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Participatory Research in Asia

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# PRIA's Engagements with Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)

## Initiatives in Community Based Research (CBR)

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# Bridging the Gap Between the Researcher and the Community: PRIA's Engagements in Promoting Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Educational Institutions

**Abstract:** *PRIA has engaged with academia in a multitude of interventions, bringing community and practitioner knowledge into the portals of traditional research institutions and processes. By doing this, PRIA has helped Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) realize their social responsibility towards a community's needs and aspirations. This document traces PRIA's work in promoting community engagement within HEIs in India and beyond. The experience, garnered over three decades, have been classified into six categories to highlight the different forms PRIA's interventions as a facilitator have taken to build bridges between the world of formal research, the practitioner knowledge of civil society actors and the experiential knowledge of local communities. The experiences discussed in this paper are not intended to be comprehensive; a few specific interventions are described under each category to illustrate the nature of the engagements fostered and the practices promoted.*

**Keywords:** Community based research, social responsibility, UNESCO Chair, higher educational institutions, community engagement, Rajesh Tandon, PRIA

## Introduction

Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) began in 1980 as a network of practitioners involved in awareness generation, community organizing and adult education to empower the poor and marginalized. Participatory Research (PR), the forte of PRIA's work, is a methodology that values experiential knowledge and practitioner's wisdom in addition to the more formal knowledge available in academia and books. In order to bridge the divide between the world of practice and the world of research, PRIA undertakes a number of initiatives to promote engagement of institutions of higher education with civil society and local communities to foster knowledge generation and mutual learning.

Dr Rajesh Tandon's experience in bringing the world of practice and the world of academic research together found further support when he was appointed as UNESCO Co-Chair on Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education.<sup>1</sup> He was also appointed as a member of the sub-committee constituted by the Planning Commission of India to make recommendations on strengthening community

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the UNESCO Chair visit [www.unescochair-cbrsr.org](http://www.unescochair-cbrsr.org)

engagement in higher education for the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan.<sup>2</sup> The UNESCO Chair grows out of and supports UNESCO's global lead to play 'a key role in assisting countries to build knowledge societies'. Involvement in this initiative has been an extension of PRIA's efforts to practice and promote community based research in collaboration with Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).

PRIA's approach to promote community based research and social responsibility of HEIs can be classified under six inter-linked categories:

1. Linking 'formal' learning and the local community
2. Researching with the community
3. Sharing knowledge with the community
4. Designing new curriculum and courses
5. Involving local practitioners as teachers
6. Building capacities on Participatory Research in academia and influencing academic thinking

<sup>2</sup> Tandon, R. (2014). *Fostering Social Responsibility in Higher Education in India*. Available at: [http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/pdf/Fostering\\_Social\\_Responsibility.pdf](http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/pdf/Fostering_Social_Responsibility.pdf) (Accessed on 22 April 2014)

## CATEGORY I: Linking 'formal' learning and the local community

*In this approach, students and teachers apply the knowledge and skills learnt in classrooms to address the challenges in a chosen community to improve the lives of people in that community. This can be achieved through assisting in conducting field work for specific projects or 'adoption' of a specific village or slum in order to engage with the community.*

As a civil society organization, PRIA encourages students to undertake field work to understand the socio-economic conditions of communities, and to suggest solutions to everyday problems. PRIA's long-term presence and trust built in these communities facilitates the engagement. Participatory Research (PR) is emphasized as the cornerstone of the field work process. In the present system of teaching in most HEIs, students feel dis-empowered as the classroom style of teaching emphasizes what they don't know. When interacting with a community, they suddenly find use for their formal knowledge, thereby experiencing a sense of empowerment by having something meaningful to contribute to that community.

However, it is recognized that the transient nature and short-term duration of student engagement doesn't always result in concrete suggestions or contributions for the community. The process has been found to be far more empowering for the student than the community. Students learn far more from the local communities than they contribute.

### Survey to understand the status of birth and death registrations in municipalities

PRIA, in collaboration with MM College, Haryana, conducted a survey to capture the situation relating to registration of births and deaths in Haryana. National Service Scheme (NSS)<sup>3</sup> students of MM College were involved in a campaign to update voter's lists as well as conducted a survey on the status of birth and death registration in ward number 4 of Fatehabad Municipal Council, Haryana. A structured questionnaire was prepared to capture the related data of people aged between 0-20 years. Orientation was given to all NSS

<sup>3</sup> The National Service Scheme (NSS) is an Indian government sponsored public service program conducted by the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports. Popularly known as NSS, the scheme was launched in Gandhiji's centenary year, 1969, in 37 Universities involving 40,000 students with primary focus on the development of personality of students through community service. The efforts of NSS volunteers have been widely acclaimed by the community, universities, colleges and general public as they have been rendering selfless service to the community. The philosophy of the NSS is based on the belief that the welfare of an individual is ultimately dependent on the welfare of the society as a whole.

workers explaining the questionnaire. Information about the purpose of the survey was disseminated among the community through different means before the campaign was undertaken. Such action facilitated the process of conducting the survey over 4 days covering 620 households. The findings were shared with the concerned municipal officials.

This activity comprised 'service learning', which seeks to ensure 'learning with the community'. In this process, while providing the service (an extremely valuable one of updating voter's lists and of documenting the status of registration of births and deaths), the students gained both theoretical and practical learnings on data collection and conducting field surveys.

Specific engagement with Barkatullah University, Bhopal and HS Gaur University, Sagar was sought during the urban voter's list updation campaign. Independent studies to assess the campaign, the processes and its impacts were undertaken in the sample towns of Aastha, Iccahwar, Teekamgarh and Panna by researchers from the two universities.

### Student internships

PRIA encourages students to undertake research on practice-oriented issues by providing them opportunities in the form of internships and field placements. It also supports students who wish to do volunteer work in a community. It has encouraged overseas students interested in writing their dissertation on development related issues to undertake field visits to the areas where PRIA or its partners work.

As part of its Practice Research Engagement (PRE), PRIA discussed a long-term strategy with CENCORED, Patna (a regional support organization) for engaging students in action research and building perspectives on participation, field work and development issues. Students of rural development from Patna University and of popular education from Magadh Mahila College, Patna participated in these discussions.

