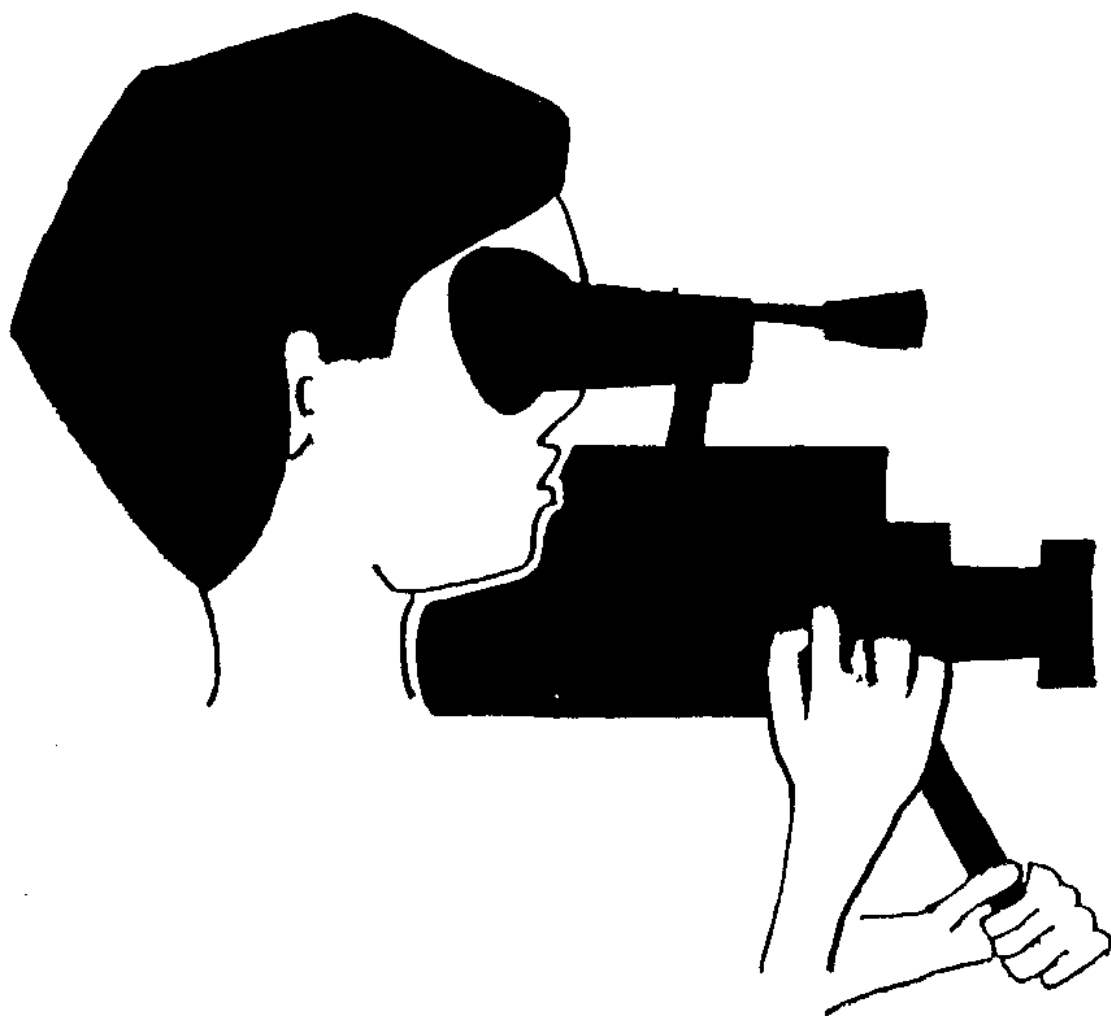




EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS

**A REPORT OF
PRIA'S EVALUATION
AUGUST 1989**



THE CONTEXT

The regional informal network of Participatory Research in Asia was started in 1976 with the idea of exchanging information and experiences among like-minded persons and groups. On February 6, 1982, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) was formally set up (as a registered Society in India) with the twin objectives :

1. To promote the Practice of Participatory Research (PR) within Asian region.
2. To link up with other similar networks in other regions of the world.

In the early days, greater emphasis was placed on the practice, promotion and refinement of the concept of PR in India. During the initial phase active discussions and consultations with like-minded individuals and groups in India were held to specify the activities and roles of PRIA.

Two intensive consultations in December 1982 and April 1983 led to the articulation of twin agenda for PRIA :

1. PRIA to use and promote the principles of PR as the basis in its research, training and evaluation activities.
2. PRIA to act as a support institution to field-based activists and grass-roots groups working in the rural, urban and industrial sector.

The historical evolution of various programmes, activities and roles of PRIA has to be viewed in this context. It is this twin agenda of defining the meaning of a support institution to grass-roots organisations on the one hand, and practicing and promoting the concept of Participatory Research on the other which acted in ways to lead to the evolution of two types of programmes over the last 8 years. The first category of programmes are those which we are calling as Issue-based programmes which focus on issues of concern for the deprived sections of our society. Three issue-focus programmes have been the dominant ones in PRIA so far. Land Ownership and Alienation, Womens' Income Generating Activities, and Workers' Education and Occupational Health. Several types of capacity building programmes constitute the second category of our programmes. These programmes have grown in response to the need to strengthen and build capacities of grass-roots organisations and individuals to carry on their tasks and realize their missions more effectively. Training of Trainers programme, Training in Management and Accounts, Support in Participatory Evaluation and Intensive Support to New Initiatives are some of the examples of these capacity building interventions. With increasing relationship with other grass-roots organisations, PRIA was also involved in playing sectoral roles which cut across the entire sector of voluntary agencies and essentially involves lobbying and advocacy functions. Because of its historical roots, PRIA continued to be some way involved in networking, learning from the supporting initiatives of similar nature in other regions and countries of the world. As part of its strategy for dissemination of popular knowledge and as support to field workers and grass-roots activists, popular publications and videos were produced as an outcome of its various studies and programmes.

The early trends set up in PRIA led to regular and ongoing review and consultation with related partners and with relevant individuals in planning and implementing each of these programmes and activities. While some reviews took a more formal and elaborate character, others continued to be built into the very process of elaborating and implementing each programme and activity. It was this trend which led to a two-day exercise of self-assessment and reflection with its then partners in February 1986. That review brought out several ideas and issues which became the

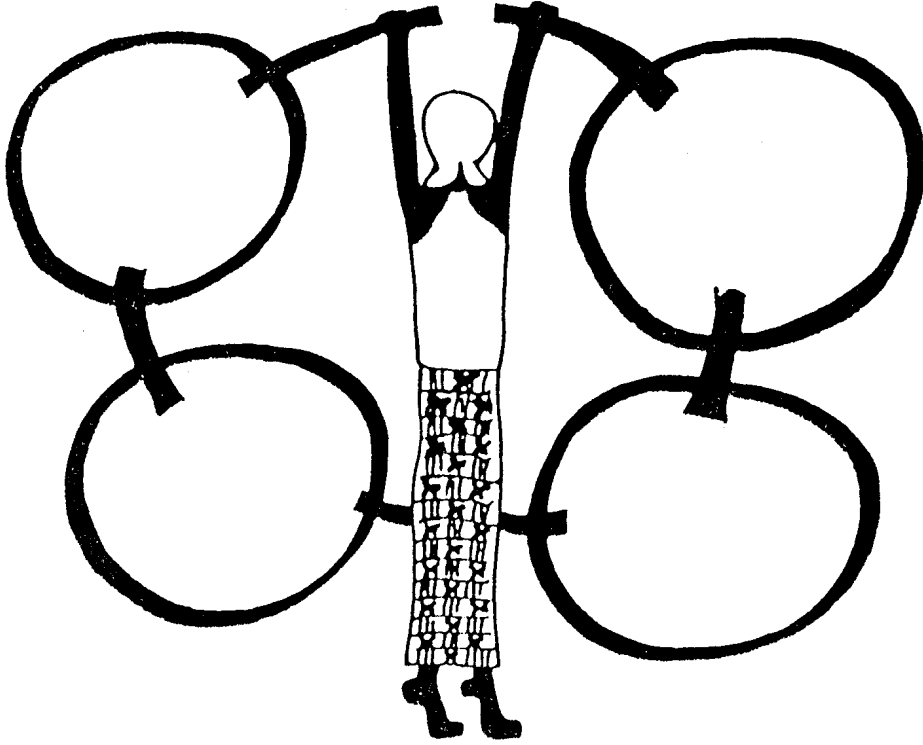
basis for action by PRIA in the following period.

Since then it was felt that after seven years of its widespread and intensive activities, a more comprehensive, systematic and intensive reflection and review of various activities, programmes and roles of PRIA must be carried out. The initiative for this evaluation and reflection came from within PRIA. And it was agreed that the entire range of its activities, programmes, publications (including its internal organisational mechanisms) should be made the focus of review and evaluation.

For the task of conducting this process of evaluation and facilitating reflection by PRIA, several options were discussed. It was finally agreed that a team of external facilitators with some knowledge and understanding of PRIA should be invited to share this responsibility alongwith PRIA staff. It was in this context that F. Stephen of SEARCH, Bangalore, Om Shrivastava, of Astha, Udaipur and Sujata Gothoskar, an activist from Bombay were requested to facilitate the evaluation process. This team of three was later joined by Chandan Dutta, a freelance researcher who has been associated with PRIA's work for some time. A series of initial meetings with this team led to the setting up of the focus and frame of reference of evaluation. Various steps and stages in data-collection and analysis, and a delienation of responsibilities of members of this team among themselves and between the team and PRIA staff were then derived upon. Throughout this process, this sharing of responsibility between an external team of evaluators and PRIA staff was a challenging and difficult process, though it was a process which we all contributed towards immensely and carried out effectively.

The outcome of this process of evaluation and reflection is contained in this report. This report therefore, is a summary of not only the process and steps of the evaluation but also key findings around various programmes and activities as well as summary of discussions on the nature of support institutions, some common concerns and PRIA's mission and future directions.

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 experience 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 the common interests through collective action—these are the components of Participatory Research. In this standpoint PRIA considers the concept of PR as an educational process which aims to support the people in the articulation of knowledge from their own point of view.



THE PROCESS

FOCUS OF EVALUATION

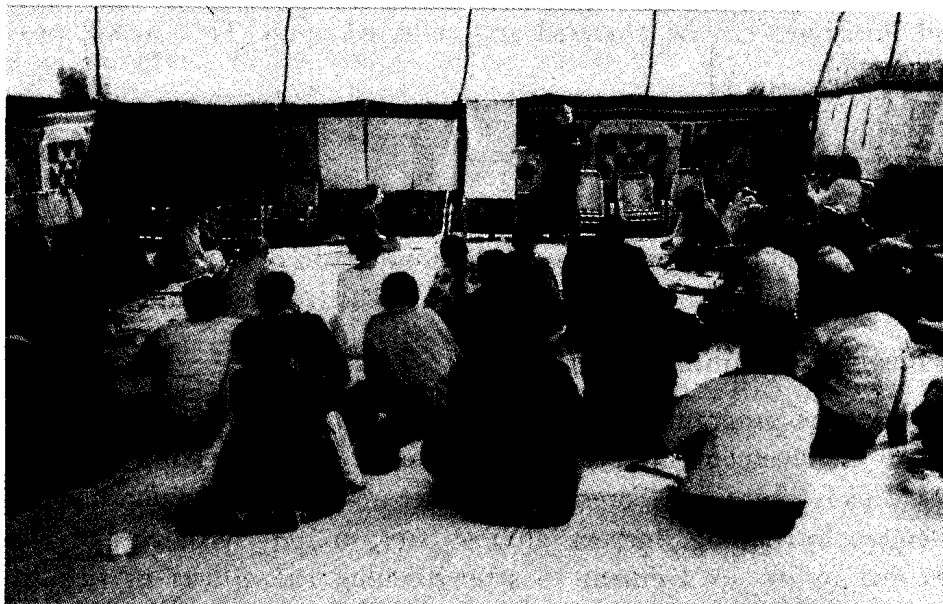
The evaluation of PRIA was essentially seen as a comprehensive and integrated look at its different programmes, activities and roles. It was felt that an analysis of the developments and trends, impact and relevance of each of our programmes and activities individually and severally had to be made in a comprehensive and integrated reflection process. Thus the inter-relationships between programmes and roles, their positive and negative impact on each other and its implications within PRIA were also to be the focus of the entire evaluation exercise. Also, it was felt that more concrete, detailed and authentic feedback from our partners in different parts of the country and the world, as well as those who have been associated with PRIA's activities and programmes in some limited way, must be obtained as a major basis for initiating this reflection and evaluation process. In fact, the role of partners who have been very actively involved with these programmes and activities of PRIA over these years was seen as a major role in the entire process of evaluation. It is with this in view that three broad purposes for evaluation were laid down in the beginning.

PURPOSES

We see three broad purposes for this evaluation :

1. To analyse the past activities, programmes and initiatives of PRIA in different areas with different methods and with different partner groups within its overall perspective;
2. To identify and design future roles and expectations of an organisation like PRIA; and
3. To identify and help evolve organisational mechanisms and directions in order to be able to play those roles.

Of these, the first two purposes seem to have been realised largely through the evaluation process, while the last one is being worked out in more detail by PRIA staff itself.



FRAME OF REFERENCE

We believe that the overall frame of reference in PRIA's evaluation has to be guided by its broader perspective. PRIA has become an intermediary, support and networking organisation for grass-roots initiatives, individuals and groups in the country primarily, and to some extent, in other parts of Asia and internationally. PRIA's overall philosophy is based on popular knowledge, popular education and popular participation. It believes in people's own capacities to articulate their current experiences, analyse their present realities and to evolve their future vision and collective mechanisms to work towards that vision : Demystification of knowledge and deregulation of control over means of production of knowledge has been central elements in PRIA's philosophy.

