

GRAMA SABHA OF SPECIAL CATEGORIES

OPERATIONAL MANUAL



Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)
Mulamkunnathukavau P.O, Thrissur, Kerala, India

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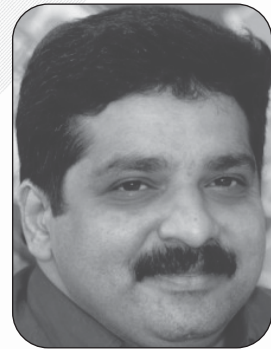
July 2015



Dr.M.K.Muneer
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Message

Grama Sabha is the constitutional platform of people to participate in the development activities of a village. The Grama Sabha members of a ward come together and discuss the development priorities of their locality. The ultimate aim of democracy can be achieved only through people's participation in planning and development. With the passing of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment, the Local Governments got a statutory backing and Grama Sabha got a vital role in planning and development of the locality with community participation. This has led to significant progress in local development and has contributed to delivery of basic services to the poor.



Despite the constitutional mandate, if we examine the two decades of experience of the functioning of Grama Sabha we can see that it is not that much encouraging as visualised. Most of the time Grama Sabha fails to discuss the core development issues of a locality. The needs and Issues of marginalised sections are also neglected. The activities taken up by Local Governments are seldom monitored.

We are far behind in mainstreaming the issues of women, children, aged, differently abled etc. No longer can the local governments go ahead neglecting the marginalised sections of society as they are citizens with equal rights. Local governments should take initiative to discuss the problems of these groups separately and should ensure



their participation in the local governance. As Grama Sabha are the principle participatory forum of a local government, special Grama Sabha can be convened for each of these categories of people.

This operational manual prepared by Kerala Institute of Local Administration for understanding the ways and means of convening special Grama Sabha will surely help local governments and general public towards achieving inclusive development. I appreciate the special efforts taken by KILA for preparing this manual and providing training for the local governments in a timely manner. I expect that this manual will be a toolkit for the local government functionaries including elected leaders, officials, policy makers, Grama Sabha members and practitioners, academicians and researchers.



Dr.M.K.Muneer

03.07.2015

Thiruvananthapuram

Forward

Democratic Decentralisation has been accepted as a dominant tool for bringing power to the public. Many thinkers and advocates of Decentralisation suggest that decentralised governance can contribute to democratic participation, better representation, accountability and governmental effectiveness. Grama Sabha plays a significant role in ensuring and sustaining Decentralisation. The Kerala Panchayathi Raj and Municipality Act 1994 have given extensive roles and responsibilities for Grama Sabha. A strengthened Grama Sabha can ensure right to participation and equal opportunity for development to all citizens, including women, aged, senior citizens, children, differentially abled and other marginalised sections of the society.



The main objective of local government is to ensure local economic development with social justice. Kerala continues to be a model for other states in participatory planning and devolution of powers. But when we assess the outcome of development and welfare schemes implemented over past two decades, we can see that the needs of the marginalised sections of society are not properly represented. Since Grama Sabha fails to include these sections of the society in the local planning process, the issues faced by them are not properly discussed in any planning forums. So the Grama Sabha meetings are to be strengthened. Before conducting the mandated Grama Sabha, a special meeting of women, children, youth, aged, physically challenged, etc., could be convened for getting their suggestions and these suggestions have to be presented in the Grama Sabha. In this context, Government



of Kerala has suggested to hold special Grama Sabha's for women, children, youth, differently abled and senior citizens. In order to convene effective special Grama Sabha, KILA has prepared an operational manual. Based on this KILA will be conducting training for the functionaries local governments.

It is expected that this Handbook will help all elected representatives and Officials and other actors working among marginalized sections. I am grateful to Dr. Peter M. Raj, Associate Professor, KILA and his team for taking efforts to edit this operational manual. I am also grateful to Dr. Mridula R for improving the writing language of the manual with great care and without altering the content of the manual.



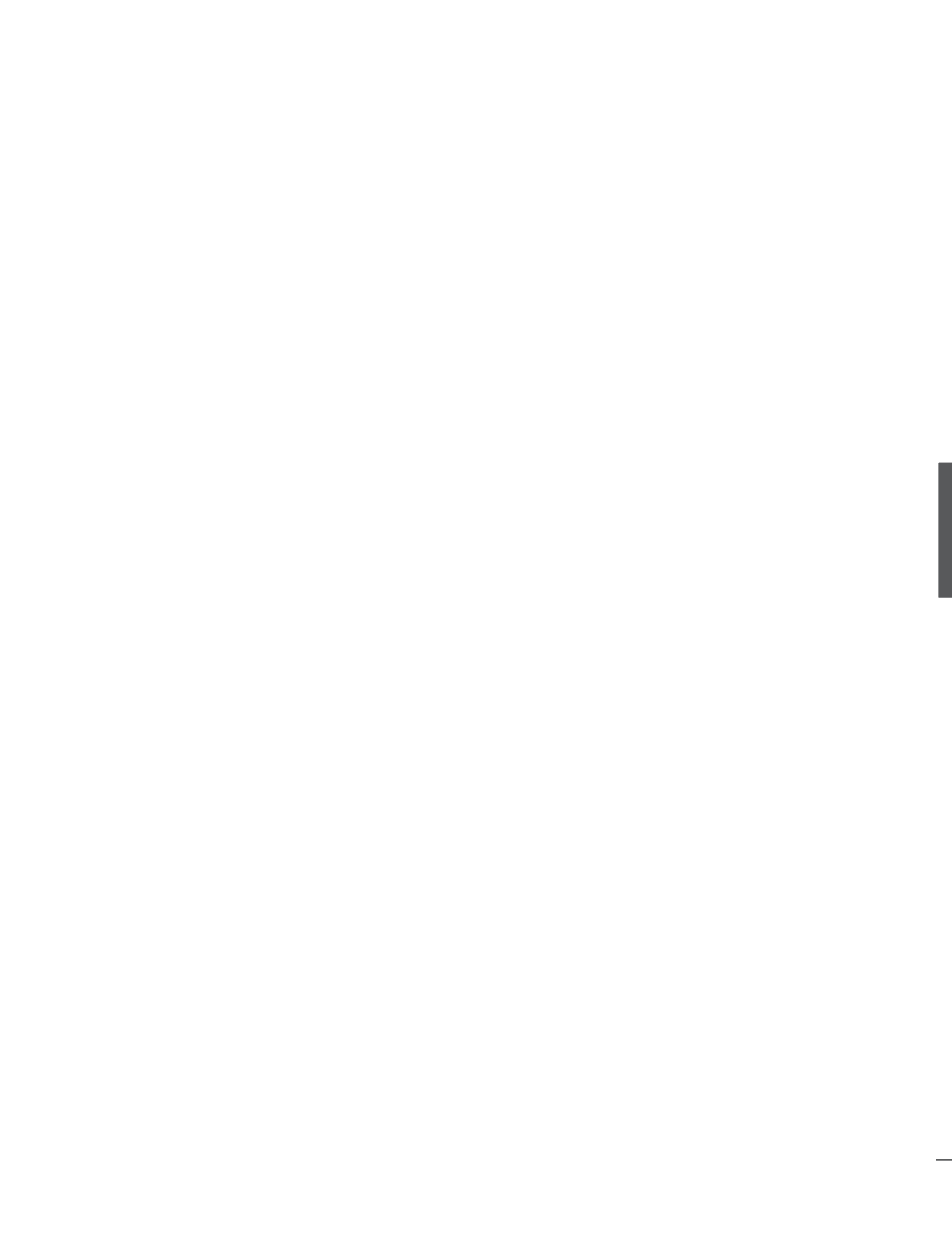
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02.07.2015



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INTRODUCTION

Local governments function with the core objective of ensuring local economic development with social justice. Local Governments being placed near to the people can ensure good governance with public participation. Good governance largely depends upon, how a Government is successful in ensuring justice for the excluded social sections and ensures their participation in decision making process. With the decentralization of power (fund, functions and functionaries) Kerala has evolved a participatory planning process which is universally acclaimed as a replicable model. Assessment of plans formulated and implemented by local, state and central governments reveals that the development needs of the marginalized sections of the society like Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, women, elderly, children and differently abled are not properly represented.

Grama Sabha and Special Grama Sabha

Gram Sabha is a constitutional mechanism which guarantees every citizen with an opportunity to participate in decision making regarding



local governance and development. Across Indian States, Grama Sabha is thinly represented by public. Lack of representation of women and poor sections of the society tend to be great blow to local democracy. Kerala which has made many strides in decentralised governance has fared poorly in ensuring proper participation in the Grama Sabhas, and this needs to be rectified. Majority of the people attending Grama Sabha of Kerala are poor and women. Even when women and marginalised sections of the society attend Grama Sabha, their issues and development needs are neither properly identified and discussed nor mainstreamed in the development agenda. Since children are not part of Grama Sabha, the programmes for children are planned and delivered with a welfare approach and largely centered on 0-6 age group. Several of the developmental priorities of senior citizens and differently abled population are left disguised due to lack of proper representation by these sections in Grama Sabha. Even when women dominate Grama Sabha in terms of the number of participation, the strategic needs of women seldom get discussed. The interests and enthusiasm of youth are not integrated into local governance agenda as youth participation in Grama Sabha is minimal.

