25th year
of People Plan Campaign
Two-day Seminar

Gender Friendly Local Governance

On 13th and 14th, September, 2022
at Hotel Pearl Regency, Thrissur

Report

Kerala Institute of Local Administration

Introduction

A two-day seminar on Gender Friendly Local Governance for 'Nava Keralam' was organized on 13th and 14th September, 2022 at Hotel Pearl Regency, Thrissur. It was the 6th out of 8 seminars organized by Kerala Institute of Local Administration in connection with the 25th year of People Plan Campaign.

250 people from different walks of like, including elected representatives, officials, activists, researchers, entrepreneurs, participated in the programme. The seminar was inaugurated by Dr. Thomas Issac, former Minister of Finance while Ms. Sheena Parayangatil, Vice President of Thrissur District Panchayat presided over the inaugural meeting. Dr. KPN Amrutha, Co-ordinator, Gender School for Local Governance, KILA, delivered the welcome speech. Key note address was presented by Dr. Sarada Muraleedharan IAS, Addl. Chief Secretary to Local Self Government Department. Dr. Jiju P Alex, Member, Kerala State Planning Board presented the Gender perspective of the 14th Five Year Plan of the State.

Ms. Rajashree Gopan, Deputy Mayor, Thrissur Corporation delivered felicitation speech and Ms. Rismiya R I, Training Associate, KILA delivered vote of thanks.

The two-day seminar was organized in such a way that there was one parallel session in the afternoon of the first day on 'Gender and Health' and 'Gender Politics of Public Spaces', followed by the inaugural session. The first day was concluded with a music concert by Ms. Pushpavathy Poyppadath, a well-known play back singer in Malayalam film industry. The morning session of the second day was also parallel session with the subjects, 'Gender and work' and 'Gender inclusive projects of Local Self Governments'. The two-day seminar was concluded with the valedictory session in the afternoon. Dr. Joy Elamon, Director General, KILA, inaugurated the valedictory session and Prof. Mini Sukumar, Member Kerala State Planning Board delivered the key note speech. Ms. Vineetha M, Lecturer, Women and Child Development, KILA delivered the welcome speech. Brief reports of each parallel session were presented in the valedictory session by Dr. R Ramya, Dr. Kala, Ms. Jayashree S, Ms. Sandhya S N respectively. Ms. Rejitha G, seminar coordinator, delivered vote of thanks.

32 research papers were presented altogether in the four sessions. 22 subject experts were interacted with the participants and presented their views.

The inaugural session

The inaugural session stared at 10am on 13th, September 2022. Dr. KPN Amrutha, Coordinator, Gender School for Local Governance, KILA, delivered the welcome speech. She told that the discussions going to be happened in the next two days would be of contemporary importance. It is essential to do an objective analysis of gender justice in the society on the back ground of 25th anniversary of the People Plan Campaign. She expressed her expectation that the seminar would lead to new steps towards future, recognizing the weaknesses in the past. The eminent Gender experts in the state, who participate in the two days, would share their experience and perspectives on each subject of the parallel sessions. Local Governments would also present their experience regarding gender friendly projects they have been implementing. The discussions would be great asset to those who work at grass root level and be able to make

Welcome speech by Dr. KPN Amrutha

use of the speeches for materializing the idea of Gender Friendly Local Governance. She concluded by welcoming the dignitaries and the participants to the two-day seminar and requesting active participation of each one in the coming sessions

Dr. Thomas Issac, former Minister of Finance, Kerala State, had done a critical evaluation of 'gender representation in the projects of Local self-governments' based on the women component plan projects. His presentation was objective and analytical with the help of power point presentation. The zest of academic research added more depth to his presentation. He explained how women component plan became a part of peoples' planning and the time line of its development to ensure women empowerment. The gender inclusion in Peoples' Plan was based on Women Component Plan (WCP), Elected Women Representatives and Kudumbashree. He explained the basic principles, terms and conditions, perspectives and the current status of WCP in a systematic way. Even though the government guideline insists to allocate minimum 10% fund, the actual spending in many LSGs is average 3.9%. And that too, not necessarily for fulfilling the strategic needs of women. Many indicators of gender friendly LSGs are not so optimistic except the growth of Kudumbashree. Both the expenditure for

Inauguration by Dr. Thomas Issac, Former Minister of Finance, Kerala State

achieving gender equality and the quality of projects are very low. Then he explained what 'Nava Keralam' programme is in a simple way and how it would help in leveraging the status of women in the State. He concluded the inaugural speech with concrete suggestions for improving the situation, such as tightening up the terms and conditions for WCP projects, trainings for Elected Women Representatives, working groups, Neighborhood groups and Women's Status Study

Dr. Sarada Muraleedharan IAS, Addl. Chief Secretary, Local Self-Government Department, delivered the keynote speech in the seminar online. She opined that the Local Self Governments should transform to a place where serious gender issues are discussed. And that space would be resulted into women being powerful political agents. She recognized the People's Plan Campaign as one of such spaces which helped women into being political agents. She observed that now-a-days women have space in political and social spheres and women's

