

# 8TH MARTHA FARRELL AWARDS 2024 FOR EXCELLENCE IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY



## REPORT



# ABOUT THE MARTHA FARRELL AWARD



The Martha Farrell Award for Excellence in Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality has been instituted to honour Dr. Martha Farrell and her ideals. It is a first-of-its-kind initiative to discover, recognise and honour mid-career individuals and committed institutions which have made valuable contributions in areas of work related to women's empowerment and gender equality.

The award was originally instituted by the Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) in partnership with the Rizwan Adatia Foundation (RAF) and the Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) from 2017 to 2019. Thereafter, from 2020-2023, in partnership with the Rural Development Trust (RDT) along with PRIA. Currently, the award is being supported by PRIA.

The annual award is given in two categories: Most Promising Individual and Best Organisation for Gender Equality with each winner receiving INR 1,50,000.00 as prize money. In 2020, the Special Jury Awards were introduced in each category, with each winner receiving INR 1,00,000.00 as prize money, with support from our esteemed jury member, Mr. Feisal Alkazi.

Since the institution of the award in 2016, we have received a total of 1,265 nominations over eight years. These comprise 716 in the individual category and 549 in the organisational category.

## MOST PROMISING INDIVIDUAL

- Any professional of any gender, between 25 and 40 years of age, who is working in government, business, industry, or civil society organisations in India.
- Any person who has worked consistently for at least the past five years to promote women's empowerment and/or gender equality within the workplace, in communities, in educational institutions, and/or in society at large.
- Innovative, practical, and comprehensive approaches to social change promoting women's empowerment and/or gender equality.
- Leading by personal example and practising feminism in everyday life.

## BEST ORGANISATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- Any organisation, including government, business, industry, educational, health, media, unions, federations, or civil society, registered in India or which is a department/center under a registered organisation in India.
- Has been actively implementing systems, procedures and practices that create a gender-sensitive and inclusive environment within their own workplace.
- Such efforts have been consistent for at least the past five years.
- Innovative, practical and comprehensive approaches to cultural and political change within the organisation towards women's empowerment or gender equality.



# AWARD JURY

Every three years of the Award, the Martha Farrell Award changes its jury, to ensure different voices from various professional sectors and with different backgrounds can assess the nominees we receive. This year, a new jury of six members was announced, with two returning members (Feisal Alkazi and Rajesh Tandon).



## FEISAL ALKAZI

Feisal Alkazi is a renowned theatre director and documentary filmmaker. He has directed over 300 plays and 30 documentaries and has been a counsellor and trainer with Sanjivini, a renowned counselling agency, for over 35 years. He extensively counselled Kashmiri children affected by terrorism between 2004-11 and served as a UN Master Trainer in HIV/AIDS prevention from 2002-07.



## DEEP JYOTI SONU BRAHMA

Deep Jyoti Sonu Brahma is the founder of Farm2Food Foundation, advocating for the mainstreaming of agriculture as an aspirational livelihood, especially for vulnerable youth in Assam. He has over 20 years of experience supporting interventions in themes of youth mentorship, educational initiatives, climate change, and coalition building.



## MIRAI CHATTERJEE

Mirai Chatterjee leads the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and serves as the Director of SEWA's Social Security team. She is also the Chairperson of the SEWA Cooperative Federation and was previously the organisation's General Secretary.





## **DR. BHAVANI RAO**

Dr. Bhavani Rao is the Dean of the School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham and the Director of two research centres - AMMACHI Labs and the Center for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. She has been appointed as India's UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality since 2016.



## **SUDHA SRINIVASAN**

Ms. Sudha Srinivasan is the CEO of Centre for Social Innovation, The/Nudge Institute and leads initiatives to create a thriving livelihoods ecosystem. Prior to The/Nudge, Sudha worked at Intel, where she spent nearly 13 years in various leadership roles.