Thus it has become necessary to evolve an alternative and complementary forum for including and mainstreaming the marginalized groups. Convening special Grama Sabha is a viable option in this regards. The plan guideline for local governments clearly states the relevance of having discussions with appropriate stakeholders for finalising plan proposals. Govt. of Kerala as per GO (M.S) No. 362/2013 LSGD Dated 16/01/2013 has directed that one among four stipulated Grama Sabhas shall be organized among special groups like children, women, senior citizens, disabled persons and youth. Special Grama Sabha should be organized among these groups for getting suggestions and these suggestions have to be presented in the GramaSabha.

Special Grama Sabha is a common platform for coming together and



discussing the issues and needs of the groups that are in need of special attention. The present operational manual discusses the ways and means of convening special Grama Sabha with special groups like: women, children, senior citizens, differently abled and youth

Objectives of Special Grama Sabha

- To create a common platform for discussing the issues and development priorities of special groups.
- To enable the Grama Sabha of Kerala to be pro-active to the needs of special groups.
- To enable the local governments to plan and implement programmes with the active involvement of the marginalized groups.
- To develop comprehensive support mechanisms for the marginalized groups with a human rights frame.

Mandatory fund allocation is stipulated for local governments in order to mainstream the development priorities of vulnerable groups like women, children, aged and differently abled as part of Women Component Plan and social security plan. There are also institutions and mechanisms for providing services to these categories of people like Anganwadi, Buds school, pakalveedu, Kudumbashree, Jagrathasamities, adolescent girls clubs etc. Different local governments across Kerala have exhibited exemplary services for these groups by conducting Special Grama Sabha .

Convening special Grama Sabha

Special Grama Sabha can be conducted at ward level or at local government level. The level at which Special Grama Sabha is to be convened will depend upon the size of the group. For example, given the size of women, children and elderly population, special Grama Sabha with these groups could be held at ward level. Grama Sabha for



differently abled persons could be convened at local government level.

The Panchayat Committee is responsible for convening Special Grama Sabha in all wards. Elected representative of the ward will be convener of the ward level special Grama Sabha. Chairperson of the concerned standing committee (for eg. welfare standing committee chairperson in the case of children's gramasabha) will be the convener of local government level special Grama Sabha. .

Organization of special Grama Sabha and linkage with plan interventions

Organisation and meeting procedure of special Grama Sabha will be similar to that of general Grama Sabha. The special Grama Sabha is not an independent entity. This has to be linked with general Grama Sabha and other processes in participatory planning. Ensuring linkages will be the responsibility of local government level special Grama Sabha.

The Grama Sabha for senior citizens is a medium for creating a senior citizen friendly governance system. The difficulties and needs of senior citizens can be brought to the attention of the Panchayat functionaries so as to enable them to take steps to protect the rights and ensure their welfare. Children's Grama Sabha aims to initiate a child friendly development perspective in the local government through the continuous involvement of children in governance. Women's Grama Sabha is a medium for mutual learning and community mobilization for engendering the development interventions. The Grama Sabha for differently abled will create a positive climate for designing the programmes for differently abled with a human development and human rights approach. The youth Grama Sabha among other things will create an effective interface among the local governments and youth.

Expense for organization of special Grama Sabha

Expense for organizing special Grama Sabha could be mobilized from



public or could be met from the amount earmarked for plan preparation and monitoring.

Role of Sevagram – Grama Kendra in organizing Special Grama Sabha

Having a permanent and visible institutional mechanism for Grama Sabha, the responsibility of organizing special Grama Sabha could be entrusted with Sevagram- Grama Kendra, which is set up at each ward. The Ward Development Committee at ward level can co-ordinate organizing special Grama Sabha in association with concerned special groups. Ward Development Committee can take a leadership role for making the concerned ward child friendly, aged friendly and so on.

How to use this Operational Manual

Several GramaPanchayats and urban local bodies of Kerala have the practice of conducting Grama Sabha among special groups. The methodology and other meeting protocols followed by them are not uniform. This operational manual is prepared based on good practices of some of the local governments. The methodology and other items suggested are suggestive and not prescriptive. Special Grama Sabha could be conducted among any sub-groups like farmers, elderly women etc. This manual is proposing a suggestive frame for organizing the same. It is desirable to organise special Grama Sabha with all special groups suggested in this manual as this will suggest how to plan programmes for these groups. It is desirable that local governments start organising special Grama Sabha with groups that are most vulnerable. Grama Panchayats, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations are responsible for conducting special Grama Sabha

Dr. Peter M. Raj
Editor



CHAPTER 1

GRAMA SABHA

GramaSabha- a forum for Social Inclusion

Convening of Gram Sabha is one of the integral and central features of 73rd Constitutional Amendment and it is also seen as a means to ensure direct democracy in rural areas. A strong Gram Sabha is the foundation of good governance and a weak or ineffective one contribute to corruption and social exclusion. Article 243(b) defines Gram Sabha as “a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of the Panchayat at the village level”. Every citizen gets an opportunity to participate in making decisions regarding local governance and development in the Gram Sabha.

Participation rate is an indicator of democratic involvement of people in local development. The democratisation of planning is reflected in the participation of people in different stages of planning. Participation becomes effective only when the participants have control over the decisions. The decisions shall reflect the views of all the sections. If the



participants are a few, then decisions reflect only the interests of a few. Equally important is to know whether participation is inclusive or not.

The Grama Sabha is the most important participatory space provided in the context of local governance of Kerala. In conformity with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments, the Kerala Assembly passed the Kerala Panchayati Raj and Municipality Act in 1994. The Section 3 in chapter II of Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 details the formation and functioning of Grama Sabha. The beneficiary selection of all projects including centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) and state sponsored schemes (SSS) is made at the Grama Sabha. Grama Sabha ensures direct participative democracy and offers equal opportunity to all citizens including the poor, the women, the child, the senior citizens and the marginalized to discuss and critically evaluate various serious issues that affect the socio- economic development of the village.

With the introduction of participatory local level planning, the role of Grama Sabha in Kerala has become highly significant. Identification of the felt needs of the people is the first step in the decentralised planning exercise. It is accomplished by convening Grama Sabha, ensuring maximum participation of people, especially, women and other weaker sections of the society in order to discuss the local development priorities. Grama Sabhas are to be convened four times a year. If a Panchayat member fails to convene Grama Sabha consecutively for two times, he/she will be disqualified. Notice about a Grama Sabha must reach the people at least 7 days in advance. This would help for pro-active participation in the Grama Sabha. There must be an Organising Committee for each Ward, which will mobilise the public for the active participation in Grama Sabha. There will be sub-group discussion in the Grama Sabha which will be vital for finalizing the felt needs of the public. The success of decentralised planning depends on the effective functioning of Grama Sabha. As a result, a strengthened Grama Sabha is vital for Kerala.

Sevagram- GramaKendras

To further strengthen Grama Sabha, the twelfth five year plan has mooted



the idea of setting up Sevagram- GramaKendras at each ward. It will serve as a meeting place for the Ward Development Committee (WDC), the executive committee of the Grama Sabha, to deliberate collectively on the administrative, developmental, welfare, service, cultural and social issues pertinent to the area, to suggest solutions, to implement projects and monitor them periodically. The Grama Kendra will be a meeting place for all the ward level peoples' committees organised by the Panchayat. The field level officers of the Grama Panchayat can also operate from this Centre for making the services of the Panchayat directly accessible to the people.

The Kendra will also be an aid-centre for the local people to access information on government and Panchayat services. The citizen's charter, maps, various notifications, lists of BPL families and recipients of welfare pensions, beneficiary list of projects of the Panchayat etc. shall be made available to public. The kendra, manned by volunteers from among retired officers and social workers, under the overall responsibility of the ward member, will function from 3pm to 7 p.m. on five days a week.

Ward Development Committee (WDC)

WDC - the executive committee of the Grama Sabha will be responsible for the effective and efficient functioning of Grama Kendra. The ward member will be the chairperson of this committee.

- WDC has a maximum of 25 member team consisting of two members (one man, one woman) selected from every Neighbourhood Committee and proportional representation of SC/ST and traditional fishermen. The duties of WDC include among others:
 - Reporting ward level needs to the Grama Sabha and the Panchayat;
 - Helping in scrutiny and preparation of a priority list of beneficiaries for projects;
 - Publicizing Grama Sabha meetings and ensure maximum participation;



- Mobilising people's participation in developmental activities;
- Presenting before the Grama Sabha, a monitoring and social audit report of works and projects in the ward;
- Following up on the decisions of the Grama Sabha and presenting a report thereon;
- Conducting a legal adalat for amicable settlement of disputes between members of the Grama Sabha.

Neighbourhood Council (NC)

A Neighbourhood Council (NC) has to be constituted for every cluster of 50-100 families in a ward. It will function as a subset of a Grama Sabha and each Grama Sabha will have around five NCs under it. All voters of the area will be members and there will be an executive committee consisting of 11 members, out of which 6 shall be women. One woman and one man will be elected to the ward development committee from each NC.

