



Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

PRIA

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**Influence on Governance Institution
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INTRODUCTION

Democracy works when citizens and most marginalized sections have the capability to ask questions and seek accountability from the state and participate in the process of governance. Democracy sustains not merely on the participation of adult eligible voters but depends on the capability and integrity of the systems of the state, institutions of governance and involvement of people's participation in governance. Accountable and people centred governance can provide systems to function democracy effectively.

The Human Development report described governance as “the exercise of the power or authority, political, economic, administrative or other wise to manage country's resources and affairs. It comprises the mechanism process and institutions through which citizens and groups can articulate their interest, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.” The real challenge remains in a democratic process is to ensure that the process of governance does not get subverted or controlled by economic and political elites who controls the institutions of governance or powerful market forces and international financial institutions like World Bank and IMF.

Since independence people are being used as mere vote banks for the political groups. In cashing the ignorance of the people, the political elites are exploiting the power and authority given to them through the electoral process, while neglecting the concerns of the poor and marginalized sections. PRIA strongly believes that unless the marginalized sections access to and control over the democratic institutions it is not possible to protect their interests. In view of this 73rd constitutional amendment is considered a watershed to democratic decentralisation but in reality, even after a decade still the devolution of powers in true sense is yet to become a reality. The UPA coalition in power has given a ray of hope to the local self- governance institutions through its CMP. A ministry on Panchayati Raj has been created for the very first time to look into the functioning of Local Governance Institutions.

When we look into the status of Local Governance in the state of Andhra Pradesh, the Government has issued approximately 500 GOs since 1995 from various departments with regard to three tier panchayat raj institutions and devolved various functions to GP, MP and ZPs but most of them are not in operational. On one hand government is claiming, “to have devolved all functions to local bodies”, on the other hand lack of clarity in these GOs make the PRIs ineffective and make them mere ‘Paper Tigers’. Though it was mentioned in GOs, various levels of functionaries are not working under PRI. This shows the real intention and sincerity of the state on devolution of powers to the local bodies. This can be a lesson for the CSOs working on governance issues.

PRIA has been involved in strengthening the capabilities of the people to participate in the processes of governance. PRIA follows a multi-pronged approach to involve the state and its functionaries, The following are the objectives

Objectives:

- Promoting accountable and transparent governance through engaging governance institutions and its functionaries to influence the systems of decision making and strengthening local self-governing bodies and engaging all public service institutions for such reform effort.
- Promoting informed citizenship for participatory governance.
- Support to strengthen the voice of the poor and marginalized and ensure their participation in local governance system to access and control over resources to join the mainstream of development.

Since 2003 PRIA AP has been actively engaging governance institutions to advocate policy initiatives in favour of the poor and marginalized. At district level it is preparing the functionaries and ERs of the local governance institutions and citizen leaders and citizen collectives as well to build their capacities and enable them to identify and address the local issues effectively. Also preparing the future leadership to access and control the local institutions. Engage district administration and its line departments on issues related Local bodies. Strengthening the capacities of civil society to actively engage them in the process of democratic governance. At state level the interventions centred around advocating people centred policies while engaging the government departments on related issues. Creating platforms for dialogue to influence the state machinery to address the issues of local bodies and ensuring the devolution process to take place. Following is a reflection of the initiatives undertaken at district and state level to influence the governance institutions.

DISTRICT (MICRO) LEVEL:

The programme on **“Governance Where People Matter”** has laid emphasis on strengthening the capacities of functionaries and enabling local institutions to access the resources. Initiatives at district level are considered very important as they mainly aimed at creating awareness, strengthening capacities of Elected Representatives, citizen leaders, citizen collectives and creating platforms among citizens and govt. officials to discuss issues. Programmes undertaken in the last three years at micro level have really brought some significant changes. Initiatives were undertaken to strengthen the capacities of the Elected Representatives of Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samiti members on the 73rd CAA emphasizing the roles and responsibilities of the Elected Representatives and role of Gram Sabha in local decision- making process.

PRC level programme

PRIA has initiated Citizen Leadership promotion programme in which active leaders have been identified from the reference groups and their capacities were strengthened on 73rd CAA, role of gram sabha, providing information about govt. schemes and programs.