## **DR. RAJESH TANDON**

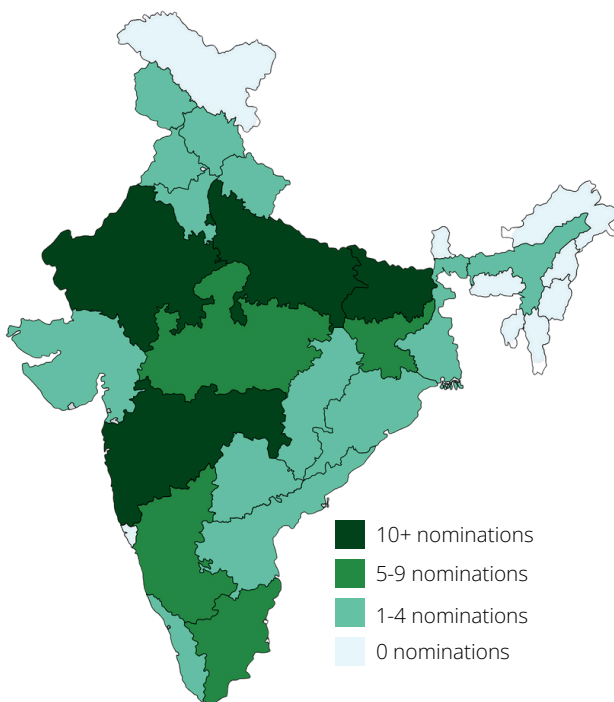
Dr. Rajesh Tandon is the Founder-President of Participatory Research in Asia, and the Chairperson of the Martha Farrell Foundation. Since 2012, Dr. Tandon has been the Co-Chair of the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education.

# 8TH MARTHA FARRELL AWARDS 2024

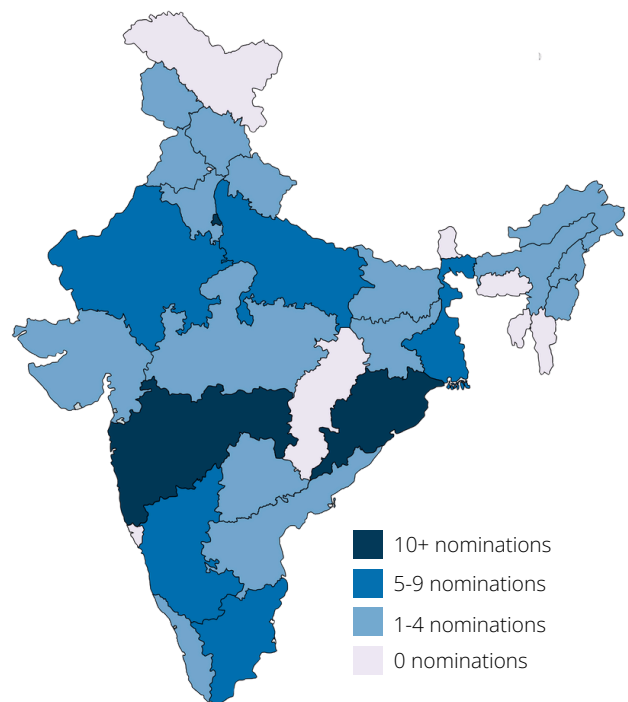
Nominations for the 8th Martha Farrell Awards opened on 17 January, 2024 and closed on 15 May, 2024. A total of 251 nominations (147 nominations in the individual category and 104 nominations in the organisational) from 24 states and union territories across India were received, comprising a wide variety of individuals (social activists, professionals, educators, media persons, government officials, entrepreneurs) and organisations (grassroots, non-profits, corporates, academic, media, social enterprises).

The award nominees embodied the belief that working towards women's empowerment and gender equality is an everyday goal and illustrated the varied forms that activism and change can take.

## INDIVIDUAL



## ORGANISATION



# EVALUATION OF NOMINATIONS

After nominations concluded on 15 May 2024, a process of evaluating the nominees commenced.

The objective of this evaluation process was to prepare a shortlist of individuals and organisations, which was then presented to the jury for their consideration and the selection of winners.

The evaluation process was divided into four steps:



## 1. Preparation of long list

Nominees in each category who did not fit within the initial award criteria (age, number of years of work, and location) were excluded. After this screening step, 103 nominees in the individual category and 90 nominees from the organisation category moved ahead.

Questions were asked of these individuals and organisations to gain a deeper understanding of their work. Of the nominees who cleared the first screening step, 75 nominees in the individual category and 68 nominees in the organisational category responded to the additional information asked.

## 2. Preparation of shortlist

The nominees who responded were then shortlisted based on the following criteria:

- Consistency
- Innovation
- Outreach
- Scaling-up/plans for expansion

A final shortlist of 19 nominees in the individual category and 17 in the organisational category was then prepared for the due diligence process.

