



Strategic Directions for PRIA (2013- 2016)

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Mission:

To promote citizen participation and democratic governance---*making democracy work for all*

Strategy:

PRIA's strategy is built on an understanding of what it takes to make democracy promote social justice, equity and dignity for all citizens, especially the socially excluded and economically marginalized citizens and communities.

Making democracy work for all requires simultaneous efforts at democratizing society and democratizing governance, at the heart of which is active and informed citizen participation.

PRIA's *theory of change* comprises of three inter-related elements:

- Mobilization and collectivization of citizens prepares them in becoming informed and active
- Creating coalitions of counter-veiling power such that pressure to energise and reform governance is generated
- Influencing governance institutions to become accountable to their mandates and citizens

PRIA's Roles:

Building on its perspective that *Knowledge is Power*, PRIA plays following sets of strategic roles in realizing its mission:

- support enhancement of knowledge and capacities of citizens to become active
- facilitate building of collectives and associations of citizens so that their voice is amplified
- enable civil society partnerships and alliances to work towards engaging governance institutions and structures
- convene multi-stakeholder dialogues between citizens and governance institutions
- promote advocacy of policies, practices and procedures which support citizen participation

Key Focus:

1. Following *thrust areas* are the key focus of PRIA's work in this period:

- Violence against Women, including Sexual Harassment at Workplaces (within a gender mainstreaming perspective)

Initial focus is to undertake the following:

- i) campaign for sensitization of both girls and boys in high schools and colleges, especially in medium size towns and educational hubs like Sonapat*
- ii) scaling-up of SJC-based efforts for addressing violence against dalit women*

iii) target public and private sector organisations for SHW compliance with regulation

- Urban Poverty and Governance

Initial focus is to undertake the following:

- i) Demonstrate participation of urban poor in making improvements in their contexts through a few intensive pilots*
- ii) Highlight the contributions of the poor in the lives of the non-poor and the inevitable nature of informality in cities*
- iii) Campaign towards strengthening accountable urban governance, especially in small and medium towns*

- Decentralised governance, planning and delivery of basic services (primary health care, drinking water)

Initial focus on the following:

- i) Campaign to strengthen DPCs as constitutional mechanisms for decentralized planning*
- ii) Using Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand experiences to scale-up policy reforms for decentralized planning and delivery of water involving panchayats*
- iii) Demonstrate value-addition of decentralized health planning, including the private providers*

- Changing roles, new challenges and capacities of civil society, including engaging with new citizen movements

Initial focus on the following:

- i) Promoting capacities in engaging with trans-national roles of emerging economies (like India)*
- ii) Facilitating conversations and engagements between civil society and the private sector (especially in light of new policies on CSR)*
- iii) Demonstrating connections across multiple actors in civil society working to promote democratic governance in India and beyond*

In addition, PRIA may undertake some targeted projects that may advance work on related thrust areas through focus on methodologies of participatory planning, participatory training, participatory monitoring and evaluation; such projects must aim to strengthen capacities of local institutions to undertake similar programmes.

2. Its overall goal is to enable *excluded* citizens to be able to access their rights and have a voice on matters that affect their lives; its major focus is on **adolescent girls and women**, including those from tribal, scheduled caste and minority communities.
3. In today's context, government policies and programmes as well as private business influence the lives of the excluded citizens; hence engagement with *both public and private* authorities would need to be carried out.

4. With growing urbanization and a larger proportion of population comprising of youth, PRIA's interventions need to focus on supporting the *urban youth and their associations* to access their rights and have a voice on matters that affect their lives.
5. In undertaking engagement with public authorities, one focus is to make *local governance institutions* work for the excluded citizens in rural and urban areas. In order to make local governance institutions responsive and accountable, engagements with higher tiers of governance—provincial, national, regional and global—are kept in sight.
6. In light of the present realities, many public agencies are expected to deliver basic services to the citizens, especially the excluded; private business also delivers similar services, sometimes on its own and sometimes in partnership with the government. PRIA's focus now includes making *both public and private sector service providers responsive and accountable to citizens*.
7. Many governance institutions in public sphere have been mandated to serve the citizens; these include police and judiciary, legislatures and parliaments, commissions and committees. In many democracies, such institutions become passive or deviate from their mandates. PRIA focuses on making them responsive and accountable to work on their *designated mandates*, as appropriate to current realities.
8. In addition, issues of social justice, dignity and well-being also require engaging with traditional structures, leadership, norms and practices in society itself. PRIA needs to focus on *democratizing society* itself.

