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Kerala's achievements in decentralisation is legendary. The experience of Kerala in social development by means of addressing poverty with an entitlement approach is being emerged as a model of development. Democratic decentralisation and participatory planning under the umbrella of the 'People's Plan Campaign', introduced by the Government of Kerala, has been one of the critical factors behind the economic and social development of the State. Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), has been facilitating the decentralisation and participatory planning process by means of undertaking various capacity-building activities along with providing institutional support.

In 1992, 'planning for economic development and social justice' become the responsibility of local self-governments (LSGs) in India with the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India. The goal has been to empower the people at the local level to involve in local economic development leading to economic development in a balanced manner. The State Governments are to function and finance to LSGs to function as 'institutions of local governments'. The government of Kerala has devolved one-third of its development funds to the LSGs with predetermined criteria based on the principle of subsidiarity. As a result, it triggered a new culture of the development process with people's involvement in planning, implementation and monitoring. The regional economy of Kerala seems to have experienced an increase in its growth trend. In the primary sector, the underutilised farm lands begins to be cultivated and the area under cultivation increased, particularly in the case of paddy cultivation. In the secondary sector, small scale and cottage industries become vibrant and the disguised unemployed in the agricultural sector have been attracted to the industrial sector. In the case of service sector, its outreach and quality increased substantially. The system of health service has been rejuvenated with Aardram Mission while the education system become more vibrant with the Pothuvidyabhasa Yajnam (special effort for rejuvenating educational sector). In the case of housing, the Livelihood Inclusion Financial Empowerment (LIFE) mission provide houses for all homeless and provide employment for livelihood and to take decent role in social activities.

Kudumbashree (prosperity through family development), the poverty reduction programme of the Government of Kerala, is implemented by the LSGs. The Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is also being implemented in Kerala by the LSGs. In Kerala, an employment guarantee scheme for urban area – Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme (AUEGS) – provides employment opportunities for unskilled labourers in urban areas. The AUEGS scheme is implemented by the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in

Kerala. The networks and social capital accumulated over the years help Kerala in surviving the challenges raised by disasters including epidemics. Kerala has been surviving the recurring floods, landslides, and COVID-19 (COVID still continuing) with the people's participation at the local level.

KILA Journal of Local Governance is an important platform for academic discourse for deepening democracy and participatory planning. In the current volume KILA Journal presents ten articles and one book review. Mr. Devarajan in his article 'Master Plan for Local Governments' discusses the importance and participatory approach for the preparation of Master Plans of LSGs. The possibility of city-level energy benchmarking for tracking the performance of the buildings was explored by Mr. Dhilon Subramanian, Ms. Sumedha Malaviya and Mr. Barath Jairaj in their article 'Benchmarking Buildings Based on their Energy Performance in Kerala: A Case Study of Kochi'. The potential of working together of higher education institutions and Local Self Governments is discussed by Dr. Nirmala Padmanabhan and Dr. Pearly Antony O. in their paper 'Higher Education – Local Government Linkage Mode for Strengthening Janakeeyasoothranam'. In their article 'Trends, Pattern and Efficiency of Plan Fund of Local Governments in Kerala' Dr. V. Nagarajan Naidu and Ms. Shency Mathew analyse the efficiency in the utilisation of Plan Fund of the Local Self Governments in Kerala. The paper titled 'Gender Responsive Local Governance – Kerala Experience' by Dr. Amrutha K.P.N. share Kerala experience in gender responsive local governance. Analysing the experience of Thrissur Municipal Corporation, Mr. Toby Thomas discusses the scope and opportunities of distribution of electricity by LSGs. Ms. T.P. Anseera in her article 'ATMA: A Convergence Mechanism for Restructuring and Strengthening Agricultural Extension Machinery' analyses the strength and weaknesses of the scheme of Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA). The performance of the Zilla Parishads (district level Local Governments) in Bangladesh is observed in the article titled 'In Quest for an Effective Local Government in Bangladesh: Perspective of Zilla Parishad' by Dr. Mohammad Tarikul Islam. The aspects of social security services by the local governments are presented by Dr. Saju Parackal in his paper 'Decentralisation: Gateway for Effective and Efficient Social Security Services for the Vulnerable/ Dependent Population'. The review of the book 'Bringing Governments and People Closer' by Mr. M. Ramachandran by Mr. V. Sreenivas shares the experience of a senior government official with special emphasis on bringing people and government closer. We hope all papers will support further discussions on decentralisation, participatory planning and the need for an entitlement approach.

Dr. Joy Elamon
Chief Editor

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Master Plan and Local Governments

Master Plan is an important scientific document for decision makers of Local Governments for proper future guidance in terms socio – economic and physical development of the planning area. It is also a total vision document for the public for the future planned and sustainable development of their land. Local Governments play very crucial role in the preparation of Master Plans at right time. In this article, an attempt is made to explain the need of Master Plan, legal background with respect to Constitution and state Acts, preparation procedure and contents of Master Plan. The functions of Local Governments related with the preparation of Plan are explained in brief. Major issues related with the preparation and implementations of the Master Plan are also brought to the picture. In the last portion few suggestions and recommendations with respect to this topic, are given. The article concludes with the request for a massive campaign programme for the preparation of plans, as a memorable event in the context of celebration of 25 years of democratic decentralization in Kerala

Keywords:- Local Governance, Master Plan, Democratic Decentralisation, District Planning Committee (DPC), Standing Committee, Working Group.

K. Devarajan*

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1. Introduction

As the part of celebration of 25 years of democratic decentralization in Kerala, one of the topics selected for KILA Journal as 'Master Plan and Local Governments' has very much relevance to present state's scenario. Consequent to the enactment of 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution related with decentralization of power to the Local bodies, Kerala state has emerged as the pioneer state which had not only shared its power, but also strengthened the local governance system with strong democratic base. The State is still in action for the institutionalization of already developed Local Governance to the current situation. While reviewing the success story of the effective decentralization programme in this state, participatory planning played a glaring role for building common people's confidence in the democratic governance at local level. In earlier stages of the participatory planning, People's Planning was in the strong campaign mode throughout the State for the preparation of the local level plans for local bodies. Even though at that time certain old town had earlier sanctioned Master Plan, preparation of local level plan through people's planning programme covered the entire grass root level urban and rural local bodies and it was a great remarkable achievement to hold a basic document for development planning in each institution at same planning period.

During the last several years, the entire planning system had a lot of scientific changes and now the modern world is running at the level of action in fingertip. It is well known that state of Kerala is a small vertical strip of land with beautiful natural greenery over an undulating topography and at same time with highest population density comparing with other states in the country. It is noted that due to this peculiarity, every parcel of the land is of so much of importance for the future generation. Considering the sustainability of all factors of this beautiful state, very serious attention is needed in every level of decision making. In this regard, Local Self Government Institutions have primary responsibility to prepare scientific plans for future developments. In this connection, in the following pages, the major relevant points related with the Master Plan and Local Governments are briefly discussed. In the last portion certain suggestion are also brought to the consideration of government for further necessary action.

2. The term 'Master Plan' in the Development Scenario

In general, the word 'Master Plan' is used as common term for the comprehensive vision document of future development actions for micro units to major Institutions. But in the context of development

of planning area of Local Governments, Master Plan is an integrated comprehensive development Plan to be prepared for a physical jurisdiction area of that Institution, considering factors related with all socio-economic and physical dimensions of that area. It is defined as a master document or a total plan showing all existing parameters as well as parameters related with future sustainable developments in a well-planned and balanced way. It functions as a real long term scientific guide for decision makers as well as the people in the future physical development of a particular area.

3. The need of Master Plan for Local Governance

Planning is considered as the fundamental action for every successful event of an individual or even for a society of a particular area. Planning became a comprehensive process with its all dimensions, if the area of action changes from a small settlement to a town or a city. In the case of mega and metropolitan cities, the process of planning is a complex matter to evolve a successful master guidance document for people as well as the decision makers. It is noted that with aid of the modern states of arts of technology, the complexity in the planning process was considerably reduced and the preparation of Master Plan for Local Governments can be prepared within prescribed time limit.

4. Legal Background for the Preparation of Master Plan

The various levels of legal background existing in the state in relation with preparation of Master Plan are explained as follows. It covers the provisions of Constitution Amendment acts, and the provisions of Kerala state acts related with Panchayath Raj Institutions, Municipalities, District Planning Committee and Town & Country Planning.

4.1. Constitutional Provisions for the Local Level Planning.

In the Constitution Article 243-W, it is specified as follows.

Subject to the provisions of constitution, legislature of a state may, by law endow-

The Municipalities with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as self-government and such law may contain provisions for devolution of power and responsibilities upon Municipalities, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to-

- (1) The preparation of plans for economic development and social justice
- (2) The performance of functions and the implementations of schemes as may be entrusted to them to carry out the responsibilities conferred upon them including those relating to the matters listed in the twelfth schedule.

In the twelfth schedule, the first item enlisted is 'urban planning including town planning' and other items in the schedule are also very much related with planning subject. It is the responsibility of the state to enact the details of local level planning in the state acts as prescribed in the constitution.

4.2. Provisions in the Kerala Municipality Act 1994

In order to enshrine the principles of the Constitution (Seventy fourth Amendment) Act 1992, State Government enacted a comprehensive act namely, the Kerala Municipality Act 1994 (Act 20 of 1994) and this act entrusts Municipalities with the functions of the preparation of plans and implementations of schemes for economic development and social justice including the implementation schemes in relation to the matters listed in the twelfth schedule.

In the section 51(3) of the Kerala Municipality Act 1994 specify that "Every Municipality shall prepare a Master Plan for its development in prescribed manner with focus on scientific spatial planning taking into account its resources and as per the fiscal investment and submit the same to District Planning Committee".

4.3. Provisions in the Kerala Panchayath Raj Act 1994

In the section 175(4) of the Kerala Panchayath Raj Act (Act 13 of 1994), a similar provisions as mentioned in the above Municipality Act were also given in which provision for the preparation of Master Plan with long term vision for around 15 years of planning period is specified.

4.4. Role of District Planning Committee (DPC) in the Planning process.

In the article 243-ZD of the Constitution, in the sub provision (1), it is specified that, there shall be constituted in every State at the district level a District Planning Committee to consolidate the plans prepared by the Panchayats and the Municipalities in the district and prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole.

In the sub provision (3) it is also given that, every District Planning Committee shall, in preparing the draft development plan, have regard to matters of common interest between the Panchayats and the Municipalities including the spatial planning, sharing of water and other physical and natural resources, integrated development of infrastructure and environmental conservation. In the Kerala Municipality Act 1994, the above-mentioned details were included in section 53 of the Act.

4.5. Provision for Preparation of Master Plan in the State Town and Country Planning Act

Before the independence of the country, considering the importance to the complex nature of urban activities, Travancore Kings had enforced the Travancore Town Planning Act (1108) in urban local bodies. In the Malabar area, Madras Town Planning Act (1920) and Madras Town & Country Planning Act were also in force, for the planned developments of the towns. In those acts it is clearly specified with provision for functions and contents of the preparation of the Master Plan of the urban Local bodies. All these acts were in force in Kerala state till the unified state act enacted on 2016.

In the unified state act namely Kerala Town & Country Planning Act (Act 9 of 2016) it has been provided provisions for the preparation and implementation of Master Plans for the Local Planning Area as one of the specific function and power of Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council, Town Panchayat, Village Panchayat etc. Along with that, other provisions such as matters dealing with master plan, procedure for the preparation, publication, and sanctioning of master plans and details of the preparation of master plans for the Joint Planning Areas, were also given. In the Kerala Town & Country Planning (preparation of master plans and its sanctioning) Rules 2021, shows the details of legal procedures for the Preparation of Master Plans. All these provisions are framed in tune with the principles of the Constitution (Seventy-fourth Amendment) Act 1992.

4.6. Legal Obligation of Local Governments for preparation of Master Plan.

Considering the strong Indian Constitutional background, specific provisions of the Kerala Municipality Act (1994), Kerala Panchayath Raj Act (1994), and Kerala Town & Country Planning Act (2016), there exists sufficient legal obligation that each Local Self Government Institution in the State to prepare the Master Plan for the proper guidance in the future development of their Local Planning Area.

5. Functions of Local Governments in Preparation of Master Plan and its Further Process.

Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council, Grama Panchayat shall have the following additional functions namely: —

- (a) Prepare or get prepared for the Local Planning Area, a Master Plan,
- (b) Implement all or any of the provisions contained in the Plans by formulating and executing projects, Land Pooling Schemes, Detailed Town Planning Schemes or otherwise;

- (c) Formulate, promote, regulate and control land use and developmental activities in the Local Planning Area as per the Plans;
- (d) Set up special function agencies, if necessary, for specific functions such as plan preparation, implementation of projects and guide, direct and assist such agencies on matters pertaining to their respective functions; and
- (e) Perform such other functions as are supplemental, incidental or consequential to any of its functions and or as may be directed by the Government from time to time.

5.1. Delegation of powers to the Standing Committees

The Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council, Grama Panchayat, as the case may be, if so decided by a resolution, may delegate, any of its powers and functions regarding the preparation of Master Plan, to the Standing Committee responsible for spatial planning or town planning in a Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council, Grama Panchayat, as the case may be. This Standing Committee shall take further step in consultation with Local Self Government Department (Planning).

5.2. Appointment of Special Committees and Working Groups

- (1) For the purpose of assisting the Municipal Corporation, the Municipal Council, the Grama Panchayat concerned in exercising such of its powers, discharging such of its duties or performing such of its functions, the Local Government Institutions concerned may constitute one or more special committees.
- (2) The Municipal Corporation, the Municipal Council, the Grama Panchayat shall have the power to co-opt as a member of the special committee constituted under sub-section (1), any person having special expertise and qualification in Town and Country Planning, who is not a member of that Local Government Institutions, as may be deemed necessary.
- (3) The Municipal Corporation, the Municipal Council, the Grama Panchayat may constitute Working Groups as per the guidelines for the prevailing or in such manner as may be prescribed, for various sectors for giving guidance and support to the special committees in the preparation of master plan.

5.3. Formation of Working Groups for the Preparation of Master Plan.

Working groups for the preparation of master plan for different sectors like agriculture and animal husbandry; fisheries; forest; industries; trade and commerce; transportation; infrastructure; housing and slum improvement; water; drainage; sewerage; solid

waste management; health; education; energy; tourism; disaster management; heritage; culture; social welfare; welfare of old aged, disabled, women and child; other suggested sectoral subjects, etc. are to be formed in participatory approach.

The working group for each sector shall be framed as a team with representation of ward member/councilor, expert in that particular subject, representative of the planning team of Local Self Government Department - LSGD (Planning), representative of department official deals with that particular sectoral subject, representative of LSGI official deals with that particular sectoral subject, representatives from people who has keen interest in that subject.

5.4. Procedure for Preparation, Publication and Sanctioning of Master Plan.

Local Self Government Institutions shall follow the provisions as prescribed in section 36 of the Kerala Town & Country Planning Act (2016), as the official procedure for preparation, publication and sanctioning of Master Plan.

6. The Role of Local Self Government Department (Planning) for the Preparation of Master Plan.

The Planning Wing of Local Self Government Department shall, guide and advise the Municipal Corporation, the Municipal Council, the Grama Panchayat concerned, its Standing Committee or any other special committees or the working groups constituted under Section 32, in the performance of their functions under the Kerala Town & Country Planning Act (2016). LSGD (Planning) shall, function as the main leading technical arm in the case of planning, for Local Governments as well as District Planning Committee and State Government.

7. Procedure for Preparation of Master Plan.

Participatory planning approach shall be considered in the Preparation of Master Plan. It shall be a joint function of Local Governments, Committees constituted, Working Groups, Concerned stakeholders in different sectors and Local Self Government Department (Planning).

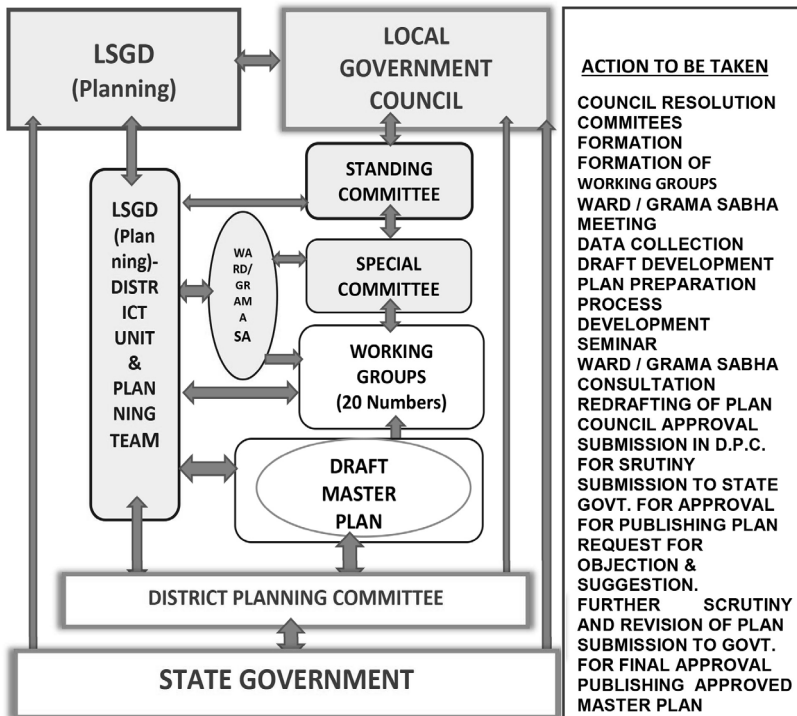
In order to follow the official procedure, Local Self Government Institutions may follow the provisions as prescribed in the section 36 of the Kerala Town & Country Planning Act (2016) for preparation of Master Plan. Local Governments have to take primary responsibility for the preparation of plan in the right time.

The role of District Planning Committee and the State government is to guide preparation procedure which is to be within

the frame work of the Comprehensive District Development Plan and State Perceptive Plan.

The agencies involved in the procedure and the various actions to be taken in the preparation of the Master Plan are schematically explained in the following diagram shown in the digram. 1.

Diagram 1: Procedure for preparation of Master Plan



8. Contents of Master Plan of Local Governments

The Master Plan shall be prepared through a participatory process and it generally indicate the manner in which development of the Local Planning Area shall be carried out and also the manner in which the use of land shall be regulated.

(1) The Master Plan may include the following, namely: —

- A development concept and strategy with a long-term vision, approximately for a period of twenty years, having regard to the policies and strategies for the Local Planning Area or part thereof concerned, as laid down in the Perspective Plan for the State, the plans for the district and the Metropolitan Area, if any. It may also incorporate goals, objectives, strategies and policies

pertaining to all or some of the sectors of spatial development that are pertinent to the local planning area or part thereof, as the case may be;

- (b) Master Plan documents with land use proposals, development control regulations and Plans for Infrastructure Development;
- (c) Statement of community involvement in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the Master Plan;
- d) Situational analysis including the history of development, present status and trend of development, regional context, physiographic and demographic characteristics, influence area and its characteristics including settlement pattern, rural-urban relationship and fringe area developments etc.;
- (e) Existing land use; and
- (f) Situational analysis in respect of hazard, vulnerability, risk and proposals for mitigation and resilience.

(2) In particular, the Master Plan shall provide for current issues, prospects and proposals regarding all or any of the following, namely:—

- (i) Economic base and employment in sectors like agriculture, trade, commerce and industries in both formal and informal sectors;
- (ii) Hierarchy of commercial areas, dispersal of commercial activities and related issues;
- (iii) Dispersal of industries and restriction on specific type of industries in both formal and informal sectors;
- (iv) Population assignment, space requirement for various activities and designating the use of land for such purposes;
- (v) Housing, including affordable housing, informal sector housing, resettlement strategy and slum up gradation;
- (vi) Educational facilities, including specialised education and research centers, health facilities, including specialized hospitals, cultural and religious facilities, public and semi-public institutions;
- (vii) System of open space, play fields and recreation areas, conservation areas, ecologically and environmentally sensitive areas, natural hazard prone areas and public gathering grounds;
- (viii) Transportation covering roads, railways, waterways, pedestrian-pathways and related activity centers, parking and terminal facilities, mass transportation system and its integration with

activity nodes, integration of land use with activity nodes and land use pattern, airport and seaport etc.;

- (ix) Utilities and services such as water supply, drainage, sewerage, solid waste management, energy, communication, fire protection, cremation and burial grounds, slaughter houses etc.;
- (x) Tourism, environmental conservation, heritage, coastal area development and the like;
- (xi) Proposals for Transferable Development Rights, Accommodation Reservation, Land Pooling Schemes or any other similar technique for promoting planned development;
- (xii) Development control regulations for promoting and regulating the use and development of land including regulations for natural hazard prone areas, imposition of conditions and restrictions in regard to the building line, open space to be maintained about buildings, Floor Area Ratio, coverage, height, number of storeys and character of buildings and density of built-up area allowed in specified area, the use and purpose for which buildings or specified areas of land may or may not be appropriated, the subdivision of plots, the discontinuance of objectionable uses of land in any area in reasonable periods, parking spaces, and the size of projections and advertisement signs and the like; and
- (xiii) Such other proposals for public purpose as may, from time to time, be approved by the Municipal Corporation, the Municipal Council, or the Grama Panchayat concerned, or as may be directed by the Government or the District Planning Committee, as the case may be, in this behalf.

(3) Other matters that may be dealt with in the Master Plan may include the following, namely,

- (a) Development issues and consolidation of suggestions of grama sabha/ward sabha/ward committee, as the case may be;
- (b) Development strategies for integrated development;
- (c) Sectoral development policies, strategies and proposals of sectors like agriculture, fisheries, animal husbandry, forest, industries, transportation, infrastructure, water, drainage, sewerage, solid waste management, health, education, energy, tourism, suggested phasing of the proposal etc.;
- (d) Implementation mechanism which may include identification of sector-wise schemes and projects to be implemented by Central or State Government departments, Public Sector undertakings, the Local Self Government Institutions concerned, corporate bodies, co-operatives, private and joint sectors and/or otherwise;

- (e) Fiscal requirements and resource mobilisation proposals;
- (f) Any other matters as may be considered necessary for carrying out the objects of preparation of Master Plan; and
- (g) Monitoring and review mechanism.

(4) Master Plan shall also provide priority Action Plan for five years with different phasing stages,

Taking into account schemes and projects envisaged in the Master Plan for the Local Planning Area or part thereof along with development priorities assigned by the Central and State Governments, indicating phasing and prioritization of actions for the implementation of short, medium and long term sectoral programmes, projects and schemes or any other particulars as may be considered necessary in respect of development by the Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council, Grama Panchayat concerned or as may be directed by the District Planning Committee and State Government.