The NC must meet prior to each Grama Sabha meeting. It will discuss the agenda items and take decisions regarding developmental activities and priorities. It shall also inform its members about ongoing developmental activities in the area, mobilize public participation and voluntary service, protect public property, campaign against social evils, help in finalizing the beneficiary list, create awareness about public hygiene and conduct surveys, and collect data about local families. The NC shall meet at least once in three months and its executive committee once in a month.

It is expected that the Sevagram- GramaKendra's with a vibrant community based structure namely Neighbourhood Council can activate Grama Sabha of Kerala.





CHAPTER 2

GRAMA SABHA OF CHILDREN

Grama Sabha for Children is envisioned as an assembly of all the children between the age of ten and eighteen of a ward (Constituency of a Panchayat or Urban Local Body). It proposes to create a child friendly development perspective in the local government by identifying the gaps in the planning interventions for children and also by initiating the necessary measures to resolve them.

Why Children's Grama Sabha: Scope

The growth and development of every nation depends, to a very great extent, on the growth and development of its children. The tasks of bringing up children as responsible citizens, who are aware of their rights and duties, have been collectively entrusted with the nation and



its administrators. It is the right of the children that all the development programmes should have a child friendly approach. Kerala has definitely succeeded in bringing about many achievements in the child development sector and can be rightfully proud of reaching the standards of the developed nations, but the fruits of development are yet to reach the entire community of children. The major social and health challenges being faced by the society of Kerala like malnutrition, increasing suicide rate, low mental health, substance abuse, alcoholism, stress etc. directly affect children. Hence, a comprehensive approach for addressing the range of children's needs and issues is particularly relevant in Kerala.

Our country has declared health, education and protection as the rights of children. The local governments along with state and central governments shoulder the responsibility of fulfilling these promises made to the children. In the present scenario, local initiatives should be promoted for improving the quality of performance of each development sector in delivering the services for children and thereby ensuring the development and protection of children in the community. The crucial responsibility of leading such local initiatives is assigned to the local government.

According to 73, 74 constitutional amendments, child development have been transferred to local governments. Local governments should formulate policies for utilising these transferred powers and resources for the integrated development of the children. With all these institutions and resources and with increased children's participation, local government can design and implement comprehensive development programs for children. Children's Grama Sabhas are the most effective platforms for planning and executing such development initiatives. Convening separate Grama Sabha for children will help discuss their problems and needs and also receive meaningful suggestions to resolve the issues.



Participants

Children's Grama Sabha can have children in the age group of 10-18 as its participants. If the children in the age of 6 and above are interested to participate in the Grama Sabha, they can also be included. Children living in orphanages and those who do not have permanent address anywhere, but are residents of the particular ward (e.g. children of migrant worker's) shall participate in Grama Sabha.

Purpose

The purpose of Grama Sabha for children will be:

- To provide children with a common platform to come together.
- To introduce children to the democratic process and Local Government system
- To discuss developmental activities, needs and problems of children and to seek suggestions to solve the problems.
- To evaluate the activities of institutions working for children.
- To act as a dynamic force in negotiating a child centric approach in all the activities of local governments and other departments.

Planning for the Grama Sabha

Convening of Grama Sabha in all wards should be planned and executed by Panchayath committee. Agenda, date and venue for the Grama Sabha should also be decided by Panchayath committee, in consultation with the elected representative of that ward. After the formation of Panchayath level children's Grama Sabha, Panchayath committee should also consult with them before fixing the date and agenda.

Convener

The Elected Representative of a ward is the convener of the Gram Sabha

**Chairperson**

President of the LSG shall preside over the meeting of the Gram Sabha. In his/her absence, the chairperson of the welfare standing committee will be the president of children's Grama Sabha.

Convener	Elected Representative
Chair person	President of LSG
Coordinator	Anganwadi worker

Coordinator

Anganwadi worker (worker of the specific anganwadi which have more coverage in the ward) can be the coordinator of children's Grama Sabha. It is the duty of the coordinator to assist the convener to perform duties relating to the Gram Sabha.

Trained Facilitator

It is desirable to include trained facilitator to facilitate discussions. Facilitator could be identified among officials of institutions under the control of the local government including teachers or any volunteer having expertise on the topic and residing in the particular Panchayat.

Participation of Officials

All Officials under the control of the Local Government, especially implementing officials of Health, Education, police and Social Welfare, should participate in the Gram Sabha if required by the President.

Grama Sabha Meeting

The Grama Sabha for Children should meet at least twice a year and should be convened one month ahead of general Grama Sabha.

Venue date and time

The Panchayath committee has the privilege to decide the date and venue of the meeting of the children's Grama Sabha. However, in order



to ensure participation of all children, it is better to hold Grama Sabha meetings during weekends or holidays.

Duration

It is to be ensured that there should be a minimum of 3 hours to carry out business.

Quorum

It is desirable to have 30% participation of children in the age group of 10-18 for children's Grama Sabha.

Notice

It is the responsibility of the elected representative (Convener) to inform the participants about the meeting of the Grama Sabha. Notice shall be circulated one week before the proposed date. It should include details like time, venue, and agenda of the meeting.

Campaigning and Organisation

The overall responsibility of organizing Grama Sabha is entrusted with the Welfare standing committee of the Local government. At ward level, the campaigning for children's Grama Sabha may be done under the leadership of respective Ward Vikasana Samithy. An organizing committee shall be constituted at ward level. The members of the organising committee will be the ward member, co-ordinator designated by the Panchayat, Anganwadi worker, representatives of Children's Club, NCC Cadets, Ward development Committee, ADS, Children's forums etc. Notice shall be circulated through Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, adolescent clubs, bala sabha, Ayal sabha etc. to the participants. Panchayath President can address school assemblies and inform students about Grama Sabha. Door to door campaigns by children's groups, posters/notices in gramakendrams, Anganwadis, clubs etc may be organized.



Meeting protocol

- Registration- The participants can register in the minutes book of Grama Sabha. The name, age, sex and signature of the participants shall be entered.
- Presentation of Report: Coordinator/ official appointed by the local government shall present a report on the existing programmes and services of the Local Government for children(A common report at panchayath level should be prepared for presenting in childrens Grama Sabha in each ward). The follow up of actions undertaken by the Local Government on the suggestions of previous children's Grama Sabha shall also be noted.
- A general discussion on the report
- Sub group discussion: group discussion on the basis of rights of children. They should discuss Initiatives of the local government for protecting the rights of the children, the development gaps, problems and suggestions for solution.

Points for group discussion

Right to survival

- ❖ Social discriminations against girl- child, like female foeticide, child marriage etc.
- ❖ Nutrition standard, drinking water and sanitation facilities provided from family, Anganwadi,schools, health institutions and other public places like markets, hotels etc
- ❖ Infrastructure facilities and child friendly services in health institutions
- ❖ Services for pregnant women, lactating mothers, young children and Adolescent girls



Right to development

- ❖ Functioning of anganwadi and schools:, infrastructure facilities school drop out
- ❖ Education avenues for differentially abled
- ❖ School mid-day meal programme
- ❖ Activities of School clubs
- ❖ Venues for play, playground, cultural and sports activities

Right to protection

- ❖ Violence against children from family, schools and other institutions
- ❖ Child labour
- ❖ Substance abuse in schools and surroundings
- ❖ Corporal Punishments to children at family, school. Travel arrangements, amenities(safe route to school)- challenges
- ❖ Protection avenues for children
- ❖ Protection of Differentially abled-challenges

Right to participation

- ❖ Participation in local government planning process
- ❖ Evaluation of the functioning of bala sabha, Grama Sabha, clubs etc.
- ❖ Participation in cultural-entertainment forums
- ❖ Group presentation: the leader of the group should present the report of discussion
- ❖ General discussion on presentation and consolidation of reports
- ❖ Recording of decisions and recommendations in Minutes
- ❖ Election of two ward representatives for the formation of



Panchayath level children Grama Sabha

Minutes

It is the duty of the coordinator to prepare and keep separate minutes for children's Grama Sabha. The decision and recommendations of the meeting shall be recorded on the spot and read out to the assembly at the end of the meeting. All the participants should register in the minutes and at least 5 participants should sign after recording the decisions.

Decisions and Planning interventions

1. Local Government level Grama Sabha for Children(LGGSC)

Two representatives elected from all the children's Grama Sabhas will constitute Local Government Level children's Grama Sabha. Like local government general body, there should be a president, vice president and standing committee chairpersons for LGGSC. ICDS supervisor/any other officials appointed by LSG can be the convener of LGGSC.

LGGSC should be convened every month. It should be convened before every general Grama Sabha to list out the subjects and issues to be brought to the attention of the general Grama Sabha.

LGGSC responsible for:

- Organising children's Grama Sabha in all wards
- consolidating the proceedings of ward level children's Grama Sabha (WLCGS)
- Bringing the attention of local body, standing committee and working group to the general problems and needs of the children.
- Follow up of decisions taken in the Grama Sabha.



2. Participation in General Grama Sabha

A ward representative should be assigned the task of participating in the general Grama Sabha and presenting the report of children's Grama Sabha of the respective ward. Report can be prepared in the prescribed format (Annexure 1), based on the discussions and minutes of Grama Sabha. Anganwadi worker (co-ordinator) can assist children in the preparation of this report. The ward member concerned should make sure that they get a space in the general Grama Sabha to present the report. The ward representatives should brief the decisions of general Grama Sabha in the next LGGSC meeting.