Key note address by Dr. Sarada Muraleedharan IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, LSGD

issues have become political agenda also. We must be proud when the political leaders are now ready to discuss women's issues. 'Sthreepaksha Nava Keralam' is an acknowledgement that women are not only a part of family instead they are individuals having their own identity. When she came back to Kerala after some years of work outside, she said, she could see the drastic change happened. Even though we say that the strategic needs of women have not been addressed by the WCP projects, we should see the new dimensions in dealing with their practical needs. She remarked that the attitude recently emerging in the society to value women's household activities and responsibilities is proactive and welcoming. This attitude change is happened through the interventions of Local Self Governments and Kudumbashree.

The concept that 'kitchen is a woman only space' has been changed, she continued. Happiness index of women is now considered as matter of importance. The word menstruation itself was taboo even 20 years before and now local self-governments are discussing about menstrual cups. Mocking over cross dressing has become stopped and there is a general acceptance that there are 'such people' also in the society. Once women were only engaged in pickle making and bakery items production and now they are able to do jobs in cyber sector and other similar works. The Peoples Plan Movement is the reason for all these changes. She expressed her belief that women are able to face new challenges in future also. She concluded with a positive note that these changes would build the 'Sthreepaksha Nava Keralam'.

Ms. Sheena Parayangatil, Vice President, Thrissur District Panchayat, in her presidential address, anticipated that the seminar would be helpful in discussing gender in a deeper manner and forming new standpoints related to theory and praxis. She was critical while mentioning the WCP projects of LSGs. So many projects have been implementing by the LSGs for years but unfortunately those are not as per expectation. She concluded with the expectation that the discussions in the seminar would lead to the reasons for the drawbacks in planning and implementation of WCP and how it could become more beneficial to women.

Presidential speech: Ms. Sheena Parayangatil, Vice President, Thrissur District Panchayat

Dr. Jiju P Alex, Member, Kerala State Planning Board, presented the gender perspective in the 14th Five Year Plan of the State Government. The 14th FYP is focusing on employment and trainings. The Covid situation in the state has opened new sectors of employment to women.

Gender perspective of 14th Five Year Plan: Dr.Jiju P Alex, Member, Kerala State Planning Board

This should be considered while planning new projects at LSGs. People's Plan Campaign had helped enormously in the area of women empowerment. At the same time a long way to go for finding solutions in the developmental issues that women are still facing. WCP projects are meant for identifying and resolving the strategic needs of women. LSGs should emphasise on leveraging the economic and social status of women based on accurate data of the status of women in their area. WCP should provide encouraging environment for women to find their

Ms. Rajashree Gopan, Deputy Mayor, Thrissur Corporation delivered felicitation speech.

own income by working or starting appropriate entrepreneurships. Skill development is essential for these activities and such trainings could be given according to the situations and possibilities in each place. LSGs should arrange support services including loans to those women who come forward to initiate new entrepreneurships.

Vote of thanks was given by Ms. Rismiya R I, training associate, KILA

Parallel Sessions

Session 1 Gender and Health

Dr. Beena Philip, Mayor, Kozhikode Corporation, presided over the session on Gender and Health. In her presidential speech she pointed out that we should help the LSGs in the decision-making process for future activities related to health and well-being, instead lamenting on the past. She told that the discussion in the session would enable KILA in formulating suggestions to the Government.

Chair of session 1: Dr.Beena Philip, Mayor, Kozhikode Corporation

The keynote address in the session was by Dr. A K Jayasree, HoD, Community Medicine, Academy of Medical Science, Pariyaram, Kannur. She started with the comment that the achievements of gender and health should be audited. Minimum 10% of mandatory allocation of fund at LSG level for women is a big opportunity. Implementing good projects is a challenge and to overcome this, we must know what is gender, what is health and what are the strategic health needs of women. There must be focused interventions in this area by combining the ideas of Beijing Conferences and the values of People's Plan Campaign as well as considering the

health issues of different sexual-gender minorities of each area. While ensuring gender justice in the society, the contribution of women who do the unpaid work also must be considered. She opined that gender auditing must be conducted on the health indices such as infant mortality rate, communicable diseases, maternal mortality rate, life style diseases, obesity, underweight and mental health.

Keynote speech: Dr A K Jayasree, HoD, Community Medicine, Academy of Medical Science, Kannur

The next presentation in the session was by Dr. K G Radhakrishnan, Lecturer, Dept. of Anesthesiology, Government Medical College, Thrissur. The wrong perceptions in the society

Speech: Dr. K G Radhakrishnan, Lecturer, Dept. of Anesthesiology, Government Medical College, Thrissur

about violence on women could be changed only through proper enquiry into the reasons for the same. He emphasized the need for trainings to students, parents and teachers in educating about the discriminations based on gender and caste. He also pointed out the need of sexuality education among adolescents.