9. Major Issues Identified in Local Governance Related with Master Plan

There are several issues identified at local level in Local Governments related with the preparation and implementation of master plans. The major issues noted are given as follows.

- (1) Even though several Grama Panchayaths are in the stage of formation of small cities and towns in the State, any of these rural institutions do not have approved Master Plan for future development of their planning area.
- (2) Several newly formed Municipalities do not have Master Plan for proper guidance of their towns.
- (3) The majority of existing approved Master Plans of old cities and towns are seen completed desired planning horizon period and need revision.
- (4) None of the existing approved Master Plan of the cities and towns have taken into account the issues of disaster due to natural calamities and the arising climate change problems.
- (5) Certain rigidity is noted in the official procedure of Master Plan preparation and it prolongs the processing period for the preparation and approval.
- (6) On evaluation of projects of Local Governments for the last few years, multiyear town level projects as conceived in the Master Plan were seen neglected.
- (7) In the recent master plans, much importance was not given

in the formation of the projects related with local economic development and social reformation of disgraced society.

- (8) It is noticed that existing draft District Plans prepared do not have the comprehensiveness and strength to guide the preparation of Master Plans.
- (9) Integrated sub-regional development plans within the district are not prepared to guide inter-related projects and specified subject-wise issues which may cover several Local Governments within the sub-region.
- (10) There is no approved State Perspective Plan prepared to guide the preparation of Comprehensive District Plans as well as the Master Plans.

10. Suggestions and Recommendations

In the context of various points and issues described above, it is the high time to think the task of preparation of Master Plan for all Local Governments in the state in a participatory approach with scientific planning technics. In this connection, in the interest of public, following few suggestions and recommendation are put forwarded for the changes to be considered in the prevailing Local Governance system.

10.1. Master Plan for all Local Governments

Considering the peculiar urbanization scenario and serious land scarcity with high density of population in the state, very important attention is needed for the sustainable and balanced development of every parcel of land. So in order to have clear guiding vision document for decision makers as well as people for scientific planned development of local planning area, it is the responsibility of all Local Governments of both urban and rural areas, urgently to prepare the Master Plans. To get the confidence of people and transparency in the system, Plan preparation process shall be in participatory approach with scientific planning technics.

10.2. Development Plans for all levels at same planning period

In order to have balanced governance system and its administration in the state, Development Plans for all decision-making level with same planning horizon period shall be prepared. State Perspective Development Plan, Comprehensive District Development Plan, and Integrated Sub Regional Plan in the district, are to be prepared along with the preparation of Master Plans of Local Governments. These will give a total balanced scientific guidance for State Authorities, District Planning Committees and Local Governments for the future

development and will reduce conflicts between inter department, inter district, inter sub regions in the district and issues between Local Governments are to be reduced to the maximum extend.

10.3. Involvement of Planning Institutions and Experts in Plan Preparation

Since at present, sufficient qualified planners are not available in LSG Department (Planning) for handling the entire planning programme at a stretch, it is suggested that services of institution like the School of Planning, Planning Departments of Engineering Colleges, unemployed qualified planners, retired planning professionals and experts in various sectoral subjects are to be utilized on a temporary basis.

10.4. More Flexibility in Plan Preparation Procedure and Implementation

In order to reduce the certain rigidity seen in the master plan preparation procedure and in its implementation in the local governance, it is suggested that certain modification and amendments are to be considered in the Town and Country Planning Act and Rules of the state for getting more flexibility in the plan preparation procedure. It is also noticed that there is an urgent need of flexible provision in the official procedure for the preparation of priority action plans for five years phasing, within the frame work of Master Plan.

10.5. Massive Campaign Programme for Preparation of Plans in the State.

Considering the important need for different plans at various decision-making levels in the state within the same planning horizon period, it is suggested that Government may arrange a massive campaign programme for the preparation of State Perspective Plan, Comprehensive District Development Plan, Integrated Sub Regional Development Plan in the district, and Master Plans for the Local Governments. This programme may be arranged similar to the people's planning programme during the early period of decentralization activities in the state.

11. Conclusion.

Kerala is a small beautiful state with tremendous natural sceneries and greeneries over an undulating terrain and inhabiting with a high density of population. On evaluation of various changes happened in the last few decades, the State was experiencing fast urbanization and physical development. The trend in urbanization from 2001 to 2011 had phenomenal increase from 25.96 per cent to 47.72 per cent and the same trend is expecting to continue in the next decade.

The settlement pattern existing in the state is a dispersed type and it is a peculiar type of pattern which in turn form rural-urban continuum throughout the state. In a short period, majority of population in the settlement area may fall in the urban form. At the same time, it is noticed that very less importance was shown in the ecological conservation and environmental balance of this state. If it is continuing in the same way, it may come to a critical junction where there may be a total imbalance occur between the physical developments and ecological as well as environmental sustainability. This serious issue is seen raised due to the non-availability of clear-cut scientifically planned vision document at every level of decision making from grass root level Local Governments to District as well as State level. So in order to take precaution to this serious issue in the state, as discussed in the above paragraph, it is the primary responsibility of all Local Governments of both urban and rural areas, as well as District Planning Committees and State Government, to prepare Master Plans of all Local bodies, State Perspective Plan, Comprehensive District Development Plan, and Integrated Sub Regional Development Plan in the district, at a same planning horizon period. In this circumstance, Government may arrange a massive campaign programme in a participatory planning approach with the leadership of District Planning Committees and Local Self Government Department for the preparation of above said plans in the scientific manner for guiding proper physical development in the state, in a balanced and sustainable way. It may emerge as one of the relevant memorable events in the context of celebration of 25 years of decentralization in Kerala.

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Benchmarking Buildings Based on their Energy Performance in Kerala: A Case Study of Kochi

In India, buildings were responsible for one- third of total electricity consumption and nearly two-third of this electricity needs coming from thermal power. In Kerala, buildings with Low Tension (LT) & High Tension (HT) connection alone consume major share of the total electricity consumption in the state. Decarbonizing these building as part of climate mitigation targets, needs energy performance bench marking initiatives from the part of local governments. Benchmarking building energy use is possible in Indian cities with minimal data. This article discuss a novel benchmarking methodology for offices in Kochi to understand availability of data and practical challenges if benchmarking were to be scaled-up. Availability of tools and approaches for benchmarking at local levels is necessary to ensure regular improvements. Through training institutions, the State Government can sensitize local bodies on the importance and benefits of energy benchmarking to track the performance of their buildings and encourage energy retrofits afterwards.

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Key words- Electricity consumption, Benchmarking, Decarbonizing, Building energy consumption, local governments.

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1. Introduction

Globally, countries are committing to decarbonizing their building stock. The buildings and construction sector accounted for 36 per cent of global final energy use (excluding embedded energy) and 39 per cent of energy and process-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in 2018 (UNEP 2019). In India, buildings were responsible for 33 per cent of total electricity consumption in 2018–19 (MOSPI, 2019), with more than 60 per cent of India's electricity needs coming from thermal power (MOSPI, 2019). In Kerala, buildings with LT connection alone consume 62% of the total electricity consumption in the state. This share will further increase if we consider the data regarding commercial and residential buildings with HT connections, which is not available separately. These numbers highlight the importance of decarbonizing buildings in the state if it wants to achieve its goal of becoming a carbon neutral state by 2050. Achieving climate mitigation targets requires an understanding of the efficiency levels of existing buildings. Energy performance benchmarking helps establish baseline efficiencies and provides policymakers, building portfolio owners, and managers with the information they need to design and implement building efficiency programs. In this context, we tested a novel benchmarking methodology for offices in Kochi to understand availability of data and practical challenges if benchmarking were to be scaled-up.

2. The status quo of building energy performance benchmarking

Many developed countries regularly conduct building energy use benchmarking for continuous monitoring and evaluation of Energy Efficiency - EE programs and policies and to inform the design of new ones. Benchmarking provides a baseline of energy use of existing buildings, compares their energy performance with others after homogenizing for physical and operational characteristics, and provides policymakers data on the relative efficiencies of buildings. While building codes and standards speak to new buildings, benchmarking programs specifically address the efficiency of existing buildings. Citywide benchmarking systems can be used by policymakers as a yardstick of energy performance in buildings when benchmarks are disclosed publicly (Chung 2011). A citywide benchmarking program where the information is shared publicly serves three purposes (Hart 2015): It informs and empowers the real estate market to pay attention to energy efficiency (EE); it motivates building owners to invest in EE

services and retrofit projects; and it can help policymakers design better EE programs and policies. Consistent benchmarking efforts across a large sample of buildings can inform better building energy codes. Good performers can be rewarded (e.g., US Department of Energy's Sustainability Awards), 1 while low performers can be penalized (e.g., the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard [MEES] regulations in the United Kingdom).

Benchmarking activities also provide an opportunity to engage with building owners, tenants, and managers on RE and EE policies and programs. These activities provide information to market actors and allow building owners to prioritize measures for improvements. In India, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) attempted to collect building energy performance data from 2007 to 2009 through primary and secondary surveys. These results were used to develop and launch a Star Labelling Program for office buildings in 2009. However, this program has not been revised since 2009. In 2010, the USAID ECO-III making.

Project partnered with BEE to conduct a large-scale benchmarking effort involving data from 760 commercial buildings of various typologies (Kumar et al. 2010). In 2014, with support from Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation, BEE launched the EcoBench Tool (Sarraf, 2014) for benchmarking and rating energy performance of hospitals using ECO-III Project survey results (Benchmarking & Performance Rating Tool, 2020). No such national benchmarking exercise was repeated in India.

3. About this paper

Our research began with the objective of developing a citywide energy benchmarking program. We reviewed literature, consulted experts with previous experience in benchmarking studies in India, and developed the survey questionnaire. We surveyed 50 offices in Kochi to understand the data available for such a citywide program, and to develop a Building Performance Index (BPI) for the offices using statistical regression techniques. Our findings may not be representative due to the small sample size of data fields used in the survey, which had implications on the interpretation of some of the findings (e.g., reasons that some offices performed better than others).

We also conducted a qualitative survey, where we spoke with the office managers to understand their perceptions of EE services and retrofits and their awareness of energy service companies (ESCOs). In several markets globally, ESCOs have been instrumental in driving

building energy performance improvements, especially in cases where up-front investments in EE are high. We also asked questions to help assess applicability of common barriers, like the split incentive and financing barriers facing EE retrofit projects. Split incentives refer to transactions where economic benefits of energy savings do not accrue to those who invest in energy efficiency, as when building owners pay for investments in energy efficiency, while occupants pay the energy bills (WRI 2016).

WRI India published a working paper “Benchmarking Energy Performance of Offices in Kochi” in March 2022 based on the insights and learnings from the quantitative and qualitative assessments. The paper generated a new knowledge on benchmarking methods and their application to provide preliminary recommendations for more informed policymaking. As the findings and learnings from this exercise are very relevant for Kerala and its local governments, we synthesized the original paper to create an abridged version that’s more contextual to the urban local bodies in Kerala. This paper attempts to provide perceptions for the urban local bodies in Kerala to undertake benchmarking exercise at multiple scales.

4. Research Objectives

Our research objectives include the following:

- Assess the feasibility of conducting a citywide benchmarking exercise for office buildings
- Develop a BPI for the offices
- Document barriers to retrofits for different owner tenant models as well as enablers to seeking EE services

5. Approach and Methodology

We collected data on 50 office spaces in Kochi city. We chose offices because they account for 27 per cent of large commercial consumers in Kochi, the second largest category after retail spaces. We decided to focus on office buildings since they are included in BEE’s Star Labelling Program typology. Also, office spaces are more amenable to the initial landscape assessment due to more typical operational hours and building design. We defined large commercial consumers as those with connected load $\geq 75\text{kW}$ or contract demand $\geq 100\text{-kilo volt-ampere (kVA)}$. We determined the threshold based on data on buildings within the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC). ECBC applies to commercial buildings with connected load $\geq$

100kW or contract demand ≥ 120 kVA. The number of such buildings in Kochi was low. We adopted a two-part methodology—a quantitative survey to benchmark the energy performance of selected office spaces, and a qualitative questionnaire (over the telephone) with managers of the offices.

6. Scope of Study

The scope of our study is office spaces and the energy consumed and managed within these boundaries. We have not benchmarked office buildings, which would refer to additional energy services provided as “common services” to all offices within the building in the form of elevators, water pumping systems, and common area lighting. Hereafter we will refer to the sample as “offices.”

7. Sample Identification

After fixing the sample criteria as offices with connected load ≥ 75 kW, we sought their electricity consumption data from the electric utility, the KSEB. Since the Kerala State Electricity Board - KSEB used a different method to document this information, we had to work with it to clarify the consumer categories and short-list 91 consumers. We contacted these consumers to seek their willingness to participate in the study. Based on the discussions, 62 joined the survey. Upon further analysis, we finalized 50 office spaces for the advanced analysis on benchmarking energy performance and qualitative research to ensure homogeneity of the sample.

8. Primary Data Collection

According to Kumar et al. (2010), in India, several efforts have been undertaken to collect energy use data of commercial buildings. These have seen only limited success for the following reasons: difficulties in standardizing questionnaire terms with the vocabulary used by office managers; challenges in ensuring data quality; addressing data confidentiality concerns of participating buildings; and inability to strike a balance between depth of data and the ease of collecting information. Keeping these lessons in mind, we developed our survey questionnaire.

This survey sought to collect data on basic energy use to enable comparisons on energy performance. Since this was a first-of-a-kind initiative at a city scale in India, we were also opportunistic and focused on datasets that the office manager could provide without much effort.

We had a letter of support from the Kochi Municipal Corporation (KMC), which immensely helped our data gathering efforts. Primary data were collected by a trained survey agency that used in-person and remote data collection techniques. Some data fields were classified as mandatory to enable benchmarking; others were voluntary.

9. Benchmarking Approach

Energy performance of a building depends on various parameters including its size, number of occupants, conditioned area, and so forth. While a building is to be compared with other buildings for its energy performance, it is important that we factor in these parameters to warrant a justifiable comparison. Using Building Performance Index (BPI) as a yardstick to compare buildings for their energy performance allows us the flexibility to factor in these parameters. While the Energy Performance Index (EPI) is one of the most widely used metrics to indicate a building's energy performance, it only considers a building's annual energy consumption and its floor area to assess its performance. Our study was more focused on a detailed assessment that demanded the use of BPI over EPI for benchmarking buildings.

Our methodology for benchmarking is adapted from Sarraf et al. (2014), where regression-based statistical methods were used to benchmark the energy performance of 760 commercial buildings. The approach was used to develop India's first national-level benchmarking platform (EcoBench), which we previously mentioned in the paper. Under this approach, a building's energy performance is compared with a "benchmark" building of similar characteristics using a scoring system. Statistical methods were used to estimate the energy consumption of the "benchmark" building and the scores or relative rankings of the buildings on the BPI. Since the detailed methodology is beyond the scope of this paper, those who are interested to understand the methodology in detail are advised to refer to the original paper.

10. Findings from the benchmarking exercise

10.1. Occupancy categories:

For each office, we also collected ownership information. Of the 50 buildings, 17 were owned by the central government, 6 by the state government, and 27 by private companies.

10.2. Premise ownership and facilities management:

We further classified the buildings into five categories based on facilities management. The details of buildings based on their ownership and management types are given below.

- i. Owners occupied most of the buildings surveyed (32 of the 50 buildings). Facilities in 23 offices were managed by in-house teams, and third parties managed the remaining 27
- ii. Tenants occupied 18 offices; 15 were present in buildings where there were other tenants as well. In 8, the owner managed the facilities, and in the remaining 10, tenants did.
- iii. None of the leased facilities had third-party facilities managers

10.3. Size categorization of office spaces:

We analysed data from the 50 offices to understand energy use characteristics, physical characteristics of the building, building management, and ownership information. We categorized them into small, medium, and large offices using statistical tests in the R program. To fix these categories, we used segmented regression techniques to analyse the data for breakpoints. However, no breakpoints were identified, possibly because of the small sample size. The carpet area of offices ranged from 325 m² to 11,600 m².

10.4. Energy- and equipment-related characteristics

- i. Connected load and annual consumption: Of the 50 offices, 21 had a connected load ranging between 75kW and 100 kW. The remaining 29 had a connected load above 100 kW. There were 11 offices with a load greater than 200 kW. The highest load recorded was 690 kW for a 21-floor office space. The 50 offices had a combined annual electricity consumption of 12 million units and a total connected load of 8.192 MW.
- ii. Air-conditioning: Three of the 50 buildings had centralized air-conditioning. The per centage area conditioned by ACs varied from 2 per cent to 100 per cent, indicating a mixed-mode ventilation practice in many offices.
- iii. Rooftop solar: Seven of the 50 offices have rooftop solar plants. Of these, 6 were in owner-occupied offices where the owner also managed the facilities. One multitenant building managed by the owner also had a rooftop solar installation.

10.5. Energy performance benchmarks:

The benchmarking exercise aimed to collect empirical data to produce statistically robust BPI values and generate a simple ranking of buildings while normalizing for independent variables' impact on individual offices' energy performance. We allotted building IDs to

the 50 buildings, calculated their BPIs, and converted them to ranks ranging from 1 to 50. BPI values ranged from 0.34 to 2.19 (Figure 1). Although we could not conduct more in-depth investigations into the reasons behind the different energy performance of the same type of buildings, we are presenting some observations:

A. The Top 22 ranks are for offices with BPI < 1

- i. 14 of the 32 owner-occupied offices (44 per cent) are in the top 22. Of these, 11 are offices where the owner occupied and managed the facilities, and third parties managed the remaining three.
- ii. There are also 6 office spaces occupied by tenants and managed by the owner (75 per cent of this category) in the top 22.
- iii. 2 of the 3 offices where a single tenant occupied the building and managed the facilities are in the top 22, with BPI scores of 0.48 and 0.60.
- iv. 14 of the 22 offices were occupied by private companies (54 per cent of private companies), 4 by central government (21 per cent of central government buildings), and 4 by state government (80 per cent of the state government buildings).

B. The bottom 28 ranks are for offices with BPI > 1

- i. Eighteen owner-occupied offices are in the bottom 28. There are 12 offices where the owners occupied and managed the facilities in-house, and third parties managed the remaining 6.
- ii. All 7 offices where multiple tenants occupied, and managed facilities are in the bottom 28.
- iii. Fourteen of the 28 offices in the bottom are occupied by central government agencies, 12 by private companies, and the remaining 2 by state government bodies.

11. Qualitative Survey

We conducted a qualitative survey of the 50 offices over the telephone due to COVID-19 restrictions. The survey's primary respondents were office managers and building supervisors who had provided the quantitative survey data. The interviews focused on two questions:

- What are the barriers to implementing EE retrofits in buildings?
Barriers to EE retrofits in buildings are an acknowledged knowledge gap (Marquez et al. 2012). We wanted to test the

applicability of the “split incentives” and other barriers across different buildings.

- What are the enablers (or drivers) to EE services?

We wanted to document specific drivers of EE services, including retrofit projects. We wanted to see if the benchmarking survey results changed mindsets or receptivity toward EE services in existing offices.

Based on the survey, the findings and inferences are tabulated below.

Split incentives	Most offices were bare when tenants moved in. The tenant had to invest and install cooling equipment (e.g., ACs) and lighting. Although tenants could have installed efficient equipment, most did not, except for Level 1 interventions (replacing broken bulbs with LED lights).	Tenants having to invest up-front in efficient equipment typically opt for low-cost equipment and appliances. EE considerations are unlikely to be prioritized unless they are readily available (e.g., LED lights). Also, though tenants could make their own decisions, the owners’ management of services may have impacted their decision not to purchase and install more efficient equipment.
Financing	In offices where owners or tenants managed facilities, operations budgets paid for replacements or retrofits, even for new ACs. However, most offices, irrespective of who owns or occupies them, had only carried out Level 1 interventions. When asked, all except one identified financing as a challenge to installing new EE equipment. Interestingly, we found that there is no interest in taking loans to finance retrofits.	Upgrading and retrofitting HVAC[HVAC stands for Heating, Venting, and Air Conditioning] systems is generally expensive and may need significant capital (especially in small offices). Given the limited presence of HVAC systems in the study, replacing split ACs with energy efficient. ACs or retrofitting efficient fans appears to be easier to implement. However, these do not achieve scale (in terms of cost savings), and more expensive upgrades need management approval

		if they are financed from operational budgets.
Interest and motivation in saving energy	All the surveyed offices ranked energy saving as one of their top five priorities. But beyond stating this, they did not do much to achieve that goal. Their primary need was the presence of a reliable power backup.	Most electrical upgrades or replacements are postponed until there is a breakdown of equipment. Even then, EE is not the first consideration for replacement. Alternatives that are readily available and affordable are prioritized.
Broader information and awareness on the energy services market	Most offices surveyed were aware of energy-saving measures. But knowledge and awareness on ESCOs was limited across the board.	In mature markets, Energy Service Companies - ESCOs can aggregate smaller projects on behalf of office owners to lower project management and implementation costs (Marquez et al. 2012). In India, while ESCOs operate in the building sector, awareness of their existence and utility is limited.

12. Findings and Critical Observations

- Benchmarking building energy use is possible in Indian cities with minimal data. We used readily available or collectable data for establishing relative energy efficiency levels of buildings. However, statistical applications for data analysis would require training and capacity-building of program officials.
- Interest and involvement of ULBs are very important. ULBs play a critical role in supporting the data collection exercise
- There was little evidence of the split incentive barrier. Most tenants moved into offices where the owner provided only basic lighting and core services. Though tenants had the choice of installing efficient equipment and appliances, they preferred purchasing lower-cost and more readily available average-efficiency alternatives in the market, except light-emitting diode (LED) lights because of their ubiquitousness.
- There is no demand for financing high-cost upgrades. None of the offices expressed interest in taking loans or accessing other finance for more expensive retrofits or replacements. They

1. HVAC stands for Heating, Venting, and Air Conditioning

were satisfied with their operations budget for upgrades and replacements.

- Saving energy is considered important to offices even though their actions suggest otherwise. Offices ranked energy savings as one of their top five priorities, but their actions, for example, on energy audits or purchase of high-efficiency equipment, do not back this up.
- Awareness of ESCO models is low. Offices were not aware of energy service companies (ESCOs) and their business models. Those that had heard of ESCOs perceived the business model to be more suited to industries.