3. Participation in Development seminar

The President, Vice president and standing committee chairpersons of LGGSC should participate in the development seminar of the local government. LGGSC may consolidate all the decisions and suggestions of children's Grama Sabha and general Grama Sabha and prepare a report titled 'Child Status Analysis' (Annexure-II) to present in the development seminar. LGGSC can also consult with children's clubs, school clubs, bala sabha and other children's forums for suggestions, while preparing the report. The report shall be prepared in consultation with the convener of LGGSC. The president of LGGSC shall present the report in the development seminar.

4. Implementation and follow up

Local Government must give due consideration to the decisions and suggestions of children's Grama Sabha. The local government should report the follow up activities taken on the decisions of children's Grama Sabha in the forthcoming Children's Grama Sabha of LGGSC. The LGGSC shall discuss the status of implementation of programmes for children and report the same to Panchayat Committee and Children's Grama Sabha. Once in a year, LGGSC should conduct social audit of institutions working for the children in the Panchayath.





CHAPTER 3

GRAMA SABHA OF DIFFERENTLY ABLED PERSONS

The challenges the Differently Abled people have to confront in everyday life are vastly different from the ones faced by others and when development programmes are mapped out, they should be diligently addressed. Special Grama Sabha for Differently Abled persons is a pioneering step in this direction at the local government level. It aims at creating an inclusive development strategy which pays keen attention to the needs, aspirations and priorities of the Differently Abled in the entire planning process of a Local Government.

Differently Abled Category

Disability is the loss or reduction in any physiological function resulting in partial or total inability to perform any bodily or mental functions in a manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.



According to The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, Medical board had included the following disabilities in the disabilities with 40% or more.

- blindness
- low vision
- hearing impairment
- loco motor disability
- mental retardation
- mental illness
- leprosy-cured

Why Special Grama Sabha for Differently Abled?

India is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. The Constitution of India ensures equality, freedom, justice and dignity of all individuals and implicitly mandates an inclusive society for all, including persons with disabilities. The National Policy recognizes the Persons with Disabilities as valuable, dynamic human resource for the country and seeks to create an environment that provides them with equal opportunities and protect their rights. Their active participation in the society is eagerly looked for. But in spite of the numerous laws, policies and treaties, the differentially abled people are still languishing in the margins of our society. According to the Census, 2001, fifty-one percent of the persons with disabilities are illiterate. There is an urgent need for mainstreaming them in the general education system through inclusive education. Around 2.7 per cent of the population of Kerala is estimated to be



disabled. Persons with Disabilities (DIFFERENTLY ABLED) are deprived of essential health & educational services, and so continue to be economically backward.

Our society fails to view the wide ranging problems of the persons who are Differently Abled with empathy. Social prejudices reject them as inferiors and keep them ignorant of their rightful place in the society. Even though the national policy emphasises physical, educational and economic rehabilitation, facilities for diagnosis, treatment, education and rehabilitation remain unattainable to them. There are gaps in ensuring proper support mechanisms including the social security coverage for the disabled. Above all there is the grievous absence of a common platform for the differentially abled to come together to discuss their issues, voice their grievances and chart out plans.

A person with disability requires wide ranging services and support from all sectors. Influenced by the national policy, the disability right movement and advancement in various bio- psychosocial interventions in the field, an organized disability management service has been operational for the last few years. The Local Governments can play an important role in putting into practice the national policy for the Differently Abled and in implementing the laws. The apathy of the society towards the disabled is reflected in the general Grama Sabha's disinclination to discuss their needs and problems and as the representatives of the disabled fail to attend the Grama Sabhas, their angst generally remains unvoiced. In this context, a special grama sabha which can ensure their active participation and open up discussions on disabled-specific issues should be organized. Formation of SHGs and special NHGs for the promotion of income generation activities, life skill development etc can be prioritised in the discussions of special grama sabha. The Special Gram Sabha for the Differently Abled can also initiate them to the wider world and awaken their interest in local governance.



Participants

The participants are all persons with disability in the Local Government as detailed below:-

Category of Differently Abled	Participants
Loco – motor disability	Differently Abled persons
Sensory disability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Visual impirement · Hearing impaired · Deaf-blind 	Differently Abled persons
Other disabled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Learning disability · Multiple Sclerosis 	Persons with disability
Mentally challenged <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mental retardation · Autism · Cerebral Palsy · Multiple disability 	Legal guardian or Parent
Mentally ill	Legal guardian or Parent
Bed redded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Paraplegia · Spinal injury 	Legal guardian/ Parent/ Care taker

In the case of mentally retarded or mentally ill persons who are not fully capable to articulate their problems, their care givers may be invited to Special Grama Sabha for the disabled.



Special Invitees

- a. Representatives of the institutions for the care or education of the Differently Abled.
- b. One representative each of the organizations for the different categories of Differently Abled working within the Local Government.
- c. Functionaries such as Health staff, palliative nurse, anganwadi workers, ASHA workers and specialists.

Purpose

- To provide Differently Abled with a common platform to come together.
- To discuss the problems and development priorities of Differently Abled and to seek suggestions to solve the problems.
- To discuss the programmes and services available for differently abled and to ensure their access to the same.
- To plan programs for the comprehensive development & rehabilitation of differently abled.
- To act as a dynamic force in ensuring a disabled- friendly approach in all the activities of local government and other departments.

Planning the Grama Sabha

Convening of special Grama Sabha for Differently Abled is planned and executed by Panchayat committee. Agenda, date and place for the grama sabha are to be decided by Panchayat committee in consultation with ward members.

Convener

The chair person of the Welfare Standing Committee shall be the



convener of Special Grama Sabha.

Chairperson

Chairperson of Local government will preside over the Grama Sabha meetings. In the absence of chairperson, the vice chairperson shall preside over the meeting.

Coordinator

ICDS supervisor shall be the coordinator of Grama Sabha. It is the duty of the coordinator to assist the convener and to perform duties relating to the Grama Sabha.

Facilitator

It is desirable to include a trained facilitator to facilitate discussions. The facilitator could be identified among the officials of institutions under the control of the local government including teachers or any volunteer having expertise on the topic and residing in the particular Local government area.

Participation of Officials

Any official, under the control of the local government, may participate in the special Grama Sabha, if required by the president. The participation of the officials of the departments of health, social security & education is mandatory for addressing the special needs of Differently Abled

Grama Sabha Meetings

Special Grama Sabha for Differently Abled persons should meet at least once a year and should be preferably convened 15 days ahead of general Grama Sabha.

Venue date and time

Grama Sabha should be convened at the place and time decided by the



Panchayat committee. To ensure full participation of Differently Abled, it is better to hold Grama Sabha in a place and day accessible and convenient to Differently Abled

Duration of Grama Sabha

Minimum duration of Grama Sabha shall be 3 hours for proper discussions.

Quorum

It is desirable to have at least 30% participation of the eligible participants.

Notice

It is the responsibility of the elected representative of the respective ward to inform the participants about the meeting of Grama Sabha. Notice shall be circulated one week before the proposed date. It should include details like time, venue and agenda of the meeting.

Organization

The overall responsibility of organising Grama Sabha for Differently Abled persons is entrusted with the Welfare Standing Committee of Local Government. All measures to get good visibility and support arrangements are needed in order to ensure the participation of maximum participants. The elected members should ensure that printed notices reach every house having Differently Abled persons. Notice shall be circulated through Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, Neighbourhood groups, Special NHGs, Voluntary Organisations working for Differently Abled persons, Public health centres etc. Door to door campaigns and exhibition of posters and notices in Sevagrama Gramakendrams, Anganwadis and other public places may also be organised.



Meeting Protocol

Registration

Registration can be done in the minutes book in the following format:

REGISTRATION FORMAT

Name of Local Self Government:

Venue:

Date:

Sl. No.	Name of the Participant	Differently Abled / Representative	If Representative, representing whom?	Type of Disability		Female	Male	Age	Signature
				Type	Category				

Report

The Coordinator of the Grama Sabha shall present a report. The report shall contain a brief profile (data base) of the Differently Abled persons, the programmes and projects organised in the previous year, brief



details of the beneficiaries of pension, scholarship, aids and appliances. The report shall be prepared in consultation with Welfare standing committee and Health & Education standing committees and the convener of social security working group. The follow up actions undertaken by the local government on the suggestions of the previous Special Grama Sabha shall also be included.

General Discussion

The facilitator of the Grama Sabha shall guide the discussion on the basis of the content of the report. The suggestions /opinions of the participants shall be noted.

Sub Group discussions

After the report the participants shall be divided in to six groups on the basis of their disability. Each group should discuss the following points.

- 1) Social security assistance including pension, scholarship, stipends, care givers pension and other assistance, data base.
- 2) Health and certification:- Aids and appliances, medical checkup, medical board certificates, examination concessions, medical assistance, therapies, ID card, medical insurance and related issues.
- 3) Education and Training:- Issues related to IED, special education, SSA assistance, educational appliances, barrier free environment, transportation, etc...
- 4) Local plan and Physical infrastructure:- Micro enterprise, Self-employment, special NHG and revolving fund, common facility centers, barrier free infrastructure, etc...