## 3. Due diligence

A due diligence process was carried out for the shortlisted nominees. The purpose of this process was to objectively evaluate the quality and consistency of their work so that the top individuals and organisations could be presented to the jury.

A training was conducted for all new members conducting the due diligence process by Ms. Nandita Pradhan Bhatt, Director, MFF, to ensure that those conducting these evaluations would gather relevant data needed for the selection process.

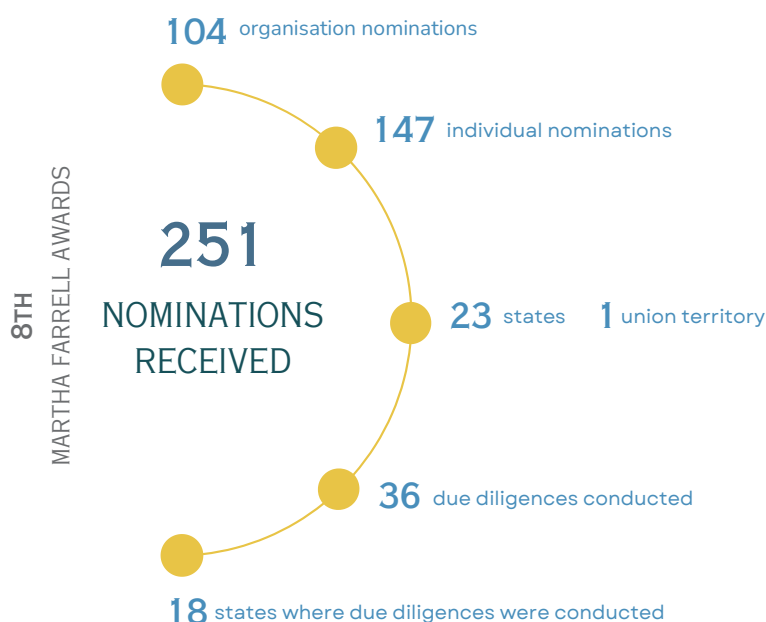
Further, the evaluators were equipped with pre-prepared questionnaires to guide the due diligence process - a guide with 14 questions was prepared to evaluate individual nominees, and a guide with 15 questions was prepared to evaluate organisational nominees.

The due diligence process was carried out by team members from the MFF and its partner organisations- PRIA (New Delhi), Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra (Lucknow), and UNNATI (Ahmedabad). MFF partner organisations conducted the due diligence process for 3 organisation nominees. The remaining 14 organisations and 19 individuals were evaluated by the MFF and PRIA teams.

The due diligence process included:

- Interviews and field visits
- Online interviews through Zoom
- Reference checks

The process of due diligence was completed by 25 July 2024.



#### 4. Jury review

The feedback and evaluation provided by the due diligence team were qualitatively assessed by the core team consisting of MFF's Chairperson, Executive Director, and Director, to prepare a shortlist to be presented to the jury.

A shortlist of 5 nominees in the individual category and 6 nominees in the organisational category was prepared for the jury to review. A jury meeting was held on 10 August, 2024 where the jury made their final decision on the selection of the four winners, based on Dr. Martha Farrell's values, which include:

- Everyday practical actions (feminism in everyday life)
- Personal examples of change
- Working with both men and women
- Institutional gender mainstreaming
- Changing systems and cultures



## FINALISTS - MOST PROMISING INDIVIDUAL



**AUGUSTINA SORENG**

Social Activist  
Jharkhand



**G. NANCY ANGELINE**

Doctor  
Karnataka



**KAVITA BUNDELKHANDI**

Journalist  
Uttar Pradesh



**HAMEEDA KHATOON**

Social Activist  
Uttar Pradesh



**TANIYA SULTANA LASKAR**

Lawyer  
Assam

**FINALISTS - BEST ORGANISATION FOR  
GENDER EQUALITY**



**GORANBOSE GRAM BIKASH  
KENDRA (GGBK)**  
West Bengal



**HILL SOCIAL WELFARE  
SOCIETY**  
West Bengal



**MAHILA ABHIVRUDDHI MATTU  
SAMRAKSHANA SAMSTHE (MASS)**  
Karnataka



**THE ENTREPRENEURS  
ASSOCIATE**  
Nagaland



**THENDRAL MOVEMENT**  
Tamil Nadu



**PERIFERRY**  
Tamil Nadu

## 8TH MARTHA FARRELL AWARD CEREMONY

The 8th Martha Farrell Award ceremony was held on 28 September, 2024 at the UNESCO New Delhi Cluster Office. For those who could not attend in person, the ceremony was also live-streamed on the Martha Farrell Foundation's YouTube channel. Ms. Samiksha Jha's moving and passionate opening poetry on feminism welcomed and informed the audience about the Award.

