



MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK FOR ALL CITIZENS

PRIA's STRATEGIC PLAN 2008

PRIA

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PRIA is an International Centre for Learning and Promotion of Participation and Democratic Governance



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I. Preface

During the Silver Jubilee deliberations, dialogues with over five thousand delegates from a vast variety of sectors, nationally and internationally, reaffirmed the significance of PRIA's thematic thrusts on Citizen Participation & Democratic Governance. Some reflections of these consultations are already in practice during the current programme in 2007-08.

This note builds on that material and incorporates the analysis and recommendations of the strategic review seminar held during end November 2007, and deliberations with the Governing Board of PRIA on December 1, 2007. It has since been discussed with PRIA's partners in January 2008. It has incorporated feedback from the comprehensive programme evaluation carried out in March 2008 by Dr. John Gaventa and Dr. Neera Burra.

It is intended to be discussed further so as to refine it for finalisation as a document guiding PRIA's future over 2009-2013 period.

II. Changing Contexts

- Asian region has become the economic engine of the world
- India has emerged as a growing economy with high growth rates in recent years; as a result, tax revenues with central and state governments have more than tripled in the past 5 years
- Public sector funding of social sector and poverty alleviation programmes has increased substantially in India, though its efficacy and impact remain questionable
- Private sector participation in both economic and social development has grown substantially, worldwide and in India too
- There has been a substantial reduction in international development assistance to many Asian and Latin American countries as they are perceived to be doing well, and Paris Agenda has largely focused on budgetary support to African governments
- Disparities within countries like India have grown as economic growth has not been associated with adequate inclusion of many
- Rapid urbanization has been acknowledged as an integral part of economic growth model currently in vogue
- Widespread concerns for security, violence and terrorism have begun to dominate developmental and democratic discourse
- Global public opinion for urgent actions on issues of climate change are gathering momentum now

Within the broader context, there are some specific trends relating to sustainable human development and deepening democracy around the world:

- ❑ Citizens are organizing themselves to demand their rights and to protest against corruption and injustices on an increasing scale
- ❑ Senior political and government leaders are beginning to recognize the urgent need for serious reforms in the manner of functioning of public agencies and programmes with respect to transparency and accountability
- ❑ Widespread consensus in India and elsewhere is emerging to strengthen decentralization of political and administrative authority to local governments as vehicles of effective service delivery

- ❑ New legislative mechanisms (like Right To Information, Penalty for Domestic Violence and Sexual Harassment, Rural Employment Guarantee, disclosure in electoral systems, etc) are available for citizens
- ❑ Positive opportunities for partnerships with public agencies are increasing, as reflected in National Policy on Voluntary Sector in India
- ❑ Demands for democratic accountability of political parties are being articulated

III. PRIA's Profile

B. Global Innovations by PRIA

- Methodologies of Participatory Research Since 1980
- Using principles of adult education for literacy and continuing education since 1981
- Contestations between expert and indigenous knowledge since 1980
- Capacity-building on non-governmental civil society organizations in people-centred development since 1982
- Strengthening management and governance of development organizations since 1985
- Citizen engagement in planning and monitoring service delivery since 1987
- Improving relations between government and NGOs since 1986
- Campaigning for citizens rights to access information since 1985
- Building coalitions of trade unions, NGOs and academics around health and pollution issues since 1988
- Building and strengthening network and coalitions of civil society for deepening democracy since 1988
- Monitoring policies of international agencies around participatory development since 1991
- Linking grassroots organizing with academia and media for advocacy since 1992
- Building human and institutional capacity of local government system since 1994
- Strengthening voices of citizen leader to demand accountability since 1996
- Mainstreaming gender programmatically and institutionally since 1997
- Demanding and supporting effective functioning of statutory commissions at national and transnational level 1998
- Mobilising civic coalitions towards free and fair elections since 2000
- Promoting participatory town planning and urban solid waste management since 2001
- Interfacing citizenship right with democratic governance since 2002
- Roles of civil society in democratizing global governance since 2002
- Building community-university partnerships for change since 2003
- Building coalitions of citizens and elected representatives since 2003
- Facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable solutions of development problems since 2004

C. Distinctive Features of PRIA

- Use of adult and life-long learning principles and approaches in designing and delivering educational & training programmes

