

**The Future We are In**





## THE FUTURES WE'RE IN

*The contemporary context has the remarkable feature of including the scenario of the next century. Major changes in the national and global context have already taken place. What appeared as part of the world of fantasy is already a reality. What appeared as the future is already with us. Three trends particularly characterise that present:*

- *The multi-faceted interconnectedness of human endeavour has now become truly global. The causes and consequences of continued poverty, growing conflicts and intensifying environmental degradation have become interdependent in the global and complex sense. This requires holistic and simultaneous understanding of forces that perpetuate poverty, cause visible as well as long-term environmental degradation and fuel widespread social disintegration and violent conflicts. It is increasingly important to recognise that strategies needed to deal with poverty eradication must take into account environmental and social linkages; the growing social conflicts have their roots in poverty, on the one hand, and control over ecological resources, on the other; environmental sustainability can only be ensured when poverty and social conflicts are addressed frontally.*


*Hence strategies to deal with poverty, conflicts and environmental degradation must reflect this reality.*

- *The **knowledge** society today is interwoven with electronics. The flow of information, ideas and messages is no longer dependent on the printed word. Widespread use and availability of electronic and visual media for flow*
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*of information and communication is becoming the dominant source of learning as well as manipulation. Enormous growth of accessible technology is rendering the theme of "Knowledge is Power" as both real and fantasy at the same time. While growing centralisation and globalisation of instruments of knowledge-production and dissemination are occurring, the "new" technology is also beginning to be used in support of decentralised decision-making and enhancing the control of ordinary citizens over their own destiny. People's knowledge can now be more effectively articulated as the basis of evolving alternative paradigms of sustainable development; new experiences and ideas can be easily accessible to people's groups and grass-roots organisations; interaction between local experiences and global expertise can be incorporated by those engaged in struggles for alternatives. Strategies to strengthen the **empowerment through learning** must contend with this reality.*

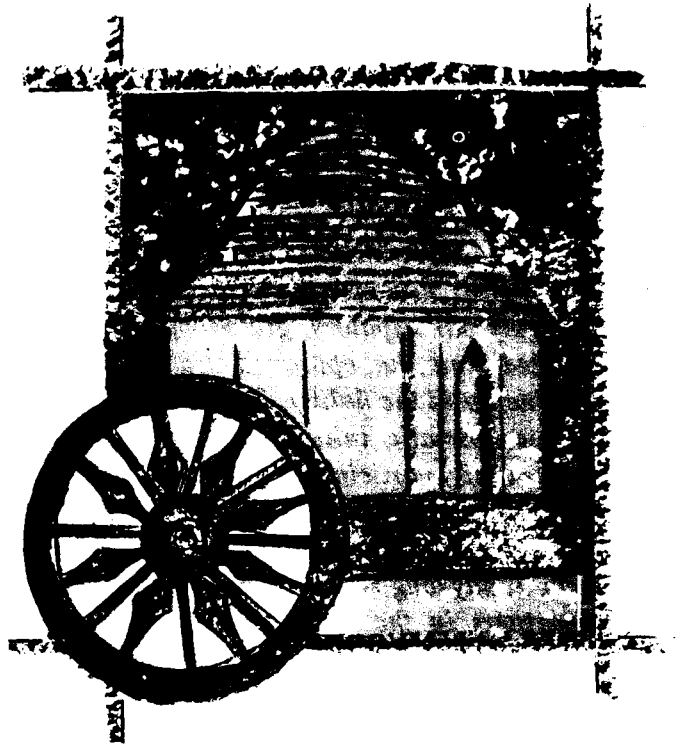
- *The reassertion of Civil Society in relation to the State and the Market is visible in the growing impact of people's organisations, voluntary development organisations, NGOs, social movements, networks, consumer groups, etc. There is increasing recognition of the contributions of these formations of the Civil Society in addressing the major problematiques of our times. At the same time, the material, intellectual and institutional bases of such formations require considerable revitalization. The voluntary development organisations, their networks and associations as well as various NGOs are facing increasing challenges in redefining their roles, strategies and contributions as institutions of the Civil Society at this juncture of history; the capacities of such institutions*