Speech: Dr. P M Arathi, Asst. Professor, MG University, Kottayam

Dr. P M Arathi, Asst. Professor, Mahatma Gandhi University, expressed her concern that the health sector in the state is converging only to health care systems. She explained how food, housing, education, sanitation, social security and inequality become reasons for unhealthy situations. Women are not homogeneous community. Women's issues and their impacts are different for different category based on religion, caste, class, ethnicity, sexual- gender identities. Studies considering all such differences should be conducted to find solutions and plan projects at LSGs. Public spaces for doing exercises, healthy food habits, care services are important. She added that a deep-rooted system of monitoring and democratisation of that system should be ensured.

Ms.Seena K M, Head, Social Development, National Health Mission Keralam, had talked about women, who face physical and mental violence. Their suicidal tendency needs to be addressed seriously. Gender perspective in health system is essential. Counselling centres are not as easily accessible as hospitals for women. 'Bhoomika', One Stop Crisis Centres, ASHA workers and various trainings are important in this situation. She explained more about 'Bhumika' centres which set up in district hospitals to support women, who come for treatments and identify by doctors/ nurses as victims of violence. She emphasised that trainings on such support services should be given to elected representatives of LSGs. She concluded by

Speech: Ms.Seena K M, Head, Social Development, National Health Mission Keralam.

explaining support services to women by other providers such as 'Snehita' by Kudumbashree and 'Seethalayam' by State Homeo Department.

Mx.Vijayaraja Mallika, Poet and General Council Member, Kerala Sahitya Academy, thrown light on the health issues that transgenders have been facing. She explained about the

Speech: Ms.Vijayaraja Mallika, General Council Member, Kerala Sahitya Academy

painful experience of corrective surgeries done to intersex infants to change them between male and female binaries. She told that it is human rights violation. She highlighted the need to eliminate the misperceptions in the society regarding sexual and gender identities. She concluded with the opinion to formulate a team of medical doctors for providing supports to LGBTQAI+ people.

The way forward in Health and Gender issues was presented by Dr.Indu P S, HoD, Dept. of Community Medicine, Medical College Thiruvananthapuram. Discussions on projects regarding 'Our Universe and Our Health' should be started with children, she told. Exercise,

The way forward : Dr.Indu P S, HoD, Dept. of Community Medicine, Medical College

entertainment and sufficient sleep are personal matters and women must get enough time for all these. Society must be empowered to provide basic supports in mental health issues. The three aspects, 'hear, meet in person and link', help in healing mental issues which might lead to suicides, at least for certain extent. Jagratha samithi can do a lot in the mental health of women. The Elected Members must hear people without any prejudices and understand them with an open mind. She reminded that life style diseases can be controlled with proper food regulations.

Activities of Local Self Governments in the area of Health

Noolpuzha Grama Panchayat has presented their interventions in health sector

Presentation: Noolpuzha Grama Panchayat

Porur Grama Panchayat has presented their interventions in health sector

Presentation: Porur Grama Panchayat

Paper Presentations by researchers and activists

Ms.Smitha Satheesh presented a paper on 'A Study on the Need for Awareness About Menopause and Ways to Improve Menopause Care'.

Ms.Ajitha Ramakrishnan presented paper on Health status and care of Adivasi Women in Attappadi Region:

Ms.Bushra S presented paper on Health and Gender issues:

Ms.Remadevi presented paper on Gender issues in Work:

Ms.Savithri V L presented a paper on Gender and Health:

Session 2 Gender Politics of Public Spaces

Ms.Sindhu E, President, Perumpadappu Block Panchayat presided over the session on Gender Politics of Public Spaces.

Presidential address session 2: Ms. E Sindhu, President, Perumpadappu Block Panchayat

Ms. R Parvathi Devi, former member of Kerala Public Service Commission (PSC), delivered key note address in the session. She started her speech by dedicating the session to Nirbhaya and Soumya, who lost their life because of Gender Based Violence at Public Places. She pointed out that gender has two dimensions, one is the spectrum of different genders in the

Keynote address by Ms. R Parvathi Devi, Former Member, Kerala PSC

society and the other is the developmental issues affecting different genders in different ways only because they belong to a particular gender. She defined public place as any place, which is outside home. Most of these public places are inaccessible and unsafe to women.

Urban planning has been implementing with the perspective that women should be delimited inside their homes. But we should think of whether the homes are safe place for women. Our public places are not at all aged friendly, differently abled friendly or women friendly. Equal opportunity is still a mirage for women who survive with so many challenges. Night walk campaign is the declaration that, nights are for women as well. Local Self Governments should consider women's freedom of mobility as a developmental issue. Safe and women friendly public places must be considered as one of the Sustainable Development Goals of LSGs.

