



Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

PRIA

Re-affirming Values of Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

On 6th February 2017, PRIA completed 35 years as an independent civil society organisation working for participatory social change.

PRIA@35 has been an exciting journey.

For some of us, PRIA@35 is about sustaining an independent, forward-looking and energetic civil society organisation, in an otherwise rapidly disruptive and uncertain world.

For several of our former colleagues (numbering 800+ alumni), PRIA@35 is a benchmark for their own professional and personal learning and growth.

For our partners in rural and urban communities in India, PRIA@35 is refreshing an old relationship in a new era.

For fellow travellers of civil society in India and globally, PRIA@35 is a reminder of history of struggles in the journey together and many more ahead.

For development professionals, PRIA@35 is re-affirmation that participation still matters in everyday life and work.

For 'comrades' in social transformation, PRIA@35 is a reminder that knowledge democracy is key to sustaining such processes.

In 2017, PRIA undertakes its work in an increasingly uncertain world, characterised by complexity, chaos and cacophony. There is growing, visible and troubling inequality - of wealth, income, opportunity, access to basic services, well-being. Intolerance of diversity and disagreements in public spheres have increased; differences in language, dress, rituals, food, culture are demonised, with anger and violence against those who are "not like us". Constitutionally mandated institutions to promote democratic governance - legislature, judiciary, law and order machinery, media, civil society - appear irrelevant, fragmented and even decayed.

How will PRIA@35 respond to these challenges?

How do we meet the economic aspirations of the youth whom we encounter through our work? They are 'smart', connected, mobile; yet information about economic opportunities are limited, particularly for urban poor youth. With awareness and safety, 'new age' adolescent girls and first generation, college-going boys and girls want to learn skills that can help them in securing sustainable livelihoods. Where can our strengths as an intermediary capacity building organisation be useful in meeting such aspirations?

How can we ensure gender matters in everyday life, not merely in public spheres and institutions? Reforming gender relations requires working with boys and men to change behaviour as vigorously as building self-confidence and agency in women and girls. Sustaining such behaviour change in everyday life is contested.

A globalised economy, out-sourced service delivery, private business and digital tooling — these will continue to matter greatly in tomorrow's India. But the numbers missing out from the benefits of these changes is increasing. We see the impacts of rapid urbanisation, informalisation, and resource extraction on the communities we engage with. The urgency to prepare them to participate, to influence these changes has never been greater. How do we scale our innovative participatory tools and interventions quickly enough to make larger impact, reach more people?

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PRIA@35 responds to these challenges by re-committing our efforts to make democracy work for all, in everyday life, and re-affirming the values that underlie our motto: Knowledge. Voice. Democracy.

Of valuing diversity of knowledge cultures - forms, languages, expressions

Of listening, supporting and amplifying the voice of hitherto excluded - their dreams, hopes, frustrations, pains

Of promoting practices and rituals of participatory democracy - and making institutions transparent and accountable to citizens

In practical terms, what will this mean for PRIA's work over the next three to five years?

Focus on three key areas of work:

- Promote and deepen practice of participatory research as facilitators, with communities and with the next generation of practitioners/students
- Build capacities of agents of change in communities & within organisations/institutions
- Transform individual and institutional practices, systems and cultures to enable deepening of #DemocracyInEverydayLife

Anchored through:

- Youth leadership, of boys and girls - to take individual and collective steps to address social issues
- Citizen leadership, especially among the marginalised and women - to learn to work collectively to access services
- Active citizenship by all - to practice #DemocracyInEverydayLife, prevent violence and promote restful peace

Strategically built on:

- Scale - multipliers, convenors, promoters, new partners
- Engagement of youth through educational institutions - high schools, colleges, universities
- Extensive use of cultural-sports methodology for learning, voicing, collectivising
- Deepening deployment of digital methodologies in diverse languages and idioms

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July 2017

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