*is to be strengthened in such a variety of ways as to enhance the potential of their impact, on the one hand, and their long-term viability and sustainability, on the other. Thus requirements for focusing on the roles and capacities of these formations of the Civil Society to meet these future challenges become a responsibility of other institutions from within the sector of the Civil Society itself. Strategies to work towards such strengthening of capacity over a long-term must contend with this reality.*

### ***Renewal***

*The renewal of all institutions is a challenge in this context that PRIA must also face. This renewal must be rooted in its own unique history which emphasises participation, learning, empowerment, knowledge-as-power, micro-macro linkage and institutional development. It must also take cognizance of the trends described above. It can learn a few lessons from its history to construct its future; but that "Futures We're In" must be the basis of that renewal.*



# The History



## HISTORY

*PRIA's history of past twelve years can be divided into three phases of four years each. The key elements and characteristics of those phases are briefly enumerated here:*

***Phase One (1982-1986)** saw the emergence of several programme initiatives, largely based on direct consultation with its partner grass-roots organisations, and provided leadership by many of its founders. The philosophy and practice of Participatory Research as an appropriate methodology of people-centred development and social transformation got promoted with considerable promise during this period. It provided new practical possibilities for the promotion of truly participatory, grass-root development of the marginalised and the oppressed (in particular, the tribals, the women and the dalits). This period generated a number of programmatic initiatives in areas like adult education, community participation in primary health care, deforestation and land alienation, workers education and occupational health, participatory training, planning and evaluation etc. A day-long reflection with nearly forty of our then close partners in the country on February 7, 1986 marked the transition to the next phase.*

***Phase Two (1986-1989)** was marked by a growth in coverage and promotion of principles of Participatory Research in areas of Training, Planning and Evaluation. These methodological innovations were widely applied in such sectors as health, literacy, women's development, occupational health, natural resources, etc. The National Networking activities around issues of Voluntary Organisations/NGOs led to the emergence of PRIA as an institution*



*concerned with the promotion of the space for voluntary action (particularly in relation to the State) and the strengthening of the programmatic and institutional capacities of such organisations. This was reinforced by the Capacity-Building programmes in areas of management of NGOs. The roles and relevance of Support Organisations as part of the movement of NGOs got demonstrated and articulated by PRIA during this period. The contributions of support, intermediary and bridging institutions in promotion and incapacitation of voluntary organisations began to get established. The network of Participatory Research continued its regional and international functions of linking, informing and stimulating other grass-root initiatives and NGOs. PRIA's programmatic and institutional expansion in this period also included building its library, documentation and publishing activities.*

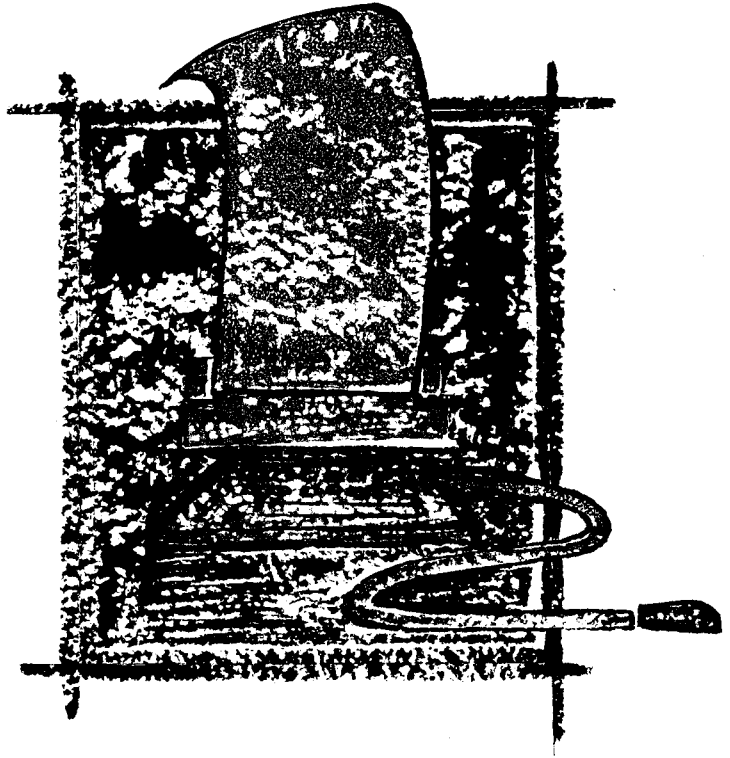
***Phase Three** of PRIA was marked by the year-long external Evaluation conducted during September 1988 to August 1989. The two-day dialogue with more than sixty partners held during February 5-6, 1989 around preliminary findings of the field data collected and analysed by the Evaluation Team helped to further elaborate the programmes and postures during this phase. The programmes were further expanded; the preparation and publication of learning materials, reports and periodicals was made a regular activity; new regional Support Organisations were catalysed; significant addition to physical infrastructure was made; Asian and International recognition was translated in programmatic activities, largely within the South-Asian and South-east Asian region. Programmatic activities included women's income-generation and empowerment, poor people's access to and control over natural resources, literacy and*