Group presentation: The leader of the group should present the report of the discussion. The recommendations and decisions are recorded in minutes book.



Nomination to general council: The special Grama Sabha should nominate one representative from each ward to be included in the general council for Differently Abled. The general council should include at least one representative from each category of Differently Abled.

Minutes

It is the duty of the coordinator to prepare and maintain separate minutes. The discussions and recommendations of the Grama Sabha shall be recorded on the spot and read out to the assembly at the end of the meeting. The minutes should contain the agenda, attendance, presidential address, welcome, the report of coordinator, brief account of major problems discussed by the participants and suggestions emerged from group discussions. It should also state the category wise problems as presented in the general discussion. The minute may also mention the working group which will respond to their demands and suggestions. All the participants should register their names in the minutes book. The convener, coordinator, facilitator and at least 5 participants should sign after recording decisions.

Decision and Planning Intervention

1. Formation of Local Government Level Executive Committee for the Differently Abled

An executive committee for the Differently Abled should be formed at the Local Government level. The committee should have a President, Vice President, Secretary, Convenor and Coordinator. The President of the Local Government will take up the role of the president of the executive committee too. Vice President and Secretary should be selected from among the representatives of special Grama Sabha. Convenor of the Executive committee will be the Chairperson of Welfare



Standing Committee and ICDS Supervisor will be the Coordinator. The executive committee shall have a general council which includes all the ward level representatives. The general council can be convened by the Vice president and secretary of the executive committee as and when required. The Executive committee for the Differently Abled should be convened at least 4 times a year and 15 days prior to the general Grama Sabha.

2. Participation in General Grama Sabha

Executive Committee should assign ward level representatives to participate in the general Grama Sabha and to report the suggestions of Special Grama Sabha for the Differently Abled. The report can be prepared (Annexure 1) on the basis of the discussions and minutes of special Grama Sabha. The ward member concerned should ensure space for the Differently Abled in the general grama sabha to present the report.

3. Participation in Development seminar

All the members of the Executive Committee, along with three other general council members, shall participate in the development seminar of the local government. A report (Annexure 2) shall be prepared in consultation with the Convener and Coordinator and presented in the development seminar by the Vice President/Secretary.

4. Implementation and follow up

Local Government must give due consideration to the decisions and suggestions of Grama Sabha of the Differently Abled. It should report the follow up activities taken on the decisions of the grama sabha in the forthcoming Executive Committee of the Differently Abled. It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to facilitate the implementation of the projects specially designed for the Differently



Abled like income generation activities, welfare pensions, BUDS School (School run by LSG for differently abled children), BRC etc. The special Grama Sabha should monitor and conduct social audit on the services and institutions for the Differently Abled and should act as a driving force in creating a disabled-friendly environment in local governance.





CHAPTER 4

GRAMA SABHA OF SENIOR CITIZENS

The Grama Sabha for senior citizens can be defined as an assembly of elderly people who have the right of suffrage, and live in an area belonging to a particular ward of the Panchayath or urban local body. As the National and State Policies for elderly define senior citizen as anyone above sixty years of age, the age of the members of the Special Grama Sabha for Senior Citizens can be stipulated as above sixty. The Grama Sabha for senior citizens is envisaged as an empowering agency which can bring their difficulties and needs to the attention of the local government and the general public and expedite the creation of a senior citizen- friendly governance system. This forum enables local government to take steps to protect the rights of senior citizens and ensure their welfare, especially those who need special care and attention like octogenarians, widows, aged bachelors and spinsters,



destitute, lonely persons and persons suffering from chronic diseases. Thus the Special Gram Sabha for senior citizens strives to form a collective of senior citizens who are economically, socially and emotionally empowered.

Why Special Grama Sabha for Senior Citizens?

Social and familial alienation combined with economic insecurity turns old age in to the most complex phase in human life. Generally the life of the aged is made miserable due to lack of economic stability, proper health care, legal support, domestic care, opportunity for rest and recreation and very importantly, lack of opportunity to utilize their skills. But even among the aged, there are several sub groups that face special problems like women, the disabled, permanently ill, forsaken, and destitute. For example an aged widow may suffer from the two pronged problem of gender discrimination and economic insecurity. The aged ones belonging to different age groups like above 60, above 70, above 80 and so on face different sets of problems. Due to the socio-economic changes and demographic transition happening in India, particularly in Kerala, aged people tend to get neglected and are seen as a burden to the society. It is crucially imperative for a civilized society to address the problems of the aged and seek remedial measures. It is the responsibility of the society to make this complex period of a person's life pleasant by creating an atmosphere for them to live as dignified and useful citizens.

The wellbeing of senior citizens is mandated in the Constitution of India under Article 41. "The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to public assistance in cases of old age". The National and State Policies for elderly emphasize the obligation of the society to the senior citizens and recognise the valuable service they rendered to the society at the prime of their life.

The policies and plans formulated by central and state governments for



the welfare of older persons should be translated into practice by the Local Governments. As Gram Sabha is a vibrant forum for promoting planned economic and social development of the villages in a transparent way, the senior citizens must have a vital role in the GramaSabha of their village. But in the existing gram sabha meetings, due to various reasons, they are not getting enough opportunity for active participation. The situation calls for a pragmatic approach and the convening of a special GramaSabha for senior citizens is a positively viable solution.

Generally, the aged remain marginalized and their problems and needs get scant attention. In this context, organizing special Grama Sabha for the aged is one of the best and innovative strategies to bring the aged population back to the mainstream. It is the responsibility of the society to energise their skills by providing proper opportunities. Apart from the avenues offered by general GramaSabha, special Grama Sabha provides the senior citizens with the opportunity to discuss their problems find solutions and formulate care packages and action plans to address their needs. They could effectively intervene in the planning process of the local government and rectify weak resolutions concerning senior citizens. Special Grama Sabha can make the aged citizens aware of the existing legal safe guards, including the 'Protection of Senior Citizens and Parents Act'. Very importantly, the beneficiaries of this programme are not merely the aged, but the society as well. The general Grama Sabhas and the local governments can benefit from the wisdom of the aged. Their experience and expertise could be mobilized for promoting planned economic and social development of the locality.

In the context of Kerala, aged population is on increase every year. As per 2011 census, 12.6% of Kerala's population is aged. The nuclear family system, high rate of mobility (migration) of younger ones in pursuit of education and employment, increased urbanism etc pose new threats to senior citizens of Kerala. These factors necessitate the



intervention of the local governments in finding innovative ways of dealing with the development priorities of the aged.

Participants

The Participants of senior citizen's GramaSabha are all voters above sixty years of age, living in the area covered by respective ward of a Local Government.

Purpose

1. To provide a common platform for the Senior citizens to come together.
2. To provide an interactive platform for the senior citizens to realize the present status, issues and challenges of individuals as well as the collective.
3. To make the aged people aware of the existing support services available for senior citizens at different tiers of governments.
4. To make them aware of the existing protective system including legal redressal mechanisms.
5. To provide a space for participation in development planning of local governments
6. To evolve community based platforms for implementing programmes for the aged with self-help approach.

Planning for the gramasabha

Convening of gramasabha in all wards should be planned and executed by Panchayath committee. Agenda, date and venue for the gramasabha should also be decided by Panchayath committee, in consultation with the elected representative of that ward. After the formation of Panchayath level Senior Citizens GramaSabha, the Panchayat committee should also consult with them before fixing the date and agenda. The agenda should have common items applicable to entire Local Government as well as items specific to each ward.



Convener

The Elected Representative of the ward shall be the convener of the Special GramaSabha.

Chairperson

The president of the Local Government shall preside over the meeting of GramaSabha. In the absence of the President, the chairperson of the welfare standing committee and in the absence of both, the convener shall preside over the meeting.

Convener	Elected Representative
Chairperson	President of LSG
Coordinator	Any Officer

Coordinator

The coordinator of special GramaSabha could be any officer designated by the Panchayat. It is the duty of the co-ordinator to assist the convener in performing the duties related to the gram Sabha in the particular ward.

Trained Facilitator

It is desirable to include a trained facilitator to facilitate discussions. He/she could be identified among officials of institutions under the control of the local government including teachers or any volunteer having expertise on the topic and residing in the particular Panchayat.

Participation of Officials

All officials in charge of organizing special GramaSabha must ensure their presence and active participation throughout the session. As Gram Sabha for senior citizens is an important platform to discuss various issues and challenges of elderly, the presence of the officials of Health and Social Security departments and the representatives of JagrathaSamiti is desirable. The concerned officials must communicate



the suggestions of the special Grama Sabha to the concerned working groups for plan interventions.

Number of Gram Sabha Meetings

The special Grama Sabha for senior citizens should be convened at least once in six months and should be convened at least one month ahead of general Grama Sabha.

Venue, Date and Time

Panchayat committee should decide the venue, date and time for convening special Grama Sabha. The date and time should be decided so as to ensure maximum participation of senior citizens.

Duration of Gram Sabha

The duration of a session of the Grama Sabha should be of a minimum of three hours to ensure effective participatory discussion and decisions.

Notice

The convener, in consultation with the coordinator and senior citizens' clubs, shall issue the notice. Notice shall be circulated before one week of the date of convening Grama Sabha. The notice should include date, time, venue and agenda.