As a result

1. Participation in gram sabha has increased especially participation of women.
2. Citizen leaders and people started raising more issues in gram sabha.
3. Micro planning initiatives were undertaken at ward level and citizen leaders were trained in developing micro planning at ward level.
4. The micro planning exercises were able to bring out the issues affecting the ward and also identify available resources within and outside.
5. Issues were prioritized and only those issues were raised in gram sabha for redress.
6. The citizen leaders were able to meet mandal level administration to address their issues and these citizens collective have become pressure groups to address issues at GP and Mandal level.
7. These efforts have resulted in strengthening inter tier linkages among three tier PRIs.

DRC Level

PRIA's interventions with district level administration on the issues of PRIs through its regular consultations made them send a communication to all GPs and mandals to conduct mandatory gram sabha as compulsory. In response to the communication all the MPDOs directed the village secretaries in their jurisdiction to conduct gram sabha and submission of minutes and resolutions to mandal Parishad.

PRIA is working in tribal areas in Visakhapatnam district to strengthen the tribal gram panchayats through different initiatives like Orientation of ERs on PESA, mobilization of Gram sabha and working on development issue (water and sanitation). PRIA consulted Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) a govt. body formed specially to promote the economic self-sustainability of tribals by procuring the MFP and a product from tribals, and markets them to share the 5th Round Table conference resolutions emphasizing the PESA act implementation. Series of consultations were held to develop a joint strategy for promoting Minor Forest Produces and strengthening of Gram Sabha process. As a result, a decision was taken to regulate Minor Forest Produces according to PESA Act.

Urban governance

PRIA through its initiatives sensitized the citizens on various social issues. It has identified citizen leaders, citizen collectives, also various urban service departments and created a platform for dialogue between them. Apart from this preparation of profiles of the municipal towns, Mahabubnagar and Anakapally were initiated. Capacity building on 74th CAA was undertaken for the ERs and citizen leaders as well. As a result, citizen leaders have taken up the issues with municipal authorities and in response they sanctioned Rs. 40 lakhs under Indira Prabha Scheme. PRIA has prepared a pamphlet on birth and death registration and distributed it in wards and subsequently series of awareness drives were taken up in Anakapally, Gajuwaka, Bhimili and Mahabubnagar municipalities. As a next step rallies were carried out involving schoolchildren and women followed by a public meeting on this issue where municipal commissioner and officer, birth and death registration participated actively.

Solid waste management was another issue taken up by PRIA in Mahabubnagar and Anakapalli municipal areas. It has organized citizens meetings in its operational areas to educate them on issues pertaining to sanitation and hygiene. It also initiated participatory meetings involving municipal administration authorities and citizens highlighting the issues. The main outcome of the meeting was management of solid waste. A team has been sent to study the solid waste management initiative undertaken by Suryapet Municipality, so that it can be replicated in the respective intervention areas.

State (Meso) Level

At the state level the role of SRC becomes crucial in building networks with concerned departments and other civil society organisation so as to influence the policies in favour of the poor and marginalized. Since 2003, efforts have been made to strengthen the relation with different departments such as

1. Departments of Panchayat Raj
2. Department of Rural Development,
3. State Election Commission (SEC),
4. State Finance Commission (SFC),
5. State Water and Sanitation Mission,
6. Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development (APARD),
7. National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD),
8. Dr. Marri Chenna Reddy Institute of Human Resource Development (MCRHRDI),
9. Extension Training Centre (ETC),
10. Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI).

Round Table Conferences on Panchayati Raj

Linkage with Govt. of AP has grown stronger with organisation of seven round table conferences at national level on Panchayati Raj. Facilitation of these conferences in different parts of the country has given credibility to PRIA. In close coordination of Department of PR, SRC has developed the fact sheet for round tables; which has paved way to build a strong relationship with the department. A state level consultation on implications of ministerial round tables on Panchayat Raj institutions, role of government and civil society organisations was organised. In this consultation state level CSO and all the concerned government departments involved and discussed at length on the implications of the resolutions. Round table resolutions were translated into Telugu, the local language and disseminated among all the stakeholders. Ministry of PR, govt. of India has insisted upon implementing the resolutions, which compelled the state to initiate the devolution process. As a result, initiatives were taken at the state level towards devolution of powers (functions, functionaries and funds) to PRIs.