*“Ek parcham aisa lahraya hain,  
Jisme swabhiman fehraya hain  
Indradhanush ke rango sa  
Utsaah usme jagmagaya hain  
Ek parcham aisa lahraya hain  
Jise narivaad ke stambh par sajaya hain  
Aur uss stambh ko barabari ki mitti me  
lagaya hain”*

*“A flag is waving,  
Carrying pride in its flight.  
Glowing with the vibrant colours,  
Of a rainbow's light.  
A flag is waving,  
Adorned upon the pillar of feminism,  
Rooted firmly in the soil of equality.”*

A film showcasing the work of the Martha Farrell Foundation was played, followed by a keynote address by jury member Mirai Chatterjee. Thereafter, the four winners in two categories were announced, recognised, and felicitated. The presentation of each award was preceded by the screening of a short video capturing the essence of the work being done by the winner.

Professor Deepak Nayar, Professor Emeritus (Economics), JNU and former Vice Chancellor, University of Delhi, presented the award for Most Promising Individual to **Augustina Soreng**. This was followed by the presentation of the Special Jury Award (Individual) by Mr. Joe Madiath, Founder Chairperson Gram Vikas to **Taniya Sultana Laskar**.





The Award for Best Organisation for Gender Equality was presented to **Mahila Abhivruddhi Mattu Samrakshana Samsthe (MASS)** by Mr. Deep Jyoti Sonu Brahma, jury member of the Martha Farrell Award. The final award - Special Jury Award (Organisation) - was presented by Dr. Anita Dighe, co-founder of ANKUR, co-founder of PRIA, and former professor of Adult Education, University of Delhi, to **Goranbose Gram Bikash Kendra (GGBK)**.



The ceremony closed with a captivating performance by the Delhi Children's Choir (DCC), from Nalandaway Foundation. Their harmonious melodies and vibrant stage presence left a lasting impression, celebrating the joy of music and unity.



[WATCH HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CEREMONY](#)



# AUGUSTINA SORENG

(Simdega, Jharkhand)



“

This Martha Farrell Award is dedicated to the women and youth of our tribal communities who are victims of continuous exploitation and oppression, and have struggled to survive and return to their roots; to those families whose pain has never been heard by the mainstream; and to all those women and girls who are fulfilling their societal obligations despite facing violence every day. This award will inspire the women and youth of my tribal community to keep believing and that there are institutions which respect and recognise the work of securing the rights for the marginalised communities and that there is hope for us too.

- Augustina Soreng

”

Augustina Soreng is a social activist, working independently for the upliftment of tribal women and girls in Simdega district, Jharkhand, in accordance with the rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India. A tribal woman from Jharkhand, Augustina has been working in the districts of Simdega, Gumla, and Khunti of the South Chotanagpur division of Jharkhand for the past 13 years.

Augustina's work spans various sections of society, aiming to raise awareness about issues particularly affecting tribal women, such as migration, human trafficking, witch-hunting, domestic violence, sexual violence, forest rights, and land rights.



Her work has included research and ground advocacy, supported by NGOs that provide training. Recently, she was a researcher in a study coordinated by the National Council of Women Leaders, which highlights the lack of support available to tribal women who are survivors of sexual violence.

Through initiatives like Panchayat public hearings, rallies, conferences, workshops, and youth dialogues, Augustina has actively advocated for the rights of tribal women, girls, and youth, becoming a strong voice for the community.

Augustina has directly reached more than 30,000 women, girls, and youth through her dedicated work. She has expanded the scope of her work and reach with the launch of her YouTube channel, "Augustina Simdega," which has over 3,750 subscribers. On this platform, she challenges patriarchal norms and systems, regularly uploading videos aimed at raising awareness and sparking critical discussions.