13. Recommendations

- City-level benchmarking exercises are the starting point for evaluating the performance of buildings and identifying opportunities to improve operational performance
- Regular benchmarking can support the development of outcome-based building codes, elevating India's building efficiency policy efforts
- Availability of tools and approaches for benchmarking at local levels is necessary to ensure regular improvements
- Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) can sensitize local bodies on the importance and benefits of energy benchmarking to track the performance of their buildings and encourage energy retrofits afterwards
- Energy Management Centre in Kerala can adopt methodology attempted in this study to build a benchmarking tool for application throughout the state, thus informing design of local EE programs and schemes on building stock efficiency improvements in cities.
- The success of EE policies and programs can vary due to local market factors. A deeper understanding of local variations in EE's perceived barriers and opportunities can inform better design and implementation of EE schemes in existing buildings.

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Higher Education- Local Government Linkage Model (HELLM) for Strengthening People's Plan Campaign

The essence of decentralization as different from mere delegation or de-concentration of resources at lower strata of government for people. Adherence to this principle has helped to project Kerala state to effectively implement decentralization which has received recognition both in national as well as global circles. Poor expertise and training of the Working Group members, abstinence by experts from Technical Advisory Groups and the absence of a good database compound the woes. On the other hand, the new challenges that Kerala faces in the form of climate change, increasing incidents of natural and biological disasters, global financial uncertainties and narrowed windows of opportunity for outmigration warrant that Local Governments emerge as hubs promoting sustainable economic growth and creating employment opportunities. This paper puts forth one potential strategy to enable Local Governments to harness the potential of all HEI in the state through a HELLM or Higher Education- Local Govt Linkage Model. In connection with this, the youth in Kerala need to be trained in such a way that would ensure their active participation in the local community and local government institutions. This Higher Education- Local Govt Linkage Model- HELLM would definitely facilitate such participation and strengthen the People's Plan Campaign which is the need of the hour. The social capital that the initiative can build up is invaluable for a democracy like India.

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Keywords:- Decentralisation, People's Plan Campaign, NEP, HELLM, Youth, Linkage model.

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1. Introduction

Local self-government can play a major role in ensuring democratic decentralization by ensuring participation at the grassroots level. Democratic decentralization is the process of devolving functions and resources of the state from the Centre to elected representatives at the lower levels so as to facilitate greater direct participation by citizens in governance, such devolution should be governed by the basic principle of subsidiarity: ie, what can be done best at a particular level should be done at that level and not at higher levels (Issac, 2000). The essence of decentralization as different from mere delegation or de-concentration is the freedom of locally making value judgments such as what should or should not be done for people and allocating resources such as who should get what, when and how (Govt. of Kerala, 2009). Adherence to this principle has helped project Kerala state to effectively implement decentralization which has received recognition both in national as well as global circles. Over the past 25 years of implementation, the state has witnessed significant improvements in the systems, processes and procedures of decentralized planning with a firm legal foundation for the Local government system, strong institutional support from varied sources such as the State Finance Commission, State Election commission, State Planning Board, State Development Council, Ombudsman for Local Government, The Appellate Tribunal, KILA, to name a few. These along with massive campaigns and people's participation, devolution of funds, timely preparation of plans by the Local Governments, integration of development plans and Budgets etc. are reported to have led to better utilization of funds, formulation of innovative projects, increasing allocation of funds to the productive sector and vulnerable segments of women, children and differently-abled, greater transparency and improved service delivery at the grassroots, greater preparedness to face natural disasters, efficient management of pandemics including Covid-19 to name a few (Kerala Economic Review, 2021)

However, certain challenges and hurdles persist which need to be addressed at this critical juncture of stock-taking during the silver jubilee of the decentralization experiment. Some critical drawbacks highlighted as early as 2009 by the committee set up by the Kerala govt to review Decentralized planning persist even now. Major drawbacks pointed out in that include non-materialization of long-term creative planning that takes the resource base of a specific geographical area into account and the inability to ensure result-based management of projects which would have increased the efficiency of implementation (Govt. of Kerala, 2009). Evaporation of the euphoria of the People's

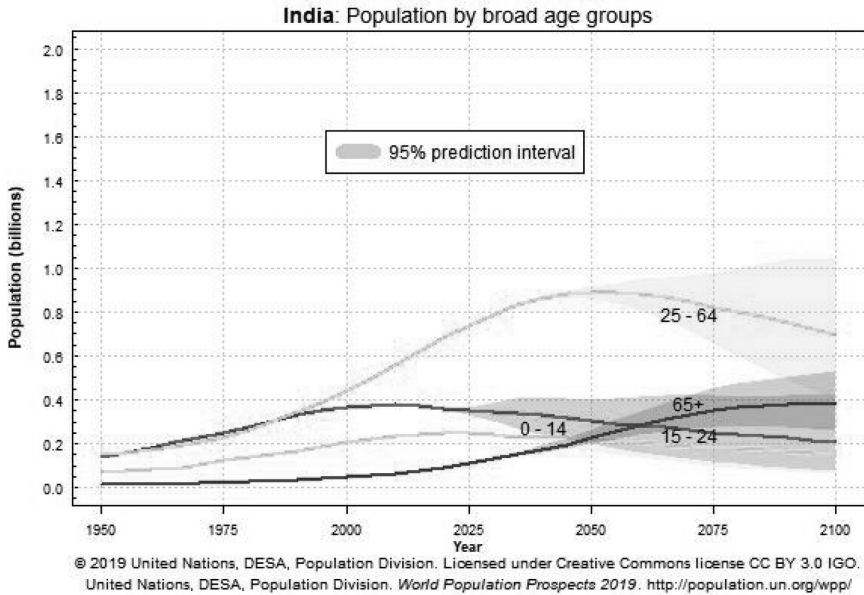
Plan Campaign/Janakeeyaasoothranam and the disinterest of almost all major civil society groups, with the exception probably of the Kudumbashree, has led to the decline of the decentralized planning process to a routine stereotypical exercise with low participation by people in Grama Sabhas and other platforms (Kerala Economic Review, 2021). Poor expertise and training of the Working Group members, abstinence by experts from Technical Advisory Groups and the absence of a good database compound the woes. On the other hand, the new challenges that Kerala faces in the form of climate change, increasing incidents of natural and biological disasters, global financial uncertainties and narrowed windows of opportunity for outmigration warrant that Local Governments emerge as hubs promoting sustainable economic growth and creating employment opportunities. Thus, the fourteenth Five Year Plan for Kerala 2022-27 envisages a greater role for Local Governments in promoting growth and welfare (Kerala Economic Review, 2021p -60). It warrants revamping the People's Plan Campaign with a new equation which will harness human resource potential from all means such as line departments, academic institutions, NGOs, CBOs etc. along with the active involvement of volunteers (Rajan J.B., 2017). This paper puts forth one potential strategy to enable Local Governments to harness potential of all HEI in the state through a HELLM or Higher Education-Local Govt Linkage Model. It needs to be emphasized at this juncture that, such a strategy was embedded in the working of decentralised planning in the initial stages in Kerala which depended on the efforts of key research, and development institutions such as Centre for Development Studies, National Centre for Earth Science Studies, Centre for Water Resource Development and Management (CWRDM), Kerala Agricultural University, Kerala Forest Research Institute etc to design grass root development strategies. However, such early involvement was restricted to few specialized research institutions and left out the large majority of higher educational institutions which prevented scaling up and sustainability. Recent developments in the education scenario at the national level have opened up potential for facilitating involvement of the entire gamut of HEIs in the state for strengthening decentralized planning. This paper explores such developments and chalks out a brief strategy for tapping this potential.

The paper sets the background through a brief on the significance of youth in India and their potential in the field of higher education. Then it moves on to explain how this potential can be engaged in various community engagement programmes in the light of New Education policy 2020. Therein it introduces a Higher Education Local Govt Linkage Model - HELLM for Strengthening People's Plan Campaign which can be critical for strengthening the future of our democracy.

2. Youth Potential in Higher Education in India

2.1 Significance of youth in India

All states in India including Kerala have a budding young population. Demographically, a significant proportion of the Indian population is constituted by youth and the country is projected to continue to have one of the world's youngest population till 2030 (UNFPA, 2030).



While the youth in general decide the destiny and future of a nation as a whole, educated youth, can play a crucial role to overcome the challenges of panchayath raj institutions. They can help improve the systems, institutions, and practices of local governance through putting to use their competencies, dynamism, energy and skills for planning, implementing and monitoring of local projects and programs. Their participation can thus enhance efficiency and strengthen the local governance (Gireesan, 2017). However, the grim reality is that at present in India, despite such great potential, youth participation is very low in political and civic arenas (Pradhan, 2019). It is in this context that the New Education Policy put forward by the national Govt offers immense potential.

2.2 Significance of Community Engagement in Higher Education as Envisaged in New Education Policy 2020

The background for community engagement had already been set through inclusion as a key criterion in evaluation of Institutions by

the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). The design and rolling out of the Unnath Bharath Abhiyan scheme in 2015 added another impetus by encouraging HEIs to adopt local communities and undertake activities to promote their development. NEP 2020 further widened the scope by clearly detailing key principles, guidelines and strategies for community engagement which cover the entire spectrum of teaching-learning process.

The new education policy highlights the holistic development of individuals with the aim of developing their intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional and moral capacities and lead to the development of a society which is enlightened, socially conscious and skilled enough to solve its problems. For accomplishing such a holistic education, HEIs can incorporate credit bases courses and projects in the arena of community engagement (National Education Policy , 2020). The policy also pinpoints the hitches with the existing system of teaching in most of the higher education institutions which emphasises the traditional method of delivery of content in the classrooms. This system makes the students dis-empowered and in many situations, students fail to relate what they learn to the realities of their life and work situations. While acknowledging this harsh reality, the policy underlines the need to make existing courses adaptive to community engagement which would equip students learn from the field. Dynamic curriculum reform to ensure such linkage between classroom theories and realities of the local community is needed to improve quality of learning and enhance student's contribution to national development.

The policy also puts forth the following key principles to guide such community engagement.

- i) Mutual learning and respect: There are greater possibilities for mutual learning and respect in the community engagement process. The community gets an opportunity to learn from faculty and students engage with them. The latter in turn can also gain from the practical knowledge and experience of the community.
- ii) University-wide, in each faculty and discipline: Community engagement should be practised across all disciplines and faculties of higher education institutions. This would enable the community to get acquainted with the latest technological innovations while at the same time providing an opportunity for the students and faculty to apply local technology and knowledge.
- iii) Credit for students: Various community engagement activities by the students should enable them to earn credits which will incentivize them to take up such activities.

- iv) Providing credit to teachers for engagement activities: Participation and contributions to community engagement by the teachers, researchers and administrators should be considered in their performance assessment. All these should be explicitly counted in the assessment for recruitment, regularization and promotion.
- v) Linkages with Local institutions: Higher Education Institutions should establish long-term linkages with local institutions like local government, district administration, local NGOs etc. which will guarantee regular community engagement (University Grants Commission, 2020).

The UBA policy reiterates that when higher education institutions apply the above principles, they can select any blend of the following forms.

i. Linking learning with community service

Through this method, students and teachers can apply their knowledge and skills in a selected community for the betterment of the life of people in that area. This is realized through a globally accepted model of service learning which provides the opportunities for the students of various disciplines to utilize their knowledge to solve the issues of a specific community.

ii. Linking research with community knowledge

Under this approach, faculties, and various programs of HEIs engage in joint research projects in linkage with communities and local agencies. The design and conduct of research would be based on the community's own knowledge. The approach emphasizes a symbiotic relationship in place of the current research strategies which are carried out generally only to advance the research interests of the students and faculty.

iii. Knowledge sharing and knowledge mobilization

The knowledge of students and teachers in various disciplines is made accessible to the local community to fulfil its dreams of development, attaining its entitlements and its support from different agencies and schemes. This can be in the form of surveys, seminars and awareness campaigns, study reports, public hearings, legal aid clinics policy briefs etc.

iv. Devising new curriculum and courses

Many Higher education institutions design a new curriculum in existing courses and develop new courses to engage with the

community. This improves the existing course curriculum and leads to locally appropriate courses which would cater to the needs of new-generation students.

v. Including practitioners as teachers

There are people with practical knowledge of a wide variety of topics ranging from agriculture, child rearing, micro-planning, water harvesting, and project management. Such enormous knowledge of local community elders, woman leaders, tribals and entrepreneurs can be tapped by inviting them to co-teach courses in classrooms and fields. Such instructors should be properly recognized.

vi. Social innovations by students

The higher education institutions should encourage and support their students to initiate learning projects with social effects. Existing curriculum and courses should have proper links to incubation of such social innovation projects. Competitions for innovations should be organized by HEIs (University Grants Commission, 2020)

3. HELLM for Strengthening People’s Plan Campaign in Kerala

3.1 Potential of HEI in Kerala

The centrality assigned to community engagement in the teaching-learning process in HEIs as laid down in the New Education Policy holds immense potential for imparting vigour to People’s Plan Campaign in Kerala for attaining the objectives of Nava Keralam Mission. The state has a strong network of HEIs with 14 universities. Out of these, 4 universities are general in nature which offers various courses. The rest of the universities offer specialized courses in specialized subject areas.

Table 1: Enrolment of Students in Arts and Science Colleges

Course	Total	Girls	Boys
B. A.	1,37,576	88,768	48,808
B.Sc.	1,05,545	78,908	26,637
B.Com	46,403	29,472	16,931
Total	2,89,524	1,97,148	92,376
M.A.	15,924	10,167	5,757
MSc.	19,971	12,757	7,214
M.Com.	6,874	4,828	2,046
Total	42,769	27,752	15,017
Grand Total	3,32,293	2,24,900	1,07,393

Source: Kerala Economic Review 2021, State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram

The table 1 shows the students enrolled in various arts and science colleges which is a potential source of human capital that can be used for various projects of the local governments. There are also 175 engineering colleges with a sanctioned intake of 47,025 in 2020-21 (Kerala Economic Review, 2021) which is another critical human resource.

3.2 Interventions needed to tap the Potential of youth for strengthening People's Plan Campaign

This section puts forth certain policy interventions and strategies that may need to be put in place to facilitate tapping this potential of using the expertise available with HEI in Kerala for strengthening the decentralized planning process. They include

i. Policies to actualise community engagement guidelines of the NEP among HEI in Kerala

Guidance may be given to various universities to draft necessary guidelines for putting into practice the strategies suggested by NEP. These include making social and extension activities mandatory for all the students to get their degree in HEI, assignment of credits for such student engagement, giving internship opportunities for the students in local self-governments, direction to link both UG and PG student research projects in arts and science as well as technical educational institutions to local issues, the inclusion of such activities in promotion criteria of faculty to name a few.

Student's projects can be directed towards analyzing various key segments such as agriculture and allied sectors, health, education, gender etc. Identified data sources and schedules may be developed with assistance which may in turn be used to undertake a situational analysis of the local context. The results can be presented as a report to the local body which will form the basis of preparing second-generation development plans. Students can also be invited to draft projects for addressing issues identified and best projects can be included in the development plan.

Research formats may also be designed to evaluate a) implementation of projects in terms of allocation and utilization of funds b) the assessment of impact/outcome at local level and link these to Sustainable Development Goals and indicators based on the National and Local Indicator framework for the same put forward by Government agencies (MOPR, 2021 and MOSPI, 2015)

Such policies need to cover not only students in general and faculty but also various clubs and cells such as NSS and their annual camps, Bhoomithra Sena Clubs, incubation cells

etc. Needless to say, a foundation has already been laid in many institutions in the form of Unnath Bharath Abhiyan as well as Red Cells. These can be further strengthened and institutionalised adopting a strategy similar to that employed in NSS through issue of graded certificates based on time and effort put in by each student.

- ii. Capacity Building for faculty and students – The proposition put forward a long time ago that academic and professional communities in Kerala have to eschew their ivory tower attitude and deeply ingrained cynicism (Isaac, 2000) needs to be reiterated and appropriate orientations conducted. It is a sad reality that, even twenty-five years down the lane of decentralization, large majority of the academic and technical community in the HEIs generally remain distanced and completely ignorant about the Local Governance structures and processes. Thus, another critical strategy would be orientation of key faculty and students on the decentralisation process and their own potential roles and responsibilities in this regard. One potential and easy tactic for such sensitisation could be motivation to undergo the related online course of KILA on decentralized planning.
- iii. HELLM cell in HE department- Our experience of trying to undertake research projects and intervention in decentralized planning reveal a number of hurdles, primary one being absence of reliable data and research tools. To overcome these, a HELLM cell may be constituted in HE department which will facilitate and handhold various teams in undertaking local research. This would necessitate synergic working of officials of Higher Education Department, LSGD data management experts, statistical experts from the Department of economics and statistics etc. A resource pool of such data sources and research tools needs to be developed for common use by all concerned.
- iv. Recording and sharing of best practices- The experience of some institutions which have already initiated projects to support local development may be recorded and shared so as to serve as an inspiration and replicable model for others desiring to follow suit. It will help shed light on feasible strategies, hurdles to be crossed etc.
- v. Financial assistance- A small financial assistance to cover basic cost of community engagement and research may be given to HEIs who come forward to support data/ research-based planning and monitoring. This can be met from the plan funds or own resources of Local Governments which will facilitate flexibility and fund allocation based on the extent of involvement rather than following a one size fits all approach.

3.3. Advantage - HELLM

Adoption of HELLM may have the following advantages

For Local Governments, it will

- Strengthen decentralized planning leading to innovative region-specific project formation and infuse dynamism through key inputs from diverse fields and personnel
- Promote data-based/ research-based planning
- Institutionalize and sustain planning through inclusion in education policy
- Institutionalize social audit through assessment of utilization of funds vis a vis allocation, promote evaluation of impact/ outcome of various projects using specific indicators through built in accountability system
- Enable bringing local projects within a result-based framework and facilitate working towards SDG goals
- Will ensure the inclusion of diverse segments of population who at present remain detached from the planning process.
- Strengthen democracy through grooming informed future elected representatives as well as participating citizens who have the capacity to use their skills to identify and address local issues and promote local development.

As far as HEIs are concerned, it will lead

- To an enriched pedagogy of teaching-learning through
- Promoting experiential learning and familiarising students with systematic data collection, scientific sampling methodology, use of structured schedules prepared by experts, tools of analysis which will enhance pedagogy of teaching of 1) research methodology 2) techniques of quantitative analysis.
- Bridging the gap between theory and practice through community engagement; enable students to develop capacities to use their skills for identification and solution of real-life problems faced by the communities, facilitate learning from local knowledge and wisdom
- Catalyzing acquisition of values of public service and active citizenship amongst students and youth alike, which would also encourage, nurture and harness the natural idealism of youth.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, the model presents a win-win situation for all concerned. Both the floods of 2018 as well as recent pandemic have revealed the

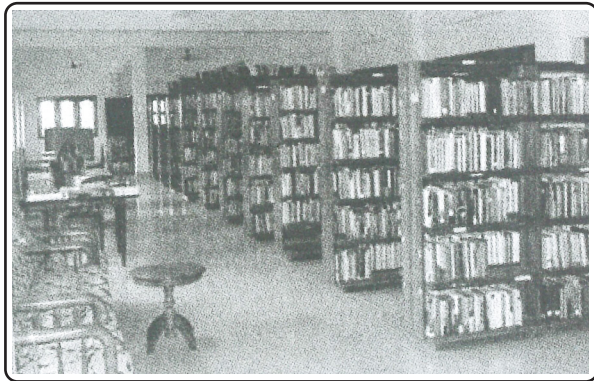
power of youth as well as local governments in crisis management. The frequent disasters that Kerala is subject point to an urgent need to strengthen both these critical resources. The youth in Kerala need to be trained in such a way that would ensure their active participation in local community and local government institutions. This Higher Education- Local Govt Linkage Model- HELLM would definitely facilitate such participation and strengthen People's Plan Campaign which is the need of the hour. The social capital that the initiative can build up is invaluable for a democracy like India.

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KILA Library

KILA library has a collection of over 10,000 books and over 200 journals, focused on KILA's thrust areas. The collection of books and periodicals of the Library is focused on the themes of Panchayati Raj, local governance, participatory planning, poverty alleviation, rural development, urban development and management. It has full-fledged information centre on local governance, with state of the art facilities like computer and Internet. With this purpose, a new library complex has been constructed.



As part of computerization of Library, KILA installed KOHA software in the Library. An online Digital Repository for local Governance has also been created by KILA and the website is www.dspace.kila.ac.in.

Trends, Pattern and Efficiency of Plan Fund of Local Government in Kerala

The success of decentralized planning exercises is revealed from the trends, patterns and efficiency in plan fund utilization of local governments. The analysis highlights not only the declining trend in total funds and plan funds devolved to lower strata of administration, but also, the increasing inefficiency in fund utilization of all layers of local government. Within the rural local bodies, the inefficiency in plan fund utilization is deplorably poor in district local bodies. In addition, the fund utilization in local bodies is not in tune with the needs and priorities of the local economy. The plan funds are diverted greatly from productive sectors to service and infrastructure activities. The inefficiency in the utilization of plan funds and their sectoral shifts, not only raise the question of the veracity of development strategies followed at the local level so far, but also the sustainability of the inclusive development vision of the state.

Keywords:- Grama Panchayat, Utilisation of funds, Plan funds, Sectorial shift, Local Governments

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1. Introduction

The 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Indian Constitution provided a solid and uniform framework for decentralized governance of the country. The 73rd constitutional amendment, not only provided a three-tier system of rural governance (Grama Panchayat (GP), Block Panchayat (BP) and District Panchayat (DP)) but also clearly defines the expenditure responsibilities and functional domain of these layers of local planning (Schedule XI of the Constitution). The 74th constitutional amendment provided the structure and mandate of Urban Local Bodies (ULB) to transform them into effective democratic self-governing institutions. The functional and financial autonomy guaranteed by these amendments to local bodies is intended to meet the needs and aspirations of people by implementing projects and schemes specific to local requirements and resource availability with people's participation at all stages of decentralized governance.

Since the state of Kerala had a unique historical legacy in economic development and political experiments suited for decentralized governance, the implementation process of the new Panchayat Raj system and urban governance in the state were speedier as compared to many other states in India. The fiscal decentralization implemented as part of these changes guarantees transfers of resources matched with increased responsibilities to local bodies. In Kerala, funds transfers are more or less matched with functional responsibilities as evident in the Fourth State Finance Commission (SFC) Report 1. The twinning of fiscal autonomy with functional autonomy is an essential ingredient for successful democratic decentralization at the local level. One touchstone for the effectiveness of fiscal decentralization is the efficiency and the way by which these allotted resources are spent by local governments.

2. Need for fiscal efficiency in local government

The concepts of decentralization and local governance have gained prominence in the last two decades with a view of enhancing efficiency in governance with better provision of public goods and services, reducing corruption and increasing public accountability by increasing downward information flows, frequent interactions between the locals and public officials and bringing the government and power downwards to more 'closer to the people'. Local governments are the best to renegotiate the fiscal bargain with taxpayers (Smith and Revell, 2016). Local governments are equipped to design and administer development programs because of the disciplining of market forces (Musgrave, 1959). It is the appropriate level of service delivery and the

choices of the public to move to obtain optimal preferences of service provision (Musgrave, 1959; Tiebout, 1956).