- Innovative tools and methods to apply perspectives and principles of Participatory Research in planning, implementing, monitoring and implementing community based and driven development programmes.
- Systematisation of grassroots experiences to evolve ideas and strategies for improving programme delivery and policy designs
- Working on both sides of the equation by empowering and marginalized by sensitizing the providers of services and policy-makers
- Evolving multi-stakeholder and collaborative approaches to solving problems and generating sustainable solutions around complex societal issues
- Building, nurturing and strengthening cross-sectoral network, coalitions and alliances to facilitate learning and actions on emerging problematique
- Managing large-scale grant-making programmes that simultaneously strengthen human and institutional capacities of local agencies

D. Thematic Expertise in PRIA 2008

- Participatory development
- Citizen engagement & empowerment
- Adult & life-long education
- Civil society building
- Transparency & accountability of governance
- Improving services through reforming local governance
- Gender mainstreaming
- Urban planning & municipal reforms
- Development management
- Community-based Participatory Research
- Occupational health, safety & environmental pollution

IV. SWOT Analysis

Opportunities

- There is a growing recognition of the need to link sectoral development projects (on education, health, water, sanitation, etc) to the processes and institutions of local governance
- National and international agencies financing development are seeking expertise which can facilitate grass-roots mobilisation as well as build capacity of delivery systems in governments
- New philanthropic foundations are beginning to take interest in strengthening democratic accountability of service delivery programmes
- There is a renewed interest in learning from Indian experiences under the rubric of south-south cooperation
- Demand for career enhancing post-secondary and continuing education is growing in India and many other parts of the world
- Corporations around the world are being challenged to demonstrate their social responsibility and good citizenship
- Professional knowledge and expertise in civil society is being recognised and utilised

Threats

- Rapid decline in international grants to Indian NGOs, and reduced possibilities of innovative experimentation through such funding
- Serious violent protests in many parts of the country and region, rendering development efforts meaningless
- Growing presence of national and international commercial entities in professional development arena, thereby increasing competition for indigenous NGOs
- Legal framework for the effective functioning of NGOs locally and globally still confusing and restrictive in India
- Increased competition for professional human resources as demand for such resources from the private sector grows rapidly
- Resources for post-secondary and life-long education are still thin in many developing countries.
- New resources from private companies or individual donations are not yet being channelised to strengthening civil society for demanding accountabilities of state and other institutions

Strengths

- Professional credibility of its commitments, perspectives and programmes among diverse set of stakeholders nationally and internationally
- Innovations and experimentations with issues and methods as its pioneering and cutting edge approach
- Consistent belief and practice of perspectives related to Participatory Research, citizen participation, autonomous space for civil society, social inclusion and accountable governance
- Capacity to engage with governments and policy-makers at different levels simultaneously- local, district, provincial, national, regional and international
- Willingness and ability to intervene at both demand and supply sides of governance
- Capacity to promote multipliers through continuing education and consultancy assignments based on field experiences of PRIA
- Effective and continuous institutional development of systems, infrastructure and internal governance mechanisms
- Capable and respected top leadership, and strong management team within PRIA
- Stimulating, professional, open and healthy work culture nurtured deliberately over time

Weaknesses

- Mechanisms for quality control and standardization inadequate to the size and diversity of PRIA's activities today
- Systematisation and documentation of learning about processes and issues from the field has not kept pace with the range and depth of interventions
- Financial management and human resource functions have not been able to develop adequately in response to the changing profile and complexity of PRIA's requirements
- Project management capabilities in the system are inadequate in relation to demand for such requirements

- Mechanisms for mobilizing local volunteers and philanthropic contributions is rather weak
- Durable partnerships with private sector and media have not been created as yet

V. Identity

PRIA is an International Centre for Learning and Promotion of Citizen Participation and Democratic Governance.

It is a global civil society organization, non-profit- distributing in nature, registered as a voluntary organization in India.

This Identity of PRIA needs to be the basis for thematic guidance. The following elaboration may guide its practical realizations in future:

Learning

- implies undertaking Participatory Research for PRIA's own learning, as well as facilitating similar learning of other stakeholders
- it includes knowledge-building
- capacity-building and dissemination of findings
- lessons
- tools
- approaches and perspectives through various forms of communication, including mass media.