It has evolved as an organisation which can convene grass-roots initiatives around issues of common concern, support efforts at advancing the rights of the poor, local development and alternative models of social change. PRIA has not been involved in direct field level developmental work but has been supporting those involved in such efforts. It is essentially an educational organisation and plays this educational role through its training programmes and workshops, research and documentation, publication of learning/training materials, production of audio-visuals and networking, dissemination of information and convening of interested parties on common concerns.

PRIA's philosophy and perspective also guide its own practice and work process. We engage in training, research and evaluation by respecting the experiences of grass-roots activists and organisations, and building on that. Our programmes are evolved, elaborated upon and implemented through the active participation and support of our partners in the field. We attempt to evolve this partnership of equality over a long-term with a variety of links. We encourage our partners to make demands on our services and facilities; we also actively intervene in their programming and organisational functioning—of course, on the basis of mutual respect and trust. We avoid becoming a funding agency (or representative of one); but we help demystify the funding process and funders through information, guidance and links.

It is within this broad perspective and philosophy of PRIA that its various activities, programmes and initiatives can be analysed and reflected upon. This should provide the broad frame for this evaluation.

PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Since its inception in 1982, PRIA had evolved various programmes and activities, based on its active interaction with field-based initiatives in different parts of the country. For the purpose of the present exercise of evaluation, PRIA's programmes and activities are categorised as follows :

a) Issue Based Programmes

This category of programme consists of those programme areas which were evolved due to PRIA's involvement in specific issues : i.e., Land Ownership and Alienation due to PRIA's involvement in Forest Policy debate, Workers' Education due to PRIA's involvement in training workers' groups; later, in 1985, Women and Work programme started due to its involvement in strengthening the efforts of field-based groups in organising women for income generating programmes.

b) Capacity Building at Grass-roots

This category of PRIA's programmes and activities consists of various efforts PRIA is making towards strengthening and enhancing capacities of the field-based groups in managing themselves and their programmes. The programmes and activities included in this area are Training of Trainers, Training in Management and Accounts, support in Participatory Evaluation, and intensive support to new initiatives.

c) Sectoral Activities

In the past, PRIA got increasingly involved in mobilising collective action and lobbying and advocacy on the issues affecting the voluntary sector as a whole. These types of initiatives are included in this category.



d) Regional and International Activities

Since its inception, PRIA has played a critical role in the Asian Region as well as internationally in promoting Participatory Research, Evaluation and Training. PRIA has also organised some regional events on the issues it is working on with field-based groups in India. All such regional and international activities of networking and organising exchanges are contained in this category.

e) Publications and Video

Dissemination and exchange of information and knowledge has been an integral part of Participatory Research philosophy and practice of PRIA. PRIA has tried to document and disseminate most of the training programmes, workshops and other activities it had undertaken on different issues and interest areas. As a result, PRIA has brought out 28 publications and 11 video films during the period 1982-1987. An assessment of the usefulness and effectiveness of this activity of PRIA was specially made in the process of evaluation.



STEPS

The entire process of evaluation was planned jointly by the team of facilitators and PRIA staff comprising of several steps as detailed below :

1. Defining the focus of evaluation and setting the frame of reference and a preliminary plan for the entire exercise was the first step. This step was carried out over an extended period of time particularly between April and July 1988. It entailed several meetings and discussions with different PRIA staff responsible for different programmes and members of the external evaluation team.
2. The development of the focus and instruments of the data collection in each of the programmes and activities was the next step. This was carried out in several ways. First of all, each PRIA staff responsible for different programmes and activities prepared a long historical note on the evolution, objectives, implementation, experiences and issues within those programmes and activities. This was shared with the members of the evaluation team who among themselves had also done a preliminary division of responsibilities. Besides, all the documents in each programme and activity starting from Project Proposals, Progress Reports, Workshop Reports, Publications and other notes and files available were shared with the members of the evaluation team for a detailed perusal of the history and the background of each of the programmes and activities.

Having done that it was then decided that data-collection from partners and others in the field had to be designed in a way that serves the purpose of each of the programmes and activities on the one hand and also provides overall insights and analysis as well.

3. Detailed planning of data-collection methods and instruments was then carried out during April and September 1988. It was agreed that a comprehensive and detailed review of all

publications must be carried out through the mailing of a set of questionnaires. Thus the entire set of publications were classified according to their purposes and questionnaires in English and in Hindi were prepared to assess the relevance, usefulness and impact of these publications among those with whom they were shared and to test the assumptions which were underlying each category of publications. About 1500 such questionnaires for different categories of publications, both in English and Hindi, were sent out all over the country and the world with a cover letter from the evaluation team and PRIA. The response rate of the questionnaires returned after being filled in was a healthy 20 per cent or more for most of the categories of publications. These questionnaires came back till December 1988 and were then analysed (see Table 1 for details).

4. For its various activities and programmes, it was decided that data-collection from a select number of organisations and individuals must be made by visiting the field by different members of the evaluation team. In some cases, information had to be sought in written form because those persons are located outside the country (mainly related to the regional and international role of PRIA). Therefore, questionnaires were prepared in English and Hindi specific to each programme and activity to be used by members of the external evaluation team for direct interviews with field workers and representatives of grass-roots organisations.

The exercise of identifying field workers and grass-roots organisations to be visited and interviewed was done jointly with the members of the evaluation team where each programme and activity was seen in terms of its partners, key individuals and area of spread. Thus a comprehensive list of individuals and organisations divided into the four regions of the country (North, South, East and West) was prepared which comprised of both organisations the programmes and activities felt closely involved with, and those with whom the contacts had been lost for some reasons. The underlying assumption was that feedback from our current and active partners as well as those who have become inactive would be helpful in understanding the programme and its ways of implementation.



From this detailed exercise, a list of about 80 organisations was finalized to be visited by members of the evaluation team during October to December 1988. These organisations (and individuals within those organisations) were then to be interviewed around programmes and activities of their involvement. Finally 72 organisations were visited and more than 170 individuals belonging to these organisations as well as others were interviewed in this effort. Table 2 provides the details of the coverage of organisations and individuals interviewed for different programmes and activities.

5. On the basis of the data collected by field visits and interviews and that received from the questionnaires mailed and the perusal of the materials available within PRIA, members of the evaluation team made a preliminary analysis of this data and presented that to PRIA staff in the third week of January 1989. The team of external evaluators was joined for this exercise by Dr. L. Dave Brown, President of Institute for Development Research, Boston, USA whose contribution in analysing this data was immense. This sharing of preliminary analysis by the evaluation team provided an overview to PRIA staff of the kind of findings that were coming from the data. This was also used to understand the findings to be shared with the in during the proposed Partners Consultation scheduled for February 5-6, 1989.
6. Consistent with its approach of acting as a support institution and building its programmes, roles and activities in collaboration with, and on the advice of, its partners, a Consultation with key partners from different programmes and activities jointly convened was seen as an integral and important part of the evaluation process. This Consultation was convened at PRIA on February 5-6, 1989 and was attended by 43 individuals from 35 organisations within the country. The Partners Consultation started by our sharing with them the evaluation process, steps and key findings and then focused on discussion on the relevance and characteristics of PRIA as a support institution and issues arising out of the evaluation findings about its roles and programmes. Partners Consultation also contributed to indicating the importance and priority of various activities and programmes, besides clarifying a whole range of issues which were thrown up by our practice and the evaluation process. It was an immensely valuable exercise and perhaps the high point of the entire evaluation process.
7. On the basis of the materials and ideas generated during the Partners Consultation and the findings shared by the evaluation team, a reflection and analysis exercise by PRIA staff was undertaken with the help of members of the evaluation team. This exercise was also used to establish some broad contours of the future directions. While this was to be completed by April 1989, it could actually be done by June 1989 only.

While focussing on the organisational issues and concerns was seen as an integral part of the entire evaluation process, in actuality this became less important during this process for several reasons. The pressure of focussing on programmes, roles and activities and the challenge data generated from the field were so immense that it made it difficult to collect additional data on the organisational aspects during that stage. Secondly, as part of its ongoing process, PRIA staff had a series of internal discussions on various organisational issues which continued during this process and, therefore, it was felt that no additional purpose might be served by doing so. However, a discussion on

organisational issues and concerns was held in the meeting in June 1989 with all PRIA staff along with the facilitators of evaluation to identify organisational issues which have to be attended to in the light of the future directions of programmes and roles of PRIA. It was in this sense that the focus on organisational mechanism, concerns, issues and matters was brought in the evaluation process.

Throughout this entire exercise, the time, energy and contribution of members of the evaluation team was immense and so also that of the PRIA staff, besides a vast number of other people, including our partners, who took the entire exercise very seriously and took special efforts to make their contributions to this process of reflection and evaluation. Our experience of using this process and the steps in the evaluation process have reaffirmed our faith in these principles and we are grateful to all who have made this a valuable, insightful and gainful experience for us all in PRIA.

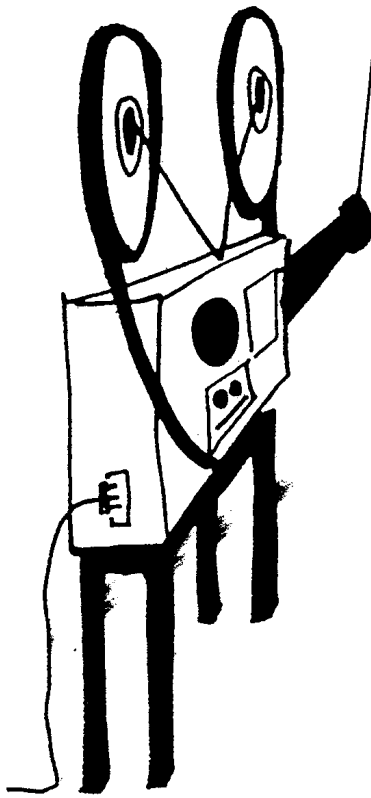


TABLE 1
QUESTIONNAIRE COVERAGE

Sr. No.	Publication	Questionnaires sent	Questionnaires received	Percentage Response rate
1.	PERIODICALS			
	i) Newsletter	340	100	30
	ii) Khoj Khabar	289	35	12
	iii) Occupational Health	109	24	22
	iv) Occupational Health & Safety Bulletin (Hindi)	67	12	18
2.	MANUALS			
	i) Manual (English)	157	40	25
	ii) Manual (Hindi)	100	8	8
3.	STUDY REPORTS			
	i) Study Report (English)	147	38	26
	ii) Study Report	48	10	21
4.	WORKSHOP REPORTS			
	i) Workshop Report (English)	138	40	29
	ii) Workshop Report (Hindi)	115	22	19
5.	International PR Publications	110	21	19
6.	International Networking Memo	93	25	27

TABLE 2
INTERVIEW COVERAGE

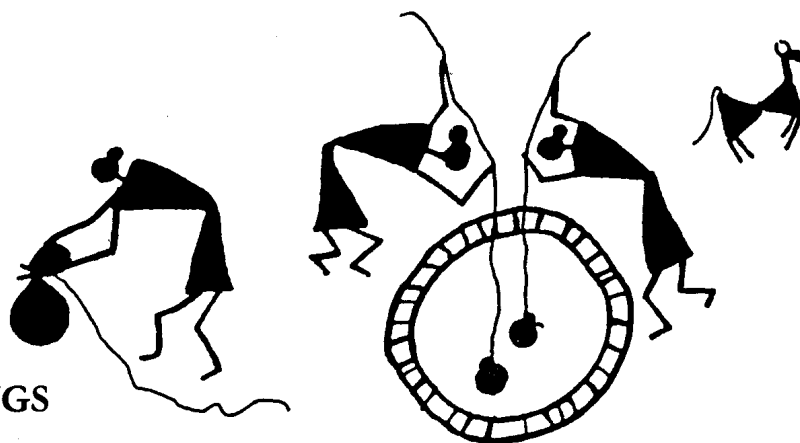
Sr. No.	Programme Activity	Number of Organisations Visited	Number of Persons Interviewed
1.	Issued Based Programmes		
	a) Land Alienation	16	40
	b) Women and Work	7	22
	c) Occupational Health and Safety	14	36
2.	Capacity Building Programmes		
	a) Training of Trainers	22	64
	b) Management Training	8	9
	c) Accounts Training	4	8
	d) Participatory Evaluation	5	6
	e) Support to New Initiatives	5	6
3.	Sectoral Role	15	18
4.	Regional/International Role	—	12
5.	General	28	36



THE KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of the evaluation with respect to different programmes and activities are summarised and presented now. Before presenting the findings, a brief description of the programmes and its activities is also provided in order to help provide the links between the programmes and results of evaluation. At this stage, the findings represent the analysis of the evaluation team based on the questionnaires, field visits and interviews. Some of the important common concerns which run across most of the programmes have been taken up subsequently for a more detailed deliberation. The presentation of the findings is organised according to the various programmes and activities.

OUTCOMES



PROGRAMME-WISE FINDINGS

A. Issue-Based Programmes

i) Land Ownership and Alienation

Since most of the social action groups in rural areas are working with a central purpose of upliftment of the poor and the deprived, questions related to land ownership and alienation concern most of them directly or indirectly.

In response to such a concern of groups working in rural areas, PRIA began its involvement on the issue of land ownership and alienation about five years ago by assisting and strengthening groups in their work on land related issues.

We started our work in this area as a follow-up of our involvement in the efforts made by hundreds of groups against proposed changes in forest policy in 1982. During the process of our involvement with groups in Himachal Pradesh and Orissa on the issue of documenting people's view-point on deforestation, we recognised the importance of people's rights over resources; and as stated before, land being the major resource, we decided to take-up issues of people's rights over land and issues related to that.