Local government through decentralization makes the efficient production of services and the closer association between expenditures and revenue mobilization at the subnational level may lead to rapid economic growth and better accountability between government and people (Oates, 1999). In the presence of diverse preferences and needs, the provision of services from decentralized governance enhances citizen welfare (Oates, 1972). The enhancement of economic efficiency by fiscal decentralization creates dynamic effects on economic growth (Oates, 1993), productivity (Couderc and Ventelou, 2005 and Brueckner, 2006), poverty, and inequalities (Sepúlveda and Martínez-Vázquez, 2010, Crook and Manor, 1998 and Crook and Sverrisson, 2001).

Decentralization improves the efficiency of resource allocation by allowing greater differentiation of resource allocations across jurisdictions according to the demand in each locality (Hayek, 1945 and Musgrave, 1959). Less will be the problem of information asymmetry in local governments. Therefore, public officials can make correct inferences on the prevailing needs of the electorate, and this in turn leads to the provision of tailored public goods and services which are aligned with the heterogeneous demands and expectations of multiple segments of the local population (Leeson, 2013). The increased competition among the local government and between public and private service providers will pressurize local governments to pay more attention to the preferences of the people and efficient service delivery.

Decentralization promotes downward accountability by placing the fate of local officials in the hands of the local electorate and it orients the flow of power to the local citizens they represent in their jurisdictions (Wallis and Oates, 1988)). This will improve efficiency by fostering accountability, reducing corruption, and increasing cost-effectiveness in the government (Ostrom, Schroeder, and Wynne, 1993) and enhances the quantity and quality of services provided. It ensures that “Budgeting, financial reporting and auditing should be comprehensive, comprehensible, comparable, verifiable and public. It is equally important, however, to ensure that budgeted resources are applied as efficiently and effectively as possible to achieve desired public outcomes” (Bird, 2000). The more local governments are closer to the people; citizens tend to be more aware of the strategies, plans, policies, and actions than that of the central government. This can lead

to the design of more effective incentive schemes which will ensure improvement in governance and improved local outcomes.

3. Objectives

The major objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the trends and pattern of the plan and development funds allocated to local governments (LGs) especially to Rural Local Governments (RLGs) in Kerala;
2. To examine the sectoral composition of the development funds in RLGs as compared to the guidelines for utilization of funds; and
3. To understand the efficiency level of RLGs in the utilization of the funds.

4. Data and Methodology

The trend and composition of plan and development funds have been assessed for the period between 2007-08 and 2019-20. The term 'plan fund' refers to the fund allocation to local governments by the state government for implementing the state and centrally sponsored schemes while the term 'development fund' refers to plan allocation to local bodies for executing the schemes and projects designed by local bodies. The major sources of data are the Information Kerala Mission (IKM) and the Budgets of the Government of Kerala for various years. The time trend for the development funds and their composition is examined with the help of annual and compound growth rates.

5. Fund allocation to Local Governments

Local Self Government Institutions are provided plan allocation in two different streams. They are: (1) Plan Allocation for Centrally Sponsored Schemes and State Sponsored Schemes and (2) Plan Allocation for Local Development (Development Fund). The schemes included in the first stream have been transferred to Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) for implementation. Under this scheme, the guidelines for Centrally Sponsored Schemes are formulated by the Central Government and for State Sponsored Schemes by the State Government. The role of the LSGIs under this stream is to act only as an agency for executing the scheme after deciding the location or beneficiaries of the scheme. For the second stream, the LSGIs have full freedom in formulating and implementing schemes after deciding their priority subject to a general overall framework. In the following sections, the trends and structure of funds allotted to local governments are discussed.

6. Plan fund allocation to Local Governments (LGs)

Table 1 reveals the amount of plan funds transferred from the state level to LGs. Local government includes all layers of decentralized planning such as urban local bodies such as Municipalities, Municipal Corporation and rural local bodies consisting of District Panchayats, Block Panchayats and Grama Panchayats. The Table shows the trends of state and local government plans at the absolute level and their growth rates over the last 25 years. The size of the LG plan increases from Rs 741.9 crores from 1997-98 to Rs 7008.1 crores in 2020-21. While the annual average growth rate of the state plan was 12.3 per cent, the growth rate of the LG plan was 13.5 per cent. Over the period, the share of LG's plan in the state plan is around 24.5 per cent. However, in some years, the share of the LG plan declined to 15.7 per cent. There has been a wide fluctuation of LG plan funds in state plans over the 25 years. This decline will have severe implications in the developmental sphere of LBs, especially in the critical areas related to human development, poverty reduction, basic minimum needs, social security and economic development, especially in the agriculture and allied sectors.

Table 1: Share of Local Government's (LG) Plan in Total State Annual Plan (in crores)

	LGs' Plan Programmes		Total State Plan		Share of LGs' plan in State plan
	Amount	Growth rate	Amount	Growth rate	
1997-98	741.9		3210.7		23.1
1998-99	938.9	26.6	3567.6	11.1	26.3
1999-00	850.9	-9.4	3465.1	-2.9	24.6
2000-01	759.5	-10.7	3290.7	-5.0	23.1
2001-02	620.1	-18.3	2852.7	-13.3	21.7
2002-03	1004.6	62.0	3953.4	38.6	25.4
2003-04	1284.2	27.8	3712.2	-6.1	34.6
2004-05	991.0	-22.8	3907.2	5.3	25.4
2005-06	1008.2	1.7	4230.9	8.3	23.8
2006-07	1233.8	22.4	4785.3	13.1	25.8
2007-08	1396.6	13.2	5690.4	18.9	24.5
2008-09	1815.9	30.0	7142.5	25.5	25.4
2009-10	2195.7	20.9	8780.5	22.9	25.0
2010-11	2715.8	23.7	10024.6	14.2	27.1
2011-12	2886.0	6.3	11758.9	17.3	24.5
2012-13	4571.1	58.4	14736.9	25.3	31.0

2013-14	4359.6	-4.6	14901.3	1.1	29.3
2014-15	4511.9	3.5	15567.3	4.5	29.0
2015-16	5279.7	17.0	21310.7	36.9	24.8
2016-17	3844.8	-27.2	24470.7	14.8	15.7
2017-18	5298.4	37.8	29896.8	22.2	17.7
2018-19	5745.5	8.4	26047.3	-12.9	22.1
2019-20	4041.1	-29.7	24445.2	-6.2	16.5
2020-21	7008.1	73.4	36214.2	48.1	19.4
Average*		13.5		12.3	24.5
2021-22 RE	6916.8	-1.3	36192.5	-0.1	19.1
2022-23 BE	8048.0	16.4	30370.0	-16.1	26.5

* Average calculated from 1997-98 to 2020-21

Source: Calculated based on the data availed from Budget in Brief 2022-23, Govt. of Kerala

7. Development funds in Local Governments (LGs)

Development fund mainly consists of the General Sector Plan (GSP), Special Component Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), which contribute to a major share of the total funds in local governments (LGs) in Kerala. Here also, the local governments consist of all urban and rural local bodies., The time frame used for a detailed sectoral comparison of plan outlay is between 2007-08 and 2019-20. Table 2 shows that there has been high growth in the allotment and expenditure of both development funds and total funds of LGs during this period.

Allotment of development fund was Rs.1714 crores in 2007-08, grew to Rs.7209 crores in 2019-20 with an annual average growth rate of 14 per cent. Likewise, total fund allotment also shows the same average growth rate of 14 per cent for the past 13-year period. But expenditure does not show a proportionate growth to that of allotment. The annual average growth rate of the expenditure side of the development fund and the total fund is 11 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. Not only this, two years such as 2016-17 and 2019-20 show a negative growth which could be attributed to the impact of the demonetization in 2016 and the outburst of Covid-19.

Table 2: Share of development fund in the total fund in LGs in Kerala								
Year	Allotment			Expenditure			% of Utilization	
	Devt. fund	Total Fund	% of devt. fund in total	Devt. fund	Total Fund	% of devt. fund in total	Devt. fund	Total Fund
2007-08	1713.8	4419.4	38.8	1378.3	2297.2	60.0	80.4	52.0

2008-09	2008.2	4934.0	40.7	1476.6	2497.1	59.1	73.5	50.6
2009-10	2368.3	6843.3	34.6	1749.0	3010.8	58.1	73.9	44.0
2010-11	2885.6	8223.4	35.1	1918.3	3523.8	54.4	66.5	42.9
2011-12	2817.8	8300.1	33.9	2202.5	4297.6	51.2	78.2	51.8
2012-13	3068.9	8594.2	35.7	2736.9	4061.5	67.4	89.2	47.3
2013-14	5058.3	10680.3	47.4	3919.4	6091.2	64.3	77.5	57.0
2014-15	5996.2	11917.3	50.3	4034.5	6135.5	65.8	67.3	51.5
2015-16	6235.0	12523.7	49.8	4467.8	6872.3	65.0	71.7	54.9
2016-17	6639.2	12549.7	52.9	3839.6	5437.6	70.6	57.8	43.3
2017-18	6194.8	14946.9	41.4	5293.1	7889.5	67.1	85.4	52.8
2018-19	6722.5	19608.8	34.3	5696.2	9999.9	57.0	84.7	51.0
2019-20	7209.1	19889.5	36.2	4032.7	7479.8	53.9	55.9	37.6
AAGR	14%	14%	40.85*	11%	13%	61.07*	74*	48.97*
CV	45.61	44.75	16.92	44.49	43.52	9.61	13.75	11.34

* Source: Computed from the data collected from Sulekha, IKM

AAGR- Annual average growth rate

“*” denotes the average between 2007-08 and 2019-20

CV- Coefficient of variation

The average share of the development fund allotment in the total fund available to LBs over this period is 40.85% with fluctuation between 33.9% and 52.9%. The share went above 50% only in two years 2014-15 and 2016-17. On the expenditure side, in most of the years, more than 60 per cent of the total spent amount is development fund. But the recent trend shows a decline from 71 per cent in 2016-17 to 54 per cent in 2019-20. This decline is attributed mainly to the decline in the percentage of utilization of the funds. More than 80 per cent of the total allotted development fund were utilized in 2007-08, but the same declined to 56 per cent in 2019-20, with almost half of the total allotted funds remaining unutilized. The story is not different for the total funds also. The share of the utilization of the funds declined from 52 per cent in 2007-08 to 38 per cent in 2019-20. The fluctuation in the utilization of development funds is also high as compared to the total fund. Thus, the declining trend in utilization funds points towards the expenditure inefficiency of LGs.

8.The sectoral composition of the development fund

The sectoral decomposition of plan allotment and expenditure will give us a better view of the decentralized planning experience. Table 3 shows the sectoral decomposition of development funds of local governments at aggregate level. The sectors are divided into production, service and infrastructure; each major sector is further classified into sub-sectors. As part of the yearly increase

of the funds, allotment to the production sector reports an annual average growth rate of 13 per cent for the past 13 years, while the expenditure growth rate of the sector is only 10 per cent. Likewise, funds allotted to the service sector report an annual average growth rate of 17 per cent and the expenditure reports a growth rate of 16 per cent. At the same time, infrastructure records a high growth rate of 30 per cent in the allotment and the growth rate of expenditure in the sector records a rate of growth of 24 per cent. Table 3 reveals the sectoral composition of total funds allocated and spent in various local bodies.

As against the guidelines of the project plan preparation, the share of development funds allotted to the production sector is 20 per cent in 2007-08. It declined to below 10 per cent when the Twelfth Plan (2012-13 to 2015-16) relaxed the norms mandated to the production sector. Though the trend revived to 13.5 per cent in 2019-20, it could not attain the mandated 30 per cent till now.

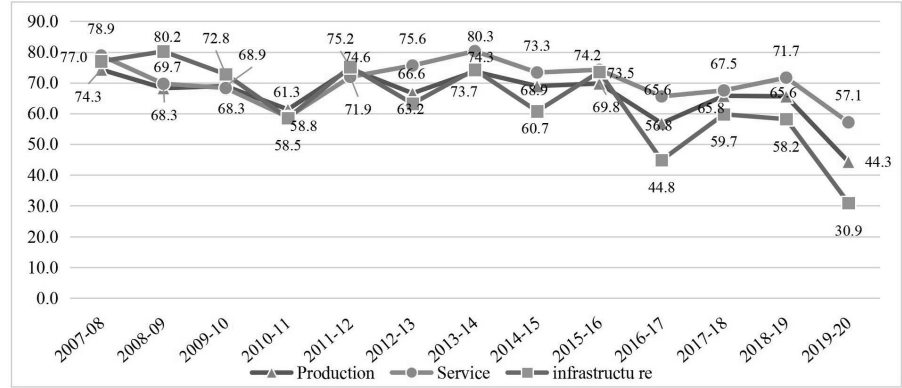
Similarly, the expenditure part also shows the same pattern and only 19 per cent of the total development fund were spent in the production sector in 2007-08. This declined to 8 per cent during the period 2012-13 to 2015-16. It was 12.6 per cent in 2019-20. This neglect of the production sector will have serious impacts on the primary sector, especially in the performance of agriculture sector.

Table 2: Share of development fund in the total fund in LGs in Kerala								
Year	Allocation				Expenditure			
	Production	Service	Infrastructure	Not incl. in sector	Production	Service	Infrastructure	Not incl. in sector
2007-08	20.2	50.3	12.0	17.5	18.7	49.4	11.4	20.5
2008-09	20.6	39.5	9.1	30.8	19.1	37.4	9.9	33.5
2009-10	19.3	37.0	10.8	32.9	18.0	34.2	10.6	37.1
2010-11	15.1	33.6	23.3	27.6	13.9	29.8	20.5	35.8
2011-12	13.8	37.7	26.2	21.4	13.4	35.1	25.5	26.1
2012-13	9.4	58.0	32.6	0.0	8.8	62.0	29.2	0.0
2013-14	8.7	54.5	36.8	0.0	8.3	56.4	35.3	0.0
2014-15	8.7	53.6	37.7	0.0	8.7	57.7	33.6	0.0
2015-16	8.1	54.0	37.9	0.0	7.7	54.5	37.9	0.0
2016-17	11.5	56.5	32.0	0.0	11.3	63.9	24.7	0.0
2017-18	13.9	54.6	31.6	0.0	14.1	56.8	29.1	0.0
2018-19	13.6	58.5	27.8	0.0	13.3	62.5	24.1	0.0
2019-20	13.5	55.1	31.4	0.0	12.6	66.8	20.6	0.0

* Source: Computed from the data collected from Sulekha, IKM

Allotment to the service sector and infrastructure increased from 50 to 55 per cent and 12 to 31 per cent respectively from 2007-08 to 2019-20. Likewise, expenditure in the service sector and infrastructure increased from 49 to 67 per cent and 11 to 21 per cent respectively during the same period. This indicates changes in the strategy of local level development from productive sector to services and infrastructure development. However, it is the responsibility of the decentralized units/LGs to regain the momentum of development in the most needed sectors like the production sector.

Figure 1: Share of development funds utilization in sectors



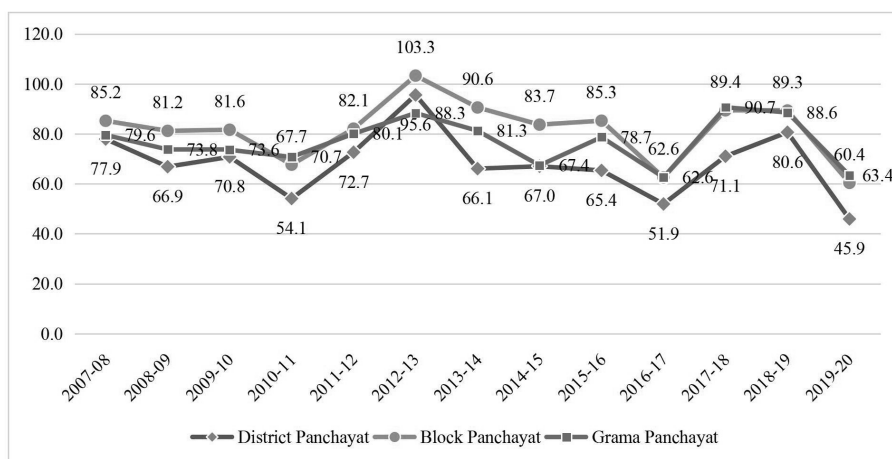
The utilization rate of development funds is a major indicator of the resource use efficiency of local government. However, the experience shows that the trend is not so impressive. The production sector and service sector utilized only 60 to 70 per cent of the total allotment to those sectors. But the share of utilization declined to 44 per cent and 57 per cent in 2019-20. The initial years of the analysis show a comparatively better performance of fund utilization in the infrastructure sector. But the sector also could not sustain this trend and, in some years, the sector has not utilized 50 per cent of its allotment (Figure 1).

9. Expenditure Performance of Rural Local Governments (RLGs)

In the following section, a detailed description of expenditure performance among rural local government or bodies (RLGs) is done. RLGs include the District Panchayats, Block Panchayats and Grama Panchayats. The Fund allotment to the district, block and grama panchayats record an average annual growth rate of 16 per cent , 13 per cent and 12.5 per cent respectively for the past 13 years from 2007-08 to 2019-20. But the expenditure side reports a growth rate of 10 per cent for the district panchayats, 11 per cent each for the block panchayats and the Grama panchayats.

In the comparison of the three types of panchayats in terms of development fund utilization, it can be seen that the performance of district panchayats is very poor compared to the other two. The share of utilization in total allotment to the district panchayat declined from 78 per cent in 2007-08 to 46 per cent in 2019-20. At the same time, the share of the development fund utilized in both Block and Grama panchayats also declined to 63 per cent and 60 per cent respectively in 2019-20 from more than 80 per cent utilization in 2007-08 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Share of development fund utilized in RLBs

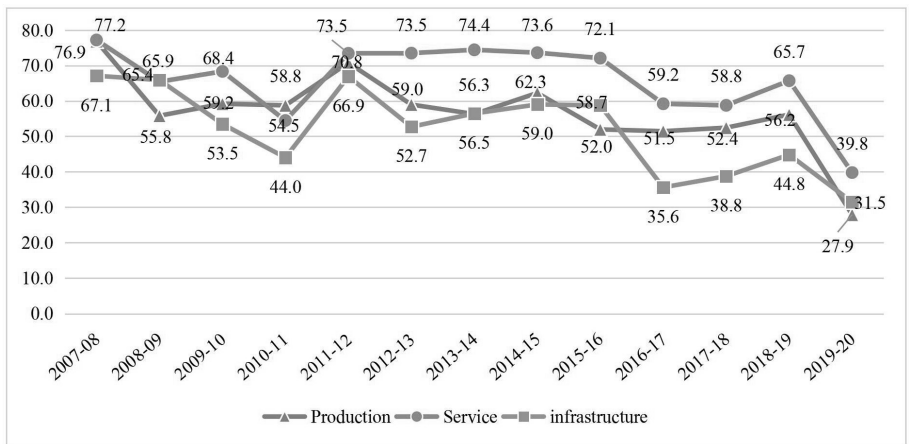


9.1. Performance in fund utilization by District Panchayats

The rate of growth of funds allotted and their expenditure vary across sectors. In district panchayats, infrastructure allotment records a high growth rate of 39 per cent and expenditure records a growth rate of 30 per cent for the past 13 years. Fund allotted to the production sector of the district panchayats reports an annual average growth rate of 15 per cent, while the expenditure growth rate is 9 per cent only. The service sector, one of the highest contributors in the sectoral composition, also reports the same annual average growth rate of 15 per cent in the allotment. But the expenditure reports a growth rate of 12 per cent.

Though the allotment and expenditure of the production sector show a growing trend, the utilization performance of the same in district panchayats is very poor. The percentage of utilization of the funds in the production sector was 77 per cent in 2007-08, declined to 28 per cent in 2019-20. Utilization of funds in the service sector also shows a declining trend. More than 50 per cent of the allotted fund to both the service sector and infrastructure remains unutilized (Figure 3).

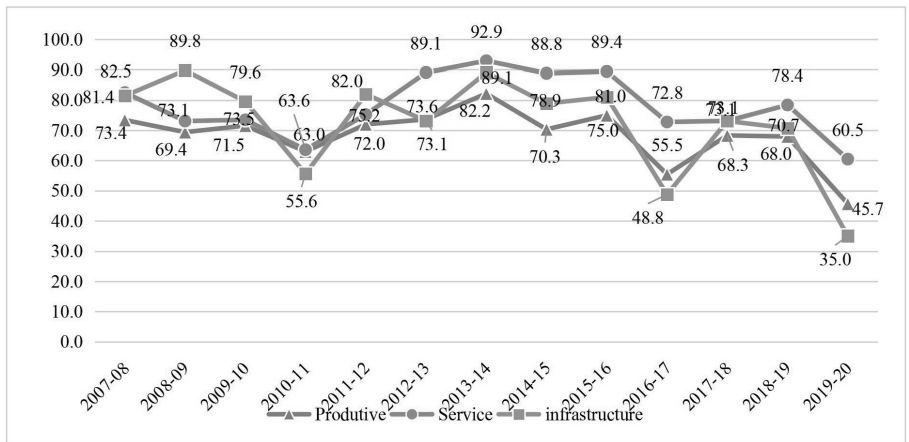
Figure 3: Share of Development Fund Utilized by the District Panchayats – Sector wise



9.2.Performance in Fund Utilization by Block Panchayats

As compared to district panchayats, the performance of the Block panchayat is better in utilizing the allotted funds. In most of the years, the service sector utilized almost 90 per cent of the total allotment to that sector. Likewise, both the infrastructure and production sectors also utilized 70-90 per cent of the total allotment in most of the years. But the recent years show a huge decline and not more than 50 per cent of the funds allotted to the production and infrastructure sector remain unutilized (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Share of Development Fund Utilized by the Block Panchayats – Sector wise



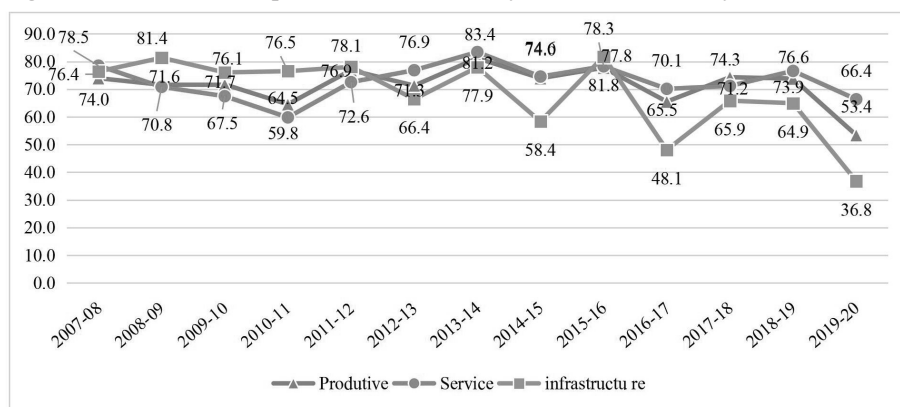
Fund allotted to the production sector of the block panchayats reports an annual average growth rate of 20 per cent for the past 13 years, while the expenditure growth rate is 17 per cent. Both allotment and expenditure of the service sector report the same annual average growth rate of 19 per cent. At the same time, infrastructure records a

high growth rate of 40 per cent in allotment and 31 per cent growth rate in expenditure.