Ways of Working:

Over the past thirty years, PRIA has evolved some effective ways of working towards its mission:

1. The key value-addition of PRIA's role is to *enable micro-macro and macro-micro linkages* in ways that create strong support for influencing various actors. Therefore, PRIA works at the grass-roots level to evolve innovations that need to be scaled-up provincially, nationally and globally.
2. Therefore, PRIA's interventions may begin at any level (micro or macro), but must expand to include *influencing of actors and institutions* at all levels.
3. In so doing, developing and *nurturing relationships* with grassroots actors, as well as relevant governance actors, is critical to PRIA's way of working. *Valuing their knowledge* and contributions is PRIA's way of doing so.
4. While *capacity development is at the heart* of PRIA's work, its forms and tools may need to be adapted more appropriately. Distance education, field exposures, use of Information Technology and social media and other blended approaches to learning are critical elements of such capacity building.

5. The knowledge generation role of PRIA is anchored in its *participatory research* perspective; systematization of practical knowledge needs greater integration in its activities and programmes. Dissemination of this knowledge through existing web-sites and portal must be an integral element of all programmes.
6. Resource mobilization needs to be carried out in ways that supports advancement of its own mission; scale of impact is not through size of funds, but nature of its convening and linkage strategy. *New sources of funding*, as well as new ways of partnering with resource- providers are critical to this stage of PRIA.
7. Trans-national programmes need to be based on the principles of *south-south cooperation*: mutual interest, shared knowledge and resources, value-addition in India as well. PRIA's involvement in regional and global coalitions and consortiums is important to influence governance institutions and to advance its own learning. Its transnational programmes, therefore, should explicitly aim to share its practical knowledge with actors in other contexts, and to learn from practices and innovations from them.
8. While some sites in India may be focused upon for deeper intervention geographically, it is important that PRIA's knowledge about those issues remains *nationally and internationally relevant*; hence, continued programming efforts that link up select field interventions with national realities must be made.
9. As PRIA's education programmes through ODL have begun to support professional capacity-building of practitioners, this is integrated in different thrust areas and programmes. *Distance education is seen as a vehicle to advance knowledge dissemination and capacity building roles of PRIA.*

Operational Steps:

1. Each of the above thematic thrust areas need to be developed further in ways that gain substantial traction over the next few years, in India and transnationally. Next phase of development of each of the above thrust areas should have the following necessary ingredients:
 - Strengthen/build partnerships with other civil society organisations relevant to the thrust area
 - Focus intensive work on thrust areas in specific socio-geographies
 - Find a way to involve some private sector actors whose interests may intersect the thrust area
 - Engage certain media actors as partners in an ongoing manner in that thrust area
 - Produce educational programmes in blended modes on each thrust area
 - Utilise web, internet & social media in a vigorous manner for informing, mobilizing, campaigning
 - Build/strengthen academic partnerships for participatory research and teaching (use UNESCO Chair strategically)
 - Strengthen partnerships with existing donors to bring in additional resource-providers in the thrust area

2. Given the over-lapping and cross-cutting nature of these thrust areas, and PRIA's overall strategy as enumerated above, a dynamic model of internal organization is required. Its basis should be:
 - Knowledge of issues, debates and developments in the thrust area
 - Nurturing relationships with diverse constituencies & actors
 - Capacities for both field work (mobilizing, networking, data-collection) and desk work (systematizing, writing, communicating)
 - Project management—planning, budgeting, coordinating, reporting

This matrix approach to organizing programme work is critical in the present dynamic environment; flexibility in re-organising in response to new opportunities is required.

PRIA's team needs to have deeper and current knowledge of selected thrust areas, yet need to use their professional capacity to work with others in a collaborative manner, respecting others' knowledge and listening to their perspectives.

3. Therefore, the revised structure should comprise of a core team in each of the above thrust areas. Each thrust area develops programmes that have national/transnational dimensions, and field linkages.
4. Distance Education is organised as a dedicated team, with each thrust area responsible for contributions (technical and financial) to developing, supporting and promoting specific educational programmes.
5. Communication and IT, along with library, is so organised as to become a part of knowledge services, integrated into every programme and thrust area. All IT instruments and web-sites are integrated into a coherent service, which is managed internally as a core function of all activities of PRIA. The use of websites for dissemination, education and campaigning is the responsibility of each project leaders and thrust area team.

Resourcing:

Finding flexible resources for the kind of work PRIA does is becoming a challenge; this is borne out in various trends globally. Resources for undertaking programmes that promote citizen participation, democratic governance and accountability in India are not easily accessible. PRIA's own professional and ethical underpinnings do not permit it to access such government funds which entail quality compromises and corruption.

PRIA is now engaging with new donors – individual and Institutional- to demonstrate the value of its contributions so that its efforts can be supported.

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