Promotion

- implies influencing others –key stakeholders—to understand and utilize the above findings
- lessons
- tools
- approaches and perspectives in their own policies and practices
- it includes mobilization & campaigning, convening & interfacing and policy advocacy interventions

In PRIA's experience, in many situations, learning interventions trigger promotional actions, as well as, promotion at interventions catalyse learning activities; this organic and integrated methodology defines PRIA's uniqueness as enshrined in 'Knowledge is Power'!

The contents of PRIA's learning and promotion interventions center around two broad, yet related, themes:

1. Citizen Participation

- entails valuing, enabling and institutionalizing participation, empowerment and decision-making by citizens, specially those hitherto excluded (like women, tribals, dalits, minorities in Indian context);
- it includes claiming rights, performing obligations and engaging with the public spheres, in the process of realizing participatory citizenship;

- it acknowledges the simultaneous relevance of institutional, statutory and spontaneous spaces for participation as necessary for addressing exclusion, deprivation and discrimination in society, polity and economy;
- it acknowledges the significance of citizens' coalitions and leadership as integral part of strengthening civil society;
- it implies innovation and experimentation in deepening participation with different categories of citizens (specially youth, elderly and those in urban settings).

2. Democratic Governance

- entails transparent and accountable systems and processes of decision-making in public institutions;
- it includes both mobilization and use of public resources for common public goods;
- it specially focuses upon democratization of institutions of local self governance (like panchayats and municipalities in India);
- it implies making government agencies and officials responsive and accountable to citizens, in making policies, designing programmes and implementing development projects;
- in addition to state institutions and political parties, it encompasses democratic governance of all institutions in society---private sector, media, academia, and civil society;
- it also means deepening democracy, specially transparency and accountability of electoral systems and processes at the local, provincial, national and trans-national levels.

VI. Strategic Directions

In light of the above analysis and trajectory-cum-identity of PRIA, certain strategic considerations need to be worked upon in the next period:

1. Standardise and Up-scale 'flagships' through assignments and contracts nationally and internationally

This implies consolidating the tools, methods, lessons, processes and systems of intervening in 'flagship' areas by building on the existing work on knowledge management.

It also implies partnering with like-minded organizations with complementary competencies. In the national context, it implies consolidating further existing key partnerships.

In international context, it means taking assignments for work in other countries (like Cambodia, Afghanistan, Uganda, Kyrgyzstan, etc); it requires building an existing trusting partnerships with such global actors INTRAC (UK), ASPBAE, IDS, IIZ(Germany), with whom PRIA has had a long-standing relationship.

'Flagships' may include projects focusing on Civil Society Strengthening, Participatory Training, Participatory Planning, Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation, Gender Auditing and Mainstreaming organizationally, Social Accountability, Capacity building of Local Governance institutions, etc.

2. Access flexible grants and own resources to support innovations in selective locations and issues in India.

This implies being very selective in identifying issues and locations where such limited resources can be applied.

Issues which attract such consideration are those where further innovation in interventions and consolidation of lessons is necessary; for example, accountable electoral systems and processes at grassroots, devolution and utilisation of public finance, civic engagements and citizen leadership among women, dalits, tribals & minorities, urban planning and municipal reforms, sexual harassment at work places, etc.

Geographic locations where such resources should be prioritized in India have to be selected on the basis of extent of poverty, scale of deprivations and endemic violence; on such considerations, selected regions of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and UP may get prioritized (from those provinces where PRIA is already intervening);

In addition, there may be opportunities to influence select institutions of democracy (like assembly and parliament and their committees, statutory commissions like Information Commission, Women's Commission, Human Rights Commission, Scheduled Caste, Tribe and Minorities Commissions, etc) where use of such resources may become strategic in the long run.

3. Forge new collaborations with academia and private sector to increase outreach of educational offerings

This implies collaborative offerings of PRIA's educational Courses through IGNOU and other academic institutions in India; it further implies deepening partnership with University of Victoria, Canada for global outreach; it may entail diversifying collaborations with institutions in other countries and regions too.

It entails continuous development and marketing of new educational offerings in multiple formats, based on emerging demands and PRIA's experiences in the field.

It requires that all educational offerings 'pay for themselves', while initial investment in developing courses and collaborations could be underwritten for the next two years.

