

GRAMA SABHA/WARD SABHA OF SPECIAL CATEGORIES



OPERATIONAL MANUAL



KERALA INSTITUTE OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

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

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Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of Special Categories:
Operational Manual

Chief Editor

Dr.P.P.Balan
Director, KILA

Editor

Dr. Peter M. Raj
Associate Professor, KILA

Associate Editors

Smt. Geethanjali
Extension Faculty, KILA

Shri. K Gopalakrishnan
Extension Faculty, KILA

Contributors

Peter M. Raj
Imthiyas Ali V
Riyas Mon T
Geethanjali
Rima Jose

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DTP

Srilatha S.Menon

Layout & Cover Designing

Rajesh Thanikudam

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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 differentially abled are not properly addressed.

Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha

Gram Sabha/Ward 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/ Ward 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 of all categories of people in the Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha, and this needs to be rectified. Majority of the people attending Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha are poor and women. Even when women and marginalised sections of the society attend Grama Sabha/ Ward 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/ Ward 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 differentially abled population are left disguised due to lack of proper representation by these sections in Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha. Even when women dominate Grama Sabha/ Ward 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/ Ward Sabha is minimal.

Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha for special category of people has become necessary to evolve an alternative and complementary forum for including and mainstreaming the marginalized groups. Convening Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha of special category of people 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 the four stipulated Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha shall be organized among special groups like children, women, senior citizens, disabled persons and youth. Special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha shall be organized among these groups for getting suggestions and these suggestions have to be presented in the Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha.

Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha of special category of people or Special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha is a common platform for coming together and discussing the issues and needs of the groups that are in need of special attention. This operational manual discusses the ways and means of convening special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha with special groups like: women, children, senior citizens, differentially abled and youth.

Objectives of Special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha

- To create a common platform for discussing the issues and development priorities of special groups.
- To enable the Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha 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 and vulnerable groups.



- To develop comprehensive support mechanisms for the marginalized and vulnerable groups with a human rights frame.

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

Mandatory fund allocation is stipulated in the plan guidelines for local governments in order to mainstream the development priorities of vulnerable groups like women, children, aged and differentially abled as part of Women Component Plan and social security plan. . Different local governments across Kerala have organized exemplary services for these groups by conducting Special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha.

Special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha-Organisation and linkage with plan

Special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha can be conducted at ward level or at local government level. The level at which special Grama Sabha/ Ward 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/ Ward Sabha with these groups could be held at ward level. Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha for differentially abled persons could be convened at local government level.

The Local Government Committee is responsible for convening Special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha at ward level or at local body level. The president of the Local Government will be presiding over the special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha meeting. Elected representative of the ward will be convenor of the ward level special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha. Chairperson of the concerned standing committee will be the convener of local government level special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha.



Organisation and meeting procedure of special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha will be similar to that of general Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha. The special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha is not an independent entity. This has to be linked with general Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha and other processes of participatory planning.

Expense for organization of special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha

Expense for organizing special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha could be mobilized from public or could be met from the amount earmarked for plan preparation and monitoring.

Role of Sevagram – Grama Kendram in organizing Special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha

Having a permanent and visible institutional mechanism for Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha, the responsibility of organizing special Grama Sabha/ Ward 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 the activities for organizing special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha in association with concerned special category.

How to use this Operational Manual

Several Local Governments of Kerala have the practice of conducting Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha of special categories of people. The methodology and other meeting protocol 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/ Ward 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/ Ward 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/ Ward Sabha with groups that are most vulnerable. Local Governments are responsible for conducting special Grama Sabha/ Ward Sabha.

Dr. Peter M. Raj
Editor



Chapter 1

Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha

1. Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha - a forum for Social Inclusion

Convening of Grama Sabha/Ward 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 Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha is the foundation of good governance and a weak or ineffective one contribute to corruption and social exclusion. As per Panchayathi Raj Act sec 3(2) "*All persons whose names are included in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of a village Local Government shall be deemed to be constituted as Grama Sabha of such village*". Every citizen gets an opportunity to participate in making decisions regarding local governance and development in the Grama Sabha/Ward 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/Ward 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 Panchayathi Raj Act and Kerala Municipality Act in 1994. The The beneficiary selection of all projects including Centrally Sponsored Schemes



(CSS) and State Sponsored Schemes (SSS) is made at the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha ensures direct participative democracy and offers equal opportunity to all citizens including the poor, women, children, senior citizens and the other 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/Ward 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/Ward Sabha, ensuring maximum participation of people, especially, women and other weaker sections of the society in order to discuss the local development priorities. Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha are to be convened four times a year. If a Panchayat member fails to convene Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha consecutively for three times and councilor of Urban local body fails to convene ward sabha for two times, he/she will be disqualified. Notice about a Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha must reach the people at least 7 days in advance. This would help for proactive participation in the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. There must be an Organising Committee for each Ward, which will mobilise the public for the active participation in Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. The success of decentralised planning depends on the effective functioning of Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. As a result, a strengthened Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha is vital for Kerala.