Overseas students interested in writing their dissertation on development related issues are facilitated to undertake

field visits in areas where PRIA and its partners are working, along with support for their research and academic supervision. A student from Occident College, Chicago, USA conducted research on PR methods, looking in particular at the experiences of Kishori Panchayats in Bochanha block, Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

PRIA organized an eight-week internship programme as part of the Master's program at the Munk School of Global Affairs, Canada. The three-module program included two weeks of classroom orientation to understand development and research methodology, five weeks of data collection and field engagement in locations in Bihar and Haryana, and one week for students to consolidate their learnings. The research topics included dalit rights and needs, female foeticide and women's political empowerment.

PRIA has hosted student interns from a number of national universities/colleges, such as Delhi School of Social Work; Xavier Institute of Social Sciences (XISS), Ranchi; The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi; The Central University of Bihar; Institute for Technology & Management, Navi Mumbai; Jindal Global Law School, Sonapat; and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. International tie-ups in this regard include the University of Victoria (UVic), Canada; Calgary University, Canada; and The University of Liège, ISS, Belgium.

### Organization of 'field schools'

The first 'field school' was organized for the students of geography from the University of Victoria, Canada. The students were exposed to the geography of India and engaged with grassroots reality to learn about Indian approaches to governance and participatory development. The students visited Sonapat in Haryana, Rajaji National Park in Uttarakhand and Sariska National Park in Rajasthan, getting an opportunity to directly deal with a number of developmental issues at the local level, such as women's political empowerment, conservation, participatory models in protected area management, eco-development, innovative agricultural management and issues of water management.

## CATEGORY II: Researching with the community

*In this approach, various faculties and programs of HEIs devise joint research projects in partnership with communities. The community's own knowledge is integrated into the design and conduct of the research. New research by students and their teachers is initiated and as part of their academic requirement students complete their thesis/dissertation and research papers (which can later be published). During such interactions, the community's knowledge is systematized and integrated into the research. However, the greatest challenge in this initiative continues to be the mindsets in HEIs that negate community knowledge and approach research as an 'exclusive' enterprise that can be undertaken only through 'formal' research. The larger professional discourse on this aspect is yet to gain centre-stage in India.*

Given the nature of PRIA as an organization promoting PR, engagements related to joint research with the community has been the most common initiative. These partnerships involve several actors in addition

to PRIA and local communities. As an enabler of partnerships, PRIA facilitates linkages between HEIs and local communities to prepare for and undertake joint research. In taking such an enabler role, PRIA's

'bridging' nature proves to be very useful. PRIA is able to influence various departments and schools in HEIs to look at research as a joint enterprise with the community. As a civil society actor, PRIA has gained credibility amongst community-based organizations. Therefore, it is able to 'bridge' the divide between HEIs and communities. PRIA's important contribution in many such efforts has been to demonstrate the value of indigenous knowledge available in the community, and the need for a mutually supportive approach in research partnerships. As a consequence, the practice of community based research has gained certain acceptability in several HEIs in the country.

Many of these research partnerships had a long-term perspective, creating a body of knowledge based on grassroots experiences. Two such examples described here highlight this aspect. The twenty year timeframe of studies on occupational health and safety carried out by workers and unions in partnership with PRIA and premier research institutes like National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH), Ahmedabad and Industrial Toxicology Research Centre (ITRC), Lucknow resulted in giving visibility to workers' knowledge and demonstrated its validity in the scientific community.

A second set of more recent studies involved understanding the dynamics of dalit leadership in partnership with panchayats and Ambedkar Centres for Study of Social Inclusion. These studies recognized the practical knowledge of panchayat leaders and dalit community organizations as a basis for further conceptualizing the challenges faced by marginalized communities at the local level.

The partnership approach has also resulted in facilitating the emergence of institutional structures for engaged research in some HEIs. HNB Garhwal University in Uttarakhand is a case in point. The interface mechanism facilitated by PRIA decades ago continues to enable research agendas to be set jointly in consultation with local farmers.

PRIA developed international research partnerships which valued local community knowledge through the studies of nomadic tribes and Santhals carried out under the Development Research Centre (DRC) initiative of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Sussex. The methodology demonstrated the need for framing of analysis through the lens of indigenous knowledge and promoting the same.

### **Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) studies in association with various universities**

PRIA's journey of bringing practice and research together for citizen action began in the 1980s with PRIA's Centre for Occupational Health, which worked in conjunction with academic institutions in conducting various research studies. This also marked the first phase of PRIA's pursuit of Practice Research Engagement (PRE). Some of the studies were:

Survey of occupational health among the cement factories in Rajgangpur, Orissa, in association with Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya, Chitrakoot and Sundargarh Industrial Majdoor Union, Rajganjpur, Orissa<sup>4</sup>

This study saw enthusiastic participation by the *majdoor* (labour) union. The union undertook the responsibility of mobilizing the workers as well as following up with the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) and the state government with respect to the results of the study. This intensive study and its analysis was shared with the government, trade unions and other voluntary organizations with a view to improving health conditions in and around the factory. As a consequence of this study, report and workshop, significant follow up actions were initiated at the level of the state government as well as the Central Pollution Control Board, New Delhi.

Survey to evaluate the effects and assess the changes in working conditions of municipal workers employed in the dumping grounds of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Mumbai, Maharashtra, in association with College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan<sup>5</sup>

Fifty workers participated in the study, which addressed the problems faced by them. This study aimed at assessing the worker's perception and their understanding of their health problems. It also focussed on accidents and safety at the work site, about which not much information was available. This was done by surveying the workers and culling out their ideas about health issues at the workplace. This engagement with the workforce resulted in some key findings which indicated the poor condition of occupational health of construction workers at the workplace. This, as a result, opened avenues of discussion on this topic, while also inviting the attention of policy makers, medical professionals and social workers.

Another similar study was a study on the prevalence of silicosis among stone miners, in association with the School of Desert Sciences and SN Medical College, Rajasthan. The workers not only participated in the survey, but based on the findings of the study a number of follow-up actions were taken by them. These included filing for compensation and availing actual compensation. The findings were also published in the bulletin of the workers' unions to enhance their understanding of the situation and for future action.

### **Other programs focusing on occupational health issues**

Apart from research studies, PRIA has also engaged in disseminating knowledge on the topic of occupational

4 <http://www.pria.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2896-silicosis-among-refractory-workers-in-rajganjpur>

5 <http://www.pria.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2895-study-of-occupational-health-problems-of-construction-workers-in-new-bombay>

health and safety in association with academia. Some of these programs were:

- (a) A comprehensive training course on occupational health, in collaboration with NIOH, Ahmedabad, ITRC, Lucknow, University of Roorkee and University College of Medical Sciences, Delhi. This training course emerged as a useful platform for interaction between experts and grassroots groups. Twenty-five representatives from various trade unions, environment groups and NGOs participated.
- (b) Follow-up workshop to the study on 'HIV/AIDS as an Occupational Disease for the Medical Community', organized in association with Christian Medical College, Vellore), DISHA, Calcutta, and AITUC, Amritsar and Aurangabad. The participants included medical doctors, health care workers and experts. This initiative resulted in strengthening the network of like-minded doctors. Also, a popular booklet for health care workers (in Hindi, English, Malayalam and Marathi) and a manual for medical doctors was prepared and disseminated.