Speech: Dr.Rekha Raj, Activist

Dr.Rekha Raj, Activist, pointed out the danger when we talk more on the inaccessibility of women in public places. Women may think that they cannot move around through public place because of many reasons including safety and they restrict themselves into private spaces. There is a general perception that public places are for men and private spaces are for women. There was a general objection from the society when our Father of Nation invited women to participate in the freedom struggle. Women who intervene in public spaces are facing diverse issues. Keralam is accepting people who fight for public issues/causes. But there is hostility when it is about the issues of different sexual-gender identities. She concluded with the note that there are many forgotten women activists and we address the actual issues of women only when these forgotten women have become part of our History.

Speech: Ms. Baby Balakrishnan, President,
District Panchayat, Kasaragod

Ms. Baby Balakrishnan, President, District Panchayat, Kasaragod, in her speech, expressed her concern that women who entre into the public sphere are not facing double exploitation, but

exploitation at multiple levels. Indian Constitution is promissing equality to all its people but women are still facing issues. Women have no right to ancestrol property in many communities. Though women are good in decision making, the society is intensionally trying to prove the other way. Eventhough many are not getting enough support from their family, the elected women members are completing their duties with due responsibility. Workshops should be conducted to plan quality projects in Women Component Plan. Many women are intervening in and successfully resolving public issues where men are not ready to do so. Democracy and empowerment in family are a prerequesite for Equality and empowerment in society, she concluded.

Ms. Laya Mariya Jaison, Politician

Ms. Laya Mariya Jaison, Politician, in her speech criticised that our society is still considering gender as binary. We are not ready to accept the fact that thre are people who belong to different sexual-gender identities live in the society. Society insists all to live as sisgender through out one's life. All genders are forced to follow the patriarchal norms of the society. There is limited scop for the development of trandgender people in our society. The society push the trans people into troubles and then blame on them for the issue. She is optimistic about the new generation that they are more receptive than the older generation in accepting the non-binary people in the society. The Transgender Policy, 'Mazhavil', paves the way for transformations in the society. She requested KILA to be an active change maker in society's attittude towards trans people.

The way forward : Dr. K Rajesh, Senior Urban Fellow, KILA

Dr. K Rajesh, Senior Urban Fellow, KILA presented the perspectives regarding future activities on gender politics of public spaces. Since Gender is not a homogeneous subject, the perspective must be inclusive of its diversities. Gender is a politics. It must have a political approach. At some point of the history of Kerala, women have become confined into homes and public places become men's only

spaces. It was not like this in early period and changes happening in the new era. The family system in our society is reinstating all fudal patriarchal values. We must strive to create gender eqauality among the leadership of political parties, religions, social organisations, cultural organisations etc. We must check how much gender friendly are the public places of our Local Governments. Continous interventions should be there to make and transform standpoints.

Activities of Local Self Governments in Gender Politics in Public Spaces

Thanalur Grama Panchayat has presented their activities related to gender politics in public spaces.

Presentation: Thanaloor Grama Panchayat

Amballoor Grama Panchayat has explained their activities related to gender in public places

Presentation: Amballoor Grama Panchayat

Kozhikode Block Panchayat has presented their activities related to women in public places

Presentation: Kozhikode Block Panchayat

Paper Presentations by researchers and activists

Dr.Sreebitha P V presented a paper on Ezhava Women and Discourses on English Education

Dr.Sreebitha P V presented a paper on Ezhava Women and Discourses on English Education Anjali K G presented her paper on Psychological State of Female Parents: A Study of

Motherhood During the Covid 19 Epidemic.

Aleena Ansari presented her paper on Issues of Adolescent Girls

Dr. Chinju presented his paper on Mental Empowerment of Elected Women Representatives of Local Self Governments.

Thushara Meleppatt presented a paper on The Paradox of Empowerment: A Case Study of Women's Political Mobilisation Post Sabarimala Judgement.

Session 3 Gender and Work

Adv. Thulasibhai, Ernakulam Disrtict Planning Committee Member, presided over the session on Gender and Work. She expressed her optimism in her presidential speech that we can achieve gender equality through continuous efforts and interventions. This would not be a drastic change, she reminded. What we are discussing now is the change that happened because of the Literacy Movement and People's Plan Campaign. Gender issues in work are as important as other gender issues prevailing in the society. She concluded that we would solve such issues eventually in future.

Presidential address Session 3: Adv. Thulasibhai

Dr.Rakhi Thimothi, Fellow, Centre for Socio-Economic and Environmental Studies, Kochi delivered the key note address in the session online. She had raised some critical issues related to gender and work based on the study done by CSES recently. Kerala women are not entering into the area of work generally. There is unemployment, at the same time scarcity of workers is prevailing in Kerala. Unemployment, especially among educated women is high. Work participation rate is also low in Kerala. The paradox is that there is high work participation in sectors, where low wage rate is prevailing. An example is service sector. Number of girls studying abroad is increasing day by day. There are lots of data-based studies related to work in Kerala.

She continued with her findings that men are searching for employment for one year, while women try for five years for jobs. The participants responded to this by raising the issue of

Key note address: Dr. Rakhi Timothy, CSES, Kochi

family responsibilities of women. People are now ready to go for any job and men are doing more preparations than women in finding jobs. Women are choosier in selecting jobs because of their family responsibilities. But men are concerned about responsible positions, salary, scope of development, promotions etc. The social environment should be transformed to a situation where women and men can do any job without any kind of discriminations.

