

Participatory Action Research for Community Development in South Asia

**South Asian Regional Seminar on ICT in Knowledge Management &
Action Research
December 3, 2017
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

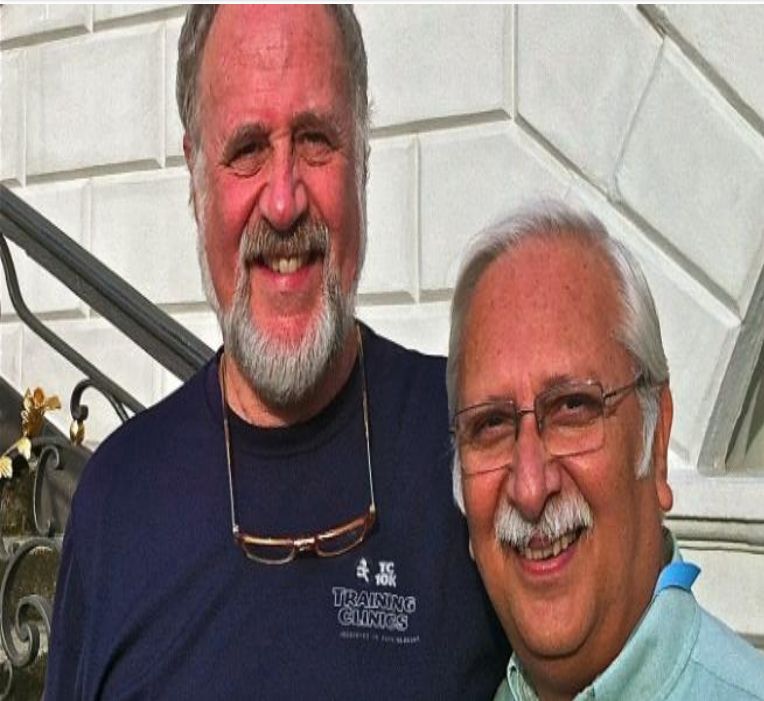


Wafa Singh

India Research Coordinator; UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research & Social Responsibility in Higher Education

Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi, India

About UNESCO Chair



UNESCO Co-Chairs
Prof Budd Hall and
Dr Rajesh Tandon

- Unique Chair based in a Northern University and Southern Civil Society Organization
- Supports North-South-South and South-South partnerships, enhancing 'knowledge democracy'
- Strengthens engagement between communities, civil society & academia
- Promotes discourse on Social Responsibility in Higher Education
- Renewed for second term till 2020



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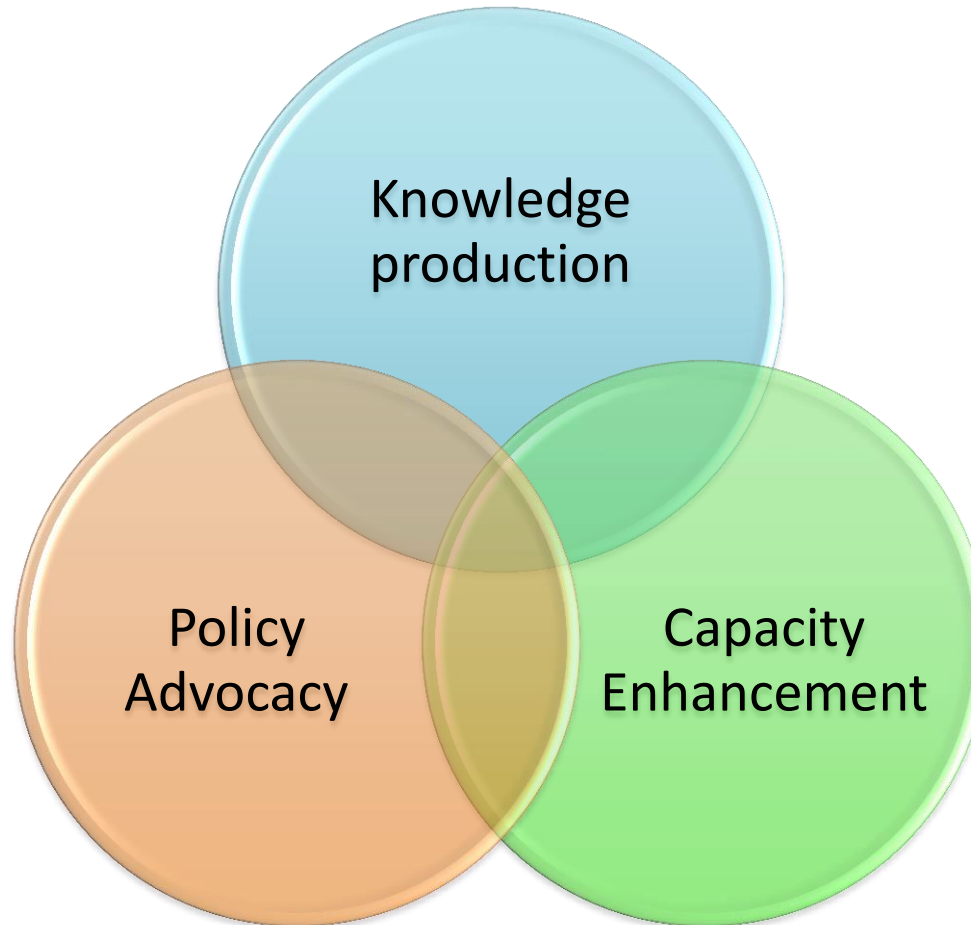
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Chair's focus areas