2. Sevagram- Gramakendram/Wardkendram

To further strengthen Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha, the twelfth five year plan has mooted the idea of setting up Gramakendram/Wardkendrams at each ward. It will serve as a meeting place for the Ward Development Committee (WDC), the ward level committee of the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha, to deliberate collectively on the administrative, developmental, welfare, cultural and social issues pertinent to the area, to suggest solutions, to implement projects and monitor them periodically. The Gramakendram/Wardkendram will be a meeting place for all the ward level peoples' committees organised by the Panchayat. The field level officers of the Local government can also operate their activities from this Centre for making the services of the local government directly accessible to the people.



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

3. Ward Development Committee (WDC)

WDC - the ward level committee of the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha will be responsible for the effective and efficient functioning of Gramakendram/Wardkendram. 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 Ayalsabha (Neighbourhood Committee) with proportional representation of SC/ST and traditional fishermen and members elected from Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. The duties of WDC include among others:

- Reporting ward level needs to the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha and local government;
- Helping in scrutiny and preparation of a priority list of beneficiaries for projects;
- Publicizing Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha meetings and ensure maximum participation;
- Helping in organising and conducting grama sabha/Ward Sabha meeting
- Mobilising people's participation in developmental activities;
- Presenting before the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha, a monitoring and social audit report of works and projects in the ward;
- Following up on the decisions of the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha and presenting a report there on;
- Conducting a legal *adalat* for amicable settlement of disputes between members of the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha.



4. Ayalsabha (Neighbourhood Council)

Ayalsabha (Neighbourhood Council) has to be constituted for every cluster of 50-100 families in a ward. It will function as a subset of Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha and each Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha will have around five Ayalsabha 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 Ayalsabha

The Ayalsabha must meet prior to each Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha meeting. It will discuss the agenda items of the forthcoming Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha 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, collect data about local families etc. are to be the other activities of Ayalsabha. The Ayalsabha shall meet at least once in three months and its executive committee once in a month.

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





Chapter 2

GRAMA SABHA/WARD SABHA OF CHILDREN

1. Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of Children

Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of Children is envisioned as an assembly of all the children between the age of ten and eighteen of a ward (Constituency of a Local Government). It proposes to create a child friendly atmosphere and 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.

2. Why Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of children?

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 is one of the functions of local governments. Local governments should formulate policies for the integrated development of the children. With the help of the institutions under the LSG's and available resources and with increased children's participation, local government can design and implement comprehensive development programs for children. Children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha are the most effective platforms for planning and executing such development initiatives. Convening special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of children will help to discuss their problems and needs and also receive meaningful suggestions to resolve the issues.

3. Participants

Children's Grama Sabha/Ward 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/Ward 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/Ward Sabha.

4. Purpose

The purpose of Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of 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.



5. Planning for the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha

Convening of Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha in all wards should be planned and executed by Local government committee. Agenda, date and venue for the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha should also be decided by Local government committee, in consultation with the elected representative of that ward. After the formation of Local Government level Development Committee for Children, they should also consult with LGDCC before fixing the date and agenda.

Chairperson	President of LSG
Convenor	Elected Representative of the ward
Coordinator	ICDS Supervisor

6. Chairperson

President of the LSG shall preside over the meeting of the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. In his/her absence, the chairperson of the welfare standing committee will be presiding over the meeting.

7. Convenor

The Elected Representative of the ward is the convenor of the children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha.

8. Coordinator

ICDS Supervisor can be the coordinator of children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. It is the duty of the coordinator to assist the convenor to perform duties relating to the Gram Sabha.

9. 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 Local government.

10. Participation of Officials

All Officials under the control of the Local Government, especially implementing officials of Health, Education, and Social Welfare, should participate in the Grama



Sabha/Ward Sabha. The Local government may also invite any officials working in the local area including the police authorities to the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha if found necessary.

11. Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha Meeting

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

12. Venue, date and time

The Local government committee has the privilege to decide the date and venue of the meeting of the children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. However, in order to ensure participation of all children, it is better to hold Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha meetings during holidays.