9.3. Performance in Fund Utilization by Grama Panchayats

The performance of the Grama panchayats, the lowest tier of the decentralization process, in funds utilization is comparatively better than all the other LBs. Both the production sector and infrastructure sector utilized more than 70 per cent of the allotted fund to the sectors in most of the years. Also, more than 60 per cent of the funds allotted to the infrastructure sector are spent except for the years 2016-17 and 2019-20 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Share of Development Fund Utilized by the Grama Panchayats – Sector wise



10. Findings and Conclusion

The analysis of the trends and patterns of the fund allocation and utilization in the LGs in Kerala is helpful to understand the sectoral shift in planning strategies and their implementation. Over the analysis period, though there is a normal yearly increase of funds to the LGs, the share of the plan fund to the LGs in the total state plan shows a declining trend. Not only this, the current share is less than that of the mandated proportion. Not only the allotted plan funds but also the allotment of development funds also witnessed a declining trend.

In addition to this declining allotment of development funds, the decline in utilization of development funds is a grave concern to local bodies of all levels. The utilization rate of development funds is lowest for the district panchayat as compared to Block and Gram Panchayats. In addition to this inefficiency of development funds utilized, the sectoral shift in the utilization of fund is another grave concern of the state. At all levels of rural local bodies, the funds are greatly diverted from productive sector activities to service and infrastructure activities. This diversion of development funds raises a real concern about the

sustainability of productive sector activities such as agriculture, small-scale industries, soil conservation, dairy development, fisheries, etc. It also raises doubt on the success of decentralized planning exercises in the state as compared to the stated objectives.

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Gender Responsive Local Governance - Kerala Experience

In order to make a developmental activity gender responsive, the whole development process must be participatory which emphasises involving the entire community of women, men and transgenders in the planning process. The constitutional amendments for Decentralised Local Governance was a major milestone in the task of engendering local governance in India. The democratic decentralisation implemented in Kerala had a vision for making Local Governance gender responsive and expressed gender concerns in participatory planning framing some effective structures and systems in the planning process. For the past 25 years our local bodies made several initiatives to reduce the gender discrimination in our society. This is the right time to assess their impacts in addressing the specific gender issues of Kerala. One of the relevant question is "Do women in Kerala who constitute more than half of the population, get equal status and justice in the society?". And also the role of Local Self Governments in providing the enabling environment for this at Local level.

Keywords:- Gender Responsive Development, Gender Equality, Patriarchy, Decentralisation, Gender Planning, Gender Mainstreaming, Women Component Plan.

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1. Need of Gender Responsive Policy in Development

A gender-responsive development policy considers and addresses the different situations, roles, needs, rights and interests of women, men, girls, boys and sexual minorities. Women's rights are human rights. Therefore, the human rights violations faced by women deny the personal development of women in the world, thereby leaving a huge gap in human resource development. This is where gender equality becomes the goal of sustainable development.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which came on November 7, 1967, decided to eliminate discrimination against women (UN WOMEN, 2015). Discrimination against women is a challenge to the dignity of mankind and there must be a change in the degrading status of women. Equal participation of women in the socio-economic, political, and cultural spheres is their right. The UN convened the first women's conference in Mexico in 1975. The year 1975 was declared as the International Year of Women which marked the beginning of the global debate on gender equality. The decade 1975-1985 was recognised as the international decade for women (UN WOMEN, 2015). The activities of the last five years were evaluated at the Second World Women's Conference convened in Copenhagen in 1980 and an action plan was approved with special emphasis on employment, health, education, property ownership, inheritance rights and child protection. In 1985, the Third World Women's Conference approved an action plan with an emphasis on world peace and development. The last 15 years of activities were evaluated at the prestigious conference in Nairobi. At the 1995 Beijing Conference, gender equality was declared as global agenda which also formulated an action plan for the next 20 years (UN WOMEN, 2015). UN Policy on Gender Equality was approved and the 12 areas mentioned in it highlight the unique issues of women globally (UN WOMEN, 2015).

1.	Women and poverty	2.	Education and training of women
3.	Women and health	4.	Violence against women and girls
5.	Women and armed conflict	6.	Women and the economy
7.	Women in power and decision making	8.	Institutional Mechanisms
9.	Human Rights of Women	10.	Women and the media
11.	Women and the environment	12.	The girl child

An action plan has been prepared for the activities in these 12 areas. The progress of the programme was assessed every five years.

Thus, the conference was convened continuously in the years 2000, 2005 and 2010 to assess the progress of the activities. In 2015, Beijing revised its action plan to Beijing+20 (UN WOMEN, 2015).

As part of this action plan, India has also recognised the Decade of Women from 1975 to 1985 and has formulated and implemented several women's development initiatives through our Five-Year Plans. The Government of India and women's organisations have formulated a number of action plans recognising that the elements of global discrimination against women apply to India as well (Ommen, M.A, 2009).

2. UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000-2015

The United Nations Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000, commits world leaders to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. The MDGs are derived from this Declaration. Each MDG had targets set for 2015 and indicators to monitor progress from 1990 levels. Goal 3 is "Promote Gender Equality and promote women".

3. UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2015-2030

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is not only one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, (Goal 5) but also integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. All the SDGs depend on the achievement of Goal 5. Gender equality by 2030 requires urgent action to eliminate the many root causes of discrimination that still curtail women's rights in private and public spheres.

4. Gender Equality - A Human Right

The right to equality is one of the fundamental rights which is most noticeable in the Constitution of India. The Constitution of India, which treats all human beings equally, irrespective of race, creed or gender, guarantees equalities and equal opportunity for all women, children, the elderly, Dalits and Tribes. The Constitution stipulates that social justice and gender equality must be ensured in government programmes and development activities at all levels. According to this, equality in positions and social justice should be accessible to all gender and sex categories in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres.

State Government of Kerala has approved a Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy in the year 2015 (Government of Kerala, 2015). This policy aims to lay a basis for the harmonious

co-existence of both sexes. It aims to do so within a framework of mutual respect, for the equal access of women and men to economic, social and political opportunities, resources, and benefits; and for a society where both women and men can participate in and benefit as equal partners in the development process of their communities, the Local, the State and the Country.

The state of Kerala was the first to introduce a Transgender policy in the year 2015. The policy addresses the right for people belonging to transgender communities to identify as “Male”, “Female” or “Transgender”. The policy recognises that transgender persons are facing injustice at several places including their own homes (Government of Kerala, 2015).

Development policy in Kerala has been more sensitive to gender equality in terms of human resource development as reflected in the much lower gender gap in basic capabilities, such as education and health. Kerala’s high sex ratio, well above unity, has been the most widely discussed indicator of women’s status and continues to be favourable to women, 1000:1084 (Census of India, 2011).

Kerala has been unique in many aspects as compared to the rest of India. Despite having a poor economy, lower per capita income and high unemployment, the state of Kerala has been known to achieve a quality of life in terms of literacy, high health Index, life expectancy, low mortality rate etc. which is higher than the other states and as equal to that of some developed countries.

However, there are several paradoxes that we see when taking a closer look at the socio-cultural issues faced by the women in Kerala. Patriarchy and its manifestation in terms of patri locality and patri linearity continue to have a stronghold and a strict power hierarchy. This has additional implications based on caste and class differences. According to the Gender Empowerment Index, higher education among women coexists with lower workforce participation and higher unemployment rates. Property Right of women in Kerala is much less compared to men. Furthermore, there is lower sex ratio in the age group of 0 to 6 years compared to a favourable one above 6 years and a higher morbidity rate due to lifestyle diseases among women. Women in Kerala also experience constraints in mobility due to the lack of safe transport options, less control over resources, and patriarchal social institutions which limit their choices. Although many women enter the workforce (in unorganised sectors) through the Kudumbashree Mission and others, it needs to be studied whether the income generated from it contributes to the growth of women’s assets

or is spent solely on the survival of the whole family. The increasing workload of women in the existing social system of Kerala needs to be examined critically.

Patriarchy in contemporary Kerala is apparent in a generalised social commitment to women's domestic role; perception of male as head of household remains strongly entrenched in society, women themselves internalising patriarchal values. High rates of literacy and impressive levels of female education did not translate into growth of paid employment for women nor into upward occupational mobility; recent data suggest a withdrawal from the labour force, largely because decent jobs are not available (Eapen and Kodoth, 2002).

Thus, on the one hand, Kerala has overcome the first-generation problem of basic amenities. Yet, on the other hand, it continues to suffer structural gender issues which require deeper policy level interventions. This is where engendering the development and planning process becomes important.

5. Decentralised planning – Gender Concerns - Structures and Systems

The Decentralisation implemented in Kerala has not only enhanced the capability vector but also had a considerable impact on the quality, efficacy and inclusiveness of the Development. The local self-governance structure is built on the principle of decentralization which implies a transfer of power from the centre to the grassroots. Indeed, decentralization has deepened democracy and made it more fruitful. A core aspect of this includes participation of citizens in the development process, with special emphasis on empowering the most marginalized to assert their rights, views and actively participate in creating an inclusive developmental process.

In Kerala, the decentralization process has been introduced by the People's Planning Campaign of the late 1990's which stressed on the importance of a bottom-up approach to development. The main elements of this include Transparency, Participation, Autonomy, Accountability, Role clarity, Uniformity, Subsidiarity, Complementarity and Inclusiveness. (Issac and Franke, 2000)

Despite all the efforts of the Government of India to include women in the development process, it was only the Ninth Plan that decided that women's issues should be included in the development agenda and special emphasis should be given to women's empowerment. Panchayat Raj Act and Municipality Act which were introduced in 1994 gave more opportunities for the participation of women (Issac

and Franke, 2000).

Reservation of 33 per cent seats for women at all levels of the three-tier panchayat system and municipal system helped to ensure the representation of women in the local government system in Kerala. In 2010 the quota enhanced to 50 per cent. Fifty per cent of women's participation in subcommittees of grama sabhas and 50 per cent of participation of women in development seminars were also ensured by the Government of Kerala. Since 2010, 52 per cent of local governments have had women as members and leaders. (Issac and Franke, 2000)

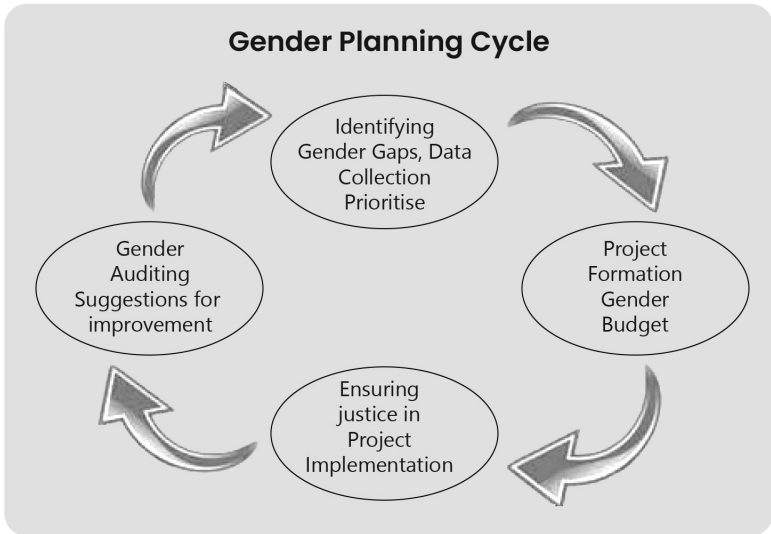
The Women's Development Working Group - a special working group - has been set up in every local government to discuss women's issues, prepare women's development plans, conduct necessary studies, discussions and gather information. There was a special subject group to discuss woman's issues and make solutions and plans at the development seminars on preparation of local government Annual Plan. In addition, representation of women is mandatory in all working groups. A special chapter on issues of women is prepared in development report and plan document. The report should consist of solutions, governance policies and development strategies based on the data collected on women's issues. Through Kudumbashree, Area Development Society (ADS) and Community Development Society (CDS), an extensive women's organisation has been set up involving around 43 lakh women. Kudumbashree has grown into a robust system for undertaking and implementing central and state government schemes even. It was suggested that women's status should be studied to understand the issues of women in the area and to formulate women's development plans.

Jagratha Samithis were made mandatory to address women's issues, atrocities, discrimination and exploitation at the local level, like the Women's Commission at the state level. Details of their structure and functions are defined through the guidelines. As part of the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan, Local bodies were advised to set up Gender Resource Centres. It is a space established to coordinate the activities for gender development and women empowerment under local government.

6. Mainstreaming Gender into Planning Circle

Gender has been the subject of in-depth discussion at the local government level. In the annual development plan, 10% of the total budget is earmarked for Women Component Plan (WCP). (WCP

Handbook KILA, 2009). Development projects that directly address the practical and strategic needs of women and exclusively benefit women are included in WCP. Apart from this, there is a government directive that all general projects should be gender sensitive and should not negatively affect the situation of women.



7. Women Component Plan

For the last 24 years, women development activities in local bodies have been going on in Kerala under the name of the Women Component Plan (WCP). Unlike other states in India, the Women Component Plan, which is being implemented in Kerala, has opened up great potential for development for women in Kerala.

A pioneering dimension of decentralised planning was the conscious attempt to incorporate gender issues (through an understanding of the unequal gender relations, the primary responsibility of women in the domestic economy, their dual work burden and different needs) into the process of planning in the 9th Plan (1997-2002) and thereafter by mandating that LSGIs should set apart 10 per cent of the devolved plan funds for preparing projects that directly benefit women (WCP) and that gender impact of all schemes had to be assessed. (Issac and Franke, 2000). The Women Component Plan is a revolutionary activity as it is the first attempt to address women's status and issues in local development and governance. The basic needs of women were recognised locally. There have also been plans to increase the income of women. WCP can be involved in the planning process to enhance the status of women by addressing the

strategical gender needs of women and by leveraging all the positive factors.

8. Model Initiatives

The Projects and interventions of only 8 local bodies are referred here among lot of similar ones (WCP study report, KILA,2019).

8.1. Noolppuzha Grama Panchayat

The Panchayat declares its support for the advancement of women by forming and maintaining the Women's Agricultural Task Force with the objective of increasing the income of the women community through the agricultural sector, mechanization and its utilization training, development of women's skills, self-sufficiency and thereby enhancing self-confidence.

Having the realization that childbirth is not just a mechanism in a woman's life but a social responsibility, Noolpuzha Grama Panchayat has joined hands with Family Health Center and constructed houses under the name of "Pratheekshalayam" and providing free food and care facilities to pregnant women and their families in the tribal community both before and after childbirth (WCP study report, KILA,2019).

The construction of Women Friendly Toilets with napkin vending machine facilities as part of making the public institutions and other institutions in the panchayat women friendly is another important activity undertaken by the panchayat in this area.

Another important project being implemented by the Panchayat for the welfare of women is the 'Jananisuraksha' project. It utilises the potential of Ayurvedic treatments to provide antenatal and postpartum health care to women.

Panchayat implemented 'Women's Fitness Center' which is set up exclusively for women by ensuring the services of modern machinery and trainers. Yoga training centers run exclusively for women at various centers of the panchayat. One of the major activities of the Panchayat in this area is the provision of training facilities exclusively for women in physical fitness and swimming and trainings in karate and kung fu for the benefit of senior women from school level with the objective of increasing the level of self-defence and self-confidence in women.

The Haritha Karma Sena, which was formed with the objectives of increasing the income of women, job creation and social hygiene, is one of the important activities undertaken and implemented by the Panchayat.

Noolpuzha Grama Panchayat made an attempt to form the annual budget for the financial year 2020-21 as a Gender Budget which

incorporate the concepts and considerations of Gender responsive planning.(WCP study report, KILA,2019)

Noolppuzha Grama Panchayat conducted a Women Status Study to facilitate the formulation of local women's policy and to formulate appropriate action plans to ensure gender equality and gender justice at the panchayat level (WCP study report, KILA,2019).

8.2.Thanalur Grama Panchayat

Publishing a newspaper named 'Samata' was a significant program done by Thanalur Grama Panchayat to ensure gender-friendly local governance. As part of this idea, an application form was prepared for women interested in entering the field of journalism and about 25 applications were received. A one-day workshop was conducted by the Malayalam University's Department of Media Studies. In addition, various trainings were imparted in this regard. Twenty housewives who are only having 10th standard education got constituted as an editorial committee. They received 3 months of continuous training. The women who are first into any public activity became journalist. The women received recognition through these women's writings.

Thanalur Panchayat prepared a Gender protocol in schools. They had several Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings. Gender Protocol is meant to address mental and physical issues of girl children. They enlisted some major points to address gender issues in school through the gender protocol. Those are,

- Address people by name in schools.
- Gender equality in teamwork
- Dissemination of equal responsibilities to girls and boys in learning activities.
- There should be no abusive language between children or teachers.
- Gender equality must be ensured in public event

8.3. Porur Panchayat

Porur Panchayat constituted a Gender Resource Centre and appointed Community Women Facilitator for coordinating the activities in this field. The gender resource centre formed various sub-committees and provided counselling to needy persons. Panchayat called special Gram Sabha for women and consolidated the suggestions and comments given by participants of grama sabha. Gender Resource Centre provided various training and competitions related to women empowerment. They also constituted Gender Desks in all institutions.

Grama Panchayat constructed girl-friendly toilets and she-pad units (providing and disposing sanitary napkins) in all schools

Panchayat prepared the register for job seekers and organising an entrepreneurship meet known as Karma 2018. Representatives from more than 10 departments and agencies introduced their schemes and provided more opportunities for entrepreneurs. Also provided entrepreneurship development training for various departments and agencies. As a result of this Rs. 1.25 crore loan provided by Women Development Corporation to establish various private enterprises. Major enterprises are LED construction Units, Bio Pharmacy Supermarket, Fashion designing unit, Animal Husbandry, enterprises in the furniture making sector. More than 100 women engaged in various entrepreneurship. They constructed a building for women. It includes fitness centre, lifestyle disease prevention centre, yoga centre and recreation also. In this building, they aimed that women's complete development both physical and mental. An important point is that they have the aim not only the empowerment of women but also to change the attitude of society and families towards women.

8.4. Vazhoor Gram Panchayat

There were many suggestions derived from the Gender Status Study report prepared by the Panchayat. Many of the suggestions from the same were included while preparing projects of panchayat. Gender Desks which support adolescent girls providing counseling in schools were also started. Menstrual hygiene was an important concern. For that they distributed Menstrual Cups to the women who needed in the Panchayat. It was implemented in a campaign mode and it helped so many other local bodies to replicate the project. Women had to approach panchayat for so many purposes. It is observed that the women were facing difficulties with their small babies. They planned to fix a Baby cradle in the front office of the panchayat.

8.5. Kozhikkode Block Panchayat

Samata designed a project called Comprehensive Women Empowerment Project. Through this project, the Kozhikkode Block Panchayat aim to address the gender issues in the following areas.

- 1) Social 2) Economical 3) Political 4) Cultural

Block Panchayat formulated a set of projects for empowering women. Through the following interventions the Panchayat became confident to say that the leadership has been deliberately shifted to women and has made great advancement in women leadership development.

- Vocational training
- Entrepreneurial development
- “Ezhuthupura” (Write shops)
- “Sarga Sangamam” (Literature Festival)
- Counselling Center
- Adolescent empowerment programmes
- Mental health care for women (MANASA)
- Self-defence training
- “MOM” for mothers with disabled children
- Gender Parliament
- Women’s Development Center
- Skill Development Center

8.6. Kattakkada Constituency – Women-Friendly Constituency

The Kattakkada, Maranellur, Malayankeezhu, Vilappil, Vilavoorkkal and Palichal Panchayats together form the Kattakkada Constituency. The extraordinary efforts in making this constituency Women Friendly began 4 years back namely “Oppam”. The main aim of the “Oppam” scheme includes upgrading the socio-economic status of women, achieving gender equality in social development, protecting the rights of women, increasing the participation and role of women in activities conducted in the constituency, ensuring gender justice and thereby (Hoogl et al., 1990) promising and helping women to overcome the challenges they face in the society. Under this programme they installed Complaint boxes in public spaces, institutions and panchayats. Under Oppam programme, Cancer Detection Camps for women were conducted in the constituency under the leadership of specialised doctors. Conducted a seminar related to the Importance of Mental Health among breastfeed mothers which can help the better mental health of mother and child. Personality Development Cell were formed in Panchayats as part of the Oppam policy. Girl student-friendly rooms were constructed in 14 schools. A program known as ‘Koottu’ was initiated under the Oppam policy to bring awareness towards the use of drugs and its harm.

“Oppam” policy hence aimed at making a gender equal and women friendly constituency by bringing change at all the spheres.

8.7. Amballoor Gram Panchayat

Amballoor Gram Panchayat started a Gender Resource Centre (GRC) to coordinate all the activities related to women empowerment and as a conscious effort to create a social order based on Gender

Equality. The prime objective of GRC is to make the panchayat gender friendly. Many activities were undertaken by the GRC. A community woman facilitator is appointed to coordinate all the women empowerment activities undertaken by the panchayat. The panchayat developed a policy for gender equality. Different stake holder consultations and focus group discussions were organized in this regard. Programmes were conducted in association with Kudumbashree Neighborhood groups, National Service Scheme, Village libraries and Clubs. Counseling for teenage girls and women, assistance to ward level vigilance committees (Jagrathasamithis), Psychosocial assistance for people suffering due to COVID -19, Gender Status study to analyze the status of women, Self-defense training for school girl students, supplying sanitary pads and incinerators for schools etc. are a few of them. Gender Sensitization workshops were conducted involving different sections of society.

8.8. Kadukutty Grama Panchayat

Women's Fitness Centre is a project implemented by Kadukutty Grama Panchayat during the financial year 2020-2021. The goal of Women's Fitness Center is to improve women's physical and mental health. These include treadmills, home gym, spin bikes, abdominal domain workbenches, and dumbbells. A monitoring committee is functioning at the panchayat level to monitor the activities of the fitness centre.

