



PRO-Health 2nd Learning Exchange

Advocacy and Engagement Planning

Holiday Inn Cebu City | 26-29 April 2024

Concept note and program

As of 24 April 2024

Background

PRO-Health or Promoting Rights Organizing for Health is a health organizing initiative of the Government Watch (G-Watch) and Accountability Research Center (ARC) in partnership with several civil society groups and local governments. PRO-Health aims to strengthen transparency, participation and accountability in public health governance by building coalitions and alliances among citizens, groups and communities around health rights issues, and by facilitating learning and problem-solving among accountability frontliners and rights defenders to come up with pro-people and bottom-up solutions to systemic barriers and hurdles to reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health services.

PRO-Health specifically engages three health programs/ policies of the government for the first year: (1) Reproductive Health and Responsible Parenthood, (2) First 1000 Days; and (3) Mental Health for youth and students. The main target of monitoring will be facilities, services and medicines in barangay health units, relevant procurement activities and performance of public health professionals.

The initiative is part of an ongoing cross-country initiative of ARC to learn with, from and for frontline rights and accountability defenders. In the face of both ongoing shrinking of civic space and the pandemic, questions of how to bolster staying power for frontline organizers become even more urgent, particularly in identifying and developing innovative solutions to age-old and structural challenges and problems made complicated by climate change, digital age and other changes in context.

On the first year of PRO-Health, baselining research was conducted by the G-Watch Center team as the sites and partners started organizing and laying the groundwork for PRO-Health monitoring. Eight [briefing-orientation seminars](#) were conducted, capacitating a total of 292 volunteer-monitors. Monitoring and data processing and consolidation are done, while sharing sessions that convene select volunteer-monitors to discuss their experience and dialogue with duty-bearers in a problem-solving session are also done in almost all the sites. In the meantime, the G-Watch Center Team has completed setting up a documentation, tracking and learning (DTL) process for PRO-Health, producing out of it one [review of evidence](#) and two baseline reports: on organizational capacity and local health situation of the sites and partners.

To continue consolidating the PRO-Health network at the national level through shared learning, analysis and agenda on the monitoring results, PRO-Health learning exchanges shall be held, convening volunteer-monitors, accountability frontliners and G-Watch core members from PRO-Health sites and partners. The first one was held last November 24-26 convening local coordinators from sites with most progress in implementing their monitoring plans.

The second learning exchange will happen on April 26-28 in Cebu City convening G-Watch local sites involved in PRO-Health to center on advocacy and engagement with the following agenda and objectives:

- review monitoring results and recommendations per site
- review and analyze national monitoring result to come up with a working national reform agenda
- review commitments generated and shared action steps forward per site
- review advocacy and engagement plan per site
- learn and devise ways to track advocacy and engagement
- share best practices in local RMNCA health governance
- initially develop PRO-Health stories to share from site experience/ work

The learning exchange will also center on learning about and devising ways to track advocacy and engagement. Effective advocacy and engagement generates effective response from government as it strengthens networks, organizations and leaders. Joy Acheron's recent [blog](#) captures the silver lining of how the challenges faced by PRO-Health in engaging with government during monitoring became an opportunity to further organize, build allies and empower G-Watchers:

With efforts to overcome the risks and challenges posed by constraining civic space, enabling citizens to do monitoring and come up with solutions becomes a painstaking process of empowerment...In PRO-Health, the conduct of monitoring in restricted civic space has turned into an organizing and coalition-building process. In a less favorable political context, the recruitment and training of monitors and the practice of monitoring can be seen as civic learning. The broadening of monitoring networks has become key to building collective countervailing power. Monitoring exercises are driven by a know-your-rights and claim-your-rights approach, and by a collective intent to improve governance. This is very different from the conventional focus of third party monitoring on data gathering as an end in itself.

The same dual goals of organizing and generating government response must be sustained as PRO-Health furthers its advocacy and engagement activities.

Meanwhile, the latest [paper](#) of Jonathan Fox, et.al. disentangles 'government response' to facilitate understanding on varied government's response and action towards citizen voice and demands, wherein differentiating would be crucial in determining whether accountability delivers enduring changes.

"Government responses to civil society voice and action can fall into three overlapping categories: responses, responsiveness, and accountable responsiveness. Officials may commit to changes—that's a response. Yet governments may or may not deliver on those promises. In contrast, when governments meet those commitments and recognize the legitimacy and relevance of social actor input into the policy process—that's responsiveness. The more consistent and inclusionary government actors are in terms of meeting their own commitments to citizens, the more responsive they are. Government agencies that go further, with officials who actually explain and justify their actions (or inaction), can be described as engaging in a third kind of response: accountable responsiveness.

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Governments can respond to voice yet still abuse their power in the ways they distribute material concessions. In this category of ‘responses,’ there is the risk of repeating similar problems in the future because there are no changes in policy or practice to avoid them. In these ‘discretionary response’ scenarios, what may look like a policy win in the short term could be easily withdrawn at the government’s discretion in the future.

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Responsive governance is widely treated as evidence of accountability. That seems intuitive; the ideas certainly overlap.