### **Studies on 'Citizenship, Participation & Democratic Governance', in collaboration with Association of Schools of Social Work (ASSWI)**

A number of research studies were undertaken with the Association of Schools of Social Work (ASSWI) on various aspects of participation. As a result of these efforts, much emphasis began to be placed on teaching participatory development. This marked the second phase of PRIA's work with respect to its pursuit of PRE.

The initiative of engaging with the schools of social work later culminated in the establishment of Regional Nodal Centres (RNCs) to work on and promote the theme of Citizenship, Participation and Democratic Governance. In all, five schools of social work collaborated with PRIA as RNCs.

- (i) Stella Maris College of Social Work, Chennai
- (ii) College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai
- (iii) Department of Social Work, Andhra University, Vishakhapatnam
- (iv) School of Social Work, Lucknow University, Lucknow
- (v) Department of Social Work, Viswa Bharati, Santiniketan (West Bengal)

These RNCs conducted various studies, such as:

- (a) Dalit leadership and governance in gram panchayats in Maharashtra
- (b) Water users' associations in Vishakhapatnam district
- (c) Exploring the evolution of Tagore's ideas of social work

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Sussex, facilitated the research and orientation programs among the RNCs.

### **Studies concerned with strengthening dalit leadership in panchayats**

PRIA realized that the effort of PRE remained incomplete until community engagement was promoted among other academic disciplines which mostly shy away from the world of practice. This endeavour to bring disciplines besides social work is reflected in the study 'Dalit Leadership in Panchayats'. A large number of academics from inter-related disciplines of political science, sociology and rural studies drawn from 17 academic institutions engaged in conducting the study in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kerala, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.

- (i) '*Dalit Leadership in Panchayats: A Study of Sirmour District, Himachal Pradesh*', in association with Department of Sociology, Himachal Pradesh University<sup>6</sup>

The engagement with the community that PRIA attempted to focus on and bring out through its pursuit of PRE is clearly visible here. The objectives of the study were, firstly, to understand the impact of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment on the leadership structure among dalits; second, to cull out the factors hindering and promoting the functioning of dalit leaders; and third, to make recommendations on what needed to be done. The methodology followed to achieve these objectives of the study was based on engagement with the people, which outlined their perceptions and ideas, in what was basically a fact finding and an exploratory empirical exercise.

The corresponding data was collected with the help of an interview schedule, divided into seven sections, which dealt with topics such as information of the panchayats, personal/social/economic/demographic profile of the dalit/non-dalit informant, information on caste based discrimination and political participation, functioning of panchayats and people's perceptions on Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The interviews also attempted to highlight information on development in the villages, and the role of dalits in it. In this way, through interacting with the dalit population in Sirmour district, with due care given to women's engagement, the study was able to come out with some significant findings and first-hand information with respect to the condition and position of dalit leadership in PRIs, and the factors facilitating and prohibiting the same.

- (ii) '*Functioning of Statutory Institutions (Human Rights and Scheduled Caste Commissions)*', in association with Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pria.org/index.php/blogs/pria-blog/item/2894-dalit-leadership-in-panchayats-as-study-of-district-sirmour-in-himachal-pradesh>

The objective of the study was to ensure social inclusion and institutional accountability. It was conducted in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. This study included state level consultations, which were held with dalit victims, members of statutory institutions, NGO members and the media to share and discuss the draft study report in order to review and get feedback on the recommendations made.

Another similar study conducted was the '*Study on Constitutional Institutions: The State Commission for Scheduled Castes & State Commission for Women*', in association with Centre for Dalit Studies, Jaipur, Rajasthan.

(iii) *Study on 'Citizen Rights and Environmental Sustainability', in association with Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Sussex*

Development Research Centre (DRC) on Citizenship, Participation & Accountability was a research partnership based at IDS, Sussex, UK, which brought together research institutions and practice based civil society groups from India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and Nigeria from the South and UK from the North. The DRC project explored the issue of participation, exclusion and marginalization within the framework of rights and citizenship.

PRIA believes that the role of people's participation in development is crucial. It allows the people and the community to understand the inevitability of interdependence and the importance of a peace culture rather than a war culture. PRIA also believes that people's participation has been the foundation of democratic practice, and recognizes citizens as 'makers and shapers', rather than 'users and choosers', of interventions and services designed by others. Therefore, as part of DRC, PRIA conducted research studies related to various aspects of citizenship, participation and accountability.

The broad approach underpinning all such studies was that of participatory research. Emphasis was on doing research with the people rather than on or for the people, with the purpose of undertaking/promoting any action or intervention in the future. This is based on the understanding that each individual is capable of critical reflection and analysis, and this knowledge is both essential and valuable in any research, educational or developmental intervention. As such, knowledge is generated through a process of collective investigation and analysis and there is a deliberate effort to promote future action.

The DRC studies conducted by PRIA include:

(i) Study on Meanings and Identities of Citizenship: Study on Santal Tribals in Jharkhand<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pria.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2890-study-on-santal-tribals-in-jharkhand>

(ii) Study on Nomads: The Marginalized Citizens<sup>8</sup>

(iii) Study on Linkages, Conflicts and Dynamics: Institutional Spaces and Participation in Local Forest Management<sup>9</sup>

(iv) Study on Multi-Party Accountability for Environmentally Sustainable Industrial Development: The Challenge of Active Citizenship – A Study of Stakeholders in Lote-Parshuram Industrial Chemical Belt, Chiplun, Maharashtra<sup>10</sup>

(v) Study on Multi-Party Accountability for Environmentally Sustainable Industrial Development: The Challenge of Active Citizenship – A Study of Stakeholders in Simhadri Thermal Power Project, Parvada, Vishakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh<sup>11</sup>

PRIA's belief is that the generation of study and knowledge about the marginalized and poor must begin at the source. It should reflect their felt needs and priorities, and must be based on their perception about their condition, their experiences regarding citizenship status, their concerns regarding inclusion of their rights in the development agenda, and their expectations of the changes that ought to take place.

