Participatory Democracy and Inclusive Governance
Listen to different views & opinions, even if you don't agree with them.
When civil society is in seize, grassroots democracy is undermined
RAJESH TANDON, FOUNDER-PRESIDENT, PRIA

Societies are undergoing deep transformations around the world. In countries like India, half the population is less than 25 years of age. Growing access to education and affordable mobile phones are making huge impacts on traditional modes of relationships in the family and neighbourhood. Migration of youth to small towns and cities is creating its own dynamics.

For an independent research and training organisation like PRIA, these shifts bring enormous challenges. As an institution built on the premise of ‘knowledge is power’, PRIA has anticipated such societal shifts in designing and implementing its interventions towards equitable, just and inclusive development over the past 36 years. This challenge is further aggravated in a world of decreasing space for civic dialogue, citizenship and inclusion. When civil society is in seize, grassroots democracy is undermined. This 36th Annual Report presents the work of PRIA over the past year in this changing milieu.

The trajectory of our work has to be viewed beyond the confines of one annual report. Inclusive development demands attention to vulnerable rural and urban households. Accessing basic services and claiming their rights entails awareness, mobilisation and organisation of such households. But, mere mobilisation of demand is not enough, as PRIA has learnt over decades. Sensitisation and accountability of the supply side—panchayats, municipalities, line departments and delivery agencies—is critical to secure such inclusion. Rural maternal health, urban sanitation services and access to safe spaces for girls’ education are all illustrations of the impacts of PRIA’s work during the year.

We invite you to peruse this Annual Report, and share your comments with us.
EFFECTIVE PANCHAYATS

Panchayats, as institutions of local self-governance, provide a space for rural communities to engage and come together to solve their own developmental challenges. PRIA has steadfastly continued to contribute towards making panchayats effective through systematic capacity building, sustained advocacy, and sharing, dialogue and mutual learning amongst practitioners, researchers and policy-makers.

Our learnings and knowledge on Gram Panchayat Development Plans, planning capacities at the local level, annual plans of panchayats, and E-panchayats was shared in meetings of the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA), thereby supporting states in strengthening panchayati raj institutions.

Supported by Niti Aayog, PRIA used a participatory action-research framework to conduct a study on Decentralised District Planning in Sikkim. The study analysed the new environment created for decentralised planning through reduction and streamlining of Centrally Sponsored Schemes and increased devolution of resources to States.
In Rajasthan, we are reforming local health governance with support from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI) in collaboration with Dasra. In 12 months, the project has covered 16,000 population, conducted 211 meetings of Village Health, Nutrition and Sanitation Committees (VHNSC), and facilitated 104 gram panchayat meetings.

Supported by UNICEF, PRIA implemented a model in Siwana block, Barmer district and Anandpuri block, Banswara district in which communities and officials came together to develop annual village health plans, rejuvenate village health committees to monitor services and ensure widespread use of e-Janswasthya app to collect and report localised health data.

In its third phase, the Rapid Action Learning Unit (RALU) of the Andhra Pradesh government was supported by PRIA to undertake participatory research with citizens around issues related to sanitation.

In Jharkhand we enhanced capacities of 1725 gram panchayat members to support the promotion of Beacon Panchayats for the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of Jharkhand. In 10 months, citizens in 25 gram panchayats in Simdega, Latehar, West Singhbhum, Deoghar and Ramgarh districts began participating in planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes.

In Chhattisgarh, 19 block level public dialogues and 9 district level public dialogues reached out to 7,900 citizens from all walks of life and professions to engage with local officials and present their view of the sanitation challenge in their panchayats. These dialogues catalysed demand from individual households to construct toilets and prompted them to end open defecation.
PRIA’s efforts at making urban governance transparent, accountable and responsive began more than a decade ago. Our endeavours have been to create mechanisms for engaging citizens to participate in the planning and implementation of city improvement programmes, and to embed these processes in the city’s governance mechanism.

Over the past 3 years, Engaged Citizens, Responsive City project supported by the European Union has built 250 Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs) as organisations of the urban poor in Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur, empowering urban poor communities to demand basic sanitation services in their settlements.

City level SIC forums in all the three cities have become vibrant and active in raising voice of the urban poor. They facilitate exchange of experiences amongst SIC members, help initiate dialogues and negotiations with city authorities and other stakeholders, and help communities articulate their needs and facilitate their participation in city level sanitation planning, implementation and monitoring.
How important are the urban poor in our lives? Domestic workers, the sanitation worker who collects the garbage from our homes, the vendor from whom we buy vegetables, the guards who man office buildings ... what would we do without them?