*adult education, occupational health and safety, and strengthening the capacities of grass-root organisations and NGOs. The Tenth Anniversary programme of PRIA held during February 5-6, 1992 on the theme of "Deregulating the Mind, Democratising the Society" brought together activists, academics, media persons, trade unionists and others to deliberate on the significance of countering the forces engaged in 'controlling the minds' of the citizens through monopolisation of knowledge, system of formal education, media, absence of 'right to information' and controlling 'intellectual property rights'.*

*The internal programmatic and organisational review by the Executive Council of PRIA during April-June 1993 marks the transition to the "Futures We're In". While retaining the philosophical inspiration from its roots and programmatic insights from its past, PRIA is now poised for major long-term strategic plan for its future. This strategic framework of its future programmatic and institutional thrust is elaborated here.*





# The Present

## **PRESENT**

*The programmatic work of PRIA now is organised around four distinct yet interrelated CENTRES. Each centre has a clear focus; the nature of programmatic activities within each Centre comprise of three types of activities:*

- *studies, research and documentation*
- *educational events: workshops, training, consultations*
- *preparation and publication of educational materials (including audio-visual).*

*The concrete plans for each Centre are prepared in light of the consideration of*

- *PRIA's Mission*
- *Emerging Opportunities, and*
- *Internal Capacity*

### **Mission and Strategy**

*To promote people-centred, holistic and comprehensive evolution of society characterised by Freedom, Justice, Equity and Sustainability, by*

- a) creating opportunities of sharing, analysing and learning among formations of the Civil Society (in particular, people's organisations and NGOs)*
- b) engaging in independent and critical analysis of societal trends and issues, development policies and programmes; and,*

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c) *enabling dialogue across diverse perspectives, sectors and institutions.*

*The operationalisation of this Mission into specific strategies and plans can vary depending on the focus of each Centre as well as the nature of the **constituencies**. The primary constituency for the work of PRIA continues to be grass-root voluntary development organisations and NGOs, People's Organisations, their Networks and other Support Organisations. Besides, the range of constituencies that PRIA programmes relate to include, among others, Trade Unions, Cooperatives and their associations, Consumer Groups, Institutions of Local Self-Governance, National and State Governments, Ministries and Departments, Private-sector enterprises, international agencies (including multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies), Formal Educational institutions (including Academia), Media and other socio-cultural formations.*

*The primary strategy of our work continues to be **epistemological** where the knowledge and learning of key actors in the process of Social Transformation is emphasised. Knowledge is an important source of Power and Control in contemporary societies, and **Educational** processes and mechanisms are needed to enhance the capacities of such actors. Our studies, workshops and publications aim to contribute towards such learning. Besides, influencing public policy and strengthening the environment for effective reassertion the institutions of the Civil Society have also acquired strategic significance in our programmatic initiatives.*

### **1. Centre for Participation and Governance**

*The central focus of this Centre is to strengthen citizen participation in shaping their own future. PRIA's wide*

experience and expertise in promoting people-centred and people-controlled development has been most effectively demonstrated in areas of literacy, access to and control over natural resources, women's economic and educational development, worker's education, primary health care, etc. The framework of EMPOWERMENT as evolved from the practice of Participatory Research has essentially implied a twin process of learning and organising as a vehicle for people-centred and people-controlled development. The use of indigenous knowledge and institutional mechanisms in management of natural resources, the promotion of local programme management committees in education, health care, water and sanitation, etc., and the unique contributions of new approaches to learning and organising demonstrated by women's movement and ecology movement are part of the repertoire of this paradigm.