Quorum

There is no fixed quorum for special Grama Sabha as in the case of general Grama Sabha. However organizers should ensure the participation of at least 30 percentages of total senior citizens residing in the ward.

Campaigning and Organization

The overall responsibility of conducting special Grama Sabha for senior citizens will be vested with the welfare standing committee of the Panchayat. To ensure maximum participation of senior citizens in the



special Grama Sabha, following strategies can be adopted.

- Notice should be displayed on public notice boards, public places and institutions.
- All senior citizens are to be contacted making use of the service of ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, Kudumbashree members, Geriatric clubs and Children's clubs.
- An organizing committee shall be constituted at ward level. The members of the organising committee will be the ward member, co-ordinator designated by the L S G , A n g a n w a d i worker, representatives of Geriatric clubs, pensioners' associations, ward development Committee, ADS, Children's forums etc.
- Participation of senior citizens belonging to all sections in general Grama Sabha is to be ensured.

Meeting Protocol

- **Registration:-** The participants have to register in the minutes book of Grama Sabha. The name, age, sex and signature of the participants shall be entered.
- **Presentation of Report:** Coordinator shall present a report on the existing programmes and services of the Local Government for aged. It should focus on the present status, support systems and the programmes and future perspectives of Local Government on development of senior citizens. The follow up of actions undertaken by the Local Government on the suggestions of previous senior citizen's Grama Sabha shall also be noted.
- **A general discussion on the report**
- **Sub group discussion:** Sub -Group discussions on the basis of social security measures, health interventions, social



protection and recreation can be conducted. They should discuss Initiatives of the local government for protecting the rights of the elderly, the development gaps, problems and suggestions for solution.

Topics for Sub Group Discussion

1. Social Security Measures: Employment status, pensions, welfare schemes, assistance and supportive services, income generation activities, Capacity building etc.
 2. Health Intervention: Health clinic, integrated health care (Allopathic, Ayurveda, homeo, Ayush etc.) geriatric clinics, house visit, health care, nutrition, health care packages, palliative care, physiotherapy, health insurance etc.
 3. Social Protections and Legal Measures: Domestic problems, neglect by children, community cum day care centers, employment training, legal aid cells.
 4. Rest, Recreation and Participation: Collectives of senior citizens, art and cultural activities, rest places, opportunity to practice traditional knowledge, sharing of expressions, body movements, communication, aged infrastructures, other basic facilities etc.
- Other than the general topics suggested, topics specific to each locality should also get attention in the group discussion. Controversial topics having vested interest must be avoided. Discussion can also be based on schemes that can be taken up using the funds of Local Government, MP, MLA and the State Government.
 - Presentation of report by representative of the group
 - General discussion: based on the report presented and consolidation of group report.



- The decisions and recommendations should be recorded in the Minutes book
- Nominate a male and female representative for LSG level GramaSabha

Minutes

It is the duty of the co-ordinator to prepare and keep separate minutes for GramaSabha for aged. The decision and recommendation of the meeting shall be recorded at the meeting itself and be readout to the gathering at the end of the meeting. All the participants should register in the minute book and at least five participants should sign after recording the decisions.

Decisions and Planning Interventions

1. Follow up on the recommendations and suggestions

Recommendations and suggestions of the special Grama Sabha for senior citizens should be reported to the general Grama Sabha, concerned working groups and welfare standing committee for follow up action and for the consideration of the annual plan of the Local Government. The issues having legal implications (for example atrocities) could be taken up with concerned authorities including police or taken up for mediation through jagratasamiti.

2. Formation of Local Government Level GramaSabha for senior citizen (LGGSSC)

LGGSSC should be constituted with 2 representatives (a female and a male) nominated from each ward level Grama Sabhas. If a Panchayat has 20 wards, there will be 40 members in the Local Government level GramaSabha for senior citizens. This shall have a five member Executive Committee. The Executive committee will comprise a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Convenor and Coordinator. The Convener of Panchayath level Grama Sabha will be the chairperson of a social security working group and the co-ordinator will be the ICDS supervisor



or any other official appointed by Panchayath. The president of the LSG will be the patron of the Grama Sabha for senior citizen.

LGGSSC will have certain major responsibilities like preparation of summary report of the suggestions and recommendations of ward level Grama Sabha, submitting plan proposals concerning senior citizens to Panchayath Committee, standing committees and working groups, making regular follow up with LSG or other support systems, preparation of status report of the aged of the LSG based on summary report etc.

LGGSSC should be convened at least four times a year one month prior to general Grama Sabha. It should be convened before every general Grama Sabha to list out the subjects and issues to be brought to the attention of general Grama Sabha. The convener should make all support arrangements for the smooth conduct of the Grama Sabha.

3. Participation in General Grama Sabha

Senior citizen's Grama Sabha should assign ward level representatives (two each) to participate in general Grama Sabha and present the report of that ward. Report is to be made (Annexure 1), on the basis of discussions and minutes of Grama Sabha. The concerned ward member should make sure that the senior citizens get a space in the general Grama Sabha to present the report. The ward representatives should give a concise account of the decisions of general Grama Sabha in the next LGGSC meeting.

4. Participation in Development Seminar

The five member Executive Committee of Senior citizen's Grama Sabha should participate in the development seminar of local government and should present status report of senior citizens (refer Annexure 2) of the Panchayat. The report shall be prepared in consultation with the convener and co-ordinator. The president shall present the report in the development seminar. Geriatric clubs, pensioner's forums, NGOs working for the aged should be consulted while preparing the report.



5. Implementation and follow up

Local Government must give due consideration to the decisions and suggestions of senior citizen's Gram Sabha. The local government should report the follow up activities taken on the decisions of senior citizen's Grama Sabha in the forthcoming Grama Sabha. It is the responsibility of grama sabha to facilitate implementation of projects meant for senior citizens including the starting of geriatric clubs, pakalveedu (day care centres for the aged) and other thoughtful initiatives. It should monitor and conduct a social audit of the institutions working for elderly and elderly - centric development activities of the Panchayat.





CHAPTER 5

GRAMA SABHA OF WOMEN

Grama Sabha for women is a participatory platform involving all women voters in a ward. The motivating principle that governs the formation of Women's Grama Sabha acknowledges gender equality as the precondition for development. Women's Grama Sabha endeavors to bring women oriented development schemes in to the mainstream, keeping gender equations in perspective. The idea will be effectively actualized when the Grama Sabha is represented by women from all the different strata of the society.

Context

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, have given directions to hold special Grama Sabha meetings of women in all Grama Panchayaths in order to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions.



Accordingly, many Indian states have started holding Mahila Sabhas. National level assessments prove that participation of women and weaker sections in Grama Sabha is very low across India and that the quality and nature of participation significantly vary from one village to the other. Now there is a welcome change. With the initiation of Mahila Sabhas, the rate of participation of women in general Grama Sabha meetings has definitely increased. This has motivated several India states, including Kerala, to commence Women's Grama Sabha.

In Kerala, majority of the participants in the Grama Sabhas are women. Grama Sabhas in Kerala have helped women achieve voice and visibility. Several factors like 50% reservation for women in Panchayaths, wide publicity given to Grama Sabha, active involvement of anganwadi workers and women's self-help groups like Kudumbashree etc. have dynamically converged to promote the cause of women.

But, in spite of increased women participation in Grama Sabha, the core development issues concerning women of Kerala are not properly discussed. Moreover, Grama Sabha does not always represent women belonging to all sections of the society. Convening special Grama Sabha for women will provide a space for all women of the locality to come together and to engage in qualitative discussions on core women's issues. There are several projects undertaken by LSGs for women both as part of the women component plan and the general plan. Special Grama Sabha could be a proper forum for discussing the quality and viability of projects taken up for women.

Why Women's Grama Sabha?

Development, in the true sense of the term, will take place only when women, who constitute more than 50% of the population of Kerala, participate in all stages of development. The skills and expertise of the entire population is to be energized in order to ensure the progress of a nation. The main objective of Women's Grama Sabha is to bring



women, who have so far been thrust to the peripheries, to the mainstream. As women's involvement is crucial for the success of the planning and implementation of women's welfare schemes, the grama sabha will discuss women's issues and prioritise the development projects meant for women. Women's Grama Sabha opens up an opportunity to foreground the problems and aspirations of women before the authorities and to evolve a women friendly development process. As this forum is conversant with the programmes and policies of local, state and central governments for women, it can help develop women centered projects in the Panchayat. It offers women a chance to discuss issues like dowry, domestic violence, substance abuse, violence in public space, female foeticide and trafficking of women and children. Women's grama sabha is not merely a body to give recommendations and suggestions to plan process; it is a common platform which is essential for women affiliations and consequent empowerment.

Participants

All women voters in the ward constitute the participants of special Grama Sabha. However girls below 18 years of age may also participate if they are interested.

Purpose

The purpose of women's Grama Sabha will be:

1. To give a platform for the women for improved participation in development process.
2. To give a platform for women to raise their issues and suggest solutions.
3. To make effective planning for women component plan as well as other projects benefiting to women.
4. To share information on programmes, schemes, and good practices that are made available for women by Central, State,



local governments and other agents of power and to make proper linkages.