In the DRC studies, citizenship was conceptualized as a multidimensional (legal-constitutional-political and as well as social and cultural) experience of the people. The study with the Santhal tribals in Jharkhand explored the understanding and experience of Santhals about their citizenship identities and citizen rights. It was undertaken in seven villages of Dumka district in the state of Jharkhand. The focus was on understanding the issue of citizenship from the vantage point of the Santhals, in an intensive and an actor-centric mode. Efforts were made to elicit their views about themselves as citizens and their relationship with the state, as well as to understand the issue as they experience and express it. As the concept of citizenship was abstract for the Santhal community, issues like livelihood, education, health facilities, infrastructure, etc., helped to provide an entry point for discussions and dialogues. Therefore, within the broad framework of PR, a number of methods were used for data collection, such as, observation, transect walk, group discussions, dialogues, semi-structured interviews and oral history.

The study on citizenship status of nomads in Alwar district of Rajasthan included their mobilization for articulating their claim for civil rights. The key

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.pria.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2891-nomads-the-marginalized-citizens-drc-report-1>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.pria.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2889-institutional-spaces-and-participation-in-local-forest-management-in-uttaranchal>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.pria.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2887-a-study-of-stakeholders-in-the-lote-parshuram-chemical-industrial-belt-chiplun-maharashtra>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.pria.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2888-a-study-of-stakeholders-in-the-simhadri-thermal-power-project-parvada-visakhapatnam-district-andhra-pradesh-drc-report-5>

findings of the study thus focused on the nomad's vocalization of, firstly, their problems and priorities in inter-related contexts of land, shelter, livelihood, rights and entitlements, and secondly, their interactions with institutions, both state and civil society, in accessing their resources and opportunities. The study used PR methods such as collective research, critical review of history, oral and visual creation of knowledge. Group discussions, community drawing and mapping were some of the simple, yet knowledge building, exercises used where both the researcher and the nomads mutually engaged in action and enquiry. It also acted as a conscientization tool which provided unique insights into the complexity and diversity of marginalized citizenship.

### **Study on 'Status of Primary Education and Scheduled Castes in Five Districts of Haryana', in association with Dr Ambedkar Study Centre, Kurukshetra University**

As part of a larger initiative of building capacities of the youth, particularly girls, along with engaging in community based research, PRIA engaged with Dr Ambedkar Study Centre, Kurukshetra University to use the tool of PR as a platform for ushering social change. Twelve young Scheduled Caste (SC) women (coming from marginalized sections of society) aged between 18 and 25 years (most studying in colleges, others working in community-based organizations) were encouraged to come forward and actively undertake this participatory study. The young girls not only conducted the study but also analyzed the findings with the help of professors of the university and PRIA facilitators.

This initiative helped the young girls develop a clear and broad understanding of dalit issues. The study was designed to understand and analyse the challenges faced by SC children in continuing their education, identify major reasons for their drop out and give suggestions for improving the educational status of SCs. The girls were engaged in research and policy planning so that they could play a more meaningful role at the local level in future. The need for engaging young students in research emerged from one of the training workshops where these girls showed an inclination towards understanding the causes of educational exclusion of dalits in their area.

To get a broader perspective, the researchers chose to interview development actors (school authorities and *sarpanches* [village heads] and even the recipients of developmental initiatives), SC drop out students and their parents. To do so, they were given training and hand-holding support on data collection tools like Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), problem tree, social mapping, case study and interview schedules. They were also provided training on data analysis and report writing. This initiative not only helped the girls in generating their own knowledge about the existing practices of social discrimination in their society but also motivated them to challenge some of them. The academic institutions involved in the process found deeper meaning in their role of bringing issues

that could influence policy dialogues and outcomes, particularly for SCs.

### **Gender based studies**

Work on gender based issues has been a hallmark of PRIA's work. The work on gender has assumed multiple forms, ranging from association in research studies in collaboration with universities, to organizing and facilitating workshops, working on violence against women and against sexual harassment at the workplace, to designing distance education courses.

(i) *Study on 'Adult Education and Livelihood: Women as Change Agents', undertaken as part of research project, in collaboration with DVV<sup>12</sup>*

The study explored the impact of educational practices on women's collectives in terms of their ability to gain control over economic, social and political resources. The research was carried out with women SHGs in Medak district, Andhra Pradesh; Uttarkashi district in Uttaranchal; and Kasargod district in Kerala. Associating with local civil society organizations facilitated access to different SHGs. As part of the methodology of the study, the tools of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews were used to understand the impact of various factors on women, which emerged from their personal perspectives itself.

As a result of this participatory initiative, it emerged that in Andhra Pradesh the women's group received basic literacy skills and training in livelihood enhancement. The women's group in Uttaranchal received substantial formal training in entrepreneurship skills, such as marketing, account keeping, etc. The women's collectives in Kerala, formed primarily for savings and credit purposes, received extensive training on enterprise development, leadership skills, decision making, financial management, loaning, etc.

The findings of the study suggested that such women collectives, when empowered with information, skill and awareness, are able to exercise independent agency and challenge set power relations. Such changes are linked to their level of participation in the program, and includes an improved sense of self independence, enhanced social position, increased participation in household decision making, bank accounts and land in their own names, along with an enhanced level of political and community activity. These changes were seen as challenging set social norms and being truly transformative.

(ii) *Study on 'Women's Leadership: Towards Gender Mainstreaming in Governance', in association with the Centre for Women's Studies, Andhra University, Vishakhapatnam<sup>13</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.pria.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2893-adult-education-and-livelihood-women-as-agents-of-change>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.pria.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2897-women-s-leadership-towards-gender-mainstreaming-in-governance>

This study highlighted the status of women elected representatives in PRIs and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Apart from this, the study also focused on issues like proxy system and decision making roles played by women. The study broadly aimed to understand the factors conducive to creating gender sensitive local self-governance institutions in both rural and urban areas where both women and men feel a mutual sense of comfort and respect for each other. The study specifically analyzed women leadership in local self-governance institutions.

Based on PR methods, the study captured 'other's perceptions' through purposive samples – six women elected representatives were taken from five women headed panchayats in Padmanabha mandal, while ten women representatives from Vishakhapatnam and Anapalli were selected for representation of ULBs, along with male elected members and male and female family members. Case study research was used to study and analyze women leadership roles in institutions of local governance.