Speech: Ms. Bindu V C, M D, KSWDC

Ms. V C Bindu, M D, Kerala State Women's Development Corporation, explained in her speech, about the employment opportunities in Kerala. KSWDC is the first system for the development of women in the State. Loans are disbursed based on guaranty. 61000 entrepreneurships are getting support from KSWDC. There is a tendency in our society to discourage women who initiate new ventures. Self-employments have social relevance as it gives employment. She explained various schemes and projects of KSWDC.

Speech: Ms. Viji, Penkoottu, Kozhikode

Ms.Viji, founder of 'Penkoottu', an organisation of women workers in the unorganised sector, shared her experience as human rights activist. She intervened in the struggle of women who work as sales girls in the shops of 'mittaitheruvu', an old street market in Kozhikode. She was a tailor there from 1994 and seen the human rights violations towards unorganised sector women workers. She had organised them with the support of Dr. T K

Speech: Ms. Sindhu V,
Gender Programme Manager,
Kudumbashree

Anandi. Those women were not registered workers and the employer introduced them as relatives to the labour officers. They were neither considered as employees nor as even human beings. No basic facilities, like toilets, were arranged. Because there were no toilets, the women employees did not drink water to control nature's call. This affected their health badly. Now the situation has been changed a lot, and she is contented for that.

Ms.Sindhu V, Gender Programme Manager, Kudumbashree, in her speech, stated that the Kudumbashree mission had started based on the slogan 'Sanghadikkuka, Saktharakuka' which means 'Get organised and be strong'. Even though women have progressed very much in the area of work and social sectors through Kudumbashree, exploitation is still prevailing. It could be at home or in public places. There is an intersectionality in exploitation such as from which caste they come from, which class they belong to etc. The way of exercising power is problematic. Though there are obstacles, each one should identify themselves and empower themselves, she opined. Girls should get sex education from childhood itself to identify and report sexual exploitation. She concluded with the note that we must be ready to understand and accept others.

The Way Forward: Dr. T K Anandi,
former Gender Consultant,
Government of Kerala

Dr. T K Anandi, former Gender Advisor, Government of Kerala, presented the way forward regarding gender politics of public places. Skill development and upgradation of their existing skill are the solutions for women's lesser participation in employment. Studies should be conducted to design how it could be implemented. Three levels of intervention are needed. One level is the skill upgradation for educated women. Second level is the possibilities to develop skills of women who are home makers now. And the third level is skill training to those who have no proper formal education. Trainings should be given in the unconventional and men only areas as well, such as construction and electronics sectors. Women who are doing home nursing and domestic works need to get organised and local self-governments should ensure decent remuneration to them.

Activities of Local Self Govrnments in the area of Gender and Work

Vadakara Municipality

Kodakara Block Panchayat

Kodoor Grama Panchayat

Paper Presentations by researchers and activists

Ms.Abhina Ansari presented the paper 'Maternity and Career Growth in Private Sector' which she had prepared along with Akshaya.

Dr.Aswathy P presented a paper on 'Stigma of Paid Work: A Case Study of Lives and Livelihoods of Fish Vending Women in Kerala'

Dr.Anu Kuriyakose presented a paper on 'Workplace Problems of Trans People: A Study based on the Kudumbashree Hotel in Palakkad District'

Ms.Archana T D presented her paper on 'A Study on Family and Work Life Balance Among Working Women'

Ms.Anjana A presented her paper on 'Work and Gender Issues'

Ms.Jeshma Jayan and Ms.Seethal O Viswam presented their paper on 'Economic Freedom and Bargaining Capacity of Women Cleaning Staff in Private Hospitals'

Session 4 Gender Inclusion in the Projects of Local Self-Governments

Ms. K Sudarshana Bhai, President, Mararikkulam North Grama Panchayat, presided over the session. Kerala, in general, have a high position with regard to the developmental indices.

Presidential speech: Ms. K Sudarsana Bhai, Mararikulam North Grama Panchayat

But in terms of activities related to Gender Equality in local governments, we are far behind. We need a clear perspective for creating gender inclusive local governance. Society has been transformed and visibility of women in every sector is increased. But the Women Component Plan Projects are still in conventional mode. There are little model projects in WCP. Trainings should be given to implementing officers. The right approach should be defined through the studies of KILA and as an outcome of this seminar, she concluded.

Dr. KPN Amrutha, Co-ordinator, KILA Gender School for Local Governance, delivered the keynote address. She observed that it is not as easy to implement activities to ensure gender justice as we talk on it. Gender issues are not getting as much support as we get it on the issues of children and elderly people. Transition of thought should be happened in our society to achieve gender justice. The quality of projects is low in LSGs. We should strive to leverage the gender perspective of our society and improve WCP projects to address strategic gender needs of women.