We began preparing for a national consultation in 1983 and this consultation took place during February 6-10, 1984. The response of groups to this consultation was overwhelming - 60 participants from 30 groups from 10 states of India took part in this event. The deliberations in the consultation forcefully brought out the need for dissemination of information and knowledge related to the issue, and the need for a support mechanism to enhance their capacity to deal with such issues. Each group present in the consultation had drawn-up follow-up study plans for their area.

Based on the studies done by the groups with PRIA's help, we prepared and published a Manual for Activists on "Land Ownership and Alienation" in December 1984. We then organised a series of regional workshops in eight provinces and the deliberations in these workshops have thrown-up following issues :

- a) Process and impact of redistribution of land;
- b) Displacement due to Dams and other projects;
- c) Problem of encroachment and regularisation;
- d) Land related bondage;

- e) Degradation of land due to industrial pollution, excessive use of chemicals, and deforestation;
- f) Tribal and other land alienation; and
- g) Documentation of traditional land and forest management practices.

In the following years, PRIA organised several events to facilitate exchange of ideas and experiences and to train workers of field-based groups in creating and using the knowledge in order to strengthen their work on these issues. Some of the above mentioned issues (like displacement due to dams) got more attention as this issue is more popular with field-based groups than issue of degradation of land due to pollution and mining. Main activities in this programme area were issue-based workshops, training and support in understanding the issue and local situation, publication of popular materials for activists and regular dissemination of information.

The data generated from the field visits and interviews in the evaluation of this programme reflects the opinions, perceptions and experiences of the participants of the various workshops organised in this programme as well as key resource persons who have been involved in this programme. On the whole, **about two-third of the participants of the workshops have found PRIA's activities in this programme extremely useful and directly relevant to their work.** The resource persons have also assessed the programme in a similar light. The use of analytical materials, documents and information sent from time-to-time to the participants was found useful as reported by more than 4/5 of the participants interviewed during the field data collection. Some of the primary reasons presented by the participants and resource persons as the basis for this usefulness of the programme are :

1. Conceptual clarity and knowledge of the subject area;
2. Participatory Methodology of organising learning process, workshops and programmes; and
3. Timely and ongoing support through sharing of information and ideas and preparation of useful and popular learning materials.

One of the ongoing comments in this regard was that more than two-third of the participants and resource persons felt that PRIA staff was quite equipped to play this role in this programme and this experience was particularly found extremely useful by participants from Maharashtra.

More than two-third of the participants reported that they were able to utilise the knowledge generated through their involvement in this programme in their field work and that this had helped them to handle this issue more effectively in their ongoing grass-roots work.

Some of the concerns that were shared by the participants were :

- 1) Lack of detailed and timely follow-up and maintaining of regular contacts with those who attend workshops.
- 2) The need for taking up some of the issues much deeper in order to generate greater insights into those.

3) Understanding and experience of grass-roots level work not visible.

Some of the recommendations for future that came from this data were to continue to do the same activities but more frequently and much more in regional languages. Another suggestion was to have materials published in a variety of regional languages. The third was to more intensively take up the role of lobbying and advocacy in relation to land related issues at the larger national level. And, fourthly, that PRIA should train and assist grass-roots level organisations to develop their own data base and research capability on this issue. The support to the development of regional resource centres and agencies which could play PRIA—type of role in this area was also recommended by those interviewed.

ii) Workers' Education and Occupational Health and Safety

Right from the very inception, PRIA was involved in several Workers' Education activities. Initially they included training programmes for organisers of workers' associations and unions, workshops on community-based work for trade union workers and training of activists for organising the unorganised sections of the working class. These workshops and training programmes led to the preparation of a Manual for Activists on Labour Movement and Legislation in India which became a guide for various organisers of workers in different parts of the country.

Towards the latter half of 1983, followed by a national workshop in early 1984, PRIA initiated a series of activities in the generally neglected area of occupational health and safety. The analysis of the national workshop suggested that workers own collective initiatives in advancing the cause of making the work places healthier and safer is perhaps the most important missing elements of the strategy in this country. As a result, a series of studies were initiated to document work place level health and safety issues and workers' awareness and initiatives in those regards. These studies brought out the need for much detailed intervention in raising workers' awareness on a variety of health and safety issues (particularly in demystification of technical knowledge and information that seem to be existing with a handful of technical experts inside and outside the country). The need was to help relate workers' own experience of the work place on an ongoing basis with the technical and scientific information being generated on causes and ways to prevent and improve work hazards.



In this regard, the initiatives from the trade unions and other representatives of the working class had also been rather minimal in this country. This has partly to do with the labour surplus nature of the economy which makes it difficult for workers to raise these issues without the threat of losing their jobs. Another important variable in this is the informal and unorganised nature of the work places which have more than 3/4th of the workers in this country working. The agriculture labourers working with pesticides in the agricultural fields, the construction workers, the workers in mines and small factories and workers at home represent that vast section of the workers in this country whose work place is unorganised and whose work is such that it has not been even studied from the perspective of occupational health and safety.

So the thrust of the programme from 1984 onwards has been on disseminating information on health and safety issues, on sharing information regarding workers' own initiatives and efforts in improving work place health and safety, and in organising a series of awareness-raising camps and skills—building training workshops for activists interested in pursuing these. These were carried out through the publication of a regular Occupational Health and Safety Bulletin in English and Hindi since 1985 and conducting of 5-6 workshops and training programmes every year since 1985. Special attempts have been made to involve experts from National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety and Industrial Toxicology Research Centre in India as well as a wide number of technical institutions outside the country to generate and share information with worker activists.

In recent years the work has also focused on documenting work place health and safety issues in those sections of the working class which are unorganised and informal. With the Bhopal gas tragedy in December 1984, PRIA also got involved in documenting the experience of Bhopal and exposing the role of Union Carbide through a couple of publications, and in being part of national and international campaigns to focus attention on the plight of those killed and maimed by the gas leakage. Popular publications and videos on a variety of health and safety issues have also been produced as part of the programme. In the last couple of years, attempts have been made to help promote workers' own information resource documentation and action centres on health and safety issues in different cities and industrial areas. Success has been met in case of Baroda and to some extent in Bombay in this regard.

The findings in this area of PRIA's programme have come from those who are worker activists involved in the workshops and training programmes and experts, and those involved in workers education efforts. One of the major strengths of the programme reported through this data is that the **workshops conducted by PRIA in this area have been found extremely useful** by an overwhelming majority of the participants who considered them as excellent examples of using participatory methodology to structure the learning process and a good combination of theory and practice. The second area of strength mentioned is PRIA's responsiveness to the requests made by the field for support, either through information, ideas of visits, to local initiatives. An overwhelmingly large number of respondents felt that PRIA was always keen and quick to provide this support and willing to get involved in support of local initiatives. The responses from the experts seem to indicate that the workshops and training programmes conducted by PRIA had

contributed a great deal in raising awareness of workers and their activists who are the key to any improvements in any work place health and safety. Another accomplishment in this regard was the mediation provided by PRIA between the experts and their expertise on the one hand and the workers and their activists on the other. The good rapport and deep understanding of PRIA staff with worker activists and their issues was also seen as a major strengths of this programme. By and large, most participants and experts felt that PRIA was fairly equipped to play this role, though a much greater and deeper knowledge of technical aspects of this programme could be obtained and built-in. On the whole, consistent and continued involvement of PRIA in the rather difficult area was recognised by all the respondents.

The areas of concern in this regard centred around several things. One was that most of the programmes and materials continued to be in English and therefore the out-reach was limited. Lack of depth in pursuing some of the issues in health and safety was mentioned as another area of concern in the programme. The third area of concern was the infrequent and occasional nature of workshops and training programmes; it appeared that these were not conducted on a consistent basis.

In the area of occupational health and safety, a large number of recommendations were made for expansion of the programme in diverse directions. It was recognised that PRIA is perhaps one of the few organisations in the country which is focussing on the educational work on this issue and, therefore, the expectations from PRIA in this area seem to be rather wide-spread. Suggestions ranged from publication of large number of audio-visual aids to medical and legal expertise to local workers and activists interested in following up on health and safety issues. There was a general expectation that PRIA should continue to push for the visibility of this issue at the national level so that more consistent policies and legislations could be enacted to support improvements in work place health and safety in this country.

While many of the respondents in the area of occupational health and safety saw this as a signal contribution of PRIA's programmes in raising their interest and awareness on health and safety issues as well as motivating them to work on these issues, there were several criticisms about the low priority attached to other aspects of workers education in this programme. In fact, it was highlighted that some of the initial work in workers education, particularly with the unorganised sectors and sections of the working class, was generally abandoned by PRIA as occupational health and safety work picked up. It was strongly recommended that the workers education efforts should be continued by PRIA on a much more vigorous and intensive basis than initially started.

iii) Women and Work

This programme area was evolved as a result of consistent interaction with field-based groups and attempts to anticipate their needs. Most of the groups working with poor rural and urban women either start with income generation activities or end up doing these sooner or later. Hence, PRIA started its intervention from this point.

After prolonged consultation with partners and experts on women's studies, PRIA organised the first workshop on this issue in March 1985 in collaboration with Seva

Mandir, Udaipur. About 23 participants from different organisations met for four days and discussed different aspects of women's income-generating programmes.

The highlights of this workshop included several critical points regarding perspective and it was explicitly stated that "income generating activities should be thought of either as a medium of empowerment or as an aspect of the life of an empowered women, or both". It was also emphasised in the workshop that "income generating efforts among poor rural women would not be seen merely as supplemental income, but as a substantial increase in their income."



The workshop had also worked out a detailed follow-up plan. So, the spirit and the contents of the workshop became the guiding force of this programme area.

During 1985-87, PRIA has organised 5 regional workshops (Orissa, Gujarat, Tamilnadu, Manipur and Maharashtra) and 4 issue based workshops. In addition, intensive support to individual groups in this direction was also extended.

The programme area which initially started with educational intervention in income generating activities, has in course of time first broadened to become a programme of Women and Work and then expanded to cover other related areas, i.e., training for women and problems of women activists.

The findings in this section are based on the data collected from participants in the workshops, collaborating partner organisations and heads of organisations whose staff attended these workshops. The major strengths of the programme are several. Firstly, most participants liked and approved of the Participatory Methodology of conducting the workshops were well-planned, properly and usefully conducted and were substantially informative and useful. More than 80 per cent of the participants had such a positive opinion about the workshop. More than two-third of the participants also found that they were able to utilise the ideas and concepts gained in these workshops in their actual field work on return. This view was also shared by their heads of the organisations. The effectiveness of PRIA's role in conducting these workshops and focusing on this issue was overwhelmingly approved by about 80 per cent of the participants and heads of the organisations. Another strength of the programme was the wide range of contacts and links that PRIA had and, therefore, the workshops and training programmes provided excellent opportunity for sharing experiences. Focussing on certain key issues in relation to women and work and analysing them in depth and producing materials on the same was also recognised as a major contribution of this programme.

Some of the concerns mentioned included the need to take up a clearer and better articulated perspective on women (which was seen as generally missing). Another concern was in relation to the lack of experience of PRIA staff in actually implementing such income generating activities on the ground within their own framework. Another concern included the need for more sustained and ongoing follow-up to the workshops and training programmes, in particular in assisting organisations within their area of work with concrete inputs on-site. Other concerns included the selection of participants to the workshops where some of them were not involved in economic activities and thus were interested in the programme.

In terms of suggestions, the dissemination of publications in regional languages was an important suggestion, and secondly, providing concrete inputs and services on-site in implementing such activities was also recommended. PRIA's role in national level networking, advocacy and legislations in relation to women and work was also highlighted and expected.

B. Capacity Building at Grass-roots

i) Training of Trainers

Education plays a very important role in the process of organisation-building among the poor. Besides facilitating the creation of grass-roots groups and organisations, it enhances peoples' participation. Training as an educational strategy provides the necessary knowledge, skills and awareness to the field workers and other change-agents who play a crucial role in setting in motion the process of organisation building.

The development of field workers in the voluntary sector has been a much neglected area. Many organisations do not plan for regular, systematic and structured learning for their staff. PRIA's association with several field-based organisations brought out the critical need in this area of training—the need to build and strengthen the internal training capabilities of grass-roots organisations so that they can function more effectively. The first round of the Training of Trainers programme was started in July 1984 in response to the above need.

The objectives of the programme were :

- a) to create a cadre of trainers in participatory training;
- b) to create multiplier effect of training in field-based groups and organisations; and
- c) to promote participatory training as an integral element of people's organisation-building efforts.

Till now, we have completed four rounds of Training of Trainers programme (each round comprises three phases) and entered the fifth round in January 1989. We have also completed a round of Hindi Training of Trainers and entered the next round in February 1989 (in collaboration with Astha, Udaipur). Apart from Hindi and English, training programmes in regional languages (Gujarati, Bengali, Telugu and also Hindi) have also begun in collaboration with other organisations.

The findings in the Training of Trainers programme showed that 3/4th of the participants found this programme extremely relevant to their ongoing work and more than 2/3rd had been continuing to use ideas, principles, skills and methods learnt during this programme in designing and conducting their own training programme. This was also a view which was shared by the heads of organisations who were also interviewed. **Ninety percent of heads of organisations interviewed found that their colleagues who had attended training of trainers programme have gained in confidence and competence as a trainer and that positive changes in their personality and behaviour were noticed as a consequence of their attending this programme.** These changes included improved communication skills and team work, enhanced decision-making, confidence in organising activities, greater self-expression and sensitivity. In terms of enhanced competence, designing and conducting training programmes through the use of variety of methods, making training programmes meaningful and interesting and ability to monitor and document training programmes were mentioned as important outcomes noticed in practice in the field. A substantial majority of participants found the programme as one of the few experiences in their life which transformed their interest and understanding towards learning and training and motivated them to take their role as a trainer more seriously, actively and intensively. Other outcomes of the programme experienced were in terms of their self-growth and greater sensitivity to self and others as part of their ongoing work in the field.

