Critical policy engagement
- Know your history
- Changing contexts (wait)
- Leadership/inspiration
- Narratives of global thinking informing local action

# Pathways to activism

## Individual pathways

- Grievance/survival
- Solidarity
- Activation in struggle
- Extending professional role

## Organisational facilitation

- Leadership
- Knowledge generation and sharing
- Capacity building (formal and informal)
- Organisational learning
- Valuing people and relationships

# Convergence across difference

- Networking
- Solidarity
- Relationships
- Action together
- Trust
- Convergence

## Further information

- <https://www.phmovement.org/cse4hfa>

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