The experience of our work over the past decades has also reinforced the need to bring in the question of Governance in this paradigm. The history of people-centred development approaches in our context has emphasised decentralised local self-governance. Local control over community resources and its sustainable and equitable use has been promoted by many grass-root programmes operating in this framework. It is clear that people-centred development is largely conditioned by the systems and processes of Governance, as amply demonstrated by the four decades of experience in India and South Asia. The importance of local self-governance has been a critical ingredient of this paradigm, where local responsibility and accountability is ensured through direct and sustained democracy. The recent Constitutional amendments in India open additional opportunity to promote local self-governance at the village Panchayat and urban Municipality

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levels. The issues of Governance have acquired additional criticality in the context of growing urbanization and require fresh response. In the face of growing globalisation and rising power of multinational corporations of the Market, reassertion of the small producers and atomised consumers through their cooperatives, associations and federations acquires salience in this framework of Participation and Governance.

This Centre, therefore, strengthens insights, knowledge and capacities of grass-roots organisations, development agencies, decision-makers, policy-makers, researchers and practitioners alike, in the concepts and strategies of building and nurturing processes and systems of participation and governance in different development situations and sectors. In this manner, the Centre attempts to contribute to enhance Participation of and Local Self-Governance by marginalised sections of the society.

The Centre now publishes the following periodical in English and Hindi.

*Bulletin on PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNANCE*  
(Three times a year).

## **2. Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health**

The central focus of this Centre is to contribute towards making work and living place "healthier". Our experience of working in the area of occupational health and safety for more than a decade has demonstrated the criticality of this set of issues among workers, in the organised as well as the unorganised sectors of economy. The environment movement, on the other hand, has not paid enough attention to

*the work-place health and safety issues. There are also emerging some disturbing trends of division and conflict between environmentalists and worker's organisations. There is, therefore, an urgent need to view and project issues of occupational health/safety and environmental pollution as part of the singular unity. By bringing such a holistic and integrated perspective, this Centre attempts to build knowledge in these areas and to bring the two sets of institutions, actors and movements together.*

*The Centre also attempts to generate indigenous knowledge on these issues as they apply to our particular context; it disseminates information generated through its own field studies and through other national and international institutions and networks; as a COLLABORATING CIS CENTRE OF ILO, the Centre also accesses and shares data-bases and specific documents with other researchers and practitioners internationally; it works towards strengthening the capacities of workers and their organisations, community groups and social activists to address these issues locally; and it promotes dialogue, based on concrete studies, across local groups, workers, industry and policy-makers. The Centre actively collaborates with other professional and research institutes in India and abroad in its programmes. It intends to promote regular monitoring of occupational and environmental health hazards by workers, citizens, consumers and the media. It works to influence such policies and legislations as affect the status of occupational and environmental health in the country.*

*The Centre now publishes the following periodical in English and Hindi.*

### **3. Centre for Institutional Development**

*The central focus of this Centre is to work towards strengthening the institutions of the Civil Society. Our experience of working in the arena of capacity-building of grass-roots NGOs over the past decade clearly suggests the growing importance of strengthening the institutional mechanisms, structures and processes of such organisations so that they can play the variety and complexity of roles they are being called upon to play today, and in future. Our work in this area also demonstrates the urgent need to evolve theories of evolution, growth and sustainability of Mission-driven 'social change' organisations, as much of the theory and practice in management and organisational development has its base in the institutions of the State and/or the Market. The current efforts to promote institution-building in the Civil Society needs support in the task of ongoing and sustained capacity-building of the leaders, staff and trainers of NGOs as well as sensitization of their national and international supporters.*

*Having innovated with many designs, trainings and materials in the areas of management of voluntary organisations, financial management, training methodology, monitoring and evaluation, staff and team building, organisational development etc., PRIA has worked closely with a number of regional Support Organisations to extensively provide such learning to NGOs in different regional languages. The need for long-term Human Resource Development for both new entrants as well as middle and senior*

level NGO staff is being addressed through several specially designed long duration Development Programmes now.