The women's development approach has been changed from considering women as mere beneficiaries to participants or agents of project implementation since the 9th Five Year Plan. We had started thinking and working for a society based on gender equality and gender inclusive projects during that period. 'Being women' had become priority criteria while inviting beneficiaries for LSG projects since People's Plan Campaign (PPC).

Even though the idea was not crystal clear, the People's Plan Campaign insisted to plan gender inclusive projects in LSGs. Decentralisation of power to all sections was a crucial step

Keynote address: Dr. KPN Amrutha, Coordinator, Gender School for Local Governance, KILA.

in PPC. The power structure has been restructured to include all gender diversities during PPC.

Dr.Amrutharaj R M, Women's Studies Expert, KILA, presented the study conducted by KILA on Women Component Plan Projects implementing by the Local Self-governments in Kerala. He opined that the People's Plan Campaign movement had given space to initiate discourses on gender in Kerala society. The Women Component Plan (WCP) was envisaged to

Presentation of study on WCP conducted by KILA: Dr. Amrutharaj R M, Specialist in Women Studies

find solutions for the strategic needs of women. KILA initiated this study of the WCP projects as women's strategic needs are scarcely considering for planning such projects.

WCP projects of selected LSGS for the last 8 years were studied. Elected representatives, officials and beneficiaries of different tires of LSGs from 14 districts were participated in the research. Feminist research methodology was used in the study. Sample survey, interviews and focus group discussions were the tools. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis had done to prepare the report.

Ms.Geetha Nazeer, Member, Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat raised the concern that it is so important to discuss about gender in the planning of projects in LSGs. She is happy

Speech: Ms. Geetha Nazeer

that some projects for women with limited resources were able to implement so far. She is apprehensive when thinking that whether women are actually empowered by the activities conducted hitherto. Women's needs are always postponed to fulfil. The society is still not

Speech: Ms. Suma T R, Equations, Bangalore

considering the issues of unwed mothers as social issue and having only welfare approach to it. Issues faced by transgenders are also not taking care of as an important matter. Funds for SC/ST is not utilising properly and therefore their issues are still not been addressed as it should be. She concluded that the LSGs can do a lot in all these issues.

Ms. Suma T R, Equations, Bangalore, reminded that 8 goals in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) should be followed to achieve gender equality. Even though we start planning projects to meet the strategic needs of women, it finally ended up as solutions for practical needs. Issues and solutions must be discussed while planning the projects. Gender inequalities are built on different social structures which are based on prevailing social values. These values are different in various social categories. The common understanding of society on gender is still a barrier for gender equality.

We have not yet absorbed the real idea of WCP, she commented. The attitude in sharing resources should be changed. The projects should be critically analysed whether it is able to include marginalised people. She concluded her speech by pointing out the concern regarding society's negative perception on gender, which affects in all sectors.

The Way forward of the session was presented by Mr. N Jagajeevan, Director, Grameena Padana Kendram, Karakulam. At the outset he applauded the activities of the gender team at

Way Forward: Mr. N Jagajeevan, Director, Grameena Padana Kendram, Karakulam

KILA as well as the development and popularity of KILA as an umbrella organisation. LSGs should plan their activities by analysing their challenges and possibilities. LSGs were concentrating on leveraging the living conditions of women through WCP projects. Now changes are happening and general quality of projects and activities are improving. The democratic way of interventions and transformation from beneficiary approach to citizen approach is a hopeful development in this sector. Deliberate inclusion of marginalised section of the society, such as differently abled people, children, elderly people, is taking place. He

emphasised that a right based approach should be developed towards the issues of plantation workers, people in coastal area, SC and ST category people, transgender people etc.

Activities of Local Self Governments in the area of Gender and Work

'Oppam' project for 'Women Friendly Constituency' in Kattakkada Assembly Constituency, Thiruvananthapuram

Gender Friendly Panchayat activities of Olavanna Grama Panchayat, Kozhikode

Gender Friendly Panchayat activities of Edavaka Grama Panchayat, Wayanad

Gender Friendly Panchayat activities of Eriyad Grama Panchayat, Thrissur

Gender Friendly Panchayat activities of Vazhoor Grama Panchayat, Kottayam

Gender Friendly Panchayat activities of Sreekrishnapuram Grama Panchayat, Palakkad

Paper Presentations by researchers and activists

Ms.Ardra V S presented paper on 'Decentralisation of Health and The Local Governance Interventions in Kerala: Where Lie the Women's Bodie'.

Mr.Anagh presented his paper on 'Transgender Rights and Systemic Changes in the Post State Policy For trangenders in Kerala - Way forward for the Inclusive Nava Kerala'.

Ms.Vandana Unnikrishnan presented her thesis on 'Socio-economic problems of Rubber Taping Women in the Kalady Plantation in Athirapally'.

