

This programme is aimed at grappling with internal and external dynamics of the social change organisations.

SECTORAL ACTIVITIES

PRIA is trying continuously to be involved in mobilising collective action, lobbying and advocacy on macro and micro issues affecting the voluntary sector as a whole. This may at times imply political action and support, at other times, it would mean playing larger supportive or critiquing roles.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

As a regional representative member of the International Network on Participatory Research, PRIA has played a critical role as a support institution in the Asian Region, as well as internationally. Activities for networking, organising forums for exchange of information and experiences amongst like-minded persons and groups are initiated in the context of internationalisation of the world order.

PUBLICATIONS and VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

Popular Documentation and Resource Centre (PDRC)

A Popular Documentation and Resource Centre is functional within PRIA since 1990. It serves as a mode for all information that is to reach grassroots organisations and activists working in the field. The tasks before the PDRC include:

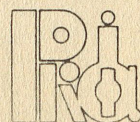
Preparation, production and dissemination of popular materials on a variety of issues both for, in-house support to PRIA's ongoing programmes, and to support the work of grassroots organisations and voluntary initiatives in the country.

Providing facilities to activists/groups to create materials for dissemination in their area of work.

Availability of audio-visual facilities for use both within PRIA and by activists/groups to help in their work.

The thinking behind setting up the PDRC is that PRIA can become an effective vehicle for exchange of information between diverse sections of society. Its accessibility would contribute towards the demystification of technology and facilitate its greater use at the grassroots level.

For sharing of information and ideas on developmental issues, regular periodicals are published thematically. Over the years several publications have been brought out on important issues, programmes and activities that PRIA has been part of independently or in collaboration with partners.

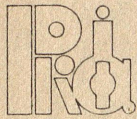


Society for
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RESEARCH IN ASIA**

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Society For
PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN ASIA



Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi, has now been in existence as a non-profit, non-governmental organisation since 1982.

PRIA was set up to practice, promote and theorise on Participatory Research (PR). Participatory Research implies an effort on the part of the people to understand the role of knowledge as a significant instrument of power and control. It tries to give value to individual and collective experiences and give credit to existing popular knowledge. To acquire the ability to appropriate knowledge produced by others, to obtain confidence and tools to produce their own knowledge and finally to use this knowledge to work on common interests through collective action - these are the components of Participatory Research. Understood in this way Participatory Research is essentially an educational process which aims at supporting people in the articulation of knowledge from their own point of view.

The understanding of the theory and practice of PR has contributed towards refining our mission and strategy of work.

In the context of dynamic socio-political developments globally and nationally, and critical reflection of its experience as

a support institution, **PRIA is committed to work towards enhancing the critical control of the marginalised and deprived people over the production and use of knowledge, in order to enhance their capacities to intervene in processes and structures shaping their lives.**

PRIA works closely with those grass-roots formations, actions and initiatives which give centrality to educational processes in their strategies for social development and change. At the same time, we interact with various segments of the social environment in an effort to intervene in this environment and influence them.

Meaning of Support

PRIA has been in existence as a support institution to field based activists and grassroot groups working in the rural, urban and industrial sectors.

In practice, over the years, this support role of PRIA has acquired several meanings. PRIA collaborates with activists, individuals, groups and organisations in such a way that it strengthens their capacities in the areas of research, training, evaluation and organisation-building, and helps them to deepen their understanding of the issues they are working on.

PRIA's understanding of this support role is one where it:

1. encourages them continuously in their work;
2. questions them to enable them to clarify their work to themselves;

3. keeps them informed about the macro developments relevant to their context and work;
4. explores sustainable options with them;
5. responds to the needs of the groups and individuals it works with;
6. stands by them at moments of crisis or need;

Our efforts during this period have been on developing long term relationships with activists and groups and to respond to needs and issues as they emerge to the best of our collective ability. The nature of this support then is different from a consultant - client or commercial-relationship. Hence, it moves beyond service - provision to an intervening nature.

Key Principles

In playing this kind of a support role we have evolved several principles which guide our actions and practice.

1. We believe in mutuality of relationship with those we work with. While valuing the experiences, ideas and positions of activists and groups, we also share our experiences and ideas with them. Thus the relationship is characterised by mutual learning and support.
2. The practice of Participatory Research is rooted in the dialectics of theory and practice. We believe

that systematization and analysis of practice contributes to evolution of theory and concepts; and such conceptual understanding and clarity then gets used in strengthening practice. This integral, ongoing and dialectical relationship between theory and practice guides our activities to a large extent.