13. Duration

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

14. Quorum

It is not necessary to fix the quorum of the meeting but it is desirable to have 30% participation of children in the age group of 10-18.

15. Notice

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

16. Campaigning and Organisation

The overall responsibility of organizing Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha is entrusted with the Welfare standing committee of the Local government. 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 Local government , representatives of Children's Club, NCC Cadets, Representatives of Ward development Committee, ADS members, Anganwadi workers, Children's



forums etc. Notice shall be circulated through Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, adolescent clubs, bala sabha, Ayal sabha etc. to the participants. Local government President can address school assemblies and inform students about Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. Door to door campaigns by children's groups, posters/notices in gramakendrams, Anganwadis, clubs etc may be arranged.

17. Meeting protocol (Annexure –I)

- **Registration-** The participants can register in the minutes book of Children's Grama Sabha/Ward 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 Local government level should be prepared by ICDS supervisor for presenting in children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha in each ward). The follow up of actions undertaken by the Local Government on the suggestions of previous children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha shall also be presented.
- A general discussion on the report
- 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. The participants may be divided into four groups on the basis of rights of children viz; right to survival, development, protection, participation. . Before discussion begins each group should select a chairperson and reporter. The group report should include the problems, needs and remedial measures relating to each subject.
- **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
- Selection of two ward representatives for the formation of Local Government level Development Committee for Children



18. Points for group discussion

18.1 Right to survival

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

18.2 Right to development

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

18.3 Right to protection

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

18.4 Right to participation

- o participation in local government planning process
- o Evaluation of the functioning of bala sabha, Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha, clubs etc.
- Participation in cultural-entertainment forums



19. Minutes

It is the duty of the coordinator to prepare and keep separate minutes for children's Grama Sabha/Ward 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.

20. Decisions and Planning interventions

20.1 Local Government level Development Committee for Children (LGDCC)

Two representatives elected from all the ward level children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabhas will form Local Government level Development Committee for Children (LGDCC). The committee shall have a General Council (comprising all representatives of ward level children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha, Chairperson of Local government, Chairperson of Welfare Standing Committee and ICDS Supervisor) and an Executive Committee. Executive committee consists of 7 members. They are as follows:

LGDCC responsible for:

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

- Chairperson- Chairperson of Local government
- Vice Chairperson -Welfare Standing Committee chairperson
- Convenor- ICDS supervisor
- Joint convenor-selected person from general council
- Coordinator- selected person from general council
- Two members- selected person from general council

General council of LGDCC should be convened three times a year. The executive committee of LGDCC should meet four times a year preferably before general Grama



Sabha/Ward Sabha. The committee should list out the subjects and issues to be brought to the attention of the general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. It is expected that this development committee should function like local government level grama sabha for children.

20.2 Participation in General Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha

A ward representative should be assigned the task of participating in the general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha and presenting the report of children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of the respective ward. Report can be prepared on the basis of (Annexure II) discussions and minutes of Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. The ICDS Supervisor (Convenor of Executive Committee) 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/Ward Sabha to present the report. The ward representatives should brief the decisions of general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha in the next LGDCC meeting.

20.3 Participation in Development seminar

All members of the Executive Committee of LGDCC should participate in the development seminar of the local government. Before the development seminar of the Local Government, LGDCC may consolidate the decisions and suggestions of children's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha and general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha and prepare a report titled 'Status Analysis of Children' (Annexure III). LGDCC consult with children's clubs, school clubs, balasabha and other children's forums for suggestions, while preparing the report. The Coordinator of LGDCC shall present the child status analysis report in the development seminar.

20.4. Implementation and follow up

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





Chapter 3

GRAMA SABHA/WARD SABHA OF DIFFERENTLY ABLED PERSONS

1. Introduction

The challenges the Differently Abled (DA) people have to confront in everyday life are vastly different from the one faced by others. When development programmes are mapped out, the challenges and needs of differently abled should be diligently addressed. Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of Differently Abled persons is a pioneering step in this direction at the local government level. It is a common platform of differently abled. People in a local government to plan and discuss their development needs & priorities. 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.

2. 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, Disability means blindness, low vision, hearing impairment, loco motor disability, mental retardation, mental illness, leprosy-cured. Person with disability means a person suffering from not less than 40% any disability as certified by a Medical Authority.



3. Approach towards 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 to 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, 2011, 2.21 % of total population of India are differently abled. Percentage of differently abled persons in India has increased both in rural and urban areas during the last decades. Kerala has 7,69,980 differently abled population which form 2.3 % of total population of Kerala. Persons with Disabilities are deprived of essential health & educational services, and so continue to be economically backward. There is also an urgent need for mainstreaming them in the general education system through inclusive education.