The Valedictory Meeting

Ms.Vineetha M, Lecturer, Women and Child Development, KILA, had delivered welcome speech in the valedictory function. As an introduction she consolidated that the two-day seminar organised on the occasion of 25th year of People's Plan Campaign have analysed the gender related activities of the LSGs and future possibilities to make gender friendly LSGs.

Welcome at Valedictory meeting:
Ms.Vineetha M, Lecturer in Women & Child Development, KILA

The People's Plan Campaign had opened a wide scope for actions in front of us. We have discussed different matters over the two days including issues faced by different gender and sexual categories. It was ideal to incorporate the academic findings of researchers and practical experience of LSGs together in one platform.she opined. Then she welcomed all the dignitories in the Dias for the valedictory meeting.

Dr. Joy Elamon, Director General, KILA, inaugurated the valedictory meeting. He expressed his immense gratitude to the participants who were attentive till the end of the programme. He also appreciated the organising team for their dedicated involvement in each and every aspect of the programme.

Invisibility of women in public place is the paradox of development in Kerala, he opined. Generally, LSGs are women friendly and this is not because of individual projects but of general developments. Locally there are places where women can come together. Women have reached into the leadership positions of common committees. These changes have happened over the last 25years.

It was difficult to get women candidates for contesting in the election in 1995. But now the scene is different and there are many women who wish to participate in elections. Women leaders have been emerging. There is a long array of elected representatives who came from the platform of Kudumbashree. This was happened because of mutually complementing processes. A social revolution had initiated in Kerala through the People's Plan Campaign. And

drastic change in various sectors had happened because of this.

This is not the end and we need to progress even more. He warned that, there may be so many

Inauguration of the valedictory meeting : Dr. Joy Elamon, Director General, KILA.

forces to pull this momentum back. We should intentionally move forward from where we are now. We are not in an island and may have so many other issues to overcome. Building of 'Navakeralam' is multi-faceted activity and employment is an important activity among them, he concluded.

In the valedictory meeting all the parallel sessions were reported by rapporteurs of the concerned sessions.

Report of the deliberations in the session on Gender and health was presented by Dr. Ramya, Resource Person, KILA.

Report of the deliberations in the session on Gender Politics of Public Places was presented by Dr.Kala.

Report of the deliberations in the session on Gender and Work was presented by Ms.SJayasree, Resource Person, KILA

Report of the deliberations in the session on Gender Inclusive Projects in Local Self Governments was presented by Ms.Sandhya S N, Resource Person, KILA.

Prof. Mini Sukumar, Member, Kerala State Planning Board, delivered keynote address in the valedictory function. She observed that the whole programme had organised with diversity. She congratulated KILA, the director general and the gender team for organising such a comprehensive programme. The programme helped her in understanding the changes happened over the 25 years and energised her with friendship. The organisational part and provision of basic facilities were also very systematic. This kind of a physical programme was conducted after two years and the programme was enriched with discussions, music, fun and relaxation, she added.

Key note speech: Prof. Mini Sukumar, Member, Kerala Planning Board.

She observed that the academic interest in the subject of gender and panchayat raj has been increased. The discussions happened in the seminar were critical in nature as a methodology and that is a success, she opined. It is equally appreciated that the discussions had gone beyond

the idea of gender binary. She mentioned some areas to be added in the discourses as well as in actions. One is the idea of wellness. Health is not only physical health and it is the feeling of wellness to the whole body, not only for men and women, but for different gender identities also. She emphasised that our public places should be inclusive of children. All categories of people should be considered in spatial planning.

Ms. Soya Thomas, Gender Consultant, in her speech observed that the seminar was turned to be a space where different category of people, including academics, students, elected representatives, activists etc could participate in discussions. She opined that we should

Speech: Ms. Soya Thomas, Gender Consultant

identify the critical gaps in the area and find solutions to fill those gaps. The discussions helped us to identify that women get visibility in many areas at the same time there are marginalisation in some sectors. The needs and status of women and other genders had discussed in the seminar. We must think more of inclusivity and how to address inequality. Possibilities of convergence and integration of projects must be explored. She was optimistic about developing a sustainable system in gender and local governance.Ms.Rejitha G, coordinator of the seminar, proposed vote of thanks at the end of the valedictory meeting. The discussions held in the parallel

sessions gave an idea of way forward in each sector. The amalgamation of academic papers and experience sharing was very important in terms of ensuring gender equality in local governance. Support to LSGs in the area of Gender is always an assurance from KILA, she concluded by expressing gratitude to one and all participated in various capacities in the two-day seminar.

Conclusion

The two-day state level seminar on Gender Friendly Local Governance, conducted on 13th and 14th September 2022 by KILA at Hotel Pearl Regency in Thrissur has special value in different dimensions. The concept of Gender in connection with local governance was discussed in a very detailed manner after a long time. The theme was discussed from the stand point of researchers as well as the practitioners. There were serious discussions and sharing of ideas as well as light moments like music by Pushpavathi Poypadath and revamping of friendships after the long gap created by Covid Pandemic.