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We live in challenging times!

- Challenges of contemporary times
- Co-existence of prosperity & poverty; democracy & exclusion; industrial development & degradation of natural resources
- Challenges of illiteracy, unemployment, inequality, etc.
- Important implications for the South Asian sub-continent
- Presence of both challenges and opportunities for the South Asian region, makes today's discussion even more pertinent



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Need to strive towards SDGs

- UN System universally adopted the SDGs in 2015
- Beacon for social economic & ecological development
- Agenda 2030 establishes 17 goals universally applicable in all countries
- Each country has been developing benchmarks and indicators for achieving SDGs
- Particularly relevant in the context of South Asia



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What do we do?

- Status quo is unsustainable; time to shift to 'new ways of thinking and doing things'
- Relevant education/educative practices and new forms of knowledge are required
- Increasing expectations from Universities, as the sites for knowledge creation
- Global debates on 'social worthiness and responsibilities' of universities
- GUNi Higher Education Report 5 & 6 places particular emphasis on this aspect



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Role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

- Historically recognized as ‘public institutions for public service’
- Demand for public accountability growing
- Opportune moment for HEIs to demonstrate social ‘relevance’
- Opportunity to make a difference in society, through their missions, and ‘research’ in particular



Increasing expectations from research

- Innovation is the key for all transformations linked to SDGs
- Can no longer afford a business as usual approach; call for innovation & 'new ways of working' from all sectors
- Of particular importance, is the increasing expectations from 'research'
- Expected to provide 'new solutions, through appreciating and incorporating alternative perspectives of knowledge'
- This calls for strengthening societal contributions of research, making it more 'engaged'



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Nuances of Engaged Research

Framing locally usable research

Building knowledge in partnership

Learning new competencies



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Lessons from around the world

Science Shops

Institutional structures promoting responsible research

Research question based on the community aspirations and needs

Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI)

Key action of Swafs program of European Union's Horizon 2020 initiative

Aims to assess societal expectations and foster sustainable research practices



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Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- Apt manifestation of 'Engaged Research'
- Amidst increasing calls for research which is community-based , rather than community-placed; PAR emerges as an important approach
- Based on the principles of inclusion, participation, action, reflection and sustainability
- Respects and acknowledges alternate knowledge forms, thereby resulting in the production of 'new knowledge systems'



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Tenets of PAR

- Variant of 'Action Research'
- Focus is on 'action' for 'improving a situation' , using Participatory Research as a mode of engagement
- Uses participation and popular knowledge to democratize knowledge production
- Ultimate aim is the 'empowerment of oppressed' to partner in social change



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PAR for Community Development

- PAR claims that research is 'with' the people, rather than 'on' the people'
- Active participation facilitates the process of capacity building enabling communities to be the 'driver' of social change
- PAR leads to mainstreaming of 'community voices' , in ways that allow communities to lead the processes that impact them
- Results in 'development', which is inclusive and sustainable



Implications for South Asia

- The region's growing contribution to world economy and development has important implications
- Calls for sustainable community development processes, built on authentic and responsible knowledge production processes
- Here PAR for community development holds special significance
- This holistic development process can in turn have important implications on a global scale
- Recently released SDG report shows hope for South Asia; need to carry on and consolidate efforts



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K4C: A step forward in this direction

A UNESCO Chair in CBR Initiative

International Training Consortium for building capacities in 'Community-Based Research'

Involves partnerships between HEIs & CSOs for co-creation of knowledge, linked to UN SDGs

Reinforces UNESCO Chair's commitment to participatory approaches to research



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K4C Goals

- Develop an internationally accredited gold standard curriculum for CBR training
- Offer a 21-week Mentor Training Program
- Create 8-10 hubs across the world to develop research capacities in local contexts
- Co-generation of knowledge for societal transformation
- Influence policies & practices in implementation of SDGs



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K4C: Forthcoming plans

- K4C kick starts in January 2018, with a 21-week MTP
- Participating countries: Colombia, India, Indonesia, Italy, South Africa
- Future prospective partners for later cohorts (in 2018 & 2019): Spain, Uganda, UK, Canada, Japan
- Final objective is popularizing the practice of CBR, as a approach for research for social change