4. Why special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of Differently Abled?

- 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 emphasizes 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 differently abled to come together to discuss their issues, voice their grievances and chart out plans.
- A person with disability requires wide range of services and support from all sectors. Influenced by the national policy, the disability right movement and advancement in various bio- psycho-social 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/Ward Sabha's reluctance to discuss their needs and problems and as the representatives of the disabled fail to attend the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabhas, their voice generally remains unheard. In this context, a special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha at local government level 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/Ward Sabha. The Special Gram Sabha of the Differently Abled at Local government level can also initiate them to the wider world and awaken their interest in local governance.

5. Participants

The participants of Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of differently abled are all persons with disability in the Local Government as detailed below:-

All elected representatives of local government are expected to participate in the special grama sabha. In the case of mentally retarded or mentally ill persons who are not fully capable to articulate their problems, their legal guardian or parent may be invited to Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of the disabled. In the case of bed ridden their legal guardian /parent/care taker may be invited.



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 ridden <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paraplegia• Spinal injury	Legal guardian/ Parent/ Care taker

6. Special Invitees

The following are to be specially invited for special gramasabha/wardsabha

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

7. Purpose of the Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha

- To provide a common platform for differently abled and 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 programmes 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.

8. Planning the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha

Convening of special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of differently abled at Local government level is to be planned and executed by Local government committee. Agenda, date and place for the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha are to be decided by Local government committee in consultation with ward members. After the formation of local government level development committee for the differently abled, local government committee should also consult with them before fixing date & time.

9. Chairperson

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

10. Convenor

The chairperson of the Welfare Standing Committee shall be the convenor of Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha.

11. Coordinator

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

12. 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 respective Local government.



13. Participation of Officials

Any official, under the control of the local government, may participate in the special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha, if requested by the President/Chairperson/Mayor. The participation of the officials of the departments of health, social justice & education is mandatory for addressing the special needs of Differently Abled

14. Meetings

Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of differently abled persons should meet at least twice a year and should be preferably convened 15 days ahead of general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha.

15. Venue date and time

Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha should be convened at the place and time decided by the Local government committee. To ensure full participation of differently abled, it is better to hold the special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha in a place and day accessible and convenient to differently abled

16. Duration of Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha

Minimum duration of the Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha shall be 3 hours.

17. Attendance

It is desirable to have cent percent attendance of all the eligible participants.

18. Notice

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

19. Organization and Conduct

19.1 Organisation

The overall responsibility of organising Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of 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, Ayal Sabhas, Special NHGs, Voluntary Organisations working for differently abled persons, Public health centres etc. Door to door campaigns and exhibition of posters and notices in Sevagram Gramakendrams, Anganwadi and other public places may also be arranged.

19.2 Meeting Protocol

a) Registration

Registration can be done in the Minutes book in the following format.

REGISTRATION FORMAT

Name of Local Self Government:

Venue:

Date:

b) Report Presentation

Sl. No.	Name of the Participant	Differently Abled / Representative	If Representative, representing whom?	Type of Disability		Male/ Female (gender of differently abled)	Age of differently abled	Ward No	Signature of participant
				Type	Category				

The Coordinator of the Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha shall present a report. The report shall contain a brief profile (data base) of the differently abled persons in the local government, the programmes and projects organised in the previous year, names 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. The follow up actions undertaken by the local government on the suggestions of the previous Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha can also be included in the report.

c) General Discussion

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

d) Group discussions

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

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

e) Group presentation:

The leader of each group should present the report of the discussion in the plenary session. The recommendations and decisions are to be recorded in minutes book.

f) Selection of representatives:

The special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha should select one representative from each ward to include in the Local Government Level Development Committee for Differently Abled. At least one representative from each category of differently abled may be included in the development committee. Selection may be done accordingly.



g) Minutes

It is the duty of the coordinator to prepare and maintain separate minutes. The discussions and recommendations of the Special Grama Sabha/Ward 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 convener, coordinator, facilitator and at least 5 participants should sign after recording decisions.

20. Decisions and Planning Intervention

20. Formation of Local Government Level Development Committee for the Differently Abled (LGDCDA)

The Local Government level development committee for the Differently abled is a representative body of differently abled people formed in every local government shall have a General Council and an Executive committee.

20.1.1 General Council

All the ward representatives selected from the Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha meeting are members of General Council. In addition to these the President/Chairperson/Mayor and Welfare Standing committee chairperson of the Local government and ICDS Supervisor are also members of General Council.