Yet the key distinction between accountable and responsive governance is that “responsiveness is at the discretion of those in power, rather than an institutional obligation.”¹⁵ Yet some kinds of responsiveness do involve accountability. The idea of accountable responsiveness suggests that powerholders respond to citizen voice with explanations, and possibly consequences—as with functioning grievance redress mechanisms.

In brief, accountable responsiveness is a subset of responsive governance...

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Accountable governance includes both public-facing answerability and upwards reporting to higher level or checks-and-balances oversight. Accountable governance is understood here as involving both some kind of process or forum for answerability, where duty-bearers must explain or justify their actions—possibly including some kind of tangible consequences, such as rewards or sanctions. Yet sanctions and rewards for public sector officials mainly come from within the government itself, from above, and may not be public-facing...

To sum up, government responses to voice can be substantive and meaningful without necessarily adding up to accountable responsiveness.

In contrast, accountable responsiveness would also involve processes of public-facing institutional answerability, such as power-sharing or effective grievance redress...”

To explore tracking government response, G-Watch is devising a [Response Tracker](#) and a [Commitment Tracker](#) that will be further developed and discussed during the learning exchange.

Finally, there is the challenge of popularizing the documentation of advocacy and engagement progress. G-Watch is also currently exploring whether and how digital means can be used to enable more G-Watchers to tell stories and track progress. In the 2nd learning exchange, each site will be launching their audio-visual presentations (AVP) on local PRO-Health on the following themes:

- Health situationer (actual situation/ condition of health units and health workers based on PRO-Health monitoring)
- PRO-Health in action (conduct of actual monitoring)
- Solidarity video (coming together of PRO-Health volunteer-monitors, showcasing their spirit, presenting their qualities and traits)

The best AVP will be given an award that the site can use to further their advocacy and engagement activities, including further use of digitalized knowledge outputs.

Program

Day 1 (Friday, 26 April 2024)		
1:00-3:00pm	Briefing with DoH Cebu (<i>to be confirmed</i>)* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies/ standards on services, medicines, personnel, facilities that all health centers in the country must comply with • Policies/ standards on barangays' role in health • Policies/ standards on health workers hiring, promotion, performance assessment and termination • How is the DOH budget for reproductive health, First 1000 Days and mental health allocated, disbursed and accounted for 	
Day 2 (Saturday, 27 April 2024)		
7:30-8:00am	Registration	
8:00-8:30am	Opening program	
8:30-9:30am	Presentation of the national monitoring results	G-Watch Team
9:30-10:30am	Review of recommendations and crafting of the national reform agenda	Joy Acheron
10:30-10:45am	Snacks	
10:45-11:15am	More discussion on the national reform agenda	
11:15-12:00nn	Sharing of best practices in local health governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Sarah Talla on engaging the barangays, professionalizing health workers and making medicines dispensation efficient • Rechie Tugawin on Ugnayan sa Pasig – how it is being used to address health issues and concerns • Mayor Ian Gil Garcia Mendez on mobilizing support from provincial and national governments to enhance rural public health services 	
12:00-1:30pm	Lunch	
1:30-2:30pm	Documentation, Tracking and Learning Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Tracker • Response Tracker • Commitment Tracker 	Victoria Maglanque
2:30-3:30pm	Review of commitments generated and advocacy and engagement plans	Per site
3:30-3:45pm	Snacks	
3:45-4:20pm	How to write a simple local policy document (Local Ordinance/ Executive Order/ Resolution/ Position Paper)	Francis Isaac

4:20-5:30pm	Workshop: draft a policy document on at least one of the recommendations from your site (<i>sites should already have an idea of what local policy document they want to develop based on their monitoring recommendations</i>)	
Day 3 (Sunday, 28 April 2024)		
8:30-9:00am	Recap and energizer	
9:00-11:30am	AVP Showing Marathon	All site
11:30-1:30pm	AVP Gallery Working Lunch	
1:30-2:00pm	Story-telling: how to tell a good TPA story	Faith Santos
2:00-3:00pm	Workshop on stories (<i>sites should already have an idea of what story from their PRO-Health work they want to develop/ share</i>)	Per site
3:00-4:00pm	Presentation of draft stories	
4:00-4:30pm	Recap <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National reform agenda • Advocacy and engagement plans highlights • Activity, response and commitments trackers reminders 	Mars dela Cueva
4:30-5:00pm	Closing program	
7:00-10:00pm	Solidarity Night: Best AVP Awards (<i>recommended attire: dressed-up</i>)	

** Only for those who are already in Cebu this time and want to join*

Reading Materials:

Aceron, Joy. The Political Meaning of Monitoring in Restricted Civic Space. 12 March 2024.

https://accountabilityresearch.org/monitoring_political_meaning/

Fox, Jonathan, Brendan Halloran, Alta Fölscher, and Rosie McGee. 2024. “Disentangling Government Responses: How Do We Know When Accountability Work Is Gaining Traction?” Accountability Research Center. Accountability Working Paper 17. <https://accountabilityresearch.org/publication/disentangling-government-responses/>

Shukla, Abhay, Shweta Marathe, Deepali Yakkundi, Trupti Malti, and Jonathan Fox. 2023. “Activating Spaces, Scaling Up Voices: Community-based Monitoring and Planning of Health Services in Maharashtra, India.” Accountability Research Center. Accountability Working Paper 14. https://accountabilityresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/WP14_final_Oct.pdf