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Closing reflections

- Current challenges demand a holistic approach; coming together of different knowledge systems, research & academia in particular
- Research needs to feed into developmental processes & perspectives
- For this to happen, a deviation from the status-quo is required
- PAR presents a model approach through which the 'desired change' can be achieved
- South Asian region, by nature of its expanse, geo-politics and development can leave a footprint on global development processes



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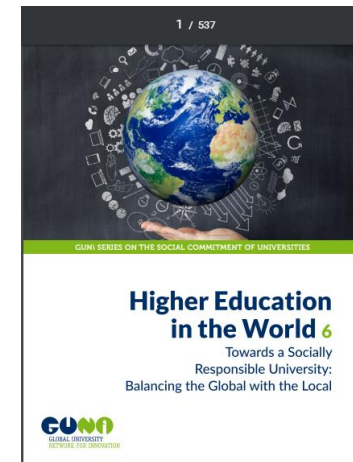
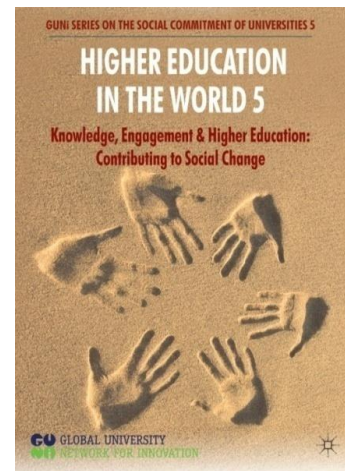
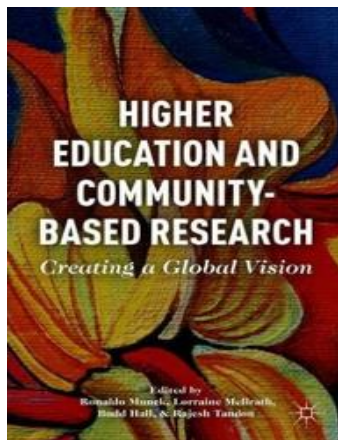
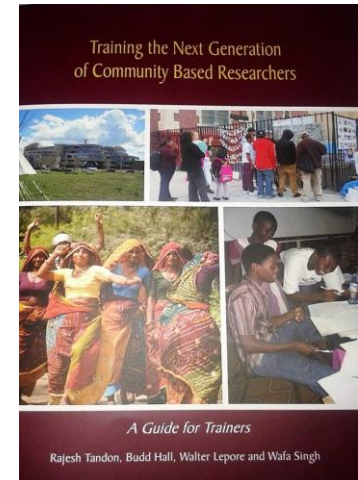
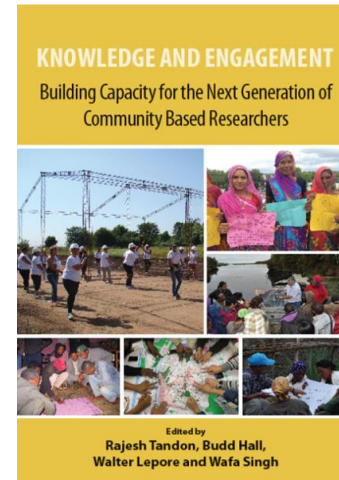
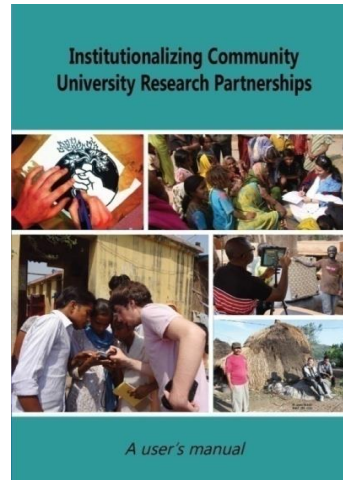
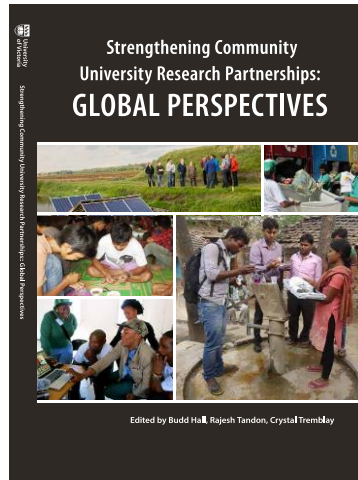
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Publications



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Connect with UNESCO Chair

Wafa Singh



@Wafasingh



@UNESCOchairCBR/

Email:

wafa.singh@pria.org

Websites:

www.unescochair-cbrsr.org

www.pria.org

www.marthafarrellfoundation.org



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