20.1.2 Executive committee

The Executive Committee consists of 7 members. They are as follows:

- Chairperson- Chairperson of Local body
- Vice Chairperson-chairperson Welfare standing Committee
- Convenor- ICDS supervisor
- Joint convenor-selected person from general council
- Coordinator- selected person from general council
- Two members- selected person from general council



20.1.3 Meetings

The General council can be convened by the Chairperson or Convenor of the executive committee at least twice a year. The Executive committee should be convened at least three times a year. It is expected that this development committee should function like local government level grama sabha for differently abled.

20.2 Participation in General Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha

Executive Committee should assign responsibilities to ward level representatives to attend the general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha and to report the suggestions of Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of differently abled. The report can be prepared (Annexure 2) on the basis of the discussions and minutes of special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. The ward member concerned should ensure a space for the representatives of Differently Abled in the general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha to present the report.

20.3 Participation in Development seminar

All the members of the Executive Committee, shall participate in the development seminar of the local government. A report (Annexure 3) titled status analysis of differently abled shall be prepared in consultation with the Vice Chairperson and Convenor. Coordinator of executive committee should present the report in the development seminar.

20.4 Implementation and follow up

Local Government must give due consideration to the decisions and suggestions of the Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of the differently abled. It should report the follow up activities taken on the decisions of the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha in the forthcoming Executive Committee of the LGDCDA. It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to facilitate the implementation of the activities specially designed for the differently abled like income generation activities, welfare activities, Functioning of BUDS School, etc. The LGDCDA 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/WARD SABHA OF SENIOR CITIZENS

1. Introduction

The Special Gram Sabha of 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 Local government. 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 of Senior Citizens can be stipulated as above sixty. The special Grama Sabha of 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 Grama Sabha of senior citizens strives to form a collective of senior citizens for extending economic, social and emotional support.

2. Status of Senior citizens

Social and familial alienation combined with economic insecurity turns old age into 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.

3. Senior citizen Policy

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.

4. Why Special Grama Sabha of Senior Citizens

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 Grama 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 Grama Sabha of their village. But in the existing Grama 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 Grama Sabha of 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 of 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 the Grama Sabha, 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 Sabha 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.

5. Participants

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

6. 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 discuss 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 them 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.



7. Planning for the Special Grama Sabha of senior citizens

Convening of special Grama Sabha in all wards should be planned and executed by Local government committee. Agenda, date and venue for the Grama Sabha should also be decided by Local government committee, in consultation with the elected representative of that ward. After the formation Local Government level Development committee for Senior Citizens (LGDCSC) the Local government 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.

Chairperson	President of LSG
Convener	Elected Representative
Coordinator	Any Officer

8. Chairperson

The president of the Local Government shall preside over the meeting of Grama Sabha. 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.

9. Convener

The Elected Representative of the ward shall be the convener of the Special Grama Sabha.

10. Coordinator

The coordinator of special Grama Sabha could be any officer designated by the Local government. 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.

11. 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 Local government.



12. Participation of Officials

All officials in charge of organizing special Grama Sabha must ensure their presence and active participation throughout the session. As Grama 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 Justice Departments and the representatives of Jagratha Samithi is essential. The concerned officials must communicate the suggestions of the special Grama Sabha to the concerned working groups for planning interventions.

13. Number of Special Grama 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.

14. Venue, Date and Time

Local government 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.

15. Duration of Grama Sabha

The duration of a Grama Sabha shall be minimum three hours to ensure effective participatory discussion and decisions making.

16. Notice

The convener, in consultation with the coordinator and senior citizens' forum 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 of Grama Sabha meeting.

17. Quorum

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



18. Campaigning and Organization

The overall responsibility of conducting special Grama Sabha for senior citizens will be vested with the welfare standing committee of the Local government. 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 Local government, Anganwadi worker, representatives of Geriatric clubs, pensioners' associations, Ward Development Committee, ADS, Children's forums etc. Participation of senior citizens belonging to all sections of the society is to be ensured.

19. Meeting Protocol

19.1 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.

19.2 Presentation of Report:

Coordinator shall present a report (Annexure 2) 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 for the development of senior citizens. The follow up actions undertaken by the Local Government on the suggestions of previous senior citizen's special Grama Sabha shall also be included in the report.

19.3 A general discussion on the report

Based on the content of the Report, a general discussion shall be conducted before the group discussions.

19.4 Group discussion:

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 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 friendly 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.

19.5 Presentation of report by representative of the group. The leaders shall present the opinions and suggestions of the groups in the plenary sessions.