Some of the concerns mentioned in this programme were the drop out in the third phase and an extended duration of the programme. Another concern included need for more cohesive selection of participants as several of them who attended this programme were not subsequently involved in training. Finally, the need for PRIA staff involved in the programme to demonstrate greater experience in training at grass-roots level was also mentioned.

In terms of suggestions, the key recommendation was strengthening regional networks, institutions and training of trainers programmes in regional languages. Continued support to those who have attended this programme was another recommendation made. It was also suggested that heads of organisations should also be encouraged to go through these programmes. Intervention in government and other national level institutions was also recommended for PRIA to initiate. More production of learning materials and audio-visual aids in support of the Participatory Training Methodology was also recommended.



ii) Management of Voluntary Organisations

With the growing visibility, size and recognition of voluntary agencies over the past decade, there have also arisen a number of issues and problems related to the management of such organisations. Issues of structure, staffing, systems and procedures, rules and regulations, leadership and staff development are plaguing several non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary organisations in the country. In this context, PRIA has been organising a series of workshops and training programmes to identify, analyse and understand these issues. During the last three years, eight workshops on these themes were organised. Another workshop on Organisational Development and Change was held in September 1987 to build capacity among the staff of intermediary organisations to be able to understand and intervene in voluntary organisations with a view to enhance their effectiveness.

Four workshops were held to facilitate financial management and accounts-keeping procedures for grass-roots organisations. These were held in PRAYOG in September 1987, where sixteen people attended; in Deoria in December 1987 in which there were thirty participants; one at Udaipur in collaboration with Astha in August 1988, and the other at Dungarpur in November 1988.

All the participants found the programme extremely relevant and useful to their ongoing role in voluntary organisations. They also found that the methodology of conducting the programme which focused on sharing and analysing experiences was extremely useful in their ongoing work. Particular interest and insight was generated on issues related to decision-making, conflict resolution, role of key persons, personnel policies, salaries, structure and accountability etc. etc. **All participants appreciated PRIA's initiative in this area as they were generally ignorant and non-concerned about these issues.** Understanding of statutory aspects of managing voluntary organisations was also recognised. Two-third of the participants of the workshops and training programmes found PRIA staff serious, intelligent and diligent. The materials prepared and distributed were also found as useful. About 2/3rd of the participants mentioned their using some of the ideas principles and skills they gained in these workshops in their ongoing work and their organisations.

All the participants attending accounts-keeping programmes found it useful, relevant and beneficial to their ongoing work. The ideas, principles and skills they learnt in the workshops were used immediately on their return to their organisations. The majority of the heads of the organisations whose colleagues had attended this also found that they had practiced improved accounts-keeping afterwards. **PRIA's role in this regard was seen as valuable one.**

iii) Participatory Evaluation

PRIA has been assisting several organisations to systematically reflect and critically evaluate their activities, projects and organisations within the framework of Participatory Evaluation Methodology. Twenty such experiences have been the focus of Participatory Evaluation during the past years.

A workshop on Participatory Evaluation was organised in collaboration with CYSD, Bhubaneswar in February 1987 where twenty people attended. In March 1988 an 'International Forum on Participatory Evaluation' was also organised in Delhi where 47 people from India and abroad participated in the workshop. Some publications have also been brought out based on PRIA's experiences in this area.

The findings in this section are based on the responses received from heads of organisations and their colleagues who were involved in the participatory evaluation process facilitated by PRIA. More than half the responses felt that the participatory evaluation initiated by PRIA was a useful and positive experience. It was so because most of the participants within the organisation got involved and engaged in critical reflection about their experiences. It also helped them to feel a part of the organisation during the process. Some did mention that their participatory evaluation was initiated at the suggestion of the donor but **they appreciated PRIA's role in conducting the process in such a manner that members of the organisation got involved in it and owned the process.** More than four-fifth of the respondents found that the participatory evaluation process helped their organisation in diverse ways. Some found that it helped in critical reflection of their past and developing new insights about their experiences. Some others found it useful in future programme and organisation planning. In one case, the organisation found that better team spirit and cohesive functioning had evolved with a more hopeful view of the future as a result of this process. Identification of strength and weakness was another enriching experience for many involved in this process. The capacity to spell out goals, future directions and strategies consistent with the same was also seen as a positive outcome of this process. All the participants appreciated the competence of PRIA staff in terms of helping conduct the process that involved members of the organisation, facilitated reflection and analysis and made them feel owners of the process.

Some of the concerns expressed comprised of lack of local language facility among those involved in participatory evaluation process as well as an occasional experience of investigative as opposed to facilitative interventions. The lack of time available with PRIA's staff in following up on the the outcomes of the evaluation was also mentioned as an area of concern. Another area of concern was the need to strengthen and further refine the concepts and principles of participatory evaluation in the light of PRIA's experience. Quick follow up in the form of sending the reports was also mentioned as an area of concern by one respondent. In terms of recommendations for future, developing the methodology and disseminating its principles and methods was seen as an important contribution that PRIA could make. Developing its own staff in terms of experience and maturity with sensitivity to the needs of members of the organisation was also seen as an area of improvement for PRIA in the years to come.

iv) Support to New Initiatives

Every year, PRIA provides intensive support to several new initiatives of voluntary action in the country. This support comprises of assistance in programme and organisational planning, proposal-writing and resource mobilization. This support continues on a regular basis in the first 2-3 years.

The response of those who have recieved PRIA's intensive support in developing new initiatives seems to indicate that all of them found it extremely useful, timely and efficient. They found PRIA competent, efficient, professional and yet participatory. The sensivity of PRIA staff towards the needs of the new initiative and organisers of new initiatives was very much appreciated. Besides, the assistance of PRIA in training, in helping them plan their activities and in providing emotional support was also recognised and appreciated by all of them. All the respondents felt that the nature of the support, its timeliness and its method was such that it made them feel empowered, stronger and more confident, and did not in any case undermine their existing perspectives, competencies or interests.

However, several concerns were raised in terms of the capacity of PRIA to continue to provide this kind of support on an ongoing basis. Therefore, it was recommended that a more judicious selection should be made before this support is extended so that it can be followed up on a long-term basis. Lack of technical competence in a variety of development areas were also seen as an area of weakness of PRIA in this regard. But more than that what was important was to find ways by which PRIA could continue to provide this support on a regular and extensive basis.

Many recommendations in this regard were made which included more regular follow-up, field visists, helping the groups on-site and commenting and critiquing on their experiences, programmes and activities on a regular basis. Recommendations were also made in helping build regional and state level capacity of other organisations to provide this kind of support to new and emerging initiatives at the grass-root level as this was seen as a valuable and an extremely important activity in the years to come.



C. Sectoral Role

The sectoral role of PRIA includes work with a cluster of NGOs and movements in convening and/or networking for mobilising collective action, lobbying and advocacy. Issues on which PRIA has played this role include Forest Bill, Bhopal Gas Disaster, Code of Conduct, Minimum Wages, VANI, etc.

Support is also extended to a variety of other networks and campaigns in the country (like 'Save the Western Ghats', 'Construction Workers', 'Workers Take-over of Sick Industry' etc.)

This also includes regular study of NGOs, government policies and schemes and informing others about the same.

About two-third of the respondents found that PRIA had played an effective role in convening, networking and lobbying at sectoral level. Greater appreciation was made of PRIA's role on issues like income tax regulation, protest against compulsory code of conduct, etc. The respondents felt that PRIA was able to inspire groups to come together and work together on common concerns at a national level. PRIA's initiative in and contribution to the formation of Voluntary Action Network India (VANI) was also appreciated a great deal as a mechanism to consolidate the work of voluntary organisations in this country.

The participants also expressed that on sectoral role, on issues which affect the voluntary sector as a whole as code of conduct and income tax issues and in formation of VANI, PRIA's role was much more effective and sustained but on issues like Forest Bill, Bhopal etc. many of them found that PRIA was not able to continue the follow-up and sustain its networking and advocacy role. The second concern raised was that much of the advocacy and lobbying role is personality-dependent and this involves the contribution of Rajesh Tandon much more than PRIA as an organisation. Some of the suggestions included strengthening of VANI as a mechanism to play the sectoral role for voluntary action much more effectively and that networking and advocacy functions on issues on which PRIA is working to be seen as an integral part of working on the programmes which have a issue focus.

About two-third of the respondents felt that PRIA is certainly capable of playing this role and has the capacity to do so. It has this capacity largely because of its widespread contacts and strong relationship with partner organisations at the grass-root level, its understanding of its limitations and strengths, its open, approachable, and non-sectarian approach and its ability to identify issues of wider concern. Yet many of them recommended that PRIA should continue to be involved in advocacy and lobbying functions, and must play the networking role at the national level on issues which are directly relevant to its area of work. It was also recommended that PRIA should develop the capacity to get involved in campaigning on issues on a much more capable and sounder basis than it has done so far. The use of materials and articles generated by PRIA on issues of common concern was very much appreciated and was recommended as something that it should continue to do. Its role in disseminating information in popular forms in this area was extremely important and must be sustained.

D. PriA's Regional/International Role

PRIA has served as Asian Regional and International Coordination node for networks of

Participatory Research, Evaluation and Training. Several Networks and Programmes have been coordinated, conducted, co-sponsored or facilitated through and by PRIA. Linked with other Regional and International Associations (ICAE, CEAAL, AALAE, CARCAE, ASPBAE, etc.) and Networks (Health Care, Environment, Pesticides, Dams, etc.) and organisations (like Highlander Research and Education Centre, Institute for Development Research, etc.) have been built over the years.



These links have helped provide opportunities for exchange of ideas, experiences, materials and people; they have also facilitated joint events (workshops, studies, publications, campaigns, etc.). Many others have actively contributed to build those links and organise those events. Several colleagues from India also attended workshops, study tours and other events abroad organized and/or facilitated by PRIA.

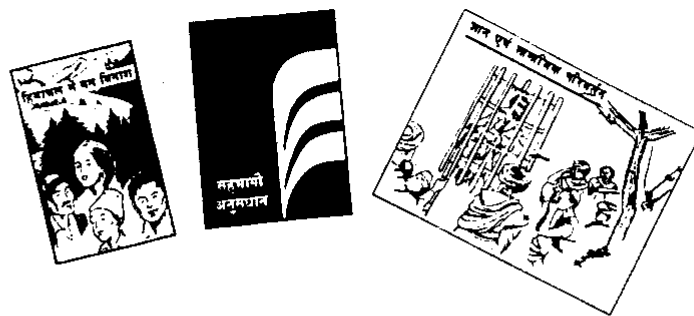
The findings in this area based on data collected from collaborating institutions and individuals at the Asian and International Level, Indian colleagues who have attended international events or visited abroad at the initiative of PRIA and foreign colleagues who have attended events organised by PRIA or visited India on a learning exchange. On the whole, about two-third of respondents have found PRIA's experiences in participatory research, evaluation and training as extremely insightful, useful for sharing at the broader level as well as its imagination, hardwork, creativity and respectability in bringing NGOs together. The workshops organised by PRIA at the regional/international level have been found as useful, utilising participatory methodology, informal, provoking exchange and analyses of experience and building a sense of camaraderie. In this regard, **more than 90% of those interviewed found that their involvement in this aspect of PRIA's work had made positive contributions to their ongoing work.** The sharing of materials, documents, publications, based on these events at the regional/international level was found extremely useful by an overwhelming majority of respondents. Another strength of PRIA in this regard was seen as projecting the inter-relationship between participatory research and its translation in training and evaluation on the one hand concrete linkages to the ongoing life and practice of those believing in that philosophy on the other. The competence of PRIA and its capacity to organise such events was appreciated and accepted by all and they felt that PRIA had the capacity to carry out this role on an effective basis. More than two-third of the respondents who were Indians and participating in such

events and exposures organised by PRIA at the international level found that their perspective had broadened and their insights had improved as a consequence of their involvement in such activities. Thus broadening of their perspective and enhancement of their self-confidence were seen as major contributions of these experiences. A large majority of them have recommended that PRIA should continue to play this role in a more systematic and vigorous manner as they themselves found it very useful.

Similarly, responses received from foreigners who attended workshops and events organised by PRIA are overwhelmingly favourable in terms of generating insights, learning and confidence among them. Learning of diverse experiences, broadening of horizons and perspectives, developing depth in concepts and practice and sharing of a larger movement was seen as important outcomes of such involvement by them. They have unanimously appreciated PRIA's capacity to conduct such workshops and training programmes which brings participatory training methodology in practice. The ability to convene wide range of experiences and bringing a mixture of professionals and grass-root activities in a common forum was also seen as major competence and strength of PRIA. They all recommended that PRIA should continue to play this role more systematically and strongly as this has the potential of building networks across the boundaries of the country, learning from each other, deepening perspectives and strengthening the movements.

Some of the concerns that were expressed in this regard were gaps in communication and weaknesses in coordination experienced by counterparts while these events were being organised. This is more a reflection of PRIA's lack of capacity in terms of sustained communication and ongoing coordination to conduct these events. Some of the links that were made during these events also were not followed up to be strengthened in future.





PUBLICATIONS

Over the years, PRIA has been involved in producing popular learning materials for field workers and activists involved in grass-roots level work. These publications have been of a variety of types and produced with a purpose.