The Centre also develops reading and training materials, case studies, exercises, manuals and audio-visuals based on, and rooted in, the experiences of NGOs and other similar institutions in countries of the South, in particular South Asia. It provides consultation and facilitates educational opportunities for specific institutions on request. Besides the areas mentioned above, the Centre is also developing programme areas like policy advocacy, research and analytical capability, strategic planning and resource mobilisation and internal mechanisms of governance and accountability for NGOs and their networks.

The Centre now publishes a bi-annual Journal on INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

#### **4. Centre for Global Alliance**

The historical roots of PRIA in the regional and international Networks of Participatory Research have acquired greater significance at this juncture. The issues of Participation and Governance as basis for alternative paradigm of Development need to be addressed in the global context. The strategies and competencies of Institutional Development of institutions of the Civil Society have Asia-Pacific and global relevance. In recent past, demands on PRIA's involvement in Asian level Networking of NGOs has grown, so has its role in building coalitions and alliances across the Asian region. Both in its networking and its professional educator roles, there is a need to take an active global stance.



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*This Centre, therefore, has the twin purpose of Building Networks and Alliances for Asian and global solidarity and advocacy, on the one hand, and strengthening the capacities of NGOs and others in the areas of Participation/Governance and Institutional Development, on the other.*

*At this stage, the work of this Centre has the following priority:*

***A. Networking, Alliances and Advocacy***

*Within this theme, the following activities are currently undertaken:*

- a) Programmatic coordination of the work of Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) entails particular responsibilities of the office of the President (Dr. Rajesh Tandon's term during 1993-96), and the office of the Secretary General (till 1997). It also involves thematic work in Leadership Building for the movement, and coordination of South East-Asia, sub-region 3 and South Asia, sub-region 1 activities.*
- b) Mobilising contributions of NGOs and other sectors towards disseminating information on and monitoring the results of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development as a member of a global network, The People's Alliance for Social Development.*
- c) Strengthening the World Alliance to Citizen Participation, CIVICUS, through activities such as the Asian regional study on the status of Civil Society in the region and continued reflection and mobilisation of various sectors within the region.*

*d) As an Asian member of NGO Working Group on the World Bank (term 1994-98), animate and facilitate a regional process of organised and systematic Policy and Implementation Review and Advocacy on World Bank (and other multilateral bodies like Asian Development Bank and IMF) supported Projects and Programmes.*

### ***B. Professional Consultation and Training***

*The primary areas of such professional inputs are related to promotion of Participation and Governance in development sectors, and Institutional Development of NGOs. Several activities are currently being undertaken:*

- a) PRIA is coordinating a Programme to Build a Capacity for Dialogue on and Monitoring of Social Policies in the Asia Pacific Region. This programme integrates capacity building activities with concrete efforts of NGOs at policy influence and advocacy. Several regional and national NGOs will be involved in this programme.*
- b) As a part of the ongoing Programme of Strengthening Support Institutions in South Asia in collaboration with IDR, Boston, in-country workshops and training programmes for strengthening the capacity for Institutional Development of NGOs are being undertaken in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.*
- c) Specific programmes at request are being undertaken. For example,*
  - Assisting SNV-Nepal field programmes to set-up a system of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation.*

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- *Facilitating an exercise of Strategic Planning for PACTPRIP. Bangladesh and ADAB, Bangladesh*
  - *Designing and conducting a Training of Trainers Programme for partners of Bernard Van Leer Foundation in Malaysia working on the theme of Early Childhood Education, in collaboration with MINSOC, Malaysia and CHETNA, India*

*This centre also coordinates **international exchange** visits, study tours or campaigns. As a secretariat for international relations it may also assist other like minded institutions and networks in their international work. It is separately staffed and funded.*

*It draws on the collaboration and support of various programme Centres and the Division of Common Services of PRIA, on a need-based, cost-reimbursible basis.*