19.6 General discussion:

Based on the report presented in the plenary, a general discussion is required to consolidate the group's suggestion



19.7 Selection of Representatives:

A Male and a Female representative shall be selected from each ward to include in the Local Government Level Development Committee for Senior Citizens (LGDCSC)

20. Minutes

It is the duty of the co-ordinator to prepare and keep separate minutes for Grama Sabha 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.

21. Decisions and Planning Interventions

21.1. 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 to consider while preparing 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 Jagratha Samithi.

21.2. Formation of Local Government Level Development Committee for Senior citizen (LGDCSC)

LGDCSC should be constituted with 2 representatives (a female and a male) selected from each ward level special Grama Sabha. If a Local government has 20 wards, there will be 40 members in the Local Government Level Development Committee for Senior citizen. The committee shall have a general council (comprising all representatives of ward level senior citizen's grama sabha, Chairperson of the Local Government, Chairperson of the Welfare Standing Committee and ICDS Supervisor) and an executive committee. Executive committee consists of 7 members. They are as follows:

- Chairperson- Chairperson of Local Government
- Vice Chairperson-Welfare Standing Committee chairperson



- Convenor- ICDS supervisor
- Joint convenor-selected from general council
- Coordinator- selected from general council
- Two members- selected from general council

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

General council of LGDCS should be convened three times a year. The executive committee of LGDCS should meet four times a year preferably before general Grama Sabha. It is expected that this development committee shall function like local government level grama sabha for senior citizens.

21.3. Participation in General Grama Sabha

Senior citizen's Development committee should assign ward level representatives to participate in general Grama Sabha and present the report of that ward. Report is to be made (Annexure 2), on the basis of discussions and minutes of LGDCSC. 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 LGDCSC meeting.

21.4. Participation in Development seminar

The seven member Executive Committee of Development committee should participate in the development seminar of local government and should present status report (Annexure 3) of senior citizens of the Local government. The report shall be prepared by the coordinator in consultation with the convener and vice chairperson. The coordinator 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.



21.5. Implementation and follow up

Local Government must give due consideration to the decisions and suggestions of LGDCS. The local government should report the follow up activities taken on the decisions of LGDCS in the forthcoming meeting of development committee. It is the responsibility of development committee to facilitate implementation of projects meant for senior citizens. It should monitor and conduct a social audit of the institutions working for elderly and elderly - centric development activities of the Local government.





Chapter 5

GRAMA SABHA/WARD SABHA OF WOMEN

1. Introduction

Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of women is a participatory platform involving all women voters in a ward. The motivating principle that governs the formation of Women's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha acknowledges gender equality as the pre-condition for development. Women's Grama Sabha/Ward 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/Ward Sabha is represented by women from all the different strata of the society.

2. Context

The Ministry of Panchayathi Raj, Government of India, have given directions to hold special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha meetings of women in all Local governments in order to strengthen Panchayathi Raj Institutions. Accordingly, many Indian states have started holding Mahila Sabha. National level assessments prove that participation of women and weaker sections in Grama Sabha/Ward 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 desirable change. With the initiation of Mahila Sabha, the rate of participation of women in general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha meetings has increased. This has motivated several India states, including Kerala, to commence Women's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha.

In Kerala, majority of the participants in the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha are women. Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha in Kerala have helped women achieve voice and visibility.



Several factors like 50% reservation for women in Local governments, wide publicity given to Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha, active involvement of anganwadi workers and women's self-help groups like Kudumbashree etc. have dynamically converged to promote the mobility of women.

But, in spite of increased women participation in Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha, the core development issues concerning women of Kerala are not properly discussed. Moreover, Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha does not always represent women belonging to all sections of the society. Convening special Grama Sabha/Ward 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 Local Governments for women both as part of the Women Component Plan and the general plan. Special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha could be a proper forum for discussing the quality and viability of projects taken up for women.

3. Why?

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/Ward 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/Ward Sabha will discuss women's issues and prioritise the development projects meant for women. Women's Grama Sabha/Ward 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 to develop women centered projects in the Local government. 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/Ward 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.



4. Participants

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

5. Purpose

The purpose of women's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha will be:

- To give a platform for the women for improved participation in development process.
- To give a platform for women to raise their issues and suggest solutions.
- To make effective planning for Women Component Plan as well as other projects benefiting to women.
- 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.
- To monitor the ongoing projects and programmes keeping a gender perspective.

6. Planning for Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha

Holding of special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha of women in all wards should be planned and executed by Local government committee. Agenda, date and place for the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha should also be decided by Local government committee, in consultation with the elected representative of the concerned ward. After the formation of Local Government Level Development Committee for Women, Local government committee should also consult with them before fixing the date and agenda.