While the women elected represented are dynamic, innovative and constructive in participation, helping

the poor in general and their women colleagues in particular to enhance the functioning of gram panchayats/ULBs, the study revealed that most women elected representatives do not have any previous experience in politics and have low awareness about rural and urban development/administration affairs. They are also dependent on and dominated by vice-presidents, husbands, sons and male family members or others for planning and executing the powers of local self-governance. Therefore some key areas of concern highlighted by the study to improve women's participation in governance included increased understanding and clarity about panchayat structures, providing them with support services, education and training, along with capacity building.

'Gender & Participation', conducted in association with the Department of Sociology, Utkal University, Odisha, made the conceptual innovation of 'absent spaces', i.e., institutional spaces created by the state which do not get populated by women due to various reasons, such as entrenched patriarchy, caste hierarchies, feudalism, etc.

## CATEGORY III: Sharing knowledge with the community

*The knowledge available with students and teachers in various disciplines is made available to the local community to realize its developmental aspirations, secure its entitlements and claim its rights from various public and private agencies. These can take the forms of enumerations, surveys, camps, trainings, learning manuals/films, maps, study reports, public hearings, policy briefs, and engagement with urban homeless shelters, teaching and health services in poor communities, legal aid clinics for under-privileged, etc.*

PRIA's approach to empowerment is based on the process of learning with the community, where sharing new knowledge is a core focus. As part of PRIA's engagements to link HEIs with communities, most HEIs share their own expertise with communities.

One particular initiative to bring practitioners and academics together was the convening of five annual conferences in partnership with different HEIs in the country. The presentation of papers jointly by practitioners and academics led to improved knowledge sharing between them. It further created an enabling environment for knowledge sharing to be meaningful from the point-of-view of the community.

Creating learning relationships for knowledge sharing to be meaningful has been the biggest challenge faced by PRIA in such initiatives. Most HEIs operate in languages and concepts that make knowledge sharing difficult with local communities. PRIA has not only acted as an interpreter/translator on certain occasions, it has also nudged HEIs to look at their knowledge dissemination activities from the eyes of the communities. The recent involvement of two universities in Sonapat, Haryana with local women

leaders to look at legal and institutional mechanisms to address violence against women is one such interesting collaboration.

### Citizenship and Governance Conferences

Since its inception PRIA has been a strong advocator and knowledge disseminator of concepts and issues concerning citizenship, participation, civil society and governance. For this purpose, PRIA has collaborated widely with academia to organize national and international conferences on 'Citizenship and Governance'. These conferences were a part of the third phase of PRIA's pursuit of PRE.

In 2004-05, four regional seminars on Citizenship and Governance were organized. They were based on Marginalized Leadership and Governance; Participatory Governance; Citizens, Civil Society Organizations and Governance; and State of Urban Governance and Role of Civil Society. Two seminars were also organized at the local level at Karauli, Rajasthan and Deogarh, Jharkhand, to discuss the issues of citizenship and

governance in the local context. The discussions were taken onto the regional seminars held at Jaipur and Jamshedpur, respectively.

PRIA also helped organized five international events on Citizenship and Governance across the country in collaboration with different universities.

Such events are particularly helpful in identifying both researchers and practitioners who are interested in forging collaborative partnerships for research partnership both with PRIA and with each other. These events have also helped in reaching out to a large number of students in universities and academic institutions to influence their thinking on contemporary issues of development, participation, citizen engagement, governance, as well as making them interested in PR research methodology as a viable tool for social science research.

*(i) International Conference on 'Citizenship and Governance: Issues of Identity, Inclusion and Voice', at New Delhi*

In this conference, 130 participants from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Uganda and UK, representing academia, practice based institutions, government and industry came together. They deliberated on issues pertaining to social and political exclusion of the marginalized and the challenges inherent in the emergence of leadership of the weaker sections in the process of governance. Other issues which were discussed included barriers in actualizing citizenship by marginalized sections and various ways through which citizen engagement takes place to influence governance.

The discussions also revealed that the legitimate place and role of civil society actors in a democratic polity is not to pose an alternative to the state, but to conscientize people for action and engagement to reform the state. The conference focused on research-practice engagement, that is, synchronization between knowledge production and putting that knowledge into practice, and how this can promote citizen action in governance.

*(ii) International Conference on 'Citizenship and Governance: State, Civil Society and Citizens: Revisiting the Relationship', in collaboration with Osmania University, Hyderabad*

Thematically, the event focused primarily on two sets of issues: firstly, the methodological issues pertaining to PR, and secondly, the conceptual and real life understanding of the issues of citizenship, citizen participation, democracy and governance. The event was significant not only for bringing practitioners and researchers together on a common platform to reflect on these issues, which are of interest to both, but the mutual engagement also proved immensely helpful in enhancing their understanding of such issues. The academics discussed the limitations of PR in large-

scale quantitative studies. The practitioners presented a real life case of poor people living in slums using the simple questionnaire method of enumeration to develop their own census, which until then had not been done for their slums. Micro experiences of practitioners were put into macro theoretical perspective.

*(iii) International Conference on 'Citizenship and Governance: Participation, Learning and Social Transformation: Re-examining Rhetoric, Action and Impact', at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi*

Realizing that conferences organized in the main academic centres in India, where discussions are held primarily in the English language, do not get enough participation from academics and researchers based in regional universities where the medium of teaching and writing is often Hindi, it was decided to hold a conference in Varanasi which is a traditional centre of learning and located in the Hindi speaking region. The conference was bilingual (Hindi and English); both languages were used to extend participation. It was attended by academics and practitioners from India as well as overseas. The issues and concerns which academics, researchers, students, NGO practitioners and activists brought to the table for discussion centred on:

- The merits of participation in a democratic set up
- Gendered issues which need to be addressed if governance has to turn its focus towards the marginalized sections
- The cultural dimensions which have implications for empowerment and participation
- That civil society and social movements offer learnings regarding participation and democracy
- The locale and dynamisms of citizenship, which have implications for participation by marginalized sections.