Her efforts have led to the rescue of approximately 50 women from human trafficking and over 50 survivors of witchcraft. She has educated over 6,000 youth on the POCSO Act and their constitutional rights. Further, she has played a vital role in helping countless individuals navigate police and administrative processes, and access their rights, including supporting 500+ labourers and migrant workers in making their entitlement cards, and helping 22 widows of migrant workers receive compensation through government schemes.

In her mission to protect and advocate for tribal girls and women, Augustina collaborates with a broad range of stakeholders, including the District Administration, District Legal Services Authority, universities, women self-help groups, Panchayati Raj institutions, and Gram Sabhas.

[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT  
AUGUSTINA'S WORK](#)



# MAHILA ABHIVRUDDHI MATTU SAMRAKSHANA SAMSTHE (MASS)

(Belgaum, Karnataka)



“—  
Winning the Martha Farrell Award is a source of great pride and encouragement for us at MASS. It validates our efforts to create a more just and equitable society for all. We are honoured to be recognised for our work in empowering women and promoting gender equality.

— Dr. Sitavva Dundappa Jodatti  
CEO, MASS

—”

Established in 1997, Mahila Abhivruddhi Mattu Samrakshana Samsthe (MASS) is a grassroots membership organisation based in Belgaum district, Karnataka, which is led by ex-Devadasi women.

MASS works towards dismantling the harmful Devadasi system and empowering Dalit women and children, ensuring their rights, livelihoods, and a life of dignity. The Devadasi system is a deeply entrenched practice in parts of India, where young Dalit girls are dedicated to a deity and forced into a life of exploitation, often including sex work.

MASS's mission is to:

- Eradicate the Devadasi system: MASS raises awareness about the dangers of the Devadasi system, in order to prevent its revival, and provides support services to ex-Devadasi women and their families.
- Empower Dalit women and children: MASS creates opportunities for economic independence, education, healthcare, and legal aid, ensuring a brighter future for generations to come.



MASS works on issues of livelihood promotion, provision of quality education, abolishment of child marriage, and provision of legal support for survivors of gender-based violence. Their holistic approach addresses these issues in several key areas:

- Awareness generation
- Education
- Livelihood support
- Legal Aid

Boasting a membership of 4,800 ex-Devadasis in their organisation, MASS has worked tirelessly to advocate to stop the practice of Devadasi dedication in Belgaum district and demand for the rights of ex-Devadasis, including providing ration cards, electricity and pension to them. In addition, they manage 100+ learning centres, where over 7,000 children from disadvantaged backgrounds have received free education. More than 8,000 women have been able to benefit from MASS's healthcare initiatives.

[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT  
MASS'S WORK](#)



# TANIYA SULTANA LASKAR

(Barak Valley, Assam)



SPECIAL JURY AWARD - INDIVIDUAL

“—

I have come to Delhi many times. People from marginalised sections often come to Delhi to negotiate with and question power structures. It is always challenging. But this time, I felt good because it feels like Delhi has come to us, into our margins. Where I come from, we face questions of identity, recognition, and collective identity. With gestures like this, we feel seen and heard. It is an honour to be nominated, especially because I get to share this platform with many special individuals.

— Taniya Sultana Laskar

—”

A feminist lawyer from Barak Valley, Assam, who provides legal support to women from minority communities, Taniya Sultana Laskar is working to make access to justice easier for the people through documentation, legal interventions, legal research and building legal literacy in marginalised communities. She works as a pro-bono lawyer for grassroots communities, while also engaging with strategic litigations to bring new changes in the legal field.

In collaboration with various local organisations and through her independent activities, Taniya has worked in six districts of Assam (Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, Kokrajhar, Barpeta and Nogaon) on various human rights issues. Working with Sanatan Unnioyon Sangstha, Taniya regularly organises gender sensitisation programmes in Barak Valley for lawyers, paralegal workers and volunteers. This network of individuals operates as a response group for victims of gender-based violence in villages of the Barak Valley.



A fellow of the South Asian Women's Fund Legal Fellowship programme, she works on cases of violence against women in Barak Valley, including rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence; she has filed 40 cases of domestic violence on behalf of abused women, and provided counselling to over 1,000 survivors of violence. Alongside working to get justice for victims of gender-based violence under the laws of the land, Taniya also documents cases of gender-based violence that fall beyond the purview of the law, including cases of marital rape.