7. Chairperson

President of the Local Government shall preside over the special Grama Sabha/Ward 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.



8. Convenor

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

Chairperson	President/Chairperson of LSG
Convener	Elected Representative
Coordinator	Any Officer

9. Coordinator

The coordinator of special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha could be any officer designated by the Local government. It is the duty of the co-ordinator to assist the convenor to perform the duties relating to the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha.

10. 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 Local government.

11. Participation of Officials

All Officials under the control of the Local Government shall participate in the Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha if required by the President. The participation of officials of health, education, social justice is desirable and all the members of ward level Jagratha Samithi is essential

12. Number of Gram Sabha Meetings

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

13. Venue date and time

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



14. Duration

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

15. Quorum

It is not necessary to fix the quorum of the meeting but it is desirable to have the participation of 30% of total women voters in the ward for women Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha.

16. Notice

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

17. Campaigning and Organisation

The overall responsibility of organizing Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha in all wards is vested with the chairperson of Welfare Standing Committee of the Local government. 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- Gramakendrams, 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/Ward Sabha, an Organising committee can be formed at ward level. Ward member, co-coordinator, Anganwadi worker, representatives of Ward Development Committee, ADS, Resident's Associations and children's forums etc. can be the members of organizing committee.

18. Meeting protocol(Annexure I)

18.1 Registration: The participants can register their names and other details in the minutes book. The name, age and signature of the participants shall be entered.



18.2 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/Ward Sabha shall also be reported. (a common report can be prepared at local government level to present in wards.

18.3 A general discussion on the report

18.4 Group discussion: After the report presentation and general discussion, the participants shall be divided in to four sub-groups to discuss the following themes.

18.5 Group Reporting: Presentation of report in the plenary by representative of the group is necessary

18.6 General discussion on the group reports presented and consolidation of reports

18.7 Select two representatives from ward for representing in the Local government level Development Committee for Women.

19. 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 be discussed in the group discussion. The major points for the group discussions are as follows:

I. Economic and social development

- * Opportunities for economic development of women
- * MGNREGS, micro enterprises
- * Women working in agricultural and other unorganised 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, Jagratha Samithi, 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 Local government

- * Programmes benefiting women implemented by the Local government
- * Programmes benefiting women by other government agencies
- * Institutions under Local government: special focus on the institutions which have closer relation with women such as PHC, schools, Anganwadi and hostels.
- * Other women friendly infrastructure arrangements



20. Minutes

It is the duty of the coordinator to prepare and keep separate minutes of women's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. 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.

21. Decisions and Plan interventions

21.1. Formation of Local Government level Development Committee for Women (LGDCW)

LGDCW should be constituted with 2 representatives each selected from every ward level women's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. If a Local government has 18 wards, there will be 36 members in the LGDCW. The Committee shall have a General Council comprising of representatives from wards, chairperson of local body, Chairperson of Welfare Standing Committee and ICDS Supervisor. Executive Committee consists of 7 members. They are as follows.

- Chairperson- Chairperson of Local body
- Vice Chairperson-Welfare Standing Committee chairperson
- Convenor- ICDS supervisor
- Joint convenor-selected from general council
- Coordinator- selected from general council
- Two members- selected from general council

General council of LGDCW should be convened three times a year. The executive committee of LGDCW should meet four times a year preferably before general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. The committee should list out the subjects and issues to be brought to the attention of the general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha.

The major responsibilities of LGDCW will be Preparation of summary report of the suggestions and recommendations of the special Grama Sabha/Ward Sabhas,



submitting plan proposals concerning women to Local government Committee, Standing committees and working groups, making regular follow up with Local government or other support systems, preparation of status report of women based on summary report etc. It is expected that this development committee should function like local government level grama sabha for women.

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

i. Issue-based recommendations. Such recommendations can be forwarded to Local government committee and Local government committee will make appropriate decision on it. They could be placed before general Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha, if needed. For example, if the recommendation is on a specific atrocity against women, Local government committee will forward it to jagratha samithi, Police or Women's Commission.

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

2. Participation in General Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha

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

3. Participation in Development seminar

Executive Committee of LGDCW should participate in the development seminar of local government and should present status report of women (Annexure III) of the local government. The report shall be prepared by the Coordinator in consultation



with the convenor of LGDCW. While preparing the report, LGDCW should consult with Kudumbashree, women's wing of pensioner's forums, NGOs working for women, adolescent girls' clubs etc. The Coordinator of LGDCW 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/Ward Sabha. It should report the follow up activities taken on the decisions of women's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha in the forthcoming women's Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha. This should monitor and conduct a social audit on the institutions working for women and women - centric development activities of the LSG.



urgent requisite and an extremely relevant interventional force.