*(iv) International Conference on 'Citizenship and Governance: Methodologies for Change Used in Contemporary Times to Impact on Development and Democracy', at Harish Chandra Mathur Rajasthan Institute of Public Administration (HCM-RIPA), Jaipur, and University of Victoria, Canada*

This conference focused on mobilization in the form of social movements, educational inputs to individuals and groups in the form of training, and collectivization of individuals and groups in their attempts to promote change. At times, people get self-organized on their own; at other times, individuals/organizations have to act as catalysts in mobilizing people; and, occasionally, the state, through its projects and institutions, promotes change. Methodologies directed towards change could have their locus at the grassroots, at the provincial level, at the national, and even the global level. The spheres where change is initiated appear

interconnected, that is, for impacting change at the grassroots level, policy change at the national and global levels is required. Practice has contributed to tremendous innovations in such methodologies for change; knowledge and participation have embedded these innovations. The conference aimed at sharing the experiences, analysis and debates on such methodologies for change. Discussions were held along the following themes:

- Politics of knowledge construction: whose perspectives set the agenda
- Researching subaltern citizenship: view of the world from below
- Popular knowledge: source for change or perpetuation of dogma
- Indigenous knowledge: promoting participation or commercialization
- Spheres of governance: critical action or mouthing slogans
- Researching the communities: politics or ethics

(v) *International conference on Citizenship and Governance, at North Bengal University (NBU), Siliguri, West Bengal*

The focus of this conference was social inclusion. Nearly 100 participants, primarily from West Bengal, attended the conference, where 49 papers were presented.

### **Campaign aimed at Addressing Violence Against Women, in collaboration with Jindal Global Law School and Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, Sonapat, Haryana**

PRIA's interventions in Sonapat, Haryana, aimed at addressing violence against women, include a campaign, *Kadam Badhao Abhiyaan*. The initiative has seen active participation of students from two robust local universities – Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (the first university for women in North India) and Jindal Global Law School. Students engage with the community through a direct interface strategized and executed by a core group comprising university students and non-students from the community. This core group is responsible for strategizing, designing and implementing the campaign on the ground.

This interface between the community and the students has facilitated knowledge sharing between the two groups to a great extent. The students of Jindal Law School are able to share legal expertise with the community. The students of Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya have contributed by adopting a couple of villages in the vicinity of their college to provide all sorts of social services. The faculty of O.P. Jindal Global University has been used as resource persons for workshops held for the *kishori samuhs* (youth groups). PRIA facilitators have shared their experiences from the field through consultations and seminars held in O.P. Jindal Global University. In these workshops, community women have shared their personal experiences on violence against dalit women in their communities.

## **CATEGORY IV: Designing new curriculum and courses**

*In consultation with local communities, local students and community-based organizations, PRIA in collaboration with HEIs designs new curricula and courses that respond to specific needs of the community; such courses may be short-term certificates courses as well as Master's degrees. They are meant for community members, field based practitioners as well as students already formally enrolled in HEIs. The courses are made available online and can be undertaken by a student at their own pace.*

The thrust of PRIA's distance education and ODL teaching activities has been to prepare new learning opportunities for field based practitioners. The need for such courses was expressed by practitioners.

PRIA relies on the principles of participation and adult learning when using the ODL mode of teaching-learning. The principles recognize that each individual has a wealth of life experiences and knowledge, the relevant aspects of which must be tapped to enhance and give value to the learning. Other elements of ODL give importance to the fact that adults are goal oriented, relevancy oriented, practical and must be respected as equals in the process of learning creation.

PRIA partners with various HEIs to develop a range of courses, whose content is prepared by practitioners having field expertise in association with teachers and

researchers in HEIs possessing theoretical knowledge. The bulk of the practical knowledge for these courses comes from PRIA's own field experiences. These courses present a perfect mix of knowledge of theory and practice. The courses augment the knowledge of the learners from a theoretical point of view of the chosen subject area as well as learning from practical experiences of students from across the world. Apart from bringing the world of academics and practice together, the courses also validate and give value to community knowledge.

The courses gain a kind of 'validity' due to its association with a recognized HEI. A practitioner, who earlier possessed no 'formal' acknowledgement of his/her experience and practical knowledge, after doing a course offered by PRIA, gets a 'certification'

of his expertise, which helps realize his/her career aspirations.

PRIA has faced several challenges in launching and conducting these courses. First, PRIA is not seen as a formal education provider as it does not have degree-granting status. Secondly, learners are most comfortable in mixed-mode where a combination of online and face-to-face delivery is possible. Diverse physical locations of learners make it very difficult to organize such face-to-face opportunities for all. However, PRIA is the first civil society organization to be able to utilize state-of-the-art Moodle technology in delivering practitioner oriented learning opportunities. These courses have been used by practitioners abroad who find them equally meaningful.

Examples of some courses include:

- Certificate Course in International Perspectives in Participatory Research and Evaluation; diploma course in Education & Development, program on International Perspectives in Participatory
- Research and Evaluation, developed in association with the University of Victoria (UVic), Canada.
- Diploma course on Participatory Development, and a distance education postgraduate program on Women and Gender, developed in association with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi
- Certificate Course on International Perspectives on Citizenship, Democracy and Accountability, developed in association with Citizenship DRC and Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex
- Master's course on Development Management and Social Communication, in association with Kushabhau Thakre University of Journalism and Mass Communication
- Appreciation Course on Women's Participation towards Political Empowerment and Leadership (WPEL)

## CATEGORY V: Involving local practitioners as teachers

*Local community elders, women leaders, tribals and civil society practitioners have enormous practical knowledge on a wide variety of issues – from agriculture and forestry to child-rearing, micro-planning and project management. This expertise can be tapped by inviting such practitioners inside the HEI to co-teach courses both in the classroom and in the field. Such instructors should be duly recognized, compensated and respected for their knowledge.*

PRIA staff has been regular faculty in various colleges and universities around the country. This was possible as PRIA's practical knowledge is seen as invaluable. However, it has been difficult to get local community members (like women panchayat leaders, president of an SHG, president of a watershed committee or organization of forest workers, etc) to be invited by HEIs as teachers. Grassroots practitioners are largely seen as needing knowledge from HEIs, not as providers of knowledge as teachers in HEIs.

What has been even more challenging is the status bestowed to such practitioner teachers. They are invited as guest lecturers to address a class and paid an honorarium. They are not treated as regular faculty. HEIs have yet to create formal spaces for practitioners (without PhDs or past teaching experience) to be invited as full professors, on similar terms and conditions as 'regular' academics.

### **Collaboration with McGill University to build the capacities of voluntary sector leaders**

PRIA, in association with McGill University, Canada, facilitated a section of the international module of a program titled 'Transformation through Society: The Societal/Global Mindset'. The program aimed to strengthen the capacity of voluntary sector leaders to

understand, adapt and respond effectively to forces transforming Canadian society and the world. The participants were exposed to contrasting experiences of rural and urban site visits, academic presentations on a variety of elements of Indian life, culture and impacts of globalization, and dialogues with India voluntary sector leaders in four separate workshops.

