KARWAAN 2.0
New Delhi
9th February, 2019
To commemorate PRIA's birthday celebrations, members from PRIA's past and present came together to enjoy an afternoon of memories, laughter, painting and good conversations. From a selfie booth to formulating complex opinions via artistic expression, it was an afternoon where we not only learnt about PRIA's work in the past and future but more importantly, the stories behind the people who made PRIA what it is now.

This was followed by lively discussions on PRIA’s plans for the future, with alumni weighing in on the areas which PRIA could improve upon or take into consideration. They had a lot of interesting points regarding PRIA’s current projects and the steps PRIA can take to improve and widen the impact of these projects.

**Working with Youth: YnD Campaign**

The first presentation was by Pooja Pandey and Deboshree Mohanta on the Youth n Democracy campaign, where they spoke about the outreach of the campaign and the impact
caused since the campaign was inaugurated in 2017. The major suggestions from the alumni were:

• **Improving outreach and communication**

Mr. Harsh Jaitli (CEO, Voluntary Action Network of India) spoke about how PRIA was one of the first organisations to realise the power of the youth when organising social change. To improve and build connections with the youth, PRIA must be able to connect with as many youth-affiliated institutions, which is where Mr. Jaitli offered VANI’s help. Ms. Neha spoke about how the campaign must focus on facilitating conversations on democracy in urban areas. The reason was that in semi-urban areas, while the scope of conducting such projects is far greater, the gender divide (among other issues) is also far larger. In bigger cities, due to greater exposure, young people see and experience gender differences to a much greater extent. Mr. Kaustuv Chakravarti added that PRIA should look at expanding into other South Asian countries as well, where due to their large youth populations, issues concerning the youth are as relevant as they are in India. He said, it would be interesting to compare and contrast the attitudes of the youth in different countries. Additionally, it is not necessary for PRIA to follow the same techniques which were used in India; they can be made location-specific.

• **Modernising the YnD campaign for the youth**

Ms Purvi Das and Ms. Namrata Jaitli spoke about the importance of PRIA’s history when they spoke of the different ways in which the YnD campaign can be improved. Both of them made the point, that the sheer diversity and foresight of PRIA’s past campaigns can be revisited and recontextualised for a young, modern, 21st century audience. Ms. Purvi along with Ms. Reena endorsed the idea of making the campaign more digital and mobile-friendly. For example, uploading all of PRIA’s knowledge resources on a mobile-based platform. Ms. Purvi also spoke about the importance of facilitating small, 1-on-1 interactions with the youth to better understand their stance on issues such as democracy. Mr. Vikas Khanna brought up an issue which the YnD campaign must be aware of: that the youth of today frequently consider their association with a campaign like YnD on the basis of “What’s in it for me?” This idea of personal investment is very strong with the youth and is always fluctuating and changing. Therefore, he added, sustaining the interest of the urban youth is a real issue and a challenge that YnD must be prepared to face. However, this can be solved somewhat by introducing dialogue which is beneficial to YnD as well as the youth. Ms. Bhavita Vaishnava
acknowledged YnD’s impact in creating participatory spaces for the youth, an area which in her opinion was slowly dying out. PRIA’s reputation in the development sector was that of conducting path-breaking work and the YnD campaign should take more advantage of this, which the YnD is already doing by conducting events such as Youthra. Bhavita also spoke about the need for providing counselling and mentorship to the youth as part of the campaign because the youth are looking for a sense of direction and PRIA must be there to provide it. Mrs. Kanak Tiwari elaborated on this vein of thought by talking about the need for the campaign to include and work with children and adolescents as well. By including them as early as possible, PRIA has the opportunity to implement the quality change that they are interested in providing to society.

Mr. Awasthi concluded the session by talking about the importance of improving the infrastructure to facilitate such dialogue that YnD is looking to conduct. Otherwise all of YnD’s efforts will be futile in the long run. “Andhere mein laath chalaane jaisa hai”. The YnD campaign must also look into how it can facilitate changes at home itself, since it is from there that real change stems from.

Knowledge Platform for Panchayats: Panchayat Hub
The second presentation of the day was conducted by Mr. Anshuman Karol on the Panchayat Hub project that PRIA has been working on for the last year. The purpose for the Panchayat Hub is to act as an online library for information pertaining to Panchayats and the Panchayati Raj system in India, with documents from not just PRIA but other civil society and research organisations as well. Major suggestions from the Alumni included:

- **Engaging with other stakeholders**

  Ms. Kanak Tiwari gave the example of the Indian Smart Cities Fellowship Program organised by the NIUA. The program was a success not only because the youth managed to gain genuine insights into urban planning and governance, but also because the NIUA was also able to engage with the youth and add a perspective towards the planning of Smart Cities which was hitherto missing. (Indian Smart Cities Fellowship Program, https://smartnet.niua.org/iscfip/index.php) She went on to add that bringing in the central and state governments as a partner can bolster the hub. Potential of the platform can be increased by organising Fellowship programs, awareness campaigns, etc. This also works in tandem with PRIA’s desire to engage with more youth.

- **Broadening the scope of the Hub to improve sustainability**

  A number of alumni spoke about the sustainability of the Hub. Would information on just Panchayats be adequate to sustain itself? Ms. Namrata Jaitli thought otherwise, as she said that the Hub was a good idea but efforts should be made to increase the various types of information on the Hub. For example, participatory planning is an important aspect of not just Panchayati Raj but systems of governance in general. However, since the Panchayat Hub in its current format does not have this information, organisations would tend to not access the Hub. She went on to add that having information on just Panchayats was too limiting and the scope must be widened. Mr. Vikas Khanna gave the example of ShikshaLokam, an organisation which has created a similar type of portal wherein they approached different NGOs across India and aggregated the various methods and ways in which these organisations would conduct their work. This type of portal is great because it was made with the intention of focusing on the demands of individuals and new organisations which are interested in doing good work but do not know how to go about it. The Hub should be
similarly focussed on what people want information on, rather than acting as a purely stand-alone library of information.

- **Interactive Component**

It’s important to add a separate interactive component to the hub. Mr. Satinder Singh Sahni and Ms. Reena proposed the creation of a “solution exchange” which is focussed on different types of local solutions and interventions, since the Panchayat system is, at the end of the day, a local system of governance. This will also ensure that PRIA’s body of work on urban governance does not go to waste as Mr. Harsh Jaitli pointed out. Ms. Reena suggested that PRIA should try and build relationships with the different “centres of excellence” from different states working on Panchayati Raj, which will add a sense of legitimacy as well as bolster people’s interaction and sustainability of the Hub.

A hearty lunch followed, where conversations not just about PRIA’s work but personal and professional lives were conducted, the air was decorated with hearty laughter and sparkling inter-personal interactions. And, last but not least, we also ate cake!