3. 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.

4. Objectives

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 the society and 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.

5. Planning for special Grama Sabha

The local government committee is to take steps to organise special Grama Sabha for youth in all wards. Agenda, date and venue of the Grama Sabha should also be decided by local government committee, in consultation with the elected representative of the concerned ward. After the formation of Local government level development Committee for Youth, they should also be consulted before fixing the date and agenda.

6. Chairperson

The president of the LSG presides over meeting of the youth Grama 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.



7. Convener

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

8. Coordinator

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

9. Participation of Officials

Participation of officials working in the development sectors like Education, Agriculture, and Rural Development etc. is desirable.

10. Number of Gram Sabha Meetings

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

11. 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. Ideally, it should be convened on holidays.

12. Campaigning and Organisation

An active awareness campaign is essentially important for the success of the Grama Sabha of Youth. On the basis of the decision by the Local Government Committee, campaigning can be done in consultation with the convener of the working group for Education and 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 organizations 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.

14. Meeting Protocol

The Grama Sabha meeting shall have the procedures like registration, welcome, presidential address, thematic presentations, group discussions, presentation of group discussion reports, selection of delegates to Local Government level Development Committee for Youth etc.

14.1 **Registration:** All participants should register in the registration format. Code number should be allotted to each participant to facilitate group formation.

14.2 **Presentation of report:** The Coordinator of Grama Sabha have to present the report in the meeting. Report presentation should focus on the present status, support systems and the programmes and future perspectives of Local Government for the development of youth.

14.3 There can be a **general discussion** based on the report.

14.4 **Group discussion:** Participants shall be divided into four groups to discuss the following themes. 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.

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

14.5 **Presentation of report** by representative of each group

14.6 **General discussion** based on the report presented and consolidation of group presentation.

14.7 The decisions and recommendations should be recorded in the Minutes book

14.8 Nominate a male and a female representative for the Local Government level development committee for Youth

15. 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.



16. Minutes

The coordinator 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.

17. Decisions and Planning Interventions

17.1. 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 the consideration of the LSG and for follow up action.

17.2. Formation of Local Government Level Development Committee for Youth (LGDCY)

A LGDCY shall be constituted with 2 representatives nominated from each ward level Youth Grama Sabha. The committee shall have a general council (comprising all representatives of ward level youth grama sabha and Chairperson of the LSG, Chairperson of the Health and Education Standing committee and one Head master) and an executive committee. Executive committee consists of 7 members. They are as follows:

General council of LGDCY should be convened three times a year. The executive committee of LGDCY should meet four times a year preferably before general grama sabha. The committee should list out the subjects and issues to be brought to the

committee should function like local government level grama sabha for youth.

17.3. 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 2. 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 LGDCY meeting.



17.4. Participation in Development seminar

All the members Executive Committee should participate in the development seminar of local government and should present a report titled 'Status Analysis of youth' of the Local Government as per the format given in Annexure 3. Youth clubs, NGOs working for the youth and elected members below 35 years should be consulted while preparing the report. The Coordinator of LGDCY shall present the report in the development seminar.

17.5. Implementation and follow up

The local government should report the follow up activities taken on the decisions of Grama Sabha of youth in the forthcoming Grama Sabha. It is the responsibility of LGDCY to facilitate implementation of projects meant for youth including the conduct of sports and cultural activities, Local Government level mass rallies and other youth developmental initiatives.





Annexure I 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
General Discussion and Consolidation	10 min	Ward member/Councilor
Vote of thanks		One among the participants
National anthem		



Annexure II
Report of Ward Level Special Grama Sabha/Ward 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 Convenor of Executive Committee	



Annexure III
Status Report of Special Category

S.No	Status Analysis Report of..... (mention the name of special category)
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 of local government

Abbreviations

ADS	Area Development Society
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
DA	Differentially Abled
GS	Grama Sabha
WS	Ward Sabha
LGDC	Local Government Development Committee for Children
LGDCD	Local Government level Development Committee for Differentially Abled
LGDCSC	Local Government Development Committee for Senior Citizen
LGDCW	Local Government level Development Committee for Women
LGDCY	Local Government level Development Committee for Youth
NC	Neighbourhood Council
WDC	Ward Development Committee



Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)

Mulamkunnathukavu, Thrissur - 680 581

Phone : +91-487 2201312, 2207000

Fax : +91-487-2201062

Email : mail@kilaonline.org, kilathrissur@gmail.com,

Website:<http://www.kilaonline.org>

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