Growing interest of private sector (in India and elsewhere) in Corporate Social Responsibility and Philanthropy could be tapped for collaborating with a select few to design and offer educational programmes.

4. Invest in systematization of knowledge and strengthening of institutional mechanisms for unified global operations

Greater efforts have to be made to continuously systematize the knowledge generated through PRIA's own interventions as well as those of other actors on the themes of its interest; this entails securing resources for collaborative studies (building on DRC and other models); it implies further consolidation of library, documentation, and EDP functions in consolidating knowledge management in PRIA.

Further institutional development requires operating on a unified model of planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting for entire operations globally; it further implies flexible deployment of human resources, and greater capacity in project management; it also entails strengthening new leadership team for taking fuller responsibility for all of the above.

VII. PRIA Vision 2020

1. Premier Global Institution
Mobilising Practical Knowledge
Designing Solutions for Sustainable democracies
Services Utilised by Government, Businesses & Civil Society
2. Education for Sustainable Social Development
Knowledge for Citizen-Centric Development
Tools for Participatory Governance
Institutional and Human Capacity Enhancement for Democratic Functioning
3. Global credentials for educational programmes in participatory governance, sustainable social development and effective democratic leadership
4. Global consortium of Capacity enhancement support institution working in Asia and Africa.

Scale

1. Three educational campuses, one abroad
2. 200 professional faculty/ practitioners
3. 100 support functions staff
4. Turnover \$10 million (Rs 50 Crores)
5. Surplus 20 %
6. Interlocking Divisionalised Structures
7. Global Governing Board

VIII. Structure

PRIA's work will be organized in the following manner during the next five years:

1. PRIA Academy for Development and Democracy **Learning For Change**
 - Educational programmes
 - Diploma and Certificates Programmes
 - Workshop & Seminars
 - Internships & Placement
 - Research
 - Knowledge mobilization (Journal, website)
2. PRIA's Centre for Democratic Governance **Your Voice Matters**
 - Campaigns & Mobilisation
 - Advocacy for improve delivery and policy reforms
 - Convening multi-stakeholder dialogues & negotiations
 - Action learning through field experimentation
3. PRIA's Advisory Services **Participatory Solutions Sustainable**
 - Assignments
 - Consultancies
 - HRD/OD
 - Evaluations/assessments/appraisals
 - Project management
 - Funds management

The above structure will ensure grouping of related work and constituencies in a coherent manner.

In addition, there would be a division of support services providing common back-up to the above structure. This division would comprise of HR/administration, finance & accounts, publication and communication and project planning & monitoring functions.

IX. Business Plan

The enclosed chart outlines a Business Plan of PRIA over the next four years (2009-2012). Several assumptions have been made in this Plan. First, the 'assets' of PRIA are its people, systems and infrastructure. These have been divided in two parts: fixed and variable. The fixed assets are the core programme team in HO (figures in parentheses indicate number of personnel), core support team in HO and core teams in the three state offices (Patna, Raipur, Ranchi). The variable assets (depending on the availability of programme funds) is comprising of District Teams in six locations, HO programme staff, HO support function, and two possible additional state offices (Jaipur, Chandigarh).

On the 'Recovery from Deployment' of PRIA assets to different projects and activities, the revenues projected are net of 'out-of-pocket' expenses for delivery of various projects and activities. The figures presented for fiscal 2009 are based on current confirmations. The estimated revenues for the remaining three fiscal years are projected on the basis of past trends and current estimates.

Additional projects may entail additional deployment on the project basis.

All fixed costs have been included in the fixed 'asset' section.

From the current estimates, the 'out-of-pocket' costs for these programmes are nearly 75% in addition to the figures indicated in the Business Plan. In addition, for the grant management function (as in West Bengal), there is 'pass through' grant amounting to about Rs 200 lakhs in fiscal 2009. Thus, total estimated project revenue for fiscal 2009 would add up to about Rs 10 crores.

X. Governance

The overall Governance function would vest in the Governing Board of PRIA. The recently activated structures of OMB and PAG, alongwith project I/C, project guide and project supervisors would be further strengthened.

Since the changes made in the Income Tax rules this year are yet to be formalized, there is a certain amount of ambiguity in the manner in which we can proceed on the legal structuring of SPRIA, PET and PI. Further differentiation and elaboration may be possible towards the end of 2008.