Govt. has asked the department of PR for conducting activity mapping exercise in the year 2004-05 for identification of roles and responsibilities and attaching functionaries at various levels. Department of PR in collaboration with APARD initiated to conduct the activity mapping exercise and has approached PRIA to facilitate the processes for activity mapping exercise. PRIA has been involved actively in facilitating state level activity mapping exercises with the concerned departments like Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Medical and Health, Education, Women and Child Welfare, BC welfare, Social Welfare, Rural Water Supply, Rural Development (including poverty alleviation and women empowerment and self-employment). PRIA also provided the reports on activity mapping exercises of other states like Karnataka, Kerala, Chattisgarh, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan for a comparative study. The different departments and their functionaries at various levels have been prepared and submitted to the government. In turn govt. constituted a taskforce to examine the report. Even at this level PRIA has been able to influence through its expertise on the status of report. The taskforce is still examining the report for consideration.

In its initial discussions with PR department for activity mapping exercise PRIA emphasised on involvement of three tier PRIs ERs. The suggestion was considered by PR department and invited the three tier ERs in all the activity mapping exercises. As a result, the voices and concerns of ERs could be heard by the state. These brainstorming exercises resulted in developing different roles and functions to be played by functionaries of different departments at various levels. There was also a discussion on funds and its allocation to PRIs at various levels to perform different functions. This effort has created an opportunity for both functionaries and ERs as well to understand each other's concerns.

PRIA has coordinated and facilitated the whole process of activity mapping. A study on devolution of finances was conducted by PRIA for which information was collected from NIRD and the collected data was analysed and updated for wider circulation and was shared with department of PR. PRIA has prepared a report on Status on Financial Position of Panchayats in AP and shared it with Department of PR, that has helped in understanding the fund flow mechanism and conducting activity mapping exercise as well.

At state level PRIA is actively associated with APARD a state level for training and research institute on the subjects of Panchayati Raj and rural development. The association has matured into a strategic linkage to consult each other on the subjects of panchayati raj and rural development. PRIA has initiated a Radio programme called "Pragatipadamlo Panchayati raj" for which APARD has helped by recommending a scriptwriter for this programme. Later PRIA hired the services of APARD for developing compendiums on three tier PRIs and they are now known as Grama Panchayat Samachara Darshini at Gram Panchayat level, Mandala Parishad Samachara Darshini at Mandal Parishad level and Zila Parishad Samachara Darshini at Zila Parishad level. These compendiums were released with a foreword of commissioner and widely distributed and used in all the trainings conducted for ERs and other functionaries. This is considered contribution towards strengthening Local self- governance. These compendiums were also distributed from the offices of department of PR and RD so that they can be used and understood among three tiers of PRIs and its concerned line departments. PRIA has

significantly contributed in influencing the methodology of training. Earlier it was widely using lecture methods in its training and orientation programmes. APARD has approached to utilise the expertise of PRIA in participatory methodology. Series of meetings with trainers of APARD were held on adult learning and participatory training methods and techniques. APARD has introduced participatory training methodology like small group discussions, energisers, exercises etc. (lot of information and resource material has been provided to APARD). Another significant influence on the training methods and introducing new training programme in APARD was “Micro Planning” into three tiers of PRIs. PRIA developed micro planning method, which has been adopted in totality to train sarpanches, village secretaries, mandal and zilla parishad members, MROs, MPDOs etc.

PRIA has also been approached by department of RD govt. of AP to be a resource agency to support the PRI pilot initiative undertaken by Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty supported by World Bank under Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Programme (APRPRP). PRIA contributed by providing its expertise on micro planning during the consultation meetings. A team comprised of World Bank representatives, SERP PRI pilot study Project Director visited PRIA programme areas to understand micro planning process. Resource material support was provided along with recommendations to introduce micro planning and role of gram panchayat into PRI pilots programme. Considering our recommendations as a follow up action Department of PR and RD has issued a GO No: 323, Dt: 27th October 2004 recognising ‘PRIA as good track record CSO working on PRIs from grass root level to national level’. Prior to implementation of the programme Department of RD has organised a 3-day workshop for Project Directors DRDA, DPOs, CEO ZPs, MDOs from 10 districts, PRI pilots implementation in which PRIA was invited to share its expertise and experience. However, the PRI Pilots programme could not be initiated due to various political reasons. Department of RD has stated to implement after the elections but the programme could not take place.

State Finance Commission (SFC):

Regular contact has been established with State Finance Commission (SFC). By visiting SFC on regular intervals by providing information booklets and other resource material is developed by PRIA. Report on Devolution of powers to PRIs was shared with SFC. Inviting SFC chairman to various platforms to share commission’s recommendations on devolution of financial powers to PRIs. At present SFC is developing recommendations for effective financial devolution by conducting district level consultations with District administration, CSOs, and ERs. In this regard SFC asked PRIA to facilitate these events both at Vizag and Mahabubnagar districts.