1. Periodicals

The first category of publications are **periodicals** which are brought out every quarter. The Newsletter is the first one which was started right from inception. This was followed by the publication Khoj Khabar, a Hindi Newsletter started in 1986. The English and Hindi versions of Occupational Health and Safety Bulletins were started in 1985 as a vehicle for promoting information and ideas in that area on a wider scale. The major assumptions for starting the Newsletter and Khoj Khabar were that these would provide information about activities as well as other learning materials available on the themes of participatory research, evaluation and training in the country and elsewhere. It was also assumed that those receiving this Newsletter would also find this information useful to their work and would perhaps be encouraged to order and ask for such materials. As has been shown in Table 3, more than three-fourth of the respondents find the information provided in the Newsletter useful and more than two-thirds of them have found this information about the materials on participatory research, evaluation and training useful. About two-thirds of them have also asked for such materials after reading it in the Newsletter. Notes at the end of the Table also show some suggestions and comments about the lay-out and other aspects of Newsletter.

Response on Khoj Khabar are shown in Table 4. About two-thirds of the respondents found information about participatory research, evaluation and training activities contained in Khoj Khabar as useful. About three-fourth of them found the information on materials on participatory research, evaluation and training as useful, while more than four-fifth of them seem to have asked for and ordered such materials after reading them in Khoj Khabar. Comments and suggestions about layout and other aspects of Khoj Khabar are also shown in the notes appended to the table.

The Occupational Health and Safety Bulletins in English and in Hindi were essentially produced with several assumptions in mind. First of all, it was felt that information on various workplace health hazards should be disseminated so that those receiving it would find it easy to understand and useful in their work. It was also assumed that information about activities of others (individuals, groups and unions) in improving workplace health and safety would stimulate readers to take similar action on their own. Further, on the

basis of the information contained in the Bulletin, it was hoped that readers would contact such initiatives to learn about them, and that the educational materials referred to in the Bulletin would be obtained by the readers in order to further their knowledge and interest in the subject.

Table 5 shows responses on Occupational Health and Safety Bulletin in English. As can be seen from the table, about three-fourth of the respondents found the information about health hazards contained in the Bulletin easy to understand and at about two-third of them found it useful in their work. Two-third of the respondents also found that information provided in the Bulletin about the work of other individuals and groups on health and safety stimulated them to take action on this issue on their own. About half the respondents were even encouraged to contact such groups and individuals on the basis of information provided in the Bulletin. More than half of the respondents have ordered and asked for educational materials described in the Bulletin for improving their knowledge and interest in the area. The suggestions received from the respondents about the layout and the future of the Bulletin are also shown in the notes below the table.



Similarly, responses on Occupational Health and Safety Bulletin in Hindi are shown in Table 6. In this case, only one-third of the respondents find the information easy to understand, though a good 60% of them found it useful in their work. It appears that the language of the Hindi Bulletin is needing further popularisation and simplification. Hundred percent of the respondents, interestingly enough, found the information contained in the Bulletin about the activities of other individuals and groups stimulating them to take action on such issues on their own. Though only a third of the respondents try to contact other such groups and individuals referred to in the Bulletin, two-third of the respondents ordered and ask for educational materials referred to in the Bulletin on this

topic. The comments and suggestions of the respondents on layout and future of the Bulletin are also mentioned in the notes below the table :

2. Manuals

The second category of publications produced by PRIA are a series of Manuals. These are as follows :

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Training of Trainers : A Manual | English/Hindi |
| 2. Labour Movement & Legislations in India : A Manual for Activities | English/Hindi |
| 3. Land Ownership & Alienation : A Manual for Activists | English/Hindi |
| 4. Occupational Health & Safety : A Manual for Activists | English/Hindi |
| 5. Didactic Bulletin Series of set 3 : | |
| a. How to Conduct Participatory Research Among Women | English/Hindi |
| b. How to Communicate Effectively with Grass-Roots Women | English/Hindi |
| c. How to Organise Women's Group | English/Hindi |

These manuals have been produced to promote certain ideas, concepts, principles and skills to be used by field workers in their ongoing field work. Manuals have been assessed, therefore, on the basis of ease of understanding and usefulness to their work. They have also been assessed on the assumption of them being helpful as a tool in improving field practice and in encouraging the readers to try out new ideas and methods in the field.

Table 7 presents combined responses on all the Manuals, separately in English and Hindi. Detailed analysis of each of the Manuals indicates that overall trend in responses does not vary across Manuals. More than four-fifth of the respondents of English Manuals and three-fourth of the respondents of Hindi Manuals have found them easy to understand. About two-third of the respondents of English Manuals and more than half of the respondents of Hindi Manuals have found them useful in their work. Around 60% of respondents of English and Hindi Manuals have found them helpful as a tool in improving their field practice. More than four-fifth of the respondents of English and Hindi Manuals have found them encouraging to them in trying out in the field new ideas and methods contained in the Manuals. Suggestions about the future and layout of the Manuals are also contained in the notes appended to the table.

3. Study Reports

Study reports are documents produced arising out of the studies conducted by PRIA, either on its own or in collaboration with others. The following Study Reports have been

produced in English and Hindi so far :

1. Participatory Training in Rural Development	English/Hindi
2. Mismanaging Health & Safety at Work Place	English/Hindi
3. No Place to Run (Global Issues of Bhopal Disaster)	English
4. Participatory Training for Adult Educators	English
5. Learning for Health Care	English
6. Knowledge and Social Change : An Inquiry into Participatory Research in India	English/Hindi
7. Deforestation in Himachal Pradesh	English/Hindi

The major assumptions underlying publication of Study Reports is that they are likely to be useful in the work of the organisations and they may encourage the readers to try out the ideas, principles and methods contained in those reports in their own ongoing work.

Table 8 presents responses on Study Reports in English and in Hindi combined together. No trends were found separate from this common trend among individual study reports. Three-fourths of the respondents of English reports and more than four-fifth of the respondents of Hindi reports have found them easy to understand. More than half the respondents of English reports and about two-thirds of the respondents of Hindi reports have found them useful in their work. About four-fifths of the respondents of English and Hindi reports found these reports encouraged them to try out the ideas, principles and methods contained in the reports. Comments on the layout and suggestions about the future of the Study Reports are also contained in the notes at the bottom of the table.

4. Workshop Reports

PRIA has also produced a series of workshop reports which document the analysis generated during different workshops. These workshop reports have been produced in English and Hindi as follows :

1. Which side are you on ? Workers Education in a Changing World	English
2. Forms of Organisations : Square Pegs in Round Holes	English/Hindi
3. Creating Alternatives : Women and Work	English
4. Women and Wasteland	English
5. Organising for Land	English/Hindi
6. Beyond Bricks and Stones : The Voice of Construction Workers	English/Hindi
7. Invisible Hands : Towards Empowerment	English/Hindi

The essential purpose of publishing workshop reports is to share analysis with an audience larger than those who attended the workshop. The decision to publish these reports is made on the assessment of their usefulness to the work of a larger constituency, and that the analysis contained in the report might help in the work of those individuals at the base. Table 9 contains responses of all the workshop reports clubbed separately under English and Hindi as no separate trends for each of the reports were noticed from the data. As can be seen from table 9, more than four-fifth of the respondents of English reports and about 60% of the respondents of Hindi reports found them easy to understand. About two-third respondents of English reports and about half of the respondents of Hindi reports found them useful in the work. More than four-fifth of the respondents of English and Hindi reports found the analysis contained in these different reports as helpful in their ongoing work. Comments on the layout and suggestions about the future of the workshop reports are contained in the notes at the bottom of the table.

5. International PR Publications

PRIA got involved in producing a series of international publications on Participatory Research in the early years. These publications were produced on the assumption that they would help in clarifying and understanding the principles of Participatory Research on the one hand, and encouraging people to go deeper in these issues on the other. The three publications contained in this are as follows :

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1. Creating Knowledge : A Monopoly | English |
| 2. Participatory Research : An Emerging
Alternative Methodology in Social
Science Research | English |
| 3. Participatory Research : An Introduction | English |

The results of the responses on this are contained in Table 10 where responses to all the publications in this category have been clubbed together. As can be seen from Table 10, about 70% of the respondents found these publications helpful in clarifying and understanding the principles of Participatory Research. Almost all the respondents mentioned that they were encouraged to go deeper in the issue of Participatory Research after reading these publications. As well, as they used conceptual principles of Participatory Research contained in these books. A unanimous recommendation of the respondents is that such publications should be brought out more regularly.

6. International Networking Memo

As part of its responsibility for International Coordination of Participatory Research Networks affiliated to the International Council for Adult Education, PRIA has been bringing out an International Networking Memo about three times a year for the past five years. This Memo is intended to provide information about the networks of Participatory Research and their activities and materials to an international audience. Responses received on the International Networking Memo are contained in Table 11. As can be seen from this table, more than half the respondents found that the information about the activities of Participatory Research Networks contained in this Memo was useful, and less than half

of the respondents (45%) found the information about educational materials on participatory research, training and evaluation useful. Two-third of the respondents asked for and ordered such materials which were referred to in the Memo. The comments of the respondents on the layout and the future suggestions are contained in the notes at the bottom of the table.

On the whole, the respondents seem to have found all types of publications brought out of PRIA as very useful and have served the assumptions on which they were produced. Their responses have indicated that these publications may need to be continued with improvements and strengthening on a variety of dimensions mentioned in the data presented before.

TABLE 3
Responses on Newsletter

(Figure in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Scales			Total Responses
		Favourable	Not sure	Unfavourable	
1.	Usefulness of Information				
(i)	About Activities on PR, PE, PT	74	19	7	100
(ii)	About Materials on PR, PE, PT	62	26	12	100
2.	Ordering/Asking for such materials	66	—	34	100

- Notes :
- (i) Comments on layout range from excellent, fine, very good, scientific and rational to acceptable, alright, ok.
 - (ii) Suggestions about contents include more information on methodology, more information on regional programmes, NGO problems and solutions, advance information about PRIA'S programmes, include funding agencies lists, review of publications.
 - (iii) Some layout suggestions were front and last page should be in two columns, more pages, illustration, cartoons, use box, editorials should be boldly printed, more classical presentation.

TABLE 4
Responses on Khoj Khabar

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Scales			Total Responses
		Favourable	Not sure	Unfavourable	
1.	Usefulness of Information				
(i)	About Activities on PR, PE, PT	67	26	7	100
(ii)	About Materials on PR, PE, PT	73	20	7	100
2.	Ordering/Asking for such materials	86	—	14	100

Notes : (i) Comments on layout OK, good, a few expressed difficulty in reading.
(ii) Suggestions to include article about cooperation between NGO's.

TABLE 5
Responses on Occupational Health and Safety Bulletin (English)

(Figure in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Scale			Total Responses
		Favourable	Not sure	Unfavourable	
1.	Information on Various Health Hazards				
(i)	Easy to understand	72	28	—	100
(ii)	Useful in work	67	22	11	100
2.	Information on activities of individuals, groups, unions stimulates to take action on OH issues	67	—	33	100
3.	On the basis of information try to contact them	50	—	50	100
4.	Ordered/asked for educational materials referred to in Bulletin	56	—	44	100

- Notes :**
- (i) Comments about layout : usually impressive, good, adequate, Ok. One response getting monotonous.
 - (ii) Suggestions include :be published in regional languages,convert from quarterly to monthly.
 - (iii) About contents : publish case studies, include more information about unorganised sector, add photos and diagrams, legal aspects on OH, feedback from workers, draft of each Bulletin should be circulated among key individual for comments.

TABLE 6
Responses on Occupational Health and Safety Bulletin (Hindi)

(Figure in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Scale			Total Responses
		Favourable	Not sure	Unfavourable	
1.	Information on Various Health Hazards				
(i)	Easy to understand	33	50	17	100
(ii)	Useful in work	60	20	20	100
2.	Information on activities of individuals, groups, unions stimulates to take action on OH issues	100	—	—	100
3.	On the basis of information try to contact them	33	—	67	100
4.	Ordered/asked for educational materials referred in Bulletin	67	—	33	100

Notes : (i) Comments about layout is good.
(ii) Suggestions to include case studies about accidents.

TABLE 7
Responses on Manuals

(Figure in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Scale			Total Responses
		Favourable	Not sure	Unfavourable	
1.	Easy to Understand				
(i)	English Manuals	83	14	5	100
(ii)	Hindi Manuals	75	25	—	100
2.	Useful in Work				
(i)	English	63	23	14	100
(ii)	Hindi	58	17	25	100
3.	Helpful as a Tool In Improving Field Practices				
(i)	English Manuals	59	24	17	100
(ii)	Hindi Manuals	64	9	27	100
4.	Encouraged to Tryout New Ideas, Methods in the Field				
(i)	English Manuals	86	—	14	100
(ii)	Hindi Manuals	82	—	18	100

- Notes :
- (i) Comments on layout of the Manuals : usually very good, excellent, comprehensive, nice to ok.
 - (ii) Suggestions include translation in regional languages, add more illustrations, include analytical sections and add more ideas, etc.

TABLE 8
Responses on Study Reports

(Figure in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Scale			Total Responses
		Favourable	Not sure	Unfavourable	
1.	Easy to Understand				
(i)	English Reports	75	19	6	100
(ii)	Hindi Reports	84	16	—	100
2.	Useful in Work				
(i)	English Reports	57	25	18	100
(ii)	Hindi Reports	64	9	17	100
3.	Encouraged to Try out Ideas, Principles, Methods				
(i)	English Reports	78	—	22	100
(ii)	Hindi	83	—	17	100

- Notes :
- (i) Comments on layout of the reports : usually good, fine, ok, lively.
 - (ii) Suggestions include translation in regional languages, more graphic pictures, tighter binding, careful proof reading, use of quality paper.