5. To monitor the ongoing projects and programmes keeping a gender perspective.

Planning for Grama Sabha

Holding of special Grama Sabha for women in all wards should be planned and executed by Panchayat committee. Agenda, date and place for the Grama Sabha should also be decided by Panchayat committee, in consultation with the elected representative of the concerned ward. After the formation of Panchayat level women's Grama Sabha, Panchayat committee should also consult with them before fixing the date and agenda.

Convener

The Elected Representative of the ward is the convener of the Grama Sabha

Chairperson

President of the LSG hall preside over the special Grama Sabha meetings. In his/her absence, the chairperson of the welfare standing committee and in the absence of both, the convener shall preside over the meeting.

Convener	Elected Representative
Chair person	President /Chairperson of LSG
Coordinator	Any official

Coordinator

The coordinator of special Grama Sabha could be any officer designated by the Panchayat. It is the duty of the co-ordinator to assist the convener to perform the duties relating to the Grama Sabha.

**Facilitator**

It is desirable to include a trained facilitator (preferably women) to facilitate discussions. She could be identified among officials of institutions under the control of the local government including teachers or any volunteer having expertise on the topic and residing in the particular Panchayat.

Participation of Officials

All Officials under the control of the Local Government shall participate in the Grama Sabha if required by the President. The participation of officials of health, education, social security and representatives of Jagratasamiti is desirable.

Number of Gram Sabha Meetings

The women's Grama Sabha should meet twice a year and should be convened two weeks ahead of the general Grama Sabha.

Venue date and time

The Panchayat committee can decide the venue, date and time of the Grama Sabha, but it should be convenient for majority of women to attend. It is better to hold Grama Sabha meetings in the weekends or on holidays.

Duration

To ensure proper discussions, there should be a minimum of 3 hours of Grama Sabha meetings.

Quorum

There is no fixed quorum for Women Grama Sabha. It is desirable to have the participation of 30% of total women voters in the ward for women Grama Sabha.

Notice

It is the responsibility of the elected representative of the ward



(Convener) to inform the participants about Grama Sabha. Notice shall be circulated one week before the proposed date. It should include date, time, venue, and agenda of the meeting.

Campaigning and Organisation

The overall responsibility of organizing Grama Sabha is vested with the chairperson of Welfare standing committee of the Local government. At the ward level the campaigning for women's Grama Sabha could be done under the leadership of respective Ward Development Committee. Notice can be circulated through Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, women groups, SHGs, ayalsabha etc; to the participants. Door to door campaign, posters/notice in sevagram- grama kendrams, Anganwadi and clubs etc can be organized. Local TV networks and vernacular media can also be used as the tool for bringing this innovative step to the attention of the public.

For the proper organization of special Grama Sabha, an organization committee can be formed at ward level. Ward member, co-coordinator, Anganwadi worker, representative of Ward Development Committee, ADS, Resident's Associations and children's forums etc. can be the members of organizing committee.

Meeting protocol

- **Registration:** The participants can register in the minutes book. The name, age and signature of the participants shall be entered.
- **Presentation of Report:** Coordinator shall present a report on the existing programmes and services of the Local Government for women. The follow up of actions undertaken by the Local Government on the suggestions of previous women's Grama Sabha shall also be noted.



- **A general discussion on the report**
- **Sub group discussion:** After the report presentation, the participants shall be divided in to four sub-groups to discuss the following themes.

Points for group discussion

The discussion will capture the broad dimensions of socio-political and economic realms that share interfaces with women empowerment. The issues and opportunities that prevail in the concerned areas shall also be discussed. Other than the general topics suggested, topics specific to each locality should also get attention in the group discussion.

I. Economic and social development

- ❖ Opportunities for economic development of women
- ❖ MGNREGS, micro enterprises
- ❖ Women working in agricultural and other informal sectors
- ❖ Responsibilities at home and public life
- ❖ Participation in social and political life

II. Security

- ❖ Atrocities against women in public space and work place
- ❖ Domestic violence against woman
- ❖ Protective mechanisms/safety nets for women : legal mechanism, Jagrata samiti, social welfare pensions
- ❖ Child marriage, child labour, female foeticide, school drop out

III. Health Issues

- ❖ Life cycle issues of women



- ❖ Care of aged women
- ❖ Reproductive health (Care of pregnant women, Issues related to child care)
- ❖ Substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and drugs)
- ❖ Nutrition and hygiene
- ❖ Occupation linked health issues
- ❖ Health services for women by health institutions

IV. Services and programmes by Panchayat

- ❖ Programmes benefiting women implemented by the Panchayat
 - ❖ Programmes benefiting women by other government agencies
 - ❖ Institutions under Panchayat: special focus on the institutions which have closer relation with women issues, such as PHC, schools, Anganwadi and hostels.
 - ❖ Other women friendly infrastructure arrangements
- Presentation of report by representative of the group
 - General discussion on the group report presented and consolidation of reports.
 - The decisions and recommendations should be recorded in the Minutes book
 - Elect two representatives for the Panchayat level Grama Sabha for women

Minutes

It is the duty of the coordinator to prepare and keep separate minutes of women's gramasabha. The decision and recommendations of the



meeting shall be recorded on the spot and readout to the assembly at the end of the meeting. All the participants should register in the minutes and at least 5 participants should sign after recording the decisions.

Decisions and Plan interventions

1. Formation of Local Government level Gram Sabha for Women (LGGSW)

LGGSW should be constituted with 2 representatives each nominated from every ward level special Grama Sabha. If a Panchayat has 18 wards, there will be 36 members in the LGGSW. The LGGSW will have a five member Executive Committee. The committee will have a President, Vice- President, Secretary, convener and coordinator. The Convener of the LGGSW will be the chairperson of women and child development working group and the co-ordinator will be ICDS supervisor or any other official appointed by LSG. The meeting protocol will be the same as that of ward level special Grama Sabha for women. Sub group discussions will be held on the suggestions and observations of ward level special Grama Sabhas of the entire LSG.

The major responsibilities of LGGSW will be Preparation of summary report of the suggestions and recommendations of the special Grama Sabhas, submitting plan proposals concerning women to Panchayat Committee, Standing committees and working groups, making regular follow up with LSG or other support systems, preparation of status report of women of the LSG based on summary report etc.

For easy follow up, the recommendations could be classified into two as below:

- i. Issue-based recommendations.** Such recommendations can be forwarded to Panchayat committee and Panchayat committee will make appropriate decision on it. They could be



placed before general Grama Sabha, if needed. For example, if the recommendation is on a specific atrocity against women, Panchayat committee will forward it to Police or Women's Commission.

ii. Development related recommendations. The recommendations relating to development could be forwarded by the Panchayat committee for appropriate discussion in general Grama Sabha and in the concerned standing committee and working groups for the consideration of the annual plan of the LSG.

LGGSW should be convened at least four times a year and one month prior to each general Grama Sabha. The convener (official appointed by LSG) should make all support arrangements for the smooth conduct of the Grama Sabha.

2. Participation in General Grama Sabha

LGGSW should assign ward level representatives (two each) to participate in general Grama Sabha and present the report of women's Grama Sabha of the respective ward. Report (Annexure 1) can be prepared on the basis of discussions and minutes of Grama Sabha. The ward member concerned should make sure that the women get a space in the general Grama Sabha to present the report. The ward representatives should brief the decisions of general Grama Sabha in the next LGGSW meeting.

3. Participation in Development seminar

The five member Executive Committee of women's Grama Sabha should participate in the development seminar of local government and should present status report of women (Annexure 2) of the LSG. The report shall be prepared in consultation with the convener and co-coordinator of LGGSW. While preparing the report, LGGSW should



consult with Kudumbashree, women's wing of pensioner's forums, NGOs working for women, adolescent girls' clubs etc. The president of LGGSW shall present the report in the development seminar

4. Implementation and follow up

Local Government must give due consideration to the decisions and suggestions of women's Grama Sabha. It should report the follow up activities taken on the decisions of women's Grama Sabha in the forthcoming women's Grama Sabha. It is the responsibility of LGGSW to facilitate implementation of projects meant for women including the micro-enterprises and other developmental initiatives. This should monitor and conduct a social audit on the institutions and women - centric development activities of the LSG





CHAPTER 6

GRAMA SABHA OF YOUTH

Young people between the age of 18 and 35, whose names are enrolled in the voters list, are the members of Youth GramaSabha. Such a GramaSabha is the forum for the youth to participate in the decision making process as well as the development and welfare activities of the locality. Local Self Governments (LSG) should give due consideration to the resolutions passed in the dynamic, interactive sessions of the Youth Grama Sabha. Thus Youth GramaSabha can create a new generation of youth with a clear vision of local and participatory development.



Why Youth Gram Sabha?

The present social climate calls for creative interventions of youth in local governance and development. Youth are the productive force of any country and the development initiatives steered by youth are generally sustainable and practical. The Grama Sabha offer appropriate opportunities for the youth to participate in local development. Unfortunately, the youth in Kerala are yet to make good use of this opportunity. Even though Youth comprise of 44% of Kerala's population, at present the participation of youth in Grama Sabha is negligible. As a result, the Local Governments are not in a position to formulate development schemes for youth in consultation with the youth and youth organizations. Youth have little awareness about the youth welfare schemes of different tiers of governments. Even educated youth show a sense of apathy towards the development interventions of the local governments. In this context, the Grama Sabha for youth becomes an urgent requisite and an extremely relevant interventional force.