In recent years, Taniya has been working consistently on issues relating to the National Register of Citizens (NRC), documenting the impact of the NRC on individuals in the region, debunking misconceptions around the NRC in communities, and highlighting how such document-based processes are exclusionary towards marginalised people.

Taniya has also co-founded a queer-rights organisation called Sexuality and Gender Equality (SAGE), which works on advocacy for LGBTQI+ issues and sensitisation in the community towards the LGBTQI+ community. Taniya is the co-editor of a Bengali magazine Boichitra, and writes on legal and socio-cultural issues for other magazines and platforms.

[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT  
TANIYA'S WORK](#)



# GORANBOSE GRAM BIKASH KENDRA (GGBK)

(Canning, West Bengal)



“ —

Winning this award is a powerful validation of our mission. This recognition fuels our dedication to advancing gender equity, inspiring us to deepen our impact and continue championing the cause with unwavering passion.

— Nihar Ranjan Raptan |  
Founder & Executive Director, GGBK

— ”



Goranbose Gram Bikash Kendra (GGBK) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting gender equality, human rights and climate readiness. Founded in 1985 in the Sundarbans region of West Bengal, GGBK works with vulnerable communities addressing issues like human trafficking, child and women's rights, and the impacts of climate change.

GGBK aims to create meaningful opportunities for vulnerable groups to ensure that they can lead their life with dignity. GGBK emphasises raising and developing outstanding leaders among women, youth and children as active citizens. Given the remote context and the climate vulnerability of the region, gender related issues like rape, child marriage and trafficking are even more heightened.

Given the vast range of issues in the area, GGBK works on various different programmes, including education, trafficking, domestic violence and dowry, livelihood promotion, and climate resilience and disaster management. GGBK has approached this work by collectivising people into self-help groups, which provide support to each other through various upheavals and disasters. GGBK works in close collaboration with community, law enforcement, government stakeholders, judiciary, media and other civil society organisations as an anchor to mentor and train communities and community leaders to build resilient communities.

GGBK's activities are intervention based, educating communities with information and helping them develop livelihood opportunities. Working directly with community leaders, survivors of human trafficking, and marginalised and vulnerable groups, GGBK acts as a facilitator between the community and funding partners, so that communities strengthen their ownership and build accountability.

Through their work, GGBK has impacted over 2 million lives across 15 states and 12 community groups, and incubated 25+ programmes.

[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT  
GGBK'S WORK](#)



# ABOUT THE MARTHA FARRELL FOUNDATION



The Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) was set up in 2015, to support practical interventions, which aim to achieve a gender-just society and promote lifelong learning.

MFF takes forward the spirit and legacy of Dr. Martha Farrell, a renowned gender practitioner and civil society leader, and forwarding her path-breaking work towards gender mainstreaming and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in the private, professional and public spheres.

## VISION

MFF envisions a world in which all formal and informal learning and working spaces are safe and gender equitable.

## MISSION

To ensure that all individuals feel secure and valued in their working and learning environments through:

- Education: Co-design learning programs to inform, make aware and empower individuals and institutions on safety and gender equity
- Research: Develop new knowledge on gender equity and the prevention of gender-based violence in learning and working environments
- Advocacy: Influence diverse stakeholders to design and implement effective policies, institutional practices and laws

Find out more about MFF: <https://www.marthafarrellfoundation.org/>

# ABOUT PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN ASIA(PRIA)



Established in 1982, Participatory Research in Asia – PRIA is a global centre for participatory research and participatory learning based in New Delhi, India. It systematises locally contextualised knowledge to integrate in development policy and programmes.

PRIA is committed to promoting participatory and inclusive development and governance, ensuring gender equitable access to basic services by building capacities of the poor and marginalised.

Globally, PRIA is recognised as an intermediary support organisation developing capacities of civil society, non-profit organisations, elected representatives, government officials, and academia across the Global South. It is known for widely sharing through training and learning programmes its innovative methodologies to promote people's participation in development and governance.

For more information, visit [www.pria.org](http://www.pria.org).

## Martha Farrell Foundation

42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110062

Phone: +91-79826 40139 | Email: [info@marthafarrellfoundation.org](mailto:info@marthafarrellfoundation.org)

[www.marthafarrellfoundation.org](http://www.marthafarrellfoundation.org)



EXCELLENCE IN  
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