9. Impact of the Initiatives on Women and Girls in the Community

The decentralised planning activities of the last 24 years have achieved a lot. Kerala has been able to make great strides in many areas, including access to drinking water, sanitation, housing and other infrastructure development. Another notable achievement has been the success in reaching out to more women through self-help groups, employment ventures. The visibility of women has also been developed through the Kudumbashree, ASHA, Anganwadi workers, especially during this Covid Pandemic it is clearly visible that 70% of the front line fighters were women in local areas. It is certain that the condition of women has improved, as a result. This has led to an increase in the participation of women in local self-government activities.

Gender has been the subject of in-depth discussion at the local government level. Society's mindset and attitude towards women and girls have changed at least to some extent. Increased visibility of women in public spaces enhanced participation of women in leadership and decision-making committees. Cases of violence against women were started reporting more (WCP study report, KILA,2019).

It is found that different projects are formulated and implemented to meet the practical needs like housing, sanitation, food security and drinking water and achieved its desirable goals. Some effective plans have been formulated to address the health issues of women at different age levels. The employment participation of women has increased significantly though in unorganised sectors and are marginalised from the employments which need special skills. Women have been able to increase their organizational skills through self-employments. This in turn, help to increase the social / public space for women. Schemes to ensure the safety of women in public places are being formulated and are being implemented. Self-defense training enhanced the confidence of girls.

Gender sensitization workshops for different sections of society helped to change the attitude of society towards women and girls at least to a small extent. Gender status study and resultant Gender equality policy of Panchayat ensured gender mainstreaming in various sectors.

10. Challenges of the initiatives

There are so many challenges and obstacles in formation and implementation of women development projects. Even though these enabling structural modalities are available, the development plans at LSGIs have not fully become gender responsive in terms of addressing the local specific gender disparities. Physical allocation of funds to WCP has been done successfully for many years but has not impacted positively in influencing changes in gender roles or women's situation in general. There are certain success stories but the planners and women activists are in search for more effective models (Gender & Development Report, KSPB, TVM, 2021). Projects/ programmes should be formulated and implemented in such a way to change the perception of the society towards women on freedom of movement, respect, recognition and decision making. The guideline should be revised to include the project proposals such as Gender Resource Centre, activities of Jagratha Samithi and appointment of Community Women Facilitators to coordinate GRC and Jagratha Samithi have to be formulated as Mandatory projects. It will help to ensure the inclusion of experts in this area. The existing system of Gender Resource Centre should be utilized effectively for a more competent and transparent implementation of Women Component Plan. Transgender people also experience enormous issues like health disparities, high rates of poverty and unemployment, discrimination in education, homelessness and physical/mental violence. These issues are to be addressed by Gender Resource Centres of local bodies.

Therefore the working group deals with women issues should deal with issues of transgenders also. The name of the working group can be 'Gender and Development' instead of 'Women and Development'.

Ensuring social justice can only be achieved by enhancing the living standards of all sections of people. The problems faced by different categories of women are different and all of them need to be considered during project planning. The Women Component Plan has not been able to make a significant contribution to the improvement of the social status of women belonging to the Scheduled Castes / Scheduled Tribes. Special trainings, income generating projects and projects for development in arts and sports development must be formulated for this purpose. Detailed study of women's entrepreneurship aimed for uplifting the socio-economic status of women is essential. Infrastructure and social structures need to be changed. Support of different departments and stakeholders need to be ensured more. The issue of women must be considered as a social issue. Political movements and women's organizations should discuss about gender equality and that should be reflected in the local developmental activities.

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Electricity Distribution by the Thrissur Corporation Electricity Department (TCED): Scope and Way Forward

The Thrissur Corporation Electricity Department (TCED) is the only Municipal Corporation which is a recognised licensee for electricity distribution in the country. The Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO) are essentially an environmental commitments focuses on the mitigation of damage caused by climate change. The historical origin can be trace back to the movement starts with the famous work 'Silent Spring' by Rachel Carson. The increased momentum in environmental action culminated into various treaties like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is a framework for limiting the emission of greenhouse gases. The international obligations started with the Conference of parties, an apex decision making body which act as a mechanism to supervise the greenhouse gas emission cut by member countries. The article forensically analyses the obligations of Thrissur Corporation Electricity Department and the possible scope of action in the realm of RPO policy and regulatory framework in the country.

Keywords:- Electricity, Municipal Corporation, Climate Change, Renewable Energy.

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1. Introduction

The conference of party (COP 26) was held at Glasgow in the year 2021, and was focused on mitigation, adaptation, finance and collaboration. The conference of party (COP27) held at Sharm-el-Sheikh in the year 2022 also focus on the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. The present article shall be appreciated in the light of India's commitment at Glasgow called 'Panchamrit,' which is, to attain a non-fossil energy capacity of 500 GW by 2030; 50 per cent of its energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030; reduction of carbon emissions by one billion tonnes by 2030; reduce the carbon intensity of the economy by 45 per cent by 2030 and the last but most important commitment to achieve net zero by 2070. The evolution of RPO obligations is based on these commitments. (United Nations, COP 26 & 27) The RPOs legal mandates shall be met by the DISCOMs, which requires a due diligence approach.

2. National Scenario

The renewable source of energy gained relevance due to international obligations along with national and state policies and regulations. Therefore, it is high time to forensically analyse the policy and the regulatory regime along with financial principles to work out a viable solution to identify, prepare and execute projects with due diligence. The national scenario in renewable energy is increasing day by day and at present 10.50% for solar and 10.50% for non-solar. (Govt. of India, RPO-MNRE)

3. Legal Rationale/Policy Analysis

The Hon'ble High Court of Kerala in a landmark judgment declared that electricity is a basic amenity of life and an integral part of life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. (K.N. Raveendran Vs. KSEB, 2021)

3.1. Electricity Act, 2003

As per the Section 86(e) of the Electricity Act of 2003, State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC) shall promote cogeneration and generation of electricity from renewable sources of energy by providing suitable measures for connectivity with the grid and sale of electricity to any person, and also specify, for purchase of electricity from such sources, a percentage of the total consumption of electricity in the area of a distribution licence. (Govt. of India, 2003)

3.2. Tariff Policy 2006 and its Amendments

The national tariff policy categorically made provisions for 'benefits under Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)', which says that tariff fixation for all electricity projects (generation, transmission and distribution) that result in lower Green House Gas (GHG) emissions than the relevant baseline should take into account the benefits obtained from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) into consideration, in a manner so as to provide adequate incentive to the project developers. Also, the policy made provisions for the non-conventional source of energy generation and co-generation. The present provision got amended to incorporate, the SERCs shall also reserve a minimum percentage for purchase of solar energy from the date of notification in the Official Gazette which will go up to 0.25% by the end of 2012-13 and further up to 3% by 2022. The 'Preferential Tariff Support' shall be available for the initial Tariff period for 13 years (except for solar power and Small Hydro Power (SHP) below 5 MW) and these projects will have to compete to ensure off-take beyond the initial Tariff period, as envisaged under Tariff Policy. The tariff fixation for solar power projects shall be a 'Project Specific Tariff'. (Govt. of India, 2006).

3.3. Tariff Policy 2016

The policy is formulated to achieve various objectives as specified under Paragraph 4 which includes the generation of electricity from renewable sources. The policy also has specific provisions for renewable sources of energy generation including co-generation from renewable energy sources, which says that the Appropriate commission shall fix a minimum percentage of the total consumption of electricity in the area of a distribution licensee for the purchase of energy from renewable energy sources, taking into account availability of such resources and its impact on retail tariffs. The policy also provided with provisions which says that,

- i. The SERCs shall also reserve a minimum percentage for purchase of solar energy from the date of notification of this policy which shall be such that it reaches 8% of total consumption of energy, excluding Hydro Power, by March 2022 or as notified by the Central Government from time to time.
- ii. Distribution Licensee(s) shall compulsorily procure 100% power produced from all the Waste-to-Energy plants in the State,

in the ratio of their procurement of power from all sources including their own, at the tariff determined by the Appropriate Commission under Section 62 of the Act.

- iii. An appropriate mechanism such as Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) would need to be promoted. Through such a mechanism, the renewable energy-based generation companies can sell the electricity to local distribution licensees at the rates for conventional power and can recover the balance cost by selling certificates to other distribution companies and obligated entities enabling the latter to meet their renewable power purchase obligations. The REC mechanism should also have a solar-specific REC. (Govt. of India, 2016)

3.4. National Solar Mission

The National Solar Mission aims to achieve 1,00,000 MW by 2022 under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM). It also moots for capital subsidy for Rooftop Solar projects in various cities and towns, Viability Gap Funding (VGF) based projects to be developed through the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) and decentralized generation through small solar projects (Govt. of India, 2010).

3.5. Master Circular on Priority Sector Lending

The priority lending benefits will be extended to renewable energy as bank loans up to a limit of Rs. 30 crore to borrowers for purposes like solar-based power generators, biomass-based power generators, wind mills, micro-hydel plants and for non-conventional energy based public utilities viz. street lighting systems, and remote village electrification. For individual households, the loan limit will be Rs. 10 lakh per borrower (RBI, 2020).

3.6. The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)

The NAPCC mainly focuses on solar energy, enhanced energy efficiency and other areas which have an impact on sustainable development (Govt. of India, 2008).

3.7. Kerala State Electricity Regulatory Commission (Renewable Purchase Obligation and its Compliance) Regulations, 2010

The Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) as per the regulations of 2010, every obligated entity shall purchase not less than 3% of its consumption of energy from renewable energy sources under the

Renewable Purchase Obligation during the years from 2010 with an annual increase of 10% of 3% per year up to a maximum RPO of 10%. The proviso further mandates that, 0.25% of the consumption of energy shall be procured from generation based on solar as a renewable energy source only. The Regulation also allows the obligated entities to purchase REC energy as per Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Terms and Conditions for recognition and issue of Renewable Energy Certificate for Renewable Energy Generation) Regulations, 2010 to comply with the RPOs. The Regulations says that, if the obligated entities does not fulfil the renewable purchase obligation as provided in these regulations during any year and also does not purchase the certificates, the Commission may direct the obligated entity to deposit into a separate fund, to be created and maintained by such obligated entity, such amount as the Commission may determine on the basis of the shortfall in units of RPO and the forbearance price decided by the Central Commission. The regulation also made provisions which empowers the SERC to impose penalty as may be decided by the Commission under the Section 142 of the Electricity Act (Govt. of Kerala, 2010).

3.8. Kerala State Electricity Regulatory Commission (Renewable Purchase Obligation and its Compliance) Regulations, 2020 & 2022

Clause 3 of the Regulation mandates that distribution licensees, Captive Consumers and Open access consumers in the State of Kerala shall have the obligation to generate and/or in the alternative to purchase the quantum of renewable energy as specified in the Table below.

Financial Year	Quantum of generation and/or purchase from Renewable Energy Sources as a (%) of total consumption (in terms of energy in kWh)			
	Non-Solar	Solar	HPO	Total
2019-20	8.00	4.00	-	12.00
2020-21	9.00	5.25	-	14.25
2021-22	10.25	6.75	-	17.00
2022-23	10.25	10.50	0.35	21.10
2023-24	10.68	10.50	0.66	21.84

The clause 4(i) of Regulation says that, every distribution licensee shall meet the renewable energy obligation at the percentage specified

in Table 1 above. For the purpose of computing the total energy consumption within the area of the distribution licensee, the quantum of energy met from large hydro sources of power with capacity above 25 MW, commissioned on or before 08.03.2019 shall be deducted. The Regulation further says that, a distribution licensee which is engaged in bulk purchase of electricity from another licensee shall not have separate obligation for purchase of renewable energy if the seller licensee meets the renewable purchase obligation for the energy sold to the licensee or the licensee reimburses to the seller licensee the additional cost incurred as approved by the Commission by the seller licensee for the generation or purchase of renewable energy to meet the renewable purchase obligation of the licensee. The Regulation 2020 following the same line with Regulation 2010 also permit DISCOMs to purchase REC to make good such shortfall. Clause 10 of the Regulations empower the Commission to address the defaulter, in case any obligated entity who is a distribution licensee fails to comply with its renewable purchase obligation as provided in these Regulations during any financial year and fails to purchase the required number of certificates, the Commission may by order, direct such obligated entity to deposit into a separate fund, to be created and maintained by such entity in accordance with the directions issued by the Commission, such amount as the Commission may determine on the basis of the shortfall in the renewable purchase obligation and the forbearance price thereof. The Regulation further details the financial principle/model for the purpose of calculating the General Tariff which includes technical aspects, capital cost, capacity utilisation factor, Operation and maintenance expenses, and auxiliary consumption (Govt. of Kerala, 2022).

3.9. The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2022

The bill is pending with Rajya Sabha which mainly focuses on the COP 26 commitment of 'Panchamrit'. The Bill introduces the statutory framework for carbon trading, mandate use of non-fossil sources, including Green Hydrogen, Green Ammonia, Biomass and Ethanol for energy and feedstock. The carbon credit trading evolves from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) propounded by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Bill also makes provisions for minimum consumption of non-fossil energy sources as energy or feedstock by the designated consumers. The plain reading of Bill it is evident that, the GHG emission fuels are

reduced as per the obligations made in COP 26 and 27 (Govt. of India, 2022).

3.10. The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2022

The Electricity Amendment Bill is also introduced to increase the share and promotion of renewable energy based on international commitments. The Bill further provides for penalising the RPO defaulters based on the deficit in RPO which shall be a sum calculated at a rate of not less than twenty-five paisa per kilowatt-hour and not more than thirty-five paisa per kilowatt-hour for the shortfall in purchase in the first year of default; not less than thirty-five paisa per kilowatt-hour and not more than fifty paisa per kilowatt-hour for the shortfall in purchase continuing after the first year of default.” The Amendment therefore a Hobson’s choice for electricity generation, transmission and distribution companies. The RPO therefore a reality which have to be worked out so that the penal part can be omitted. (Govt. of India, 2022)

4. Thrissur Corporation Electricity Department (TCED) Scope and Way Forward

The way forward was identified by the TCED during the Municipal Council Term of 2015-2020 . The Council worked out various models and formulated projects like run of river SHEPs of 25.5 MW and Solar. The Small Hydro Electric Projects SHEPs are under progress. The Municipal Council in the year 2022 came with a pragmatic solution for this conundrum, where the budget for the FY 2022-23 specifically approved the solar project for 30 MW. The ARR plan also made provisions for 20 MW. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) approval of 10 MW is deliberated and got approval in principle. Therefore, once the projects take-off, the overall RPOs eventually reach 55.5 MW, which is far exceeding the obligations. In addition to the above TCED may frame and adopt a RPO specific policy, which shall have SHEP, Solar and other Renewable Energy generation, adoption, purchase components, explore the scope of Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) purchase in consultation with Agency for New and Renewable Energy Research and Technology (ANERT) and the scope of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) as per the regulation. The TCED may also explore the scope of procuring Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) from KSEBL or any other agencies with cost effective certificates to record compliance under the Regulation 2020.

5. Proposed Financial Models-Solar Specific

The TCED may explore and adopt a financial model which is shown as below;

5.1. The Lease Model-1 (EPC/RESCO)

The CAPEX for the project shall be bear by TCED alone which may be utilised from Reserve amount or Availing loan. Then the project cost will be Project Cost (X)= Capital Investment (A)+ Central/State Subsidy of 40% (B). Therefore $X = A + B$ (where B is 0.4X)

5.2. The Lease Model-2 (EPC/RESCO)

The CAPEX for the project shall be bear by Thrissur Corporation. The TCED should return the CAPEX amount to Thrissur Corporation over the project period considering the bank rate and the profit from the energy sale. To adopt this model an agreement with TCED and Thrissur Corporation with the approval of KSERC is a mandate.

5.3. 'Consumer the Master Model'

The CAPEX for the project shall be bear the consumer. That is 0.6 of X (project cost). Then the CAPEX will be $X = A$ (0.6 of X will be bear by consumer) +B (where B is 0.4 X)

A. The TCED should explore the scope for leasing of parcel of lands in-situ or ex-situ of Corporation limits. The model which was adopted by KSEBL or CIAL at Ettukudukka near Payyanur (12MW) may be referred. The KSEBL adopted 2 financial models under the 'Pradhan Mantri -Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM)'. The Scheme have 3 components which are;

- i. Component-A: Setting up of 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground/ Stilt Mounted Grid Connected Solar or other Renewable Energy based Power Plants.
- ii. Component-B: Installation of 17.50 Lakh Stand-alone Solar Agriculture Pumps.
- iii. Component-C: Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid Connected Agriculture Pumps.

The financial models adopted and approved by KSERC for KSEBL for the implementation of Component A are;

Model-1: Farmers Investment Model

Farmer can directly invest the full amount and KSEB Ltd

purchases the entire solar energy from the farmer at a predetermined levelized tariff for 25 years. The tariff for purchase of solar power from the farmer is proposed to be fixed at Rs.3.50/unit considering low-capacity plants (0.5MWp – 2MWp) under this Scheme.

Model-2: Lease model

If farmers are not able to invest in the Scheme on their own, they can lease out their land or the right-to-use agreement to KSEB Ltd for a period of 25 years at a lease rent rate of Rs.0.10/unit without escalation. KSEB Ltd investment will be through EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction), that is an end-to-end package or RESCO (Renewable Energy Service Company) mode.

6. Conclusion

The historical relevance of TCED relating back to its inception year 1936. Also, the only Municipal Corporation in India having a business interest/stake in electrical energy vis-à-vis its traditional functions. The old player TCED call for new technique and strategies to scale up new heights which eventually improve the quality and consistency of power supply. The RPOs are a mandate which require preparation and adoption of a policy at local government level. The policy should be guided by the existing central/state policies and guidelines. The policy will help the TCED to stand in an equitable bargain position with other stakeholders. The policy will also work out modalities and procedures ensuring due diligence in the RPO projects which includes generation, procurement, installation, REC purchases and sales etc. The business model should be worked out at local level so as to benefit TCED, Corporation and Consumers. The RPOs implementation will add on to the environmental commitments of India.

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ATMA: A Convergence Mechanism for Restructuring and Strengthening Agricultural Extension Machinery

To achieve togetherness between diverse people who are separated or divided – socially, culturally, politically, economically and/or geographically – they need to be brought together in consensual face-to-face contact and in social contexts where equitable interpersonal co-operation and group cohesion are fostered. That means to create and develop a community people in groups need to engage and participate in common practices and be committed to making decisions in cooperation with each other. Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) is an extension programme for improving agriculture through community mobilisation. It aims at making extension system farmer driven and farmer accountable by way of new institutional arrangements for technology dissemination in the form of an ATMA at district level to operationalize the extension reforms. This article discuss how ATMA is highly recommendable and sustainable to strengthen the extension machinery encompassing all stakeholders in technology generation and dissemination particularly the farmers.

Keywords:- Community Mobilization, Extension Programmes, Technology, Agriculture, Convergence

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1. Introduction

Though the extension system in India is pluralistic, it is predominated by government agencies. Pre and post independent India has witnessed a number of extension programmes for the effective transfer and dissemination of agricultural technology to the farmers through non-formal education, some of which include the Gurgaon project, Marthandam project, Sriniketan project, National Extension Service, Community Development Programme, Intensive Agriculture Development Programme (IADP), Training and Visit Extension Programme etc. These projects have ensured all round holistic development of the rural India.

Training and Visit Programme made a big dent in the agrarian society as it was more suited for the rapid dissemination of broad based crop management practices. Beyond high success rate, several limiting factors of Training and Visit system called for policy intervention to make extension system farmer driven and farmer accountable through institutional reforms. These reforms were to initiate a demand driven, broad based, holistic and bottom-up approach in agricultural extension system. The Government of India through the Ministry of Agriculture and with the assistance of MANAGE, Hyderabad designed a new extension pilot project in the name Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA). This was piloted at district level under Innovation in Technology Dissemination (ITD) under NATP (1998) in seven states, namely, Andra Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand and Maharashtra. Based on the experience of 28 districts during 1998 to 2004, GoI officially launched the ATMA in several rural districts in India in 2005. (GoI, 2018)

As the pilot project was launched at the national level project within a span of five years without sufficient process evaluation studies ended up with several constraints to the scheme. The scheme was revitalized to overcome the challenges under 'support to state extension reforms programmes for extension reforms' in 2010 with a strong manpower, infrastructure and activities including provision of specialist and functionary support at district level, agro service centers were proposed at block level and innovative support through 'farmer friend' at village level and revision of ATMA cafeteria. (GoI, 2018). Thus the existing ATMA was revitalized to ensure that the key constraints under the scheme are adequately addressed.

The vigor of ATMA lies in enforcing the strategies like decentralized decision making, involvement of private sector in agricultural extension (Public-private Extension Partnership), group approach (Commodity Interest Groups (CIG)/Farmer Interest Groups (FIG)/Farming Study Groups (FSG) and Farmer Producer

Organizations (FPO)), farming system approach, gender concerns, research-extension-farmer linkages, farmer oriented activities, farm information dissemination, convergence and sustainability of extension services. Thus, the ATMA scheme aims to facilitate and strengthen extension delivery system in the state through gap filling mode so as to ensure effective and all round location specific technology transfer to the farmers through participatory approach thereby making extension system farmer driven and farmer accountable.

2. Operational Modality

ATMA at the district level functions in convergence with all agri and allied departments under the umbrella of ATMA Governing Board and ATMA Management Committee with the Deputy Commissioner and the District Agriculture Officer as the Chairman respectively. The agency at the block level operates under the Block Technology Team (BTT) with a BTT Convener as the head and a set of extension functionaries from Agri and Allied departments and ATMA Support staff. The team is also supported by the Block Farmers' Advisory Committee (BFAC) along with Farmer friends (FFs) for identification, planning and execution of all farmers' extension programmes.

ATMA component is being implemented through the institutional mechanism as detailed below:

2.1. State Level

- (i) The State Level Sanctioning Committee (SLSC) set up under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) is the apex body to approve State Extension Work Plan (SEWP) which will form a part of the State Agriculture Plan (SAP). In those cases where SLSC meeting cannot be held in time or there is any other administrative reason, SEWP can be approved by the Executive Committee of same on the recommendation of Inter Departmental Working Group (IDWG).
- (ii) The SLSC may be supported by the IDWG which is responsible for day-to-day coordination and management of the Scheme activities within the State.
- (iii) The State Nodal Cell (SNC), consisting of State Nodal officer, State Coordinator, State Gender Coordinator and supporting staff will ensure timely receipt of District Agriculture Action Plans (DAAPs), formulation of State Extension Work Plan (SEWP) duly incorporating farmers' feedback obtained through State Farmer Advisory Committee (SFAC) and its approval by the SLSC. The SNC will then convey the approval and monitor implementation of these work plans by State Agricultural Management & Extension

Training Institutes (SAMETIs) and ATMAs. The SAMETIs will draw-up and execute an Annual Training Calendar for capacity building of the Extension Functionaries in the State. While doing so, the SAMETI will check duplication and overlapping of training content, training schedule, and trainees themselves. And also ensure regular training and skill upgradation of State and District/Block level extension functionaries and their reach out to the grass root level extension functionaries and farmers through field visits.