TABLE 9
Response on Workshop Reports

(Figure in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Scale			Total Responses
		Favourable	Not sure	Unfavourable	
1.	Easy to Understand				
(i)	English Reports	84	13	3	100
(ii)	Hindi Reports	60	31	9	100
2.	Useful in Work				
(i)	English Reports	64	18	18	100
(ii)	Hindi Reports	47	23	30	100
3.	Analysis in the Report Helps in work				
(i)	English Reports	81	—	19	100
(ii)	Hindi Reports	88	—	12	100

- Notes :
- (i) Comments on layout of the reports usually good to excellent, satisfactory and interesting.
 - (ii) Suggestions are translation in regional languages, to add pictures and examples, include PT methodology whenever possible.

TABLE 10
Responses on International PR Publications

(Figure in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Scale			Total Responses
		Favourable	Not sure	Unfavourable	
1.	Helpful in Clarifying and Understanding the principles of PR	70	30	—	100
2.	Encouraged to go deeper in the issue of PR after reading the books	97	—	3	100
3.	Used the conceptual principles of PR contained in the books	93	—	7	100

Notes : (i) All the respondents said that such publications should be published more frequently and more consistent quality of articles.

TABLE 11
Responses on International Networking Memo

(Figure in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Scale			Total Responses
		Favourable	Not sure	Unfavourable	
1.	Provides useful information about activities of PR, PT, PE Networking	57	33	10	100
2.	Useful information about educational materials on PR, PT, PE	45	45	10	100
3.	Asking/ordering for such materials	65	—	35	100

- Notes :
- (i) Comments on layout include very clear, easy to read, good.
 - (ii) Contents were visually not attractive, too academic.
 - (iii) Suggestions includes printing, be more attractive, to add illustrations, cartoons, give more bibliography, more information about concrete practices/work done in this field.

PRIA'S OVERALL STRENGTHS AND CONCERNS

While some of the common strengths and concerns seems to be emerging from the key findings in relation to specific programmes, activities and roles of PRIA, there was also identification of some overarching strength and concerns in relation to PRIA as a whole. This data was generated through general interviews with those who were knowledgeable about, associated with and concerned about, PRIA's past and future, as well as those who were close partners, members of the governing body and others who have known PRIA since its very inception. These interviews were held with individuals within the country as well as outside, the country, who have had a certain sense of the history and complexity of PRIA. The evaluation team, on the basis of data generated, field visits made, interviews conducted, and questionnaire analysed, also came up with a comprehensive list of strengths and concerns for PRIA. PRIA staff was also involved in this process of defining what it sees as its overall strengths and key concerns. A combination of the above are presented herein.

I. Strengths

The following were identified as key strengths of PRIA :

1. **Confidence about, clarity of and faith in the philosophy of Participatory Research** was seen as its major strength. Participatory Training Methodology as an effective learning approach, as evolved and practiced through the workshops and training programmes of PRIA has been seen as its major contribution. This has been recognised in its various workshops, programmes and activities. The philosophy of Participatory Research, and the principles and methods of Participatory Training and Evaluation, and their relationship to our way of life, living and working, has been conceptualized, promoted, demonstrated and refined by PRIA.
2. **Strong relations with a diverse group of partners** was seen as another strength. One of the important outcomes of the evaluation findings also highlighted the strong partnership that PRIA has built over these years with a large number of grass-roots level voluntary agencies, support institutions and others in the field of development, both within the country and outside. A capacity to build strong relationships and faith in building partnerships as the desired mode of working, was seen as one of its major strengths.
3. Another strength is that of PRIA being able to combine the **participatory activities with a professional approach**. As someone mentioned, 'they are professionals with a personal touch' who combine elements of personal relations, openness with others and efficiency in work. Openness in planning and work, easy access to PRIA, sharing of information by PRIA as an open institution, towards others' ideas and experiences, on the one hand, and efficient task performance on the other—this combination was seen as another area of strength. As many have said, "PRIA is open accessible, informal, flexible, sincere, supportive and committed".
4. PRIA has a strong and good leadership, prepared to take risks and attempt innovations. The leadership is visionary, competent, committed, courageous, and promotes the practice of its philosophy.



II. Concerns

Some of the key concerns as they emerged from the data and the subsequent discussions related to the following :

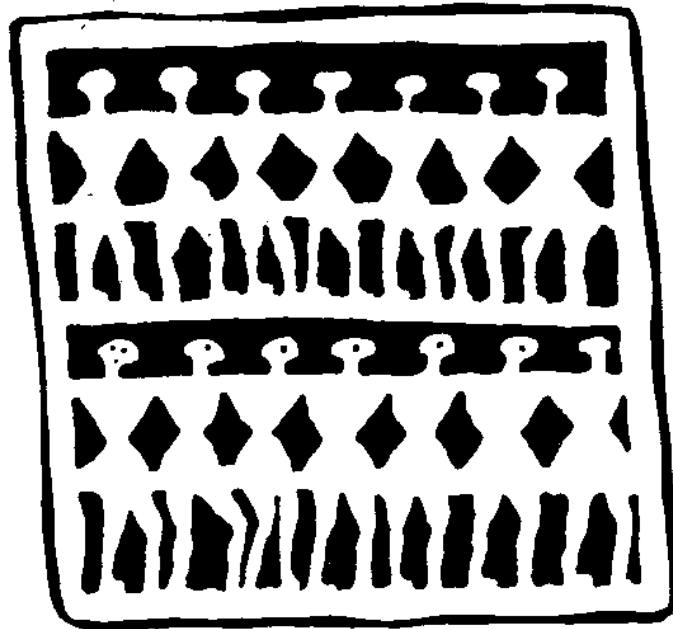
1. The first concern was that **PRIA is still being very closely identified with Rajesh Tandon**. It was seen as an issue in the institutionalization of PRIA and its future elaboration. The nature of voluntary organisations and the history of PRIA were seen as the main reasons for this, though it was mentioned that there has been an increasing visibility of other staff members since the past two years.
2. In many of the activities, the partners' experience was that **follow-up has been weak and/or erratic**. There was a sense that PRIA is not able to provide the kind of follow-up that is needed in the various activities.
3. PRIA staff have been seen as not having extensive **experience at the grass-roots level**, particularly the newer staff.
4. **PRIA's activities are very thinly spread** in various directions without necessarily a deep specialization in a few. There is a feeling that these activities are also not necessary linked to each other in an integral manner.

Some of the other concerns were related to PRIA being able to maintain its past quality of work in the face of rapid growth, undertaking too much work (beyond its capacity to deliver) and a growing vulnerability (in terms of lack of a sound funding base and/or external regulations). These concerns were also openly shared and discussed, and the analysis thereof incorporated in the future planning.

The emerging theme from the evaluation was that PRIA needs to enter a new phase in future with further clarity and determination. All the partners who were interviewed and those who have responded through questionnaires and other means to this exercise, demonstrated considerable appreciation of, and concern for, PRIA and it is their caring and concern which has been the basis for their suggestions and comments about the future directions.

The second thing that emerged was that most of the partners, and those with whom PRIA has worked over these years, were essentially making suggestions for more activities, deeper specialization, expansion into other regions etc. As such, partners' response did not necessarily help in limiting PRIA's scope, but it implied doing more of the same, better and more effectively.

The deliberations during the evaluation process, both among ourselves and the partners, indicated that partners certainly do not see any contradictions between these multiple roles in the same way as we were anticipating. In the views of partners, all these types of roles are necessary and there is a need to play these roles. The question, therefore, that they posed for PRIA is: Does PRIA have the capacity to play these roles ? And, secondly what can PRIA do to ensure that these roles get played by others ? In view of the partners, all these roles were important and need to be played, and perhaps it was for PRIA to examine which of these roles it could play most effectively and for which of these roles it could draw on the capacity of other institutions and help build the capacity of some others such that all these roles get played actively and effectively.



ROLE AND RELEVANCE

ISSUES RELATED TO PRIA'S ROLES

In further pursuing the evaluation data and the discussion with the partners, several issues related to the kind of roles PRIA is playing through its activities were raised. Many of these issues tended to suggest a choice of different types of roles that PRIA could play and these are listed as such :

- a) **Should PRIA provide intensive support to individuals, grass-roots organizations and agencies or should it only engage in common activities which bring members from different organisations together ?** This was raised as an issue from the evaluation data as it was felt that intensive support was needed in some programmes and activities, while more common activities were needed in others.

The discussion with the partners clearly indicated that there is a close inter-relationship between intensive support to select grass-roots level groups on the one hand, and common activities with a large number on the other. In certain areas, intensive support was essential in order for groups to learn from ideas and experiences and to translate them into reality. This kind of intensive support not only creates examples and models but also provides an opportunity for PRIA staff to learn from concrete experience of the grass-roots level. Yet, it is important that common activities are taken up with large number of groups (like workshops and other educational interventions) which create space and opportunity for them to share and learn from each other and to develop collective strategies for common causes. **Thus, indepth intensive support and common activities build on each other and one without the other may not even be effective.** It was in this context that reference was also made to such other institutions in the country and elsewhere who are only playing a common activities role, whose networking and other such initiatives do not have roots and grounding in the intensive support at the grass-roots level. **Thus, the inter-relationship between intensive support and common activities was emphasized and it was felt that both had an autonomous relevance on their own and were mutually reinforcing.**

- b) **Should PRIA work with grass-roots level organisations and agencies alone ? Or should PRIA work with other constituencies as well** (for example, Government development agencies, donors, or other support institutions, etc.) ? It was argued by some that PRIA should only work with smaller grass-roots groups and strengthen them, while the data also indicated that there is an expectation from PRIA to play similar intervening roles with other constituencies which have implications for grass-roots level work.

On this issue, it was felt that **the work at both the levels and all the levels is equally important.** Sometimes, direct work at grass-roots level brings experience, depth and understanding on the one hand, and mobilisation of pressure from below on the other. At times, working with other constiencies influences larger and macro issues in such a way that greater space is created for more intensive and effective grass-root work. **Thus lobbying was as important as directly working in support of grass-roots.** The important thing for PRIA to do was to raise a debate within the grass-roots groups to the importance of working with other constituencies and to maintain a balance between these two roles. It was argued that perhaps lobbying work without direct grass-roots level contribution would be devoid of ideas and depth on the one hand, and mere support to grass-roots level work

without interventions at the macro governmental and other levels may not create enough space for intensive work at the grass-roots to continue.



- c) Should PRIA work on issue-based programmes alone (like natural resources, workers education, women and development etc.) ? Or should PRIA also work on **capacity-building efforts of grass-roots level organisations and others** ? The evaluation data seemed to indicate that some partners of PRIA considered its issue-based work as the only work of importance, while some others saw PRIA's unique contributions towards the capacity-building of voluntary organizations and grass-roots actions.

The apparent tension between emphasis on issue-based programmes or capacity-building programmes was also discussed and discarded in the light of the experience generated during the evaluation in general and partner's consultation in particular. Partners felt that both are inter-related and in fact, **PRIA's role has been that of building the capacity of groups in the broader sense**, whether it is of developing understanding and insights into issues and how to work on them at the grass-roots level or a general capacity enhancement for effective work at the grass-roots level as well as effective conduct of collective efforts at grass-roots level. Thus, there is neither any tension between work on issue-based programmes and capacity-building activities nor is there any need to get concerned about the tensions. The tensions seem to emanate from the fact that PRIA's involvement in different issue-based programmes creates relationships with different types of grass-roots organisations and hence the constituency in the issue-based efforts is different in some ways than the constituency in capacity-building types of interventions. However, capacity-building support was considered necessary for those who were involved with PRIA in issue-based programmes and similarly, work on deepening understanding on issues and sensitizing on issues was necessary for those who were associated with PRIA largely through capacity-building programmes. The important thing was for PRIA to recognise that in its broader sense it was an educational intervention to enhance the competence, the capacity, the confidence, and the overall empowerment of a variety of groups, organisations and individuals working from different angles, entry points and perspectives on the larger issue of social transformation.

- d) Should PRIA confine its role within the national boundaries and be seen as essentially an Indian institution or should PRIA also play regional (Asian) and international roles? Some felt that PRIA should concentrate only in India, while some others indicated that PRIA is too India-centric.

It was felt that the history of PRIA is rooted in its international linkages through the formation of network of Participatory Research and its close association with the Adult Education movement in the world. Hence, those origins of PRIA cannot be denied and hence its role at the regional and international level needs to be recognised and contended with. PRIA's work within the country was able to generate a deeper insight through its own practice on the principles and philosophy of Participatory Research, Evaluation and Training, which in turn was the basis for its contribution across the national boundaries. Thus, experiences on issues in which PRIA has been involved in and issues of concern for its partners which are available in other countries in the Asian region and internationally, can be utilized to strengthen and enhance the work of those partners and organisations within the country. It was also recognised that increasingly the forces of oppression, control and domination are being internationalized, and operating at a global level, and that struggles to resist them and present a countervailing power to those forces have to build international linkages, perspectives and networks. It was in this context that struggles on the question of dams, environment, women, health and safety, etc. were mentioned which have not only international dimensions but also wider ramifications.

- e) Should PRIA continue to play its programmatic roles or should it also play sectoral, convening, alliance-building, coalition-making roles? Some data suggested that sectoral role is needed to create space and put pressures at macro-levels for local action to flourish and succeed, some others felt that sectoral role makes PRIA vulnerable, not liked by certain quarters within voluntary agencies and the government and donor community, and not seen as legitimate activity for an intermediary organization.