State Election Commission (SEC):

A close association with State Election Commission was developed with the initiation of rural PEVAC in 2001 and it was strengthened with the successful implementation of urban PEVAC in 2005. A forum of CSO was formed at state level with the following objectives:

- To Educate the voters especially women to participate and contest in local body elections,
- To update the voter list and enrolment of eligible adult voters.
- To create awareness on using EVMs.

CSO forum has derived various strategies like posters, pamphlets, writing on walls, audio cassettes, slides in cinema halls, cable operator etc. to create awareness. Election Commission has sent communications to all the districts to permit and promote our initiatives as well as others engaged in similar activities. SEC has endorsed the posters that are widely used during the elections. Poster on usage of EVMs was very well received by the people and was pasted in polling booths so that people can cast their votes properly. SEC after completion of the elections sent an appreciation letter for the efforts of PRIA in educating the people and enabling them to participate actively in the electoral process. PRIA considers that, the acceptance of PEVAC initiatives by the SEC is one of the major influences in the state. SEC has recognised initiatives like PEVAC is a major component to strengthen

the democratic process of governance. Impact assessment study prepared by PRIA was shared with SEC and they are using it as an important resource in preparing their urban election report.

Conclusions

The conclusions are based on the observations drawn from the reports of 2003 to till date, and through the interactions held with staff at DRC level.

1. Last three years are seen crucial in building relationship with different stakeholders.
2. At mandal level the interventions were centred on awareness and knowledge building exercises on 73rd and 74th CAA with ERs of GP and MP, citizen leaders and at times MPDO and MRO and other functionaries were involved.
3. Most of the immediate issues affecting the lives are being addressed but addressing strategic issues need to be given focus and appropriate strategies may be developed around these issues.
4. Mandal Administration look at PRIA as credible resource organisation on PRI issues do consider the recommendations but it still needs further reinforcement to be recognised as a agency that can influence on issues.
5. Linkages with District administration further need to be strengthened and staff capacities have to be enhanced on identified issues and networking and advocacy as well.
6. Linkages with issues-based networks such as dalits networks, tribal networks, networks on sectoral issue-based networks to be established so as to make the presence of PRIA and its initiatives may be further strengthened.
7. The issues identified in urban interventional areas like birth and death registration, and solid waste management have made very little impact over municipal authorities and reference community as well. This may be due to the indifferent nature of the urban community and municipal authorities though recognise the intervention there is a need to focus further on strengthening the relation with urban services department. Appropriate strategies needed to be recognised as an influential force rather a service-oriented organisation.
8. On the issue of solid waste management in Urban Municipalities of Mahabubnagar and Anakapalli sent a delegation to study the Suryapet Municipality but no mechanisms were developed with concerned departments or pressure-building initiatives were taken up for a comprehensive plan of action on solid waste management.
9. At state level PRIA has been able to build strong relation in the last three years with different departments of govt. and institutions of research and training. PRIA is recognised as an expert organisation on governance issues. However, the indifferent nature of government towards PRIs do act as an impediment at times in negotiating with the government.
10. Department of PR and RD recognise the expertise of PRIA and involve in its initiatives as resource organisation pertaining to PRIs. However, the relation is more towards utilising the expertise rather an agency working towards advocating policy change in favour of poor and marginalized.
11. Issue based linkages from PRC to DRC to SRC may further strengthen the approach to empower the local governance institutions.
12. The devolution process initiated by the state as a follow up of the Round Table Conferences. PRIA played a role of facilitator. However, influencing the decision-making body is very limited. This area is needed to be strengthened by building strategic networks with other civil society organisation to create space for a dialogue with the state.
13. NREG Act and RTI Act are recently been enacted by the parliament. However, as a follow up APREG Act on the lines of NREG Act clearly undermined the importance of PRIs, by giving all

the responsibilities such as issue of job cards, job registration, village developmental plans, maintenance of muster roles to village secretaries, In the same way Under RTI Act too applications for information at GP level has to be given to village secretaries. This makes the govt's dual nature of intentions.

14. Strengthening the capacities and perspective building of staff and the citizen leaders around the strategic issues may be taken up so that
15. PRIA is seen as a resource agency on governance issues but not as agency that can influence the state for a people centred policy on PRIs and an influencing agency working towards devolution of powers to the PRIs.

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