2.2. District Level

ATMA is an autonomous institution set up at district level to ensure delivery of extension services to farmers. ATMA Governing Board is the apex body of ATMA which provides overall policy direction. ATMA Management Committee is the executive body looking after implementation of the scheme. District Farmers Advisory Committee is a body to provide farmers' feedback for district level planning and implementation. With dedicated staff provided for the ATMA, it will continue to be the district level nodal agency responsible for overall management of agriculture extension system within the district, including preparation of Strategic Research and Extension Plan (SREP).

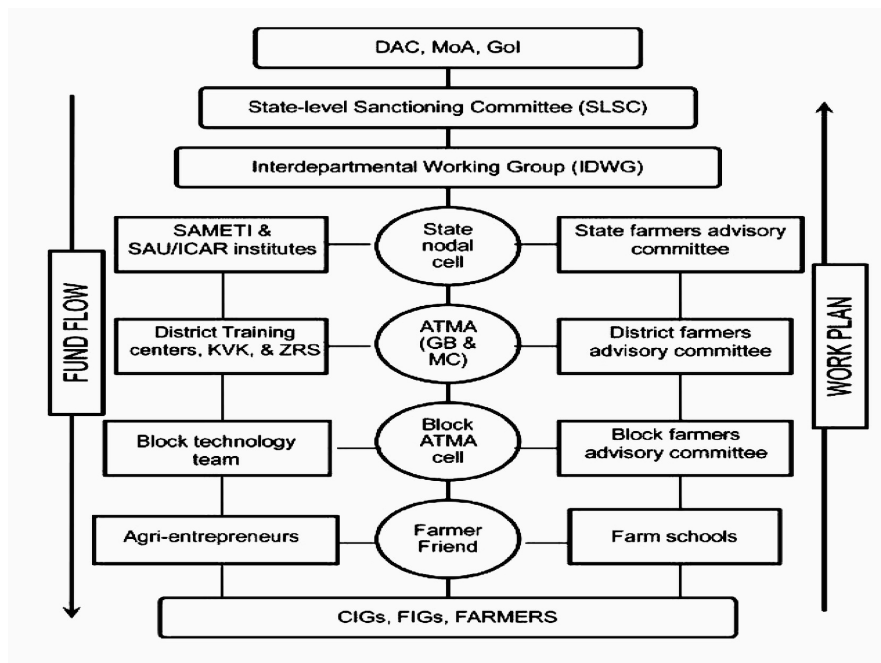
2.3. Block Level

The Block ATMA Cell consisting of Block Technology Team (BTT) (a team comprising officers of agriculture and other allied departments within the Block) and Block Farmers' Advisory Committee (BFAC) (a group exclusively consisting of selected farmers of the Block) will prepare the Block Action Plan (BAP) and provide necessary extension support within the Block in its execution.

2.4. Village Level

- (i) The Farmer Friend (FF) will serve as a vital link between extension system and farmers at village level (one for every two villages).
- (ii) Agri-entrepreneurs, Diploma holders in Agricultural Extension Services for Input Dealers (DAESI), Input Dealers and extension workers in nongovernmental sector will supplement the efforts of extension functionaries.
- (iii) Commodity Interest Groups (CIGs), Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) and Food Security Groups (FSGs) will serve as a nodal point for information & technology dissemination among its members. (iv) Farm Schools will serve as a mechanism for farmer-to-farmer extension at every Block.

The organizational structure at various levels has been depicted in the following diagram.



3. ATMA Cafeteria of Activities for Restructuring and Strengthening Agricultural Extension Machinery

- Preparation of Five Yearly Strategic Research and Extension Plan (SREP) and Annual District Agriculture Action Plans (DAAPS) through participatory rural appraisal;
- Training of farmers- inter- state, within- state and block level farmers' trainings;
- Demonstrations- hands on method demonstrations and result demonstrations;
- Farmers' exposure visits- inter- state, within state and block level exposure visits;
- Mobilization of farmers into groups, capacity building and provision of seed money;
- Recognition and Felicitation of Individual farmers and Farmers' groups with cash awards and citations;
- District Level Exhibitions/Kisan Melas;
- Farm information dissemination through different media;
- Field days and kisan gosthis;

- Joint visits of extension functionaries with KVK experts to farmers' fields;
- Assessment, refinement, validation and adoption of technologies and short term research trials;
- Capacity building and skill development programmes for extension functionaries;
- District level innovative activities;
- Setting up and operationalization of farm schools;
- Linkage of farmers' groups with financial institutions; and
- Active involvement of ATMA support staff in the implementation of various agriculture and allied schemes including PMKSY, RKVY, FOCUS, UNDP programmes.

4. Convergence of Extension Work Under ATMA

Mutually synergetic linkages will be established among various activities instead of unilaterally mandating that all such farmer-centric activities shall be carried out through ATMA. For instance, half day's training given under Seed Village Programme shall also be made part of Farm Schools as, in any case, training on seed technologies form a part of critical stages during which farmers are trained under Farm Schools conducted under ATMA. This convergence should be institutionalized by ensuring that State Extension Work Plan, covers field-level training and extension components. SREP is an ideal platform to provide convergence from the conceptual level and prioritization point of view. IDWG will further underline such a convergent approach at the State level. Farmers' skill training and field extension as contained in other schemes of DAC&FW may be converged with similar farmer-related activities going on through ATMA.

A single ATMA Governing Board headed by the District Magistrate will provide commonality in approach and implementation for avoiding duplication. ATMA Governing Board shall act as an over-arching umbrella at the district level to oversee all extension-related activities in other Missions like National Horticulture Mission (NHM), National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana- Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied sector Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR) and other schemes of Krishonnati Yojana. Such a holistic approach will avoid duplication of efforts and promote more extensive & inclusive coverage of beneficiaries. The Integrated ICT platforms (such as Farmers' Portal, State Agriculture Portals, and Central Agriculture Portal) will also provide requisite impetus to implementation at the field level.

5. Convergence with Research System

ATMA scheme provides for active involvement of Research System/ Research Agencies at different levels of implementation. State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) have to be fully involved not only in preparation of SREP and Extension Work Plans but also in implementation of various programmes in the field. They will be represented in all bodies, namely, ATMA GB and ATMA MC in districts, SLSC/ IDWGs at State level, BTT - BFAC Meetings at Block level. In addition, each KVK scientist may be made in charge of one or more Blocks within the district. The KVK Scientist will technically advise the BTT and will also be actively involved in preparation of BAPs, especially with regard to research related issues/ gaps and strategies. He will also take feedback from his colleagues in the KVK in respect of their respective areas of expertise (GoI, 2018).

6. Convergence with Development Departments

Necessary convergence with all line departments is ensured through involvement in the process of preparation of SREP and Work Plans at Block, District and State levels. Work Plans to be submitted to SLSC for funding under the Scheme should explicitly specify activities to be supported from resources of other schemes and those proposed under ATMA Programme. Necessary convergence is to be ensured through integration of Comprehensive District Action Plans (CDAPs) and District Agriculture Action Plans (DAAPs) – all of which will form an integral part of State Agriculture Plan to be approved by State Level Sanctioning Committee (SLSC) under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana- Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied sector Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR). Further, within approved allocations of Scheme, the State Level Sanctioning Committee (SLSC) may also approve inter component changes as per need during the course of implementation of the Work Plan, within ambit of Guidelines, which should be reported to DAC&FW immediately. Active involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the selection of beneficiaries for various farmer oriented activities, including selection of Farmer Friend should be ensured. (Biam, K.P. 2018).

7. Convergence with and Involvement of the Non-Governmental Sector

In order to ensure the promotion of multi-agency extension strategies, and to implement scheme activities in Service Provider or Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) mode, at least 10% of scheme allocation on recurring activities at the district level is to be incurred through Non-Governmental Sector viz. NGOs, FOs, PRIs, Cooperatives, Para-Extension Workers, Agripreneurs, Input Suppliers, Corporate

Sector etc. Since a lot of manpower and infrastructure has been given under the Scheme for providing extension services, the State Government should fix an upper limit on extension services in Service Provider or PPP mode. This percentage limit should be clearly spelt out in the SEWP (Kaushik, S. and Verma, T. 2001).

Outsourcing will nevertheless be confined to such activities where the organization concerned has expertise and requisite skills and the manpower deployed under ATMA is unable to perform such tasks due to multifarious tasks.

8. ATMA Networking

State level bodies/ officers viz. State Nodal Officer/ State Coordinator/ Gender Coordinator will ensure networking of all ATMAs so as to foster information sharing (success stories, best practices, research/ extension issues, application of innovative technologies & strategies, etc.). All States/Districts shall share information regarding their activities/ innovations/ successes to the outside world on the national ATMA portal (www.extensionreforms.dacnet.nic.in). Also, progress of the scheme activities shall be reported on the national ATMA portal. This Portal shall also have links to related websites both at State and National levels.

ATMA in Kerala

In Kerala, ATMA scheme was implemented in the year 2005-06. The districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Palakkad, Idukki and Wayanad in the first phase and later extended to all the districts of the State.

Bottom-up planning procedures involving a participatory approach, intensive Information Technologies (IT) applications and strengthening research-extension-farmer linkages are the main pillars of ATMA model and hence use of ATMA as an extension approach is highly recommendable and sustainable to strengthen the extension machinery encompassing all stakeholders in technology generation and dissemination, particularly the farmers. ATMA activities in the State include Training of Farmers, Organising Demonstrations, Exposure Visits, Mobilization of Farmer Groups (capacity building, skill development and support services, seed money /revolving fund, food security group), Rewards and Incentives, Farmer Awards, District level Exhibitions, Kisan Melas, Fruits/ Vegetable Shows, Farmer Scientist Interactions at district level; Assessment, refinement, validation and adoption of frontline technologies and other short term researchable issues through KVKs and other local research center, and Farm

schools. Apart from this, ATMA newsletter is being published in each district in order to publicize the activities on bimonthly basis. In each district, group based pest surveillance system where one best performing ATMA group will be selected and trained for monitoring and reporting incidents of pest and disease on regular basis to Krishi Bhavans.

Constraints faced by extension functionaries

Important constraints faced by the extension functionaries of ATMA in Kerala are inadequate financial support under the ATMA scheme, delay in approving and releasing of fund, lack of guidelines for Block action plan, lack of prior information on work plan, absence of modern ICT at the field level, unavailability of production inputs at the farmer's doorstep, lack of training on improved technologies. The farmers under ATMA are facing several problems including unavailability of production inputs, lack of training on improved technologies, absence of planning in input distribution, inadequate training programmes, unplanned input distribution, and lack of information dissemination system.

5. Conclusion

In order to address the key constraints faced by extension system in the country with respect to reducing capacity of public extension services, its lack of decentralized and demand driven focus, the Innovations in Technology Dissemination component of National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP) was implemented. This component aimed at pilot testing new institutional arrangements for technology dissemination at district level and below in order to move towards an integrated extension delivery. The project process involved adopting bottom up planning procedures for setting the research and extension agency in order to make the technology dissemination farmer driven and farmer accountable. The extension delivery was oriented towards group approach catering to the location specific requirement of the farmers. Gender concerns have been given adequate emphasis under the project. It functions as a registered society at District level and serves as a focal point for integrating research and extension activities and helps in decentralizing the management of agricultural technology transfer. Support for specialists and functionaries, Innovative support through a 'Farmer Friend', Promotion of outstanding farmers, Farmer-to-farmer extension support, flexibility of having Extension Work, Non-governmental implementing agencies, Public extension functionaries being made more effective through trainings and exposure visits are the key features of the project. Like the decentralized planning

programme, ATMA model pillars are bottom up planning procedure involving participatory approach, intensive Information Technologies (IT) applications and strengthening research-extension-farmer linkages. Hence use of ATMA as an extension approach is highly recommendable and sustainable to strengthen our farmers.

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In Quest of an Effective Local Government in Bangladesh: Perspective of Zilla Parishad

In the Republic of Bangladesh, because of the control of the central government, the Zilla Parishad (ZP) can enjoy limited authority in its decision-making power over the provision of services. Due to a fragmented legal framework, the legal assignment of district council functions and expenditure responsibilities remains unclear, and there is a significant gap between the legally assigned functions and the actual capacity to perform their functions. Lack of coordination between ZP and district administration offices in providing services has been identified as a major obstacle to effective local service delivery. The main impediment to effective coordination is the distance between the frontline service delivery unit where the service is delivered to citizens and the officials who ultimately have decision-making power over local service delivery often sitting at the District (Zilla) level or national government. Therefore, there is a need to deconcentrate decision-making power on service delivery to the ZP level, thereby reducing coordination failures and improving local services.

Keywords: Local Government, Service Delivery, Zilla Parishad, Accountability, Citizen Participation

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1.Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of Bangladesh stipulates in Article 59(1) that local government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies made up of people elected in accordance with the law, while Article 152(1) states that an administrative unit is a district or other area designated by law (Siddiqui, 2005). The District Councils in Bangladesh have long been recognized for their value. Bangladesh's constitution states unequivocally that the state shall promote institutions of local government with people's representation (Ahmed, 2014). The Zilla Parishad or District Council – the highest level of the rural local government tier – is the oldest local government tier in Bangladesh. The Zilla Parishad Act of 2000 (Section 49), considering financial capabilities, has mandated the Zilla Parishads to implement developmental activities by designing annual and five-year plans in consultation with other local government institutions and individuals (Kabir, 2014).

District Council has the authority to boost government grants and redirect other types of grants. Despite consistent monetary support, it's unclear why successive governments haven't made an effort to turn the Zilla Parishad into a fully functional local government entity (Ahmed, 2014). The 8th Five Year Plan (FYP) is contemplating concerted efforts to help districts that are falling behind, as well as tackling the vulnerability of leaving no one behind to ensure that LDC students graduate successfully. Several studies and evaluations of UNDP's local government intervention show that investing in local government is a great value for money in advancing local development, boosting growth and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Zilla Parishad Act 2000 was enacted, and now the chairman and members of Zilla Parishad are elected at large. Previously, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was in charge of running the office. A 'tender committee' was in charge of selecting the schemes and carrying out the projects. The district minister instructed the CEO, who executed them without question. The District Council's primary responsibilities were limited to the implementation of certain development plans and the provision of charitable donations to educational and religious institutions. The main sources of income were immovable property taxes and government grants (Nasrin, 2013). In accordance with the rules, the Zilla Parishad can promote commercial programs as well as initiate and implement projects on the basis of prior permission of the government. According to article 34, Zilla Parishad will form

seven standing committees on the following areas to provide the best services to the people:

- 1) Law and order;
- 2) Education;
- 3) Health, family planning, environment, drinking water and sanitation;
- 4) Agriculture, irrigation, cooperative, fisheries and livestock;
- 5) Social welfare, women and children development, youth development, sports and culture;
- 6) Relief and disaster management, NGO affairs and self-employment; and
- 7) Communication and infrastructural development.

As per Article 49 of the Act of 2000, Zilla Parishads must consider short-term, mid-term, and long-term development planning based on the financial strength of the Parishads. This paper-based on contest analysis is aimed at understanding the effectiveness of the Zilla Parishad.

2.Can Zilla Parishad Deliver the best Service for the Citizens? A Critical Analysis

Local government systems in Bangladesh that are more decentralized and effective are now widely accepted as essential for advancing development agendas that benefit the poor, increasing participation in decision-making, and ensuring that resources are allocated to areas where they are most needed, thereby improving allocative efficiency. Standing ZP committees, for example, are inactive. The bylaws, as well as any other standards necessary for the Committees to function, remain unclear. Reluctance has been observed among all significant ZP Committee participants due to the absence of suitable guidelines, ToRs and guiding concepts. Because committee members are not required by law to attend meetings, many of them choose not to participate.

It is hardly unusual that the member secretaries of various committees are not motivated to speed up committee operations due to their own heavy workloads and lack of communication from their parent ministries. Sometimes, despite the committee chair's repeated requests, member secretaries fail to call committee meetings. For example, the majority of ZP members are unable to contribute resources to cover the costs of organizing committee meetings. If a committee

makes recommendations for actions to improve a specific problem, neither the committees nor the UZP will be able to give any funding for those actions. As a result, committee members get disinterested in their work as a result of their unpleasant circumstances.

The chairmen and members of committees increasingly rely on government officials who serve as their member secretaries because of a lack of capability. Because government officials play such a large role in Bangladesh, this type of dependence on people's representatives does not allow the committee system to function well. The majority of committee chairs, member secretaries, and members do not have a good understanding of the fundamental objectives and procedures of committee working. Unfortunately, they are hindered by their lack of comprehension, and as a result, the committee system fails miserably. The chairman and members of various committees have a desire to exert influence over the relevant government departments. The member secretaries of each committee face a significant challenge in writing minutes and keeping records. Municipalities are in fact found within the bounds of districts, and these local government bodies are sometimes confused by imprecise boundaries (Bhuiyan, 2014).

Although ZPs have some flexibility, they are currently constrained in their ability to collect revenue from the sources given to them, even if they exercise that latitude responsibly. Furthermore, under the current system of intergovernmental fiscal transfer, ZP only receives a small amount of money compared to their actual needs (Nasir Uddin, 2014). ZPs' capacity to carry out their responsibilities successfully is hampered by a lack of proper resources. LGIs in both rural and urban areas have recently tried to mobilize LGI's own source of money by attaching their tax efforts to some performance criteria. These actions have aided LGI in increasing revenue. Henceforth, an explicit LGIs tax collecting policy is required for enhanced Zilla Parishad performance and service delivery for other LGIs (Islam & Khan, 1997).

The profit-making projects were preserved in Zilla Parishad Act 2000 under Article 28. The Zilla Parishad is allowed to promote commercial programs, establish and conduct initiatives with the prior consent of the government under the rules. The majority of ZPs own their own rest house, auditorium, community center, multi-purpose hall, and shopping centers (Shah, 2004). The amount of decision-making power vested in service providers thus gets further reduced. Currently, ZP plays some roles in the delivery of local services and local administration offices provide these services as well (Nasir Uddin, 2014).

The inability of ZP and district administration offices to effectively coordinate in the delivery of local services has been cited as a major hurdle. Distance between frontline service delivery units, where citizens receive services, and officials with ultimate decision-making power over local service delivery, frequently located at the District (Zilla) level or at the national government, is the key obstacle to successful coordination. The ZP is in charge of coming up with its own annual development plan (ADP). When ZP prepares for the ADP, it generally does not adhere to a predefined protocol. With few technical staff and an insufficient monitoring system, it appears that ADP suffers with spending its government-funded budget in accordance with its work plan. Political motivations drive the Project Implementation Committee, which does not manage ADP implementation as intended.

ZP is hampered by a lack of qualified human resources. There is no technical support for it. An assistant engineer and a sub-assistant engineer are deputed from the LGED to oversee the development of the community center, auditorium, and other physical infrastructures. ZP employs a small number of administrative professionals. Accountants, assistant accountants, and support workers are the most frequently hired posts. They do not receive any training from National Institute of Local Government (NILG) or even on-the-job training.

Limited coordination between ZP and the district administration offices in delivering services has been raised as an important obstacle to the effective delivery of local services. The main impediment to effective coordination is the distance between the frontline service delivery unit where the service is delivered to citizens and the officials who ultimately have decision-making power over local service delivery often sitting at the district (Zilla) level or national government.

3. In Quest of an Effective Zilla Parishad

For strengthening democratic local governance, ZP should think of negotiating with several foreign donor organizations that are equally committed to democratic local government improvement. They should present reform agendas to the government jointly, expecting the administration to respond to their demands respectably. ZP may support the establishment of an advocacy forum comprised of academics, development practitioners, and representatives of civil society organizations dedicated to improving local government in general and committees in particular. This forum's principal duty would be to lead advocacy campaigns on various local government concerns. A few such forums may be established initially, with the potential of expanding throughout the nation.

In the ZP, there is currently no mechanism in place to track who is doing what and how they are doing it. Advocacy might be conducted with the government to initiate legal changes to develop a system of monitoring the ZP's operations to mitigate the amount of power abuse by elected representatives and government personnel. Indeed, a system of punishment and reward should be implemented to assure the ZP's overall effectiveness and the Committees' in particular. Promotion of gender equity and gender mainstreaming, including (i) completing a gender action plan and (ii) allocating and spending a specified percentage of the ZP budget on gender activities as indicated in the plan.

Remaining challenges Introducing performance-based budget allocation, i.e., placing governance reform as a condition to receiving a budget for infrastructure improvements, brought a successful paradigm shift among local governments in Bangladesh. It is necessary to increase citizen awareness and engagement in the administration of ZP. Women and the poor are now included in ZP operations, with a particular budget provision. ZP's financial management and accountability have improved, and the organization's administration has become more transparent. Increasing own-source revenue allows for extra budget allocation for infrastructure operation and management.

Through numerous training programs, ZP officials will increase their awareness, understanding, and skills, allowing them to provide more efficient and effective services to the public. Since improving administration and services to citizens influences their willingness to pay for services, the process can be self-sustaining and reinforcing, which also allows for continuous improvement in service delivery. However, there are still some challenges ahead in order to make the system more self-sustaining and self-enforcing. The first barrier would be the ZP's overall budget constraint. The government should consider developing a performance-based Block grant budget allocation mechanism by establishing a unified set of objective performance criteria and applying them to every ZP.

Each tier of local government has a long list of potential revenue tools, including taxes, fees, and other sources of income. Property-based revenue, which includes taxes and rates, is the major source of revenue for ZP. In practice, many of these can only generate a little amount of revenue. They are highly reliant on transfers from the national government. This causes the ZP to compromise some of their autonomy.

4. Conclusion

If people's opinions are heard and their rights to participate are respected, democracy can be reinforced. Development at the grassroots level cannot be assured unless local government bodies are strong and well-functioning. Building a strong local government is essential for achieving the dream of a poverty-free democratic Bangladesh. As a result, bringing about reforms in local government is now a crucial demand. The Charter of Change or Vision 2021, which aims to transform Bangladesh into a respectable nation by transforming political culture and ridding society of corruption, will be difficult to achieve unless a strong, honest, and dedicated local level governance system emerges to support the central government. Allow local community to take the lead and drive social change. While NGOs are still likely to be mainly concerned with the basics of improving human development, being involved in human security projects helps to improve NGOs as organizations and to reinforce and expand the contribution they can make to the people with whom they currently work. To make development really meaningful, people must be directly involved in the formulation and implementation of decisions.

