

Strategic Plan 2022

PRIA completed 40 years of its kaleidoscopic journey on February 6, 2022. Over these four decades, PRIA's commitment to supporting the knowledge, voice, and democratic participation of the excluded and marginalised has been accomplished in myriad ways. We started with the practice of participatory research as a methodology for social mobilisation of women, Adivasis and workers, and raised the question: Whose knowledge counts?

Our long-term interventions to build human and institutional capacity of civil society organisations and active citizenship are steeped in our core belief of creating an inclusive, just, and democratic society. When community-driven socio-economic development approaches were mandated through statutory institutions of local self-governance (panchayats and municipalities), PRIA's innovative efforts to make them effective, accountable, and responsive to the vulnerable and excluded households were scaled-up manifold.

In empowering women and girls to find their space and voice in a gender-just society, PRIA has demonstrated a new methodology of integrating gender institutionally, where working with boys and men, and safe private and public spaces has been the focus. Recognising the importance of education and training of next generation researchers, professionals, and scholars, PRIA supports postsecondary educational institutions to revise their curriculum and pedagogy and become socially relevant, with focus on including the philosophy and practice of community-based participatory research for generating and using knowledge for locally adapted global goals.

The widespread Covid-19 pandemic made starkly visible the underlying structural inequalities, nationally and globally. Questions around the very survival of humanity and the planet – why the current policies and models for socio-economic development are not working, how do we mitigate the unequal impacts of continuous environmental degradation and climate change, and the need to recognise and nurture diversity, especially of gender and knowledge systems – cannot be ignored.

Between August and December 2021, we convened 22 conversations in which stakeholders – partners, associates, supporters, experts, investors, colleagues – drawn from civil society, government, business, media, and academia – participated. In collaboration with 50 national and international partners, these conversations were enriched through contributions from 203 speakers from around the world. We were encouraged when we received 2661 registrations for these webinars, and 1432 participants (nearly 55 percent) from more than 40 countries. By telling our story, and listening to similar and different others, we tried to understand what the pathways and partnerships for post-pandemic recovery which are reliant on local, community led solidarity actions, supported by redesigned institutions and active citizens.

The future goals for humanity have to shift to wellness, resilience, and sustainability. Towards achieving these goals, significant shifts in public policies and greater investments of resources will be needed, anchored in values of inclusion, justice, equity, and solidarity.

Individuals, households, and communities will need to learn many new behaviours and competencies, critical for taking responsibility for health, ecology, and well-being. New ways of safe and assertive participation in digital spaces will need to be learnt by girls and women. Youth will need to practice active citizenship to make public institutions responsive and accountable, while nurturing social solidarity and diversity. Likewise, institutions will need to be renewed and redesigned for sustainable urban development, accountable community resource management, and knowledge production and dissemination.

Strengthening community-led, sustainable, resilient social and economic development will require social innovations driven by synergising local knowledge and global technology. Granular, community-based data would be essential to ensure social protection measures are inclusive of vulnerable and marginalised households. Widespread use of community-based participatory research methodology can support the same.

PRIA@40 recommits to contributing to the above, by refreshing its core competencies in its thrust areas of citizen participation, decentralised governance, gender mainstreaming, inclusive urbanisation, empowering civil society and building a knowledge democracy. We hope you will stay connected and join us in this journey. “Active citizenship is about both rights and obligations. Great policies and big schemes cannot automatically result in improvements in people’s lives without collective awareness and actions of citizens for whose public good they are created. Also, merely pin-pointing the weakness of government institutions is not enough; we have to find ways to support them to improve their capacities and functioning.”

– Dr. Rajesh Tandon Founder- President, PRIA