### **Inter-professional Dialogues on Participatory Development and Participatory Research.**

With a view to encouraging local practitioners to play the role of teachers and facilitators on key issues, PRIA initiated a series of inter-professional dialogues on Participatory Research and Participatory Development. The dialogues aimed at developing an understanding of the concept and assessing its implications for social work education and practice. The national and regional inter-professional dialogues were organized in association with Association of Schools of Social Work (ASSWI) and Maharashtra Association of Social Work Educators (MASWE). These dialogues which took place between researchers and practitioners elaborated the conceptual framework of participatory development and research and detailed the implication of incorporating these themes into social work education and practice. Additionally, understanding participation from a development perspective was

facilitated by experienced practitioners, researchers and academicians who contributed to the dialogue as resource persons.

Another activity in this regard had been the joint initiative of promoting participatory forms of indigenous governance on natural resource issues. This was in

association with MPAMBO Multiversity, Uganda. The initiative aimed at developing concrete experiences in social inclusion and empowerment through the use of PR in creating collective spaces. As a part of this initiative, a network of mother tongue scholars was developed for promoting indigenous knowledge in indigenous governance.

## Category VI: Building capacities on participatory research in academia and influencing academic thinking

*PRIA attempts to influence academic thinking in the direction of participation and engagement by way of inclusion of participatory methodologies into traditional teaching pedagogy. Seminars organized in collaboration with universities on PR methodology have aimed at influencing university teaching to include PR as a viable method of social science research, along with augmenting capacities of academics with respect to the discipline of PR.*

In the third phase of PRIA's pursuit of PRE, seminars were organized between researchers and practitioners of PR. While researchers reflected more deeply on the concepts and methods, the field based experiences of the practitioners highlighted the richness and utility of PR.

Some programs organized to influence academic thinking towards PR included:

1. Workshop on participatory research, for the faculty and students of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai
2. Workshop on participatory research, organized in association with Women's Studies Research Centre, MS University, Baroda. Thirty-five participants, representing activists, field workers from development organizations, university researchers and postgraduate students working with women in Gujarat attended the workshop. The workshop aimed at enhancing understanding of the philosophy and principles of PR, and assisting

participants to incorporate the principles into their work. The workshop assisted the group to understand and explore the feminist dimension of PR and also provided an opportunity for dialogue between NGOs and researchers.

3. Seminar on participatory research, in association with Schools of Social Work, Vishakhapatnam.
4. Seminar on participatory research and the agenda of social transformation, in association with Punjab University, Chandigarh.
5. Seminar on relevance of participatory method for social sciences, organized in association with Andhra University, Hyderabad.
6. Seminar on participatory research methods, in association with Mysore University.
7. Seminar on participatory research and democratic governance, in association with HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar.

## Conclusion

PRIA's journey over the past three decades has been a story of promotion of PR in order to enhance the value of local practitioner knowledge. To some extent, HEIs have been influenced to accept this approach. As a civil society organization, PRIA has been able to pioneer such an approach due to a combination of its expertise drawn from practice and its commitment to PR. Its bridging character has enabled it to gain credibility with both HEIs and community-based organizations such that mutual engagement becomes possible. When national policy further evolves in this regard, PRIA may well be able to facilitate growing circles of such partnerships and engagements between HEIs and communities in more mutually beneficial and respectful manners.

PRIA's experiences in practising and promoting the idea of community based research teaches us several lessons.

1. Non-assignment of credits to 'service based learning' by university students often de-incentivizes them from undertaking such activities. They prefer to be engaged in projects that will help them fulfill their academic requirements, rather than undertaking 'non-rewarding' community service. As a result, the immense value of the learning that students derive from such work is also wholly disregarded. PRIA's efforts to encourage students to undertake community based projects need the

support of the university system to derive benefits to the student and the community.

2. The research studies which were pursued jointly with HEIs were designed to prove advantageous both from the point of view of knowledge generation as well as intervention for change. Various research publications emerging from the studies were helpful in disseminating the findings to a wider audience and serve as reading materials for the new courses introduced in the universities. However, institutional requirements such as, promotions, publications, etc, often restrict academics from engaging in any activity which may appear questionable in the eyes of their evaluators.
3. Activities such as the regional seminars and annual conferences have proved to be helpful in bringing together academics, students and practitioners on a common platform to discuss contemporary issues on participation, citizenship, civil society, governance and methodological issues related to PR. The collaboration with universities in hosting such workshops and seminars demonstrated on the one hand their willingness to accept new ideas brought in by the practice community and, on the other, the desire to introduce new methodologies in the university curriculum. Where such events were held without the collaboration of universities/ academic institutions, the outcome both in terms of participation and discussions suffered.
4. The biggest hurdle faced in organizing the conferences was the bureaucracy and rigid structure of the university system. Universities tend to be non-responsive to changes in promoting new ways of engagement, new methodologies to be adopted for research and teaching, and inclusion of new courses on contemporary subjects. Courses which have been traditionally designed to impart conventional social science curriculum do not allow for the teaching of new methodologies. For instance, despite the popularity and acceptance of PR as research methodology, few universities include it as a part of their curriculum. Also, when the new courses are designed, the reading material remains scant. HEIs never look beyond their universe to locate reading material, bypassing the material, cases and stories generated by the practice community. Influencing university teaching and research to incorporate PR into the syllabus requires influencing the academic community as well as addressing the systemic issues in universities.
5. Academic institutions, where the bulk of research work is conducted, are not very open to practitioners. Though there are cases of individual scholars having association with field based organizations, these are mostly individual initiatives and not necessarily promoted by the institution. Also, the strict requirement of degrees which shapes the eligibility criteria of professors and teachers constrains the opportunity for a seasoned practitioner, without a degree, to share her/his knowledge in the university.

These challenges can be addressed and community engagement of HEIs can be promoted and made robust in the following ways:

- Setting up of membership based network for community engagement. This alliance would be responsible for promoting ideas and the practice of community engagement throughout the country.
- Creation of a policy mechanism through the channel of an autonomous empowered committee at the level of the Planning Commission. This committee would be mandated to invite innovative proposals from HEIs, generate new funding schemes, and define policy elaborations and criteria for effective integration of the intended goals into the higher education system of the country.
- Allowing for more flexibility in curriculum design, along with reviewing the present pattern and inclusion of pedagogy that incorporates elements of community engagement in HEIs. They must be provided with suitable autonomy in designing their programs and courses, which are in coherence with the needs of society
- Credits for performing community engagement work in HEIs should be made a part of conducting evaluations. This should include credits for students, teachers and visiting faculty who engage in community based work.
- Need to establish educational institutions who engage in community based and common knowledge traditions. These institutions can focus on vital aspects of community health/cultures/ practices along with focusing on other aspects of community knowledge production, application and dissemination.