2. *UNNATI*  
(Covering Western Region,  
Gujarat and Rajasthan  
primarily) G-1, 200 Azad Society  
Ahmedabad - 380 015  
Phone : 079-646145
  
3. *SAHAYI*  
(focusing on Kerala) T.C. 5/805 (3)  
G.C. Nagar IInd Street  
Mannamoola  
Perookada P.O.  
Trivandrum - 695 005  
Kerala  
Phone : 0471-434664
  
4. *JANAMITRA*  
(People's Learning Centre)  
(covering AP) 180/58 New Bank Colony  
Near Church, Konan Kunte  
Kanakapura Cross Road  
Bangalore-560062  
Phone : 080-6634382
  
5. *CENCORED*  
(covering Bihar) Shyama Bhavan  
West Boring Canal Road  
Patna - 800 001  
Bihar  
Phone : 0612-264858

# **INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE**

*The institutional structure of PRIA comprises of two main divisions : Division of Programme Centres and Division of Common Services. The enclosed chart gives some details.*

## **Governing Board (GB)**

*The overall policy formulation, review and supervision of PRIA is vested in an independent Governing Board comprising of seven professionals and activists drawn from diverse sectors of society. The Board meets at least twice a year and conducts periodic Institutional Audit to continuously monitor and improve institutional health. It sets up special sub-committees from time-to-time to formulate and supervise policies in such areas as Personnel, Programmes, Finance etc. Members of the Board are directly contributing to the different programmatic activities of the Centres.*

## **Executive Director (ED)**

*As the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of PRIA, the ED is accountable to the GB for the entire functioning of PRIA.*

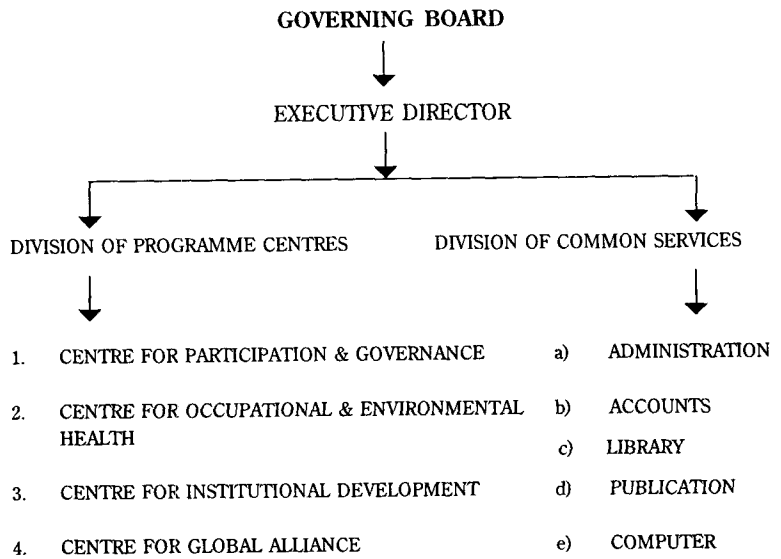
## **Division of Programme Centres**

*Each Centre has a Centre-Coordinator with full responsibility and accountability for programme management, personnel supervision of programme staff and financial monitoring and reporting. Each Centre has some programme associates working together as a team under the leadership of the Centre Coordinator.*

*Each Centre has a Peer Support Panel comprising of senior professionals and activists experienced in the areas of work of that Centre. These Panels of 5-6 persons each help in designing, monitoring and reviewing the activities of the Centre. A number of experienced activists, professionals and experts are associated with each programme Centre as part-time advisers and consultants to augment the available competencies in each Centre.*

### ***Division of Common Services***

*The Division comprises of FIVE units which function independently but together constitute the Division. The primary purpose of the Division of Common Services is to service the programmatic Centres directly, other partners and associates.*



## **GOVERNING BOARD**

*Chairperson*  
**Prem Chadha**

*Member*  
**Joe Madiath**

*Treasurer*  
**Vijay Mahajan**

*Member*  
**Sheela Patel**

*Member*  
**D. Thankappan**

*Executive Director (ex-officio)*  
**Rajesh Tandon**

April 1995