3. Our work with grass-root activists and groups is situated within a larger understanding of the macro context. We believe that micro attempts are likely to be diverse in their elaboration; yet the macro context shapes the possibilities for micro interventions. Thus, a simultaneous understanding of, and action at several levels - from the micro to the macro - is needed.
4. We believe that collective learning processes help strengthen the capacities of marginalised people to intervene more effectively in influencing their lives. Thus the issues related to their learning, learning opportunities and process need to be placed before society at large as a matter of right. We believe such processes are based on socially acclaimed values of democracy, secularism, equality and social justice.
5. We believe that developing consultative processes with a broad community of partners and other significant actors helps in evolving a relevant and appropriate strategy for our work. Networking and establishing horizontal linkages with a wide variety of local groups and

relevant others helps to sustain this consultative process. It is through this kind of effort that various activities and programmes of PRIA acquire concrete shape and get implemented.

6. The nature of our support is essentially educational and is intended to strengthen the capacities of our partners. This implies a more pro-active and interventionist posture, as opposed to a passive, service-provision.

Our programmes and activities have been categorised as:

-Issue Based Programmes.

-Capacity Building Efforts.

-Sectoral Activities.

-Regional and International Activities

-Publications and Video Productions

These programmatic directions are elaborated as under:

ISSUE BASED PROGRAMMES

People's Access and Control over Natural Resources.

As a dominant means of production in our society, land continues to be a major source of power and control in rural India. Similarly, access and control over other natural resources - water and

forests - have also been instrumental in the perpetuation of poverty in rural India. Increasingly the whole issue of common property resources which include land, water and forests and their use by the rural poor has to be grappled with.

Keeping these concerns before us PRIA has defined its priorities in this programme area on issues of:

- Local governance of natural resources in tribal areas.
- Access to common property resources
- Water as a source of livelihood
- Displacement from control over natural resources
- Alternative utilisation of natural resources

Towards this end, the programme entails:

— documentation of experiences of struggles and actions on this issue; orientation and issue based workshops and training programmes, — to strengthen the knowledge base of individuals and groups, working on the issue of people's access and control over natural resources.

Worker's Education on Occupational Health and Safety

The main objective of the programme has been to raise awareness among worker's and their representatives (as well as those belonging to related professions

like medicine, law, engineering, etc.) on problems of health and safety at the workplace.

Based on initial experiences of working with independent and national trade unions we began to play a role for :

- disseminating information on working conditions.
- supporting struggles on occupational health and safety at the workplace
- initiating educational support on a larger scale through national and regional issue based campaigns.

These experiences in the recent past and present have created opportunities for collaboration with similar and multiple others, to contribute towards Worker's education on Occupational Health and Safety.

In the coming years PRIA would

- serve as a clearing house for documents, pamphlets, and study reports on workplace health hazards and related issues.
- document case studies of struggles to disseminate among workers and activists.
- conduct issue-based workshops and training programmes to sensitize and raise awareness and skills among workers and activists.
- assist in developing workers' resource centres at the regional level to

provide space for exchange of information and ideas.

- assist the National Campaign on Dust Related Lung Diseases in carrying out the campaign effectively.
- support worker's centres and trade unions in their efforts of organizing educational activities.

Women's Empowerment

The involvement of PRIA in this programme is situated within a macro analysis of critical gaps in women's development. In the past, PRIA has been involved in interventions to enhance social and managerial capacities of activists and groups involved in women's income generation activities. Practical experiences and critical reflection have re-defined our thrust areas in this programme, while refining our perspective on women's issues. Our activities within the ambit of Women's Empowerment programme would involve:

- capacity building of women activists and grass root organisations
- creating awareness and developing inter-linkages on issues related to women and gender concerns. These would be achieved through intensive support to groups working on women's issues, through issue specific workshops and other interventions.
- information and back-up support on micro and macro issues impacting the lives of women in general, and poor women in particular.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Elements of capacity building of activists and organisation run through all the activities PRIA undertakes.

The primacy of educational process in strategies of social development and change calls for capacities for structuring and facilitating educational processes. Along with a number of groups in different parts of the county, over a period of time, PRIA has been able to enhance its own understanding about the pedagogy for social change and its implication on facilitation skills. Based on such collectively evolved understanding PRIA conducts training programmes for activists on training/ learning methodology. PRIA is also involved in backing several attempts to conduct such trainings in regional languages (i.e. Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Telegu, etc.) in terms of learning material, design and staff support.

The other aspects of PRIA's activities in this programme area relate to strengthening the collective - the organisation. These activities range from assisting groups in reflecting upon their work and organisation; incorporating mechanisms of ongoing documentation of experiences and its retrieval, to training of organisational teams in organisation building and management.

PRIA also tries to provide intensive support to individual organisations in working out their strategy of educational intervention, strategic programme and organisational planning.