## Engagements At a Glance

S. No.	Category	Area of Engagement	Name of the Engagement
1	Category I	Urban Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey to understand the status of birth and death registrations in Fatehabad Municipal Council, Haryana</li> </ul>
		Internship Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student internships</li> <li>Organization of 'field schools'</li> </ul>
2	Category II	Occupational Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey of occupational health among the workers in cement factories in Rajgangpur, Orissa, in association with Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya, Chitrakoot &amp; Sundargarh Industrial Majdoor Union, Rajanpur, Orissa</li> <li>Survey to evaluate the effects and assess the changes in working conditions of municipal workers, in association with College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan</li> <li>Study on the prevalence of silicosis among stone miners, in association with the School of Desert Sciences and SN Medical College, Rajasthan</li> </ul>
		Citizenship, Participation and Democratic Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dalit leadership and governance in gram panchayats in Maharashtra</li> <li>Water users associations in Vishakhapatnam district</li> <li>Exploring the evolution of Tagore's ideas of social work</li> </ul>
		Strengthening Dalit Leadership in Panchayats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study on 'Dalit Leadership in Panchayats in Sirmaur district, Himachal Pradesh', in association with Department of Sociology, Himachal Pradesh University</li> <li>Study on 'Functioning of Statutory Institutions (Human Rights and Scheduled Caste Commissions)', in association with Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy,</li> <li>Study on 'Constitutional Institutions: The State Commission for Scheduled Castes &amp; State Commission for Women', in association with Centre for Dalit Studies, Jaipur, Rajasthan</li> </ul>
		Citizen Rights and Environmental Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study on Meanings and Identities of Citizenship: Study on Santhal Tribals in Jharkhand</li> <li>Research Study on Nomads: The Marginalized Citizens</li> <li>Study on Linkages, Conflicts and Dynamics: Institutional Spaces and Participation in Local Forest Management</li> <li>Study on Multi-Party Accountability for Environmentally Sustainable Industrial Development: The Challenge of Active Citizenship - A Study of Stakeholders in Lote-Parshuram Industrial Chemical Belt, Chiplun, Maharashtra</li> <li>Study on Multi-Party Accountability for Environmentally Sustainable Industrial Development: The Challenge of Active Citizenship – A Study of Stakeholders in Simhadri Thermal Power Project, Parvada, Vishakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh</li> </ul>
		Participatory Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Engaging Scheduled Caste Girls', joint initiative of PRIA and Dr Ambedkar Study Centre, Kurukshetra University, Haryana</li> </ul>
		Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study on 'Adult Education and Livelihood: Women as Change Agents', undertaken as part of research project, in collaboration with DVV</li> <li>Study on 'Women Elected Representatives in Local Self Governance', undertaken in association with the Centre for Women's Studies, Andhra University, Vishakhapatnam</li> <li>Study on 'Gender and Participation', in association with Department of Sociology, Utkal University, Odisha</li> </ul>

3	Category III	Annual Conferences and Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Citizenship and Governance Conferences</i></li> <li>• <i>Campaign aimed at 'Addressing Violence Against Women', in collaboration with Jindal Global Law School and Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, Sonapat, Haryana</i></li> </ul>
4	Category IV	Designing of Innovative Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Range of Online Distance Learning (ODL) courses run by PRIA</i></li> </ul>
5	Category V	Building Capacities of Practitioners to Play the Role of teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Collaboration with McGill University to build the capacities of voluntary sector leaders</i></li> <li>• <i>Inter-professional Dialogues on Participatory Development and Participatory Research.</i></li> </ul>
6	Category VI	Influencing Academic Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Seminars on Participatory Research organized in association with HEIs such as, TISS, Mumbai; MS University, Baroda; School of Social Work, Vishakhapatnam; Punjab University, etc.</i></li> </ul>

### **Acknowledgement**

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# Making democracy work for all

Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) is an international centre for learning and promotion of citizen participation and democratic governance. PRIA's professional expertise and practical insights are utilised by other civil society groups, NGOs, governments, donors, trade unions, private business and academic institutions around the world.

Since its inception in 1982, PRIA has embarked on a set of initiatives focusing on empowerment of the poor and excluded. PRIA has consistently worked on issues of citizens' access to rights and entitlements, such as basic services in health, education and water in rural and urban areas; women's literacy and livelihood; forest rights of tribals; prevention of land alienation and displacement; and workers' occupational health and safety. In all its interventions, PRIA emphasises gender mainstreaming institutionally and programmatically. Its perspectives on *participatory research* generate innovative participatory methodologies.

PRIA has promoted 'governance where people matter' to ensure that citizens and their collectives can access and claim their rights through engaging with governance institutions and processes. PRIA works on the *demand side* of development by facilitating active citizenship and empowering civil society. It works on the *supply side* by reforming institutions and their governance so that the entitlements of citizens are realised.

PRIA's vision of a desirable world is based on values of equity, justice, freedom, peace and solidarity with a philosophy – *Knowledge Is Power* – that takes forward all its actions.

PRIA's mission is to work towards the promotion of policies, institutions and capacities that strengthen citizen participation and promote democratic governance.

Building on its perspective that *Knowledge Is Power*, PRIA's strategy comprises:

- Supporting enhancement of knowledge and capacities of citizens to become active
- Facilitating building of collectives and associations of citizens so that their voice is amplified
- Enabling civil society partnerships and alliances to work towards engaging governance institutions and structures
- Convening multi-stakeholder dialogues between citizens and governance institutions in the public and private spheres
- Advocating for policies, practices and procedures which support citizen participation and democratic governance

PRIA operationalises its strategy through:

1. *Enabling micro-macro and macro-micro linkages* that create strong support for influencing various actors. Therefore, PRIA works at the grass-roots level to evolve innovations that are scaled-up provincially, nationally and globally.
2. *Developing and nurturing relationships* with grassroots actors and systematising practical knowledge.
3. Promoting *capacity building* through distance education, structured events, field exposure, and information dissemination.
4. Undertaking trans-national initiatives based on the principles of *south-south cooperation*.

The intensive field programmes of PRIA are currently located in the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand and Rajasthan. In addition, through its network of partners, these interventions extend throughout India. PRIA is also involved in programmes in countries like Afghanistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Philippines and Sri Lanka. In addition, its global interventions in distance education, capacity building and global advocacy reach out to practitioners, professionals and policy-makers around the world.



Knowledge is Power  
**PRIA**

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