#JustThink
PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH FOR CITIZEN ACTION

Participatory research methodologies have been effectively utilised to generate community data and knowledge, which has been used in ensuring inclusion of urban poor and rural communities in planning and monitoring of basic services.

Comprehensive household enumerations in informal settlements on sanitation services in Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur were instrumental in identification of households without individual toilets, providing real-time data to municipal corporations to achieve various targets under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U).

Participatory Settlement Enumeration (PSE) in all three cities helped urban poor residents in prioritising their sanitation needs.
City-wide sanitation surveys in Ajmer and Jhansi generated reliable and critical data to municipal corporations for sanitation planning in both cities. Identification of major gaps in sanitation services, such as solid waste management, drainage, sewerage, enabled 168 SICs to prepare settlement level sanitation service improvement proposals. Of these, 133 proposals have received attention from municipal corporations.

A study on the Status of Women Sanitation Workers and An Assessment of the Status of Public and Community Toilets was undertaken in Ajmer.
YOUTH FOR DEMOCRACY

PRIA animators and field facilitators are the hands and feet of our work with communities. Young men and women have been recruited from the local areas where our work is being implemented. Their local knowledge is their greatest asset, which they use to build an environment of trust with the communities. Capacity building of animators is an important part of our work, to enable them to sustain the change beyond the project implementation period.
PRIA field facilitators in Jhansi have been invited to join 23 ward level “Swachhta Protsahan Samitis” constituted by Jhansi Municipal Corporation.

In Ajmer, all our women field facilitators were invited by Ajmer Municipal Corporation as ‘Swachhta Doots’ for monitoring sanitation services in market places.

486 volunteers in Rajasthan and 600 youth in Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur gained knowledge and skills to emerge as confident youth leaders and have begun to address community issues such as sanitation, maternal health and women and girls’ safety.

**YOUTH AND DEMOCRACY CAMPAIGN**

YnD campaign provides a platform for college students to engage in deep and thoughtful conversations around the powerful idea of Democracy in Everyday Life (#DIEL). The campaign has successfully reached over 30,000 youth across 40 locations in India.

If you’re young and believe in democratic actions, join the YnD group on Facebook!
Indian youth engaged in open, fearless and non-judgemental inter-personal conversations. This gives us hope, for the youth of India to generate a “youthquake”, and bring significant cultural, political, and social change through democratic actions in their everyday lives.

#YouthForDemocracy
KNOWLEDGE FOR CHANGE

Learning in Higher Education Institutions needs to connect with larger society today, not only in curriculum but also in ways of teaching. PRIA’s Knowledge for Change (K4C) initiative builds research capacity among academics and students for the next generation of community based participatory researchers. Collective action by academics and practitioners will address locally pressing societal challenges, including achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

INTERNSHIPS @ PRIA

PRIA’s carefully crafted internship program offers an opportunity for students and practitioners to gain insights into participatory methodologies and tools, and develop awareness of gender issues in social change. Last year, 23 students from Pune, Delhi, Dublin, Victoria (Canada), Asansol, Kota and Ajmer completed their internship at PRIA.

Want to join PRIA's internship program? Write to our HR department (hr@pria.org)
PROTECTING AND PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS

There are 4 to 10 million domestic workers in India. They are the invisible workforce of Indian households. As compared to other informal sector workers, domestic workers experience more difficult work conditions and are more vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse and sexual harassment.

For the past 18 months, supported by the Embassy of The Netherlands in India, PRIA in collaboration with Martha Farrell Foundation has reached out to 1260 women domestic workers in Gurugram, Faridabad and South Delhi, raising awareness, organising them into workers' collectives and building a network of civil society organisations, labour unions and resident welfare associations to support them in registering cases of sexual harassment with Local Complaints Committees.
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Year ended 31.03.2018
Extracted from Audited Statement of Accounts 2017-18

(In INR '000)

Income
Research and Training Grants 58,163
Other Income 19,868
Total Income 78,031

Expenditure
Programme 54,249
Administration 12,378
Depreciation 1,756
Total Expenditure 68,383

Excess/(Deficit) of Income Over Expenditure 9,648
Interventions in
3 cities
9 districts
198 gram panchayats

Reaching out
Directly building capacities of
651,168 persons
Sensitizing 1.5 million
population
555 training-learning workshops
with 16,086 learners (7374 men
and 8712 women)

Facilitating
160 gram sabha meetings
132 SHG meetings
2298 youth group meetings
35 workshops and conferences
with 1460 participants
2 city-wide surveys covering
12,800 households, with 20%
urban poor households