Who have been affected by gender inequality or discriminations? Where does the marginalisation happen? Who are marginalised and by whom? Gender inclusion should be in which area? Where were changes happened? What more changes should be happened? These were some of the questions raised during the discussions in the two days. Some models, suggestions, identification of gaps, solutions to fill such gaps were derived through the discussions. There was a noticeable transformation from gender binary and inclusion of gender diversity in the discussions. The increasing academic interest in the subject and critical approach were also recognised. The participants evaluated the programme generally as 'two days with information, cooperation, entertainment, and relaxation'.

Programme Schedule

Day 1, 13.10.2022

Time	Programme	Resource Person
09.30am- 10.00am	Registration	
09.30am- 10.00am	Welcome	Dr. KPN Amrutha, Coordinator, Gender School for Local Governance, KILA
	Chair	Ms. Sheena Panayangattil, Vice President, District Panchayat, Thrissur
	Inauguration	Dr. Thomas Issac, Former Minister of Finance, Government of
	Keynote address	Dr. Sarada Muraleedharan IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Local Self Government Department, Government of Kerala
	Felicitation	Ms.Rajashree Gopan, Deputy Mayor, Thrissur Corporation
	Presentation on Gender Perspective in 14th Five Year Plan	Dr.Jiju P Alex, Member Kerala Planning Board
	Vote of thanks	Ms.Rismiya R I, Training Associate, KILA
01.00pm-02.00pm	Lunch	
02.00pm-06.00pm	Parallel sessions	
	Session 1 Health and Gender issues	
	Chair	Dr.Beena Philip, Mayor, Kozhikode Corporation
	Keynote address	Dr. A K Jayasree, HoD, Dept. of Community Medicine, Academy of Medical Science, Kannur
	Paper presentations	Students, Researchers, Local Self-governments
	Speeches	Dr. K G Radhakrishnan, Lecturer, Dept. of Anaesthesiology, Medical College, Thrissur
		Dr. Arathi P M, Asst. Professor, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam
		Ms.Seena K M, Head, Social Development, National Health Mission, Keralam
		Mx.Vijayaraja Mallika, General Council Member, Kerala Sahiytya Academy, Thrissur

	Discussions	
	Way Forward	Dr.Indu P S, HoD, Dept. of Community Medicine, Medical College,
02.00pm-06.00pm	**Session 2 Gender Politics of Public Spaces**	
	Chair	Ms. E Sindhu, President, Perumpadappu Block Panchayat
	Keynote address	R. Parvathi Devi, Former Member, Kerala Public Service Commission
	Paper presentations	Students, Researchers, Local Self-governments
	Speeches	Dr.Rekha Raj, Activist
		Ms. Baby Balakrishnan, President, District Panchayat, Kasaragod
		Ms. Laya Mariya Jaison, Politician, Ernakulam
	Discussions	
	Way Forward	Dr. K Rajesh, Senior Urban Fellow, KILA
06.00pm-08.00pm	Music concert	Pushpavathy Poyppadath, Malayalam Playback Singer

Day 2, 14.10.2022

09.30am-12.30pm	Parallel sessions	
	Session 3 Gender and Work	
	Chair	Adv. Thulasibhai, Member, District Planning Committee, Ernakulam
	Keynote address	Dr.Rakhi Thimothy, Fellow, CSES, Kochi
	Paper presentations	Students, Researchers, Local Self-governments
	Speeches	Ms. Bindu V C, M D, Kerala Women's Development Corporation
		Ms.Viji, 'Penkoottu', Kozhikode
		Ms.Sindhu V, Gender Programme Manager, Kudumbashree
	Discussions	
	Way Forward	Dr. T K Anandi, Former Gender Advisor, Government of Kerala

09.30am-12.30pm	**Session 4 Gender inclusive Projects in Local Self Governments**	
	Chair	Ms.Sudarsana Bhai, President, Mararikulam North Grama Panchayat, Alappuzha
	Keynote address	Dr. K P N Amrutha, Coordinator, Gender School for Local Governance, KILA
	Presentation of Study on WCP by KILA	Dr.Amrutharaj R M, Specialist in Women's Studies, KILA
	Speeches	Ms.Geetha Nazeer, Member, District Panchayat, Thiruvananthapuram
		Ms. Suma T R, State representative, Equations, Bangalore
	Discussions	
	Way Forward	Mr.N Jagajeevan, Director, Grameena Padana Kendram,
12.30pm- 1.30pm	Lunch	
1.30pm – 3.30pm	Valedictory Session	
	Welcome	Ms.Vineetha M, Lecturer, Women and Child Development, KILA
	Inauguration	Dr. Joy Elamon, Director, KILA
	Reporting of Parallel Sessions	Dr. Ramya R Dr. Kala Ms. S Jayasree Ms.Sandhya S N
	Keynote address	Prof. Mini Sukumar, Member, Kerala State Planning Board
	Deliberations	Ms. Soya Thomas, Gender Consultant
	Vote of Thanks	Ms.Rejitha G, Seminar Coordinator