Participants

Youth Grama Sabha consists of the youth (men and women) aged between 18 and 35 of a ward. The women of this age group, who are members of women's Grama Sabha, can also attend the youth Grama Sabha as this focuses on the development priorities of youth.

Purpose

1. To create a common platform for the youth of a ward to come together and participate in the development activities of Local Government.
2. To sensitize youth about their rights and responsibilities towards local development.
3. To create awareness about the role of youth in local governance



for evolving effective development interface.

4. To utilize the service of the youth and youth clubs to formulate and implement development schemes for youth.
5. To suggest ways and means of improving development programmes of local governments with pro-poor orientation.

Planning for Grama Sabha

The Panchayat committee is to take up the task of planning and implementing the formation of the special Grama Sabhas for youth in all wards. Agenda, date and venue of the Grama Sabha should also be decided by Panchayat committee, in consultation with the elected representative of the concerned ward. After the formation of Local Government level Youth Grama Sabha, Panchayat committee should also consult with them before fixing the date and agenda.

Convener

The Elected Representative of the ward is the convener of the Youth Gram Sabha of the ward.

Chairperson

The president of the LSG presides over meeting of the youth Gram Sabha and in the absence of the President the Chairperson of Health and Education Standing Committee shall do it. In the absence of both, the convener shall preside over the meeting.

Coordinator

The coordinator of special Grama Sabha could be a school teacher or any officer designated by the LSG. It is the duty of the co-ordinator to organize the special Grama Sabha in the particular ward.

Participation of Officials

Participation of officials working in the development sector like School



Teachers, Agriculture Officer, Village Extension Officer etc. is desirable.

Number of Gram Sabha Meetings

The special Grama Sabha for youth should be convened at least once in six months and should be convened at least 15 days ahead of general Grama Sabha.

Venue, Date and Time

The convenience of youth should be taken into consideration while deciding upon the venue, date and time of the meeting of the special Grama Sabha for youth. Ideally, it should be convened on holidays.

Campaigning and organisation

An active awareness campaign is essentially important for the success of the Grama Sabha for Youth. On the basis of the decision by the Panchayat Committee, in consultation with the convener of the working group for youth Welfare, Yuvasakthi coordinators and youth clubs, notices can be circulated among the following groups.

1. All youth aged between 18 and 35, with the assistance of Yuvasakthi Coordinator and Youth Clubs.
2. All youth organizations.
3. All youth clubs and voluntary organization associated with youth welfare.
4. Display notice at public places and institutions.

An organizing committee shall be constituted at ward level with representatives of appropriate bodies for the smooth conduct of the special grama sabha.

Meeting Protocol

The Grama Sabha meeting shall have the procedures like registration,



welcome, presidential address, thematic presentations, and group discussions, presentation of group reports, selection of delegates to Local Government level Youth Gram Sabha and vote of thanks.

- Registration: All participants should register in the registration format. Code number should be allotted to each participant to facilitate group formation.
- Welcome by Elected representative of the ward
- Presidential address by President of the LSG
- Presentation of report: Report presentation should focus on the present status, support systems and the programmes and future perspectives of Local Government for the development of youth.
- There can be a general discussion based on the report.
- Sub group discussion: Participants shall be divided into four groups to discuss the following themes.

Points for sub group discussion

1. Involvement of youth in local governance
 - ❖ Involvement of youth in Grama Sabha organization
 - ❖ Membership of youth in Working groups and other forums for plan formulation
 - ❖ Programmes by the Local governments for the welfare of the youth
 - ❖ Support to Young elected members
 - ❖ Support to youth clubs
2. The problems faced by youth
 - ❖ Unemployment
 - ❖ Youth unrest/ antisocial activities
 - ❖ Substance abuse



- ❖ Atrocities against women
- 3. Participation of youth in economic life
 - ❖ Youth and employment opportunities
 - ❖ Skill up gradation
 - ❖ Youth in agriculture
 - ❖ Employment and entrepreneurship, self-employment programmes
 - ❖ Linkage with banks and other agencies
- 4. Participation of youth in public life
 - ❖ Role of youth in voluntary work
 - ❖ Role of youth in development and welfare activities
 - ❖ Youth and politics
 - ❖ Youth and cultural activities
 - ❖ Activities of youth and women clubs

Before discussion begins each group should select a chairperson and reporter. The group reports should include the problems, needs and remedial measures relating to each subject.

- Presentation of report by representative of the group
- General discussion based on the report presented and consolidation of group report
- The decisions and recommendations should be recorded in the Minutes book
- Nominate a male and a female representative for the Local Government level Youth Grama Sabha

Questions and Suggestions

The members of Youth Gram Sabha have the right to ask questions and



give suggestions for consideration in the meeting before or during the meeting of Gram Sabha.

Minutes

The co ordinator should record the minutes of the meeting on the spot and read it out to the assembly at the end of the meeting. All the participants should register in the minute book and at least five participants should sign after recording the decisions.

Decisions and Planning Interventions

1. Follow up on the recommendations and suggestions

Recommendations and suggestions of the special Grama Sabha for youth should be reported to the general Grama Sabha, concerned working groups and Health and Education standing committee for follow up action and for the consideration of the annual plan of the LSG.

2. Formation of Local Government Level Grama Sabha for Youth (LGGSY)

A LGGSY shall be constituted with 2 representatives (a female and a male) nominated from each ward level Grama Sabha. It shall have a five member Executive Committee. The Executive committee will have a President, Vice- President, Secretary, Convenor and Coordinator. The Convener of LGGSY will be the chairperson of the working group on Education and the co-ordinator will be a school Headmaster or any other senior teacher appointed by the LSG. The elected members below 35 years will be the special invitees.

The major responsibilities of LGGSY will be as follows:

- Preparation of summary report of the suggestions and recommendations of ward level Grama Sabha
- Submitting plan proposals concerning youth development to



Panchayat Committee, Standing committees and working groups.

- Preparation of status report on the youth of the LSG based on summary report.

LGGSY should be convened at least four times a year, fifteen days prior to general Grama Sabha. It should be convened before every general Grama Sabha to list out the subjects and issues to be brought to the attention of general Grama Sabha. The convener should make all support arrangements for the smooth conduct of the Grama Sabha.

3. Participation in General Grama Sabha

Two participants each from all wards should attend general Grama Sabha and present the report of their respective wards. Report should be prepared based on the format given in Annexure one. The concerned ward member should make sure that the youth get a space in the general Grama Sabha to present the report. The ward representatives should brief the decisions of general Grama Sabha in the next LGGSY meeting.

4. Participation in Development seminar

The five member Executive Committee should participate in the development seminar of local government and should present status report of youth of the LSG as per the format given in Annexure 2. Youth clubs, NGOs working for the youth and elected members below 35 years should be consulted while preparing the report. The president of LGGSY shall present the report in the development seminar.

5. Implementation and follow up

The local government should report the follow up activities taken on the



decisions of Grama Sabha for youth in the forthcoming Grama Sabha. It is the responsibility of LGGSY to facilitate implementation of projects meant for youth including the conduct of sports and cultural activities, LSG level mass rallies and other youth developmental initiatives.



ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Area Development Society
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
BRC	Block Resource Centre
DA	Differently Abled
GS	Grama Sabha
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IED	Inclusive Education for Differently Abled
LSG	Local Self Government
LGGSY	Local Government level Grama Sabha for Youth
LGGSC	Local Government level Grama Sabha for Children
LGGSSC	Local Government level Grama Sabha for Senior Citizen
LGGSW	Local Government level Grama Sabha for Women
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NC	Neighbourhood Council
NHG	Neighbourhood Group
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PHC	Public Health Centre
SHG	Self Help Group
SSA	Sarva Siksha Abhiyan
WDC	Ward Development Committee

Annexure-I
Report of Ward Level Special Grama Sabha

No of participants	
Name of seleted representatives	1. 2.
Topics of discussion-general discussion	1. 2.
No of groups formed for discussion	
Topics of discussion in sub groups	1. 2.
Summary of group report	
Suggestions to general grama sabha	1. 2.
Name & signature of the person prepared the report	
Name & signature of the coordinator	

Annexure -II
Report of Panchayath Level Special Grama Sabha(Table 4)

S.No	Status Analysis of(LSG)
1.	Name of the local Body
2.	Total no of Wards
3.	No of Special grama sabha convened
4.	Total No of participants in grama sabha
5.	Issues/needs raised in Special grama sabha
6.	Suggestions placed before general grama sabha
7.	Decisions of general grama sabha
8.	Issues needed special focus by local government

Annexure- III : Meeting protocol

Registration		
Welcome	10 min	Elected representative
Chairperson	15 min	President of LSG
Reporting	10 min	Coordinator
General discussion	10 min	On the basis of report
Group discussion	30 min	Sub Groups to discuss & consolidate all the problems and needs of the special group
Group presentation	40 min	Group leaders- children
General Discussion and Consolidation	10 min	Ward member
Vote of thanks		One among the participants
National anthem		