Finally, the discussion on programmatic sectoral role of PRIA was also a very illuminating one. It became clear that PRIA's ability to play a sectoral role was largely because of the vast contacts, partnerships and relationships it had built with grass-roots and other organisations throughout the country and elsewhere by working on its various programmes and other activities. In fact, working through the programmes and other activities makes PRIA aware of some of the sectoral issues which are affecting a large number of grass-roots organisations and voluntary agencies in the country and elsewhere. It was this kind of understanding which made it possible for PRIA to take up sectoral initiatives and to develop the capacity to convene meetings of a large number of individuals, organisations and institutions to come together on a common cause. The question was not whether there was any contradiction between the above two roles, but how playing the sectoral role sometimes created tensions for its programmatic role. It was narrated that sectoral role led to certain tensions and alienation within the voluntary sector in the country, and thereby reduced the involvement of certain types of organisations in its different programmes and activities. It was argued that PRIA works on its programmes as well as on its sectoral role on the basis of a clearly defined set of principles and philosophy and that those who come together with it on sectoral issues perhaps are also those which

will collaborate with it on programmatic matters. It was recognised that not only is this tension inevitable, it also needed to be understood and lived with. It was also mentioned that playing the sectoral role makes PRIA more vulnerable to forces from outside, and also in certain respects in the case of PRIA dependent on the person of Rajesh Tandon, - since playing a lobbying, networking and sectoral roles in many respects depends on the personality of the person rather than the capacities of the institution. It was important to recognise both these aspects of playing the sectoral role and, therefore, their likely impact on the programmes and the institution in the long run. It was for PRIA to maintain a balance between these two and not give up one in the hope of doing only the other.

An interesting debate also occurred during the evaluation process on the apparent contradictions between professionalism on the one hand and social commitment on the other. The evaluation data, the process of reflection and consultation with partners highlighted that PRIA's stand on issues and its philosophy of Participatory Research, both in theory and through its methodology of work in practice, were evidence of its social commitment and desire to stand on those commitments in the face of risks and vulnerabilities. The distinction that needed to be made was between professionalism and technocratism. It was argued that professionalism implies deep understanding of an issue and a commitment to a set of principles and causes. Professionalism also implies effectiveness, efficiency and ability to do high quality work with limited resources. It was in this sense that professionalism went hand-in-hand with social commitment, something which the data from the evaluation and partners' consultation demonstrated that PRIA possessed in ample measure. However, a word of caution was raised on the notion of technocratism and that PRIA should not get bogged down with technocratic perspectives on issues and problems or ways of functioning. The debate and reflection throughout the evaluation process and in particular during the partners' consultation made it very clear that this was not the case and that if such an impression had gone around in certain quarters, it was more motivated than based on reality.



It was with this kind of an understanding that several broader principles for future direction got highlighted. First of all, **PRIA needed to continuously examine its capacity and its programmes and activities in the light of its mission** and that it should carry them forward only if it had both the capacity and found them consistent with its mission. **PRIA should resist responding merely to the demands of the partners if they either went beyond its mission or its capacity.** Second aspect was that **PRIA needed to utilise its demonstration of the relevance of these roles to others in the country and outside so that other institutions, agencies and organisations could begin to play these roles, could visualise and understand them and could enact them with multiple constituencies in the larger social change process.** The unique combination that PRIA represents through playing a variety of these apparently contradictory, but in fact mutually re-enforcing, roles had to be extended to others.

It was in this context that one of the guiding principles for its future work needed to be in identifying existing institutions and helping build newer ones which could be strengthened and empowered to play similar roles in different parts of the country and the region, and **PRIA should make it as part of its mandate to help strengthen such other institutions and networks so that a variety of these roles could be played more satisfactorily, effectively and intensively and contribute to the overall processes of social transformation in the country and beyond.**

PRIA AS A SUPPORT INSTITUTION

PRIA's mission needs to be re-stated more clearly and coherently. PRIA started out with the mission to practice, promote and elaborate the theory, philosophy and principles of Participatory Research as a contribution to the education, empowerment and organisation of the poor and oppressed in the larger process of social transformation.

It was this mission which led to PRIA's strategy of involvement in the country through studies, analysis and educational interventions. Yet, through its earlier consultations, PRIA evolved another strategy for realization of its mission which was to become a **support institution to other grass-roots level initiatives** in rural, urban and other settings. Throughout its programmes, activities and roles, PRIA has tried to combine both these strategies for realization of its mission in practice. It has attempted to become an **institution which provides educational support by building strong partnerships with grass-roots level organisations and others who are working towards the education, empowerment and organisation of the poor and the oppressed, as a contribution to the overall process of social transformation.**

It has tried to, therefore, insert itself in that process of social transformation by bringing in the perspective, the principles and the skills of Participatory Research in understanding and analysing reality, in valuing and articulating experiences of the poor and the deprived, and in presenting alternatives dreams and visions created by such sections of the society in a public arena for influencing the process of larger policy making. **It has contributed to building alliances and networks with a view to strengthen the capacity of organisations and individuals working at the grass-roots level to come together with like-minded others and generate momentum and pressure for its counter-vailing influence in defining the future of the society.** It has, therefore, worked with field-level organisations and activists in bringing in the contribution of the knowledge and

experience of the poor and the deprived, and re-sharpening and re-tooling of their critical faculties and analytical aspects to work towards influencing their own destinies, and in demystifying knowledge and ways of producing knowledge and attempts to control and influence the minds of the people through use of knowledge as an important source of power and control in the current societies. It has worked towards popularising, apparently difficult and inaccessible ideas, theories, and principles with field workers on the one hand, and it has worked towards disseminating and making visible the experiences, the ideas, and the analysis of those who are not so visible and vocal. It has used **educational interventions to help break the culture of silence of the poor and the deprived** on the one hand, and it has articulated its philosophy by **demanding democratisation of information and knowledge from the centres of unilateral control and centralization on the other**. It is this kind of a combination of the two distinct and yet closely inter-related strategies for the realization of its mission that has led to the underlying formulation of all its programmes, activities and roles. Therefore, PRIA works towards building strong, total, mutually trusting, respecting, personalised, close, open, warm and friendly relationships with a large number of individuals, groups and organisations in the country (and outside) as the fundamental basis for its support through educational interventions, based on the principles and philosophy of Participatory Research. It is with this in view that it has evolved and implemented a methodology of Participatory Training and Learning on the one hand, and methodology of Participatory Evaluation, reflection and analysis on the other. Thus, in the elaboration of principles of Participatory Research through its further practice as shown through its programmes and activities, PRIA has demonstrated the inevitable link between Participatory Research, educational support and long-term partnership. These three are seen as inter-related and yet integrated aspects of the larger contribution that PRIA is making in the overall process of social transformation.

RELEVANCE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUPPORT INSTITUTION

Without doubt, the data generated during the evaluation process and consultation of partners had established the relevance of support institutions in the current historic moment of the work of grass-roots level initiatives and perspectives, **the importance of a support institution was highlighted and uniformly accepted**. It was seen as support in the form of information, support in the form of ideas, support in the form of links, support in the form of access to information and other resources, support implying mediation of expertise, support in the form of emotional support to activists, support implying mirroring, support implying questioning, support implying inspiration, coalition and alliance-building, networking, deepening understanding, supportive materials, links with other professionals, expanding the horizons, and presenting national and international frames. In fact, the debate on characteristics of support institutions, their roles and importance was one of the most profound undertaken so far in the voluntary sector of this country.

As far as the characteristics of the support institutions are concerned, several of them were highlighted. The most important was that **the activities of the support institution should help to empower the "recipient" of support** and that this should become the acid test for PRIA as a support institution. If the recipient begins to feel dependent, or a lack of confidence, and confused as a consequence of the support, then it undermines the nature of the support institution. In fact, it was felt that the quality of relationship that a grass-roots level organisation builds with its members and local communities should be empowering local communities and members. Similarly, the

relationship between a support institution and grass-roots organisation should be empowering the latter. The mutuality of interests served and benefits derived by both the parties were also seen as an important part of the characteristic of an effective support institution.



In fact, it was argued that financial support was not an element of an effective support institution. It was highlighted that PRIA's decision not to extend financial support for funding to other grass-roots level initiatives was a wise one because such a support tends to create dependence and brings in distortions and suspicions in the relationship between the parties. Similarly, it was argued that merely conducting programme activities, workshops, or publications was not support. What was more important was a sense of support, to be with people in their situation of crises and to assist them to build, grow and develop on their own. Support was also seen in the form of openness to multiple experiences, different opinions, and perspectives and flexibility to respond to diverse styles, approaches, philosophies and positions. Thus, the importance and relevance of a support institution was not only highlighted but reiterated through this evaluation process. It appears that this may be a contribution of PRIA evaluation to the larger process of reflection on the nature and role of intermediary support organisations at the current historic juncture in the growth of voluntary action in the country and elsewhere. It also establishes certain dimensions and characteristics on which to assess the effectiveness of a support institution.

PRIA believes that as a support institution, it works with other activists, individuals, groups and organisations in ways that :

- Respond to the needs of the groups and individuals it works with;
- Encourage and motivate them continuously in their work;
- Cajole and push them;
- Inform them about rules, regulations, happenings which have some bearing on their work;
- Explore options with them;
- Question them to enable them to clarify their work to themselves;
- PRIA stands by them at moments of crisis or need.

PRIA has succeeded in generating confidence of, and credibility with, grass-roots organizations and others involved in the larger process of social transformation.

Building of partnership based on personal contacts and mutual trust and understanding were seen as an integral part of the strategy of PRIA as a support institution and not merely an instrumental requirement of its work as a support institution. This was obviously visible in the data generated through the evaluation. Many partners felt that PRIA was open, accessible, flexible, responsive, available, that they were able to work easily with PRIA staff and have a comfortable relationship with them.



ISSUES OF SUPPORT

The discussion on the nature of support institutions and PRIA's measuring up to this set of criteria reflected a list of other critical issues which emerged from the data of the evaluation. These issues, and the responses of the partners on them, and PRIA's own reflection, are outlined below :

1. Direct Implementation

Should PRIA play only support roles or should it also get involved in **direct implementation** ? Many a times, we have been told that without direct experience at the grass-roots level, PRIA may not be able to play this support role effectively. Some such views also arose out of evaluation data and this feeling was further reinforced. Discussion with the partners highlighted two very clear outcomes. Firstly, **without doubt, PRIA should largely and exclusively play support roles and should not try to work at the grass-roots level. It was recognised that support function has a legitimacy, relevance and importance of its own and it needed to be played without necessarily doing direct grass-roots level work.**

Secondly, many partners mentioned candidly that **direct implementation does not mean working at the grass-roots level only in a few villages and slums.** Direct implementation takes various forms. PRIA's involvements in campaigns, in implementing action plans arising out of various meetings of grass-roots level groups, in taking up practical training programmes and preparing reference and learning materials are also examples of direct implementation. These need not be necessarily limited to work at the grass-roots level.

Clarity with which several of the partners brought this point up shows that in the process of social change, there is a chain of events, activities, roles and levels and that PRIA has a definite role and place in that continuum, and that place need not be identical with the place that grass-roots level organisations have in that chain of social transformation. This recognition of the place of PRIA and its partners, was an important first step in becoming clear on this.

However, it was unanimously mentioned that PRIA staff needs to develop an understanding of, and sensitivity to, grass-roots level to work more effectively. Various suggestions were made in order to enhance this capacity of PRIA staff and this is an area that needs to be worked on.

2 Openness

The openness and flexibility of PRIA was seen by some as an evidence of lack of stand on issues by PRIA. There was a concern that PRIA is flexible and open on the one hand, and it does **not have any stand**, on the other. Some of the partners suggested that openness and flexibility with a clear stand is what PRIA does. **Many of them felt that Participatory Research was a stand.** It was a clear stand. It was also felt that perhaps PRIA takes stands on issues and at the same time gets along well, and even works with those who need not agree with its stand on those issues. It is this openness and flexibility which creates the possibility of PRIA's work with a large number of organisations and individuals and this does not have a stand, or hesitates to take the stand or does not project its stand.

It was felt that taking a stand and that its own stand becomes the stand of all are two different things. Rigidity of one's stand was not seen as a desirable way of expressing one's stand.

The other reflection on this issue showed that PRIA may not have articulated its stand very clearly on certain issues, even if it has a clear stand. Partners suggested that PRIA should perhaps articulate its stand more clearly on some issues where it does not do that, while maintaining its openness and flexibility of approach in relating to those who do not necessarily agree with its stand or take a stand other than PRIA on issues. The question of taking a stand and articulating it while also working non-sectarianly was seen as the key strength of PRIA.

3. Wide Range

Another major critical issue related to working on a wide range of issues and problems vs, developing deep specialization in a few. The response of the partners in the consultation and the data from evaluation seem to suggest that this is the choice that PRIA needs to exercise. Some have suggested that deeper understanding and specialization on issues does not mean becoming narrow and limited to a few issues. It was felt that on all the issues PRIA is working on and the general problems of development in the country, PRIA must develop deeper and deeper understanding and that this depth of understanding then informs its various activities. Therefore, **there was no contradiction seen between developing deeper understanding and appreciation of problems and their underlying causes on the one hand, and working on a wider range of issues on the other.**

Another response was that in order for PRIA to be able to do continuous follow-up on the variety of activities which it has been initiating, technical knowledge and expertise on those may be necessary within PRIA. Therefore, PRIA may not be able to develop that kind of technical expertise on a wide range of issues.

On the other hand, working on a wide range of issues from the sector of the workers to tribals to voluntary agencies and trade unions and other support institutions was seen as a strength because through this only PRIA was able to link up with diverse categories of individuals and organisations working towards the broader process of social transformation in the country and was able to convene them around common issues and concerns. Thus working on a wide range of issues and the capacity to convene a large number of such agencies and individuals go together.

It was in this light that several suggestions were made. PRIA should play its role of mediating the expertise more intensively and effectively. PRIA need not develop technical expertise on all the issues related to problems of development in the country. But it may develop relationships with those individuals and organisation who have such technical expertise and help play the role of mediating that expertise on a regular basis with the grass-roots level requirements. Thus PRIA may utilise its capacity of understanding grass-roots work and its strong partnerships with them to bring in appropriate expertise from other institutions as and when needed. In fact, this role of mediating expertise and appropriating technical knowledge in the service of the grass-roots would become consistent with its Mission.



