



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Participatory Institute for Development Alternatives (PIDA) (Sri Lanka)

(1982)

...for developing exemplary processes of self-reliant, participatory development among the poor in Asia.



Wilfred Karunaratne
Former Chairman of PIDA

PIDA is a non-governmental development organisation, which was established in 1980 for the purpose of initiating and promoting grassroots participatory development processes in Sri Lanka. PIDA's approach to development grew out of pioneering work in the mid-70s by South Asian scholars who started a process of reflection on Asian poverty and the failure of past development efforts. They attempted to develop a conceptual framework for an alternative development in Asia.

To turn this theoretical work into practice, the Sri Lanka government and the United Nations Development Programme began a Change Agents Programme in 1978, which in turn led to PIDA's foundation.

From its very inception, PIDA has been working together with SAPNA (South Asian Perspectives Network Association), a South Asian NGO with its headquarters in Sri Lanka. The two networks have been enriching and supporting each other.

PIDA's vision of development perceives it as a process of holistic human improvement led and managed by the people concerned in their own communities. To start the process, PIDA initiators go to live in the villages and seek out the poor with whom they wish to work. They then engage with them in a process of heightening awareness of the political, economic and social realities of their condition and how it can be bettered through a combination of mutual self-help and collective organisation. They then encourage such organisation for the achievement of specific objectives, such as improved access to credit, access to farm inputs, improvements in the marketing of produce and the formation of informal consumer cooperatives. This conscientisation dimension is at the core of the PIDA methodology of rigorous social mobilisation. In this way PIDA has repeatedly proved that the social and material position of both the rural and urban poor, who are nearly always marginalised by conventional development efforts, can be considerably improved largely through

their own efforts, given the necessary stimulus and encouragement. PIDA is also involved in training trainers and networking with other grassroots groups in South Asia.

Over the past decades PIDA has expanded and multiplied its coverage from small village to district level, through a three-pronged approach:

- expansion through groups organised by PIDA itself;
- training of development workers of other community-based organisations and mid-size NGOs in order to widen their vision about development and also to build their capacity;
- playing a consultancy role in state sector development efforts to make development more meaningful to the community and minimise any harmful effects resulting from such programmes.

A fourth South Asian tier has been established in cooperation with SAPNA. PIDA's cases on the ground have been extensively used in SAPNA's several book length publications, e.g. *Pro-Poor Growth and Governance in South Asia, Decentralisation and Participatory Development*, (SAGE, 2004).

Quotation

"We look at development in fundamental humanistic terms as a process of overall development of people and their potential. Bringing out the creativity and the potential of the people is the means as well as the end of development."

Wilfred Karunaratne, Chairman

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