4. Weak Follow-up

A common concern raised in the evaluation data was weak and erratic follow-up by PRIA. It became clear that PRIA was experiencing the tension between responding to ever growing expectations and demands from the partners or merely acting on the basis of its own capacity. Is PRIA partner-driven or capacity-driven or mission-driven or fund-driven ? It appears again and again that PRIA's emphasis on, and strengths of,

partnership makes it partner-driven and, therefore, PRIA gets involved in a variety of activities which are responses to expectations of its partners. It is possible, therefore, that it has exceeded the current capacity of PRIA and it may give the impression that consistent and regular follow-up does not occur.

The second response was that perhaps a clearer definition of follow-up needs to be made and partners need to be informed as to what kind of expectations they may have vis-a-vis follow-up from PRIA. Many partners suggested that the responsibility for follow-up, and the capacity to undertake that, should be locally situated and created within districts, states and regions and that PRIA should play an important role in this regard. **It was in this context that repeated suggestions were made for PRIA to undertake, as part of its central responsibility, building up and strengthening of regional support institutions to play such support functions in the different regions and states of the country.**

5. Growing Institutionalisation

The fifth issue was that multiple requests and demands made from the partners have been growing and as a result of PRIA's continued response, there is inevitable growth and institutionalisation in PRIA. There were several concerns raised within PRIA itself about the consequences of the institutionalisation and growth, particularly related to its likely impact on the sustenance of values and principles which guide PRIA's work with its partners and the internal culture in PRIA.

The response of the partners seem to indicate that growth was seen as inevitable and care should be taken to ensure that the institutionalisation process does not thwart PRIA's ability to work with and build partnerships, and promote the practice of **Particularly Research**, and its culture of openness, flexibility, accessibility and personal touch built over the years.

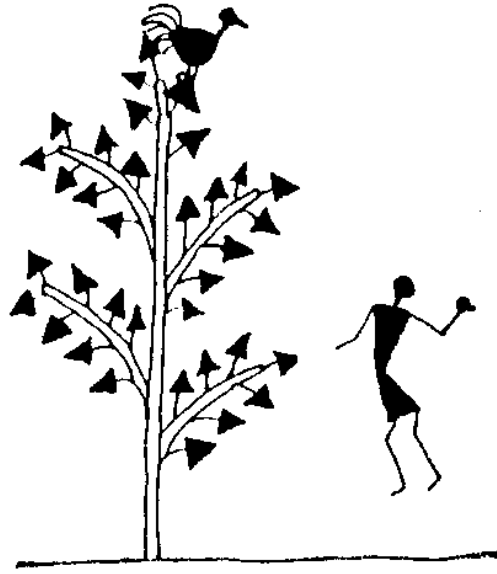
Concern was also expressed that the process of institutionalisation should be carried out in such a way that PRIA's dependence and vulnerability to outside influences is minimised. Many partners were very concerned that increasing visibility of PRIA and its taking up stand on a variety of controversial issues may invite reactions from the world outside which may undermine PRIA's ability to survive over a long term period, if it does not guard against those vulnerabilities and dependencies.

6. Person and Institution

As a characteristic of support institutions, PRIA was also experiencing tension between the **person and the institution**. The person of the Coordinator and the key founder of PRIA is much more visible and identified with PRIA, its philosophy and practice than the institution of PRIA, in its own right. This was seen both as a strength and weakness. It was seen as a strength because individuals were seen to be embodying a number of values which institutions need to develop, cherish and imbibe; and yet it was felt that PRIA should have a life of its own beyond Rajesh Tandon and its other founders, and that it be able to develop its capacity to survive beyond the individual.

Still, there may be areas of work and types of roles (like sectoral etc.) which may continue to put pressures on the identification of PRIA with the person. It was in this context that several suggestions for creating greater visibility of colleagues and institutionalisation of activities of PRIA etc. were made. An intensive analysis revealed that over the last two years the identification of PRIA with the person has been decreasing as more and more senior colleagues had begun to play active roles autonomously and in their own right.





EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

With all this reflection, analysis and revisioning where does PRIA go into the future ? In terms of its various activities and programmes and the diversity of its roles, some of the future directions that have become clear are stated below. These should be seen as future strategies for PRIA in order to help realise its broader mission. Some of its activities, strategies are reformulation of the current ones and some are new.

I. Programme Strategies

PRIA would be undertaking in the future the following five broad categories of programmes which are building on the history and trends of different activities enumerated previously.

1. Natural Resources

This is the programme which will move beyond the focus on Land Ownership and Alienation and would now include forests and water as well as important natural resources. The thrust of the programme is **poor peoples' access to, control over and ownership of natural resources**. The programme will focus on issues related to tribals, fisherfolk, problems arising out of dams, mining etc. and would also focus on concerns of those living in urban areas and their access to resources in those settings. In terms of the uneven geographical spread of the programme so far, attempts will be made to make special efforts to expand the coverage of the programme to those geographical locations in the country which have not yet been actively involved in the programme. Similarly, certain issues which we feel as a consequence of our analysis as important will also be pursued even if today the demand from the constituency may not exist. We want to move beyond the response to the constituencies and its interests as, for example, in the question of dams and take on issues which are going to become increasingly important (like degradation of resources etc.)

2. Workers' Education

The programme which had become limited to Occupational Health and Safety will be reformulated as a broader programme on Workers' Education. It will have several components. In terms of occupational health and safety, PRIA would attempt to initiate an information, documentation and dissemination centre on issues of occupational health and safety, both in the organised and unorganised sectors of the economy. It will continue to work directly and primarily with workers, their sympathisers and activists in raising awareness on these issues, but would also include other constituencies to bring to the attention at the national level issues arising out of occupational health and safety. This may entail initiating certain campaigns on specific issues of health and safety as well as disseminating information on concerns of health and safety at work places in the unorganised sectors, particularly with women workers.

The other aspect of the programme would focus on workers' educational efforts and would include workshops, training programmes, preparation of learning materials and

their dissemination for worker activists in order to build second line of leadership, specifically for those who are involved in organising the unorganised sectors of the working class in this country. A special thrust of this programme area would be preparation and dissemination of popular learning materials in order to continue to raise these issues among a variety of individuals, groups and associations concerned with these issues in the country.



3. Women and Development

The programme of Women and Work would be reformulated and given a broader focus as Women and Development. Continuing activities on Women and Work would also imply intensive implementation of some of the strategies and ideas in relation to enhancing womens' income and empowerment simultaneously on the ground. This will mean that PRIA will undertake in the future some intensive support to and consultation with select programmes and projects to demonstrate the validity of its strategies and their wider applicability. Similarly the issue of advocacy in relation to women's income generating schemes and programmes of the government would be taken up in order to highlight the variety of limitations entailed in the current development planning for women's economic activities.

Besides, PRIA will begin to focus on the broader concerns of women in different aspects of development programming and models. A specific thrust would be in assisting groups working in urban and rural areas to initiate their own programming with women and concerns of poor women. The focus of the programme will continue to be centred on the needs, interests, concerns and capacities of poor women in the country.

4. Enhancing Competencies

This will be a major capacity-building programme for grass-roots voluntary organisations on the one hand, and other training and research institutions both in the non-governmental and the government sector on the other. The major interventions here would be Training of Trainers programmes, both at the national and regional

levels. The regional Training of Trainers programmes will be expanded and more intensive support provided to such institutions carrying out this activity. Preparation of additional learning materials would be a major thrust in the future.

Besides, the focus would also include Training of Trainers programmes in Adult Education, both for the State Resource Centres and for the non-governmental organisations in the country. Preparation of audio-visual learning materials would be specifically undertaken in this regard. A variety of other initiatives in animators training in the country would be included in this programme in order to provide support to voluntary organisations through interventions of training of trainers type. Enhancing the competence of key individuals working in voluntary organisations to be able to carry out their work more effectively will be the major thrust of this programme in the coming years.

5. Strengthening Organisations

This is the new formulation of a variety of interventions that PRIA has been carrying out over the years. This programme will now cater to strengthening the capacities of organisations involved in social change efforts in the country. For newer and smaller voluntary organisations, a variety of workshops and training programmes on management aspects and accounts-keeping would be carried out. In order to pursue this more effectively, PRIA would engage in identification and training of regional support organisations whose capacity in conducting management and accounts-keeping workshops in regional languages would be strengthened in order to have a wider multiplier effect and to ensure deeper coverage in the country over the years.

Secondly, PRIA would specifically design programmes for larger and older voluntary organisations which will help them build their capabilities on a long-term basis. These programmes would focus in issues like organisational missions, strategies and structure, leadership styles of key leaders of organisations, issues of personnel policy and staff development.



The programme would also include continuing work on Participatory Evaluation where specific assignments as well as thematic workshops will be carried out in the future. The focus of this would continue to be strengthening the reflection capacity of organisations and their wider capability to continue the work of realising their mission as they have formulated for themselves.

A new initiative in helping groups to do their organisational and programme planning would be undertaken with the help of workshops and preparation of learning materials. The ongoing work in Process Documentation would be strengthened to enhance the capacity of grass-roots organisations to create mechanisms for ongoing documentation of their activities and analysis and reflections through them.

II Other Strategies

In the future, several new strategies are under consideration. These are in relation to the following aspects :

1. Strengthening Support Institutions in India

As a consequence of the process of reflection, it has become very clear to us that PRIA must actively work towards strengthening existing, and if necessary, helping create new support institutions in different parts of the country which can play similar functions with a large number of grass-roots organisation in different states and regions of the country as PRIA has been playing over the years from a national level. This would entail identification of institutions, training of their staff, preparation of learning materials for their use, on-going support to help develop their capacities and linkages with wider constituencies.

2. Further Elaboration of Participatory Research

PRIA has been involved in practicing, promoting and defining the principles and ideas of Participatory Research, primarily through its work with grass-roots voluntary organisations in the country. It is that which has led to the evolution of its methodology of Participatory Training and Participatory Evaluation. In the future, there is a need to document fresh understanding and new insights in relation to Participatory Research and to promote these more actively through workshops and training programmes in the country. It is also important to explore newer applications of the principles of Participatory Research with newer constituencies, (for example, non-formal education and learning of children and adolescents, etc.) and this will be an area of exploration in the future for PRIA.

3. Popular Documentation and Research Centre

PRIA would strive to create a Popular Documentation and Resource Centre within itself which will serve two broad functions. The first function will be preparation of popular materials on a variety of issues that confront grass-roots social change and voluntary development organisations in the country. Preparation of such materials, their production and dissemination would be an important task of this Centre. The

second function this Centre would perform, perhaps as a second phase of its growth, would be to work towards creating a facility for the use by activists on preparation of their own materials for dissemination for their own use and for use in the context of their own staff. Thus, the Centre would have possibility for activists to utilise its equipment, materials and facilities and would also help to contribute towards demystification of technology and its wider access to the grass-roots.

4. The Sectoral Role

The importance of the sectoral role makes it imperative that PRIA begins to move in the direction of playing a sectoral role in an institutional capacity. The sectoral role does not mean networking on issues alone, which should be done in the various programmes. Sectoral role here, means promotion of voluntarism and the sector of independent development promoting initiatives in the country. While there is some inevitable requirement of key individuals playing this role, the institutional capacity of PRIA should be geared to be able to play sectoral role with the creation of VANI. It is appropriate that PRIA works towards strengthening of VANI and helps VANI play this sectoral role more actively in the years to come. Therefore, PRIA's contribution would be in strengthening VANI to play this role in the future. Besides, PRIA could continue to work towards analytical aspects in relation to the problems and issues of the sector. Thus the current study of non-governmental organisations in the country could be an illustration of this kind of role which should be pursued in the future as well.

5. Asian and International Role

With the growing experience and understanding of principles and practice of Participatory Research through our work in India, it seems appropriate that PRIA should now play a more active institutional role at the Asian and International level in promoting the principles of Participatory Research and supporting those who are working on these issues. This will entail more active networking in Asia and other parts of the world. It will entail organising of workshops and training programmes on these issues in collaboration with similar organisations in other Asian countries. It will imply identification of and support to other support institutions in different Asian countries who are trying to play similar roles in their countries vis-a-vis grass-roots organisations, and would finally entail helping them imbibe and reformulate the philosophy and principles of Participatory Research as a core basis for their ongoing functions. Thus an activity which so far has been played in an individual capacity by a few persons in PRIA would now have to acquire an institutional character in the future.

The future directions for the roles and strategies of PRIA have several implications. It has implications for its organisational structure and design, for the capacities and commitment of its staff, for its infrastructure facilities. Mostly, it has important implications for its relationship with its partners and other constituencies nationally and internationally. Having recognised the relevance and the importance of support

institutions' functions as evolved through the practice of PRIA over the last 8 years, it seems that we are reaching a stage in the growth of PRIA which places heavy responsibilities on its institutional directions. These responsibilities not only entail further promotion and articulation of principles and philosophy of Participatory Research and its roots in the evolution of the methodology of Participatory Training and Evaluation but also its role in helping strengthen existing and create and build new support institutions and support functions throughout the country and in the Asian region. It is a responsibility which will make considerable demands on the capacities of PRIA as an institution to be able to effectively relate to and work with diverse constituencies on a variety of programmes and tasks through a series of activities and initiatives, while continuing to remember and restate its mission derived from its underlying vision of the philosophy of the Participatory Research and its wider contribution to the overall process of social transformation in our societies.

It is a challenge which we need to rise upto with the support and encouragement of our partners, colleagues and well-wishers. We hope that that support will be willingly forthcoming in the years to come as we gear ourselves upto meet that challenge.