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Decentralisation: Gateway for Effective and Efficient Social Security Service for the Vulnerable / Dependent Population

Local self-governments have tried to promote the well-being of the vulnerable/dependent population by designing and implementing several projects. Yet, there are thousands who are out of the safety net. This article focuses on how decentralisation and Local Governments - LGs can be strengthened as a gateway for social security for all vulnerable /dependent populations i.e., elderly, unemployed, chronically ill, transgender persons, invalidity, loss of breadwinner etc. It has based itself on the 'best practices on social security' implemented by LGs and critically review the 'bottlenecks' at the legislation and policy that prevents their right to wellbeing and equality. It concludes by suggesting a comprehensive social security policy encompassing all populations at risk enabling the LGs to be Effective Gateway for Social Security Services.

Keywords: Decentralisation, Local self-government, social security, best practices, bottlenecks, local development

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1. Introduction

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments and subsequent enactment of Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 (KPR Act) and the Kerala Municipality Act, 1994 (KM Act) have brought revolutionary changes in the institutional background for democratic decentralisation and participative decentralised planning in Kerala- Government near to the people. One of the mandatory functions transferred to LGs is the social security of all people within their administrative purview. Article 243G of the Constitution underlines this role of the LGs. Similarly, the KM Act and KPR Act entails that LGs identify locally specific issues, prepare plans and implement them with the paramount aim to ensure a safe, secure and dignified life to everyone as envisaged in the Constitution.

“In a crisis-shaken world marked by unprecedented quagmire of political, environmental, economic and fiscal uncertainties... social security is a human right and all people regardless of where they live, should be guaranteed at least a floor of basic social protection” (ILO, Social Security for All, 2012). Social security is referred as the protection that a society provides to individuals and households to ensure access to health care and to guarantee income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity or loss of a breadwinner. (ILO 2001). Such social security system helps to absorb the shocks and minimise adverse impacts. It covers both deprivation and contingencies and prevents, reduces or eliminates economic and social vulnerabilities to deprivation.

Successive governments at National/ State level have enacted legislations and formulated policies to ensure social security to various dependent/vulnerable population. The Rights of Persons with Disability (RPWD) Act, 2016; the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019; are the legislations enacted at the National level. Following these legislations, the state of Kerala has formulated the policy for transgender persons in Kerala 2015; Vayojana Nayam 2013 (old age policy) and Kerala state policy for the persons with disability 2015. (www.lsgd.gov Kerala accessed 30th May). Based on these policies, the state of Kerala has introduced several schemes/programmes to provide adequate social security and assist them to lead a respectful and dignified life and be inclusive in the society. The ground reality, however, unveils that thousands are still insecure and unprotected. Moreover, beyond the above population, there are others like destitute

people, unemployed, chronically ill persons, families that have lost bread winner or individuals/families experiencing other risks who needs security but remain out of the safety net. These dependent populations do not receive any mention in the legislations and remain out of security facing problems of exclusion, destitution, chronic or life threatening diseases, disabilities and sudden poverty.

There are hundreds of published works/reports on decentralisation and its effect on different sectors such as health, education, anti-poverty program etc. But they have mostly ignored/not captured questions concerning the effect/influence of decentralisation in realising social security to the vulnerable/dependent population. This article therefore examines social security in the context of decentralization through the lens of the available literature on decentralisation and LGs. It analyses the practices followed by LGs and critically review the gaps in accessing the social security rights ensured through the legislations/policies/schemes/programmes. Consolidating the findings, the article concludes by suggesting some pertinent measures on what can be done next so that every dependent population (individuals/households) are brought under the safety net of income security /health care.

2. Methodology

The present research has utilised available data from the secondary sources of information to understand the role played by the Local Self-Government in ensuring social security to all population in the context of decentralisation. Information was gathered from multiple sources viz., online sources, government portals, websites of state and national governments, web portal of various local governments, studies undertaken by various agencies and various legislation documents (KPA 1994, KMA 1994, RPWD Act, 2016; the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 and the Transgender Persons Act, 2019 etc.). The study has also collected details of the programmes/projects undertaken by the LGs in their own areas under social security. From the available volume of practices, a few practices are selected as best practices based on a criteria and has been included in this article. The criteria followed for selecting the best practices are:

- » That the practice should be recent (last five years from 2017);
- » Relevant to social security;
- » Acceptable/acknowledged (that has been acknowledged by govt/ other agencies/received various awards) and
- » Dependable and replicable/ scalable anywhere in the country.

The parameters selected for the present study are also subject to several limitations. Lack of or inadequate data and other information relating to quantitative parameters, mainly relating to the number of LGs that follow similar practices and also qualitative consolidated information regarding the practices followed by various LGs in Kerala. The primary reason for such inadequacy of data is the virtual absence of any appropriate mechanism evolved for regular collection, compilation and monitoring of the essential data. The information thus collected from various sources were reviewed rigorously and were coded under three major heads the best practices, the bottlenecks and what can be done. The results are presented under the heads: Best practices, Bottle necks and the Way forward.

3. The Best Practices

Several LSGs were pro-active in initiating innovative projects to provide safety net to households/individuals particularly those having old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity or loss of a breadwinner. In Kerala, the Department of Social Justice and its allied agencies are involved in ensuring social security to all the people particularly the vulnerable ones. A few of such innovative practices commenced by the LSGs or LSGD are given in this section. Though there is a huge volume of practices available, only a few are selected and included in this article.

Differently Abled: Working towards the global commitment for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Kerala Social Security Mission (KSSM) has undertaken a survey in 2015 which highlights 7.94 lakh people equivalent to 2.32 per cent of the total population of Kerala are disabled. (KSSM, 2015) The state has viewed disability from a human rights and development issue and has accepted a rights based comprehensive life cycle approach. There are a number of programmes/projects initiated at State and LG level.

The programmes initiated included: Buds Rehabilitation Centre, BUDS school for inclusive education for all differently abled (Ramapuram Panchayat); Disability Resource Centre (Kottakkal) through which early detection of mental and physical disability under a project named SUPAPTHI was undertaken and necessary treatment is given. “Nalla Manas” programme (Kadampazhipuram GP) provides support to people who suffers from mental illness. “Pariraksha” (Chaliyar GP) project in which a team of doctors, nurses and palliative volunteers visit the homes and provides health care to palliative

care patients. “Aswasakiranam” project designed provides monthly assistance to care givers of the patients such as 100 per cent blind, bedridden patients suffering from cancer, cerebral palsy, autism, mental illness, mental retardation and bedridden due to old age, who need a full-time caregiver. The Kalotsav for Disabled (Mudakkuzha GP) had performances by the disabled and the caretakers, also an exhibition and sale of products made by the disabled.

Child-Friendly LSGs: Children from marginalised/vulnerable sections requires support to enjoy their childhood. Several LSGs have taken the initiative to make their LSGs child friendly (balasouhradam). Kolazhy, Ramapuram and Kottakkal LGs introduced several programmes such as martial arts training for girls, student nurse cadet, breakfast for upper primary, active school based clubs, civil service training, organising balasabhas etc., for building it Balasouhradam (child friendly). A special working group for children with one special officer is created. “**Safalamee Balyam**” a three days’ workshop (Ramapuram GP) organised gave them sufficient inputs on areas they can involve and be active part of the LSG. Kattakkada GP formed “Jagritha Samithi” to check substance abuse, organised medical camps on non-communicable and communicable diseases, initiated various clubs in schools (adolescent clubs, nature club, science clubs etc.) (KILA & IS Gulati Institute, 2021). Geographic Information System - GIS-Based Mother and Child Health Tracking System with the support of the JATAK and JANANI software applications are introduced in Mananthawadi Block Panchayat for tracking the health status of pregnant women and children (Economic Review, 2020). Although limited in number, the multiple programmes/projects initiate in LSGs indicates that they consider children as assets of the nation and are interested in caring them.

Senior citizens: Kerala State formed Vayojana Nayam 2013 (the Old Age Policy) to make Action Plans for the welfare of Senior Citizens in the State. “**Pakal Veedu**” project established in LGs provides not only facilities for entertainment and relaxation but also balanced diet and treatment. Several of the LGs have started Palliative care services under Kudumbashree. Care for the elderly who stay alone are included in the “Snehitha Calling Bell Scheme” where Kudumbashree workers visit their homes once in a week. “Vayomithram” Project provides free medical consultation, free medicine, Palliative care through mobile clinic and help desk to elderly. Sayamprabha programme provides day care facilities for the overall well-being of elderly and provides shelter,

food, medical care and entertainment (Kerala State Planning Board, 2021). Vayo Souhruda GP (like in Alappad GP) aims for transforming all panchayats in the State into old-age friendly panchayats. Free Electric Auto project implemented by Noolpuzha GP provides transport facilities to elderly and those who are unable to travel by themselves within a radius of 15 kilometres. They have also initiated Telemedicine facility at the centre and at the tribal hamlets (KILA- 2021).

Women Development: Decentralisation has provided women a platform for voicing their issues; generating women leadership and participating in the decision making bodies. LGs have designed and implemented a number of programmes for an inclusive women development at the local level. The projects include: Women status study (Noolpuzha GP Thanalur & Porur GPs, Vazhoor GP etc.) to understand the socio-economic conditions, challenges and issues faced by women; creation of Gender Resource Centre for co-ordinating the activities related to women; Martial Art training for women and adolescent girls, Jagratha samithis as vigilance group to counter women /girl abuse (Poovar GP, Thanalur GP & Vazhoor GP); women friendly toilet; sanitary (she-pad) napkin vending machine in schools (Poovar GP, Vazhoor GP, Trivandrum District Panchayat); life style disease prevention training centre (Noolpuzha GP, Porur, Trivandrum District Panchayat); Haritha Karma Sena for increasing the income of women; vocational training, entrepreneurship programmes (Noolpuzha, Thanalur, vazhoor, Poovar, Calicut and Trivandrum LGs).

Transgender persons: Kerala State has formulated a policy for transgender persons under which the Social Justice department has introduced a number of projects for their security and inclusiveness viz., Transgender Helpline (24x7) and crisis management centre; Financial assistance for vocational training and self-employment; Pension for destitute transgender above 60 years; financial assistance for education, Sex Re-assignment Surgery (SRS) in Govt. Hospital, opening Human Immunodeficiency Virus - HIV zero surveillance centre; Sensitization programmes; and Scholarship for transgender students (Economic review, 2020). But projects implemented at the LSG level are not identified.

Destitute Persons: Kerala has initiated “Ashraya” project for destitute persons. Under the scheme destitute persons are identified at the LG level and provides periodical health check-up, food grains/essential commodities, housing and other basic facilities. The LGs implement them with the collaboration of Kudumbasree.

The projects implemented for ensuring social security to vulnerable/depended population by LGs underlines the role of creative leadership and their commitment. Projects focussed on providing social security to all particularly to individuals/households such as destitute, chronically ill patients, unemployed, loss of breadwinner, invalidity, maternity etc., are found to be scanty. It suggests for developing a comprehensive state policy of social security encompassing all the vulnerable/risk population in each area.

4. Missing links and Bottlenecks

As seen from the previous section, the State along with the LSGs have initiated several projects to ensure the right to social security of all within their administrative area, particularly for the vulnerable/risk/dependent population. Nevertheless, a number of bottlenecks/gaps in the legislation/policies push thousands out of the safety net or limit LSGs as a hub of services for the security of marginalised. This in turn limit the maturation of local governments into effective and efficient means for delivering social security to the entire population within their purview. Following are key bottle necks that prevents surety of social security to the less privileged:

Devolution of Functions (Power) to LSGs is partial: Following the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment, KPA 1994 and the KMA Act, 1994, Kerala has transferred most of the functions and functionaries to the LSGIs. Nevertheless, the devolution of power to LSGs is only partial as the Acts gives the State Government overriding powers over LSGs.

- » Section 189 of Kerala Panchayat Raj Act. the Government shall have the power to issue general guidelines to the panchayats and panchayats shall comply with such directions.
- » Section 56, KMA: Government by notification in Gazette make rule to carry out all or any purpose of KM Act.
- » Section 193 of KPA and 64, KMA: Government may dissolve LSGs make default in performing the duties imposed on it by law.
- » Section 191 KPA and 57, KMA: Government may cancel a resolution or decision taken by LSGs or in violation of directions issued by Govt.
- » Section 58, KMA: The State Govt. has the power to issue directions to urban local bodies, function of ward sabhas and ward committees, etc. (KMA, 1994)

These provisions indicate that although functions are transferred to LSGs, a string is attached with the devolution through

which the Government has the power to override LSGs at any time. This results in the inability of LSGs to exercise the powers in full.

Fiscal Decentralisation: LSGs receive funds under three streams General Purpose Fund for meeting the expenditure on traditional functions and establishment expenses; Maintenance Fund for the maintenance of assets of local governments including those transferred as part of decentralisation; and Development Fund (Plan allocation) for meeting the development expenditures. There is a progressive allocation to LGs from the state plan outlay. However, it does not consummate with the increased role and responsibilities. During the 13th plan period 22.92 to 25.92 per cent of the state plan outlay was allocated to LGs as development fund. In addition, 9 to 10% of states own tax revenues to LGs as Maintenance and General Purpose Fund. The devolution shows that compared to other states in the country Kerala is one of the most fiscally decentralised state in the country. (Ministry of Panchayati Raj & TISS, 2015). Nevertheless, since major portion of the Local Government fund is from State/Central government and in the form tied fund, they exercise control over the amount and can be used only for specified purpose. The conditions put forth for utilisation of funds often prevents utilisation of funds? (Deepthy, M. M. & Dhanuraj D. 2017). Moreover, the plan fund allocation by the State government is inadequate to implement various programmes relevant to the needs of vulnerable/risk population in their specific areas. Furthermore, although, the 15th Finance Commission has enhanced allocations for LSGs to 4.31% of the divisible pool, as against 3.54% by the 14th FC for 2019-20, the flexibility in spending is reduced to considerable extent (Economic Review, 2022).

Devolution of Functionaries- Dual Control: Section 180 of KPA and KMA states, the officers and employees of the Panchayat, other than contingent employees shall be Government Servants.' The nature of relationship between LSGs and transferred institutions is found to be a grey area. This arise mainly from dual control of the institutions and its staff by respective government departments and the LSGs (ARC & CSES, 2021). At present, State government is responsible for staffing and salaries of transferred institutions and implementation of Central and State schemes. Performance appraisal of these institutions is done by higher offices of the department. LSG's authority over the staff is limited in sanctioning leave, calling for reports of its functioning, prescribing field duties and approving tour programmes only. The elected representatives and the employees rarely considered the

transferred institution as an institution of the 'local government' Thus devolution of power to LSGs is partially restrictive and inadequate.

Disabled & Elderly Friendly Local Governance: A long way to go: - It is found that in spite of the provisions in the Act most of the local body offices/transferred institutions are not disabled friendly. In some LGs, the office of the departments is spread out over in more than one building/floors. (ARC & CSES, 2020). Access to communication, especially during emergencies, still remains a major area of concern. There is lack of understanding about the type of projects that can be undertaken for persons with disabilities and low utilisation rate of the funds earmarked for them. Also it is seen that multiple departments provide same type of service indicating absence of an integrated system that coordinate and oversee activities of various departments particularly of Social Justice, Health, Education, Labour, and LSGD. Besides, the LGs do not have a comprehensive data on PWD in their area and use it in designing programmes focussed on assisted living. A robust system of providing day/home care or educational facilities for disabled persons in each LG area is absent/negligible. In such absence, the families have to take care of them depriving the family of the opportunities to earn their livelihood pushing them to the vicious cycle of poverty.

Gap in senior citizens Act and policy: Following the Senior Citizens Act, 2007, Kerala has in place the Vayojana Nayam (Old Age Policy) to ensure need-based maintenance of their welfare. The elderly must not merely live longer, but must be able to lead secure, dignified and productive lives. Majority of the elderly depends on family members for their requirements. It naturally affects the family equilibrium as the family members are unable to go for work and earn. It pushes the families to critical conditions affecting survival and medical care needs of the family including the elderly. The policy does not speak about a basic set of standard multi-sectoral services to the elderly at different stages. Their needs differ as they grow older, and the policy should ensure different packages that will meet the varying needs. The policy is also silent on what the elderly can and should contribute to the development of society. Further, lack of sufficient data regarding elderly is another constraint for policy makers while designing their programmes.

Inclusiveness of Transgender persons - still a dream: Consistent with the 2014 Supreme Court judgement, the State Policy For Transgender Persons, (2015) allows for the self-identification of a person

as a “Transgender”. The Policy also recommends the establishment of District-level TG Boards that can register TGs and issue identification cards. However, the survey by the Social Justice Department on TGs revealed that they are unable to acquire even basic capabilities essential to a life of well-being and dignity.

Poor Participation in Grama Sabha: The Gram Sabha is the sacrosanctum of decentralisation. The real needs and solutions (programmes) relevant to the respective area is expected to be born in Grama Sabha. However, the operations of Grama Sabha (GS) are found to be partial or ritual due to political constraints and institutional rigidity. The aspirations of the people are reflected in the deliberations in Grama Sabha but not fully reflected in the final plan as the ruling party-LSG- has a final say in shaping the projects. This keeps away local inhabitants away from the meetings. Some inhabitants link these meetings with the benefits they receive from the programmes. Non-beneficiaries have a tendency to avoid attending Grama Sabha meetings. As this becomes prominent, the GS which is a significant tool for development stands discredited and the bureaucracy takes upper hand.

Role of Leadership: The quality of leadership shown by a LSG president or a few elected members often determines the outcome of several initiatives. (Kannan, K.P, 2015) Wadakkancherry BP, Cheriyanad, Adat, Elappullay panchayats and many others have shown such creative leadership. How to sustain or create such leadership for long in LSGs is indeed an important, though a difficult question.

Working Committees: The Act mandates constitution of pro-active working committees in each LSG with elected members and subject experts. However, they remain inactive in most places resulting in lack of innovative and locally specific projects to resolve the issues of population of the specific area particularly that of social security.

Absence of robust comprehensive social security system at the LG level: Decentralisation envision bottom-top approach through which every individual/family receive adequate health care, income security and well-being. Nevertheless, there is absence of a Comprehensive Single Social Security Window System in LGs that encompass all vulnerable/dependent population. Lack of this support system can push the families to abject poverty and collapse immediately or in the long run.

The LGs in Kerala are functioning in a restrictive setting. Their financial position is weak and are highly reliant on grants from

Central/State Governments and are unable to function and exercise the authority delegated to them. It can cause neglect in providing social security to population at risk/ dependents. The above bottlenecks require to be considered and appropriate amendments be done in policies to ensure social security of all individuals/households at risk within their administrative area.

5. What Next? The Way Forward

Drawing from the analysis of the best practices and the bottlenecks stated above, the following recommendations have been suggested to make the decentralisation and LGs more pro-active and effective in providing social security to all in their administrative area:

Promoting a Comprehensive Social Security System: The State has to draft a Comprehensive Social Security System encompassing all the individuals/households that is vulnerable and at risk. Also to create a Single Window of this Comprehensive Social Security system in all the LGs so that all are secured income and health.

Kudumbasree - the catalyst and executor of social security: Kudumbasree has a strong Human presence and resource & leadership backup across the LGs in Kerala. They shall be trained to be the catalyst and single window implementer of various social security programmes in the LGs. An amendment of the Act in this regard could make it binding on them to pro-actively involve for the welfare of all. They could contribute in identifying and creating data bank of people/families that suffers /vulnerable/distressed, bring them under the umbrella of various social security projects/programmes and to implement the projects on an outcome based mode.

Special Gramasabhas: Grama Sabhas convened for a specific purpose/group or domain is deemed to be effective as in the case of Child Friendly Local Governance (KILA, 2021). Department of local Self Government shall either issue a Government Order - GO or make amendment in KPA/KMA adding the provision that at least one Grama Sabha shall be convened every year exclusively to discuss issues related to social security to individuals/households that are at risk/vulnerable due to one or the other reason.

Home care/Day care facilities: There are families with persons with disabilities, lactating children, elderly, chronic ill patients at home etc., wherein the family members cannot go to work as they have to care and nurse them. Kudumbasree members could be trained & placed

either in home or day care facilities in every LG. This would enable the family members to go for work and earn their livelihood overcoming their family risks. Promoting this home/day care system at LGs could promote the wellbeing of both the individuals and their families. LGs shall also establish a mechanism for doorstep delivery of services to these groups through Kudumbasree network

Constitution of an Expert Committee: A District level expert committee shall be constituted to examine and validate the locally specific innovative projects prepared by LGs. Decentralised planning envisages analyses of the specifics of local development problems and formulate appropriate solutions based on the resource potential of that area. This committee shall support in designing need based innovative projects of the local governments and decide on approval.

Functionaries (Dual control) & Financial autonomy – Dual control: Though a good part of administrative machinery can be easily transferred to work under the PRIs, the PRIs cannot work in isolation of other Government structures at the local level. LSG may therefore be allowed to recruit contractual staff based on need assessment at the local level to support existing staff of the transferred institutions.

Similarly, Article 280(3) (bb) of the Constitution entitles Union Finance Commission to make recommendations to the President on the measures needed to augment the consolidated fund of a State to supplement the resources of the LGs in the State. The Central Finance Commission shall therefore make a liberal use of this provision to augment the funds of the LGs enabling effective & efficient discharge of functions assigned to LSGs. Substantial provision of untied grants would help in implementation of innovative programmes for the benefit of the people.

Information Dissemination: LSGs using the social media platforms and IT enabled services shall inform the public regarding social security schemes/programmes. LGs shall also consider providing a common service number where people can register for services and regularly get notified about services across institutions. People who are unable to access shall be reached through conventional methods.

Empowered citizen group: Each LG shall create empowered citizen group across the ward/division of LGs to act as watch committees to identify families/individuals at risk and assist them to claim their rights. They shall also monitor if these and other vulnerable

individuals/households receives their right to be secure and live a respectful and dignified life in the society

6. Conclusion

Over the past three decades of decentralisation the country/state has travelled a long way in every front; social, economic and infrastructure development. The size of the economy has grown many fold so are the needs of the people especially the marginalized. There are thousands who are still deprived of decent living, education and health facilitates even though the government has taken several initiatives to ensure social security to people. Bridging this gap in providing social security is significant in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals - SDG. Giving more powers and funds to local governments along with the support/guidance of an expert committee can ensure that it reaches the needy and empower them to fulfil their constitutional obligations. Considering the changes happening globally and locally, MoPR, State and union Government should think and discuss seriously of enhancing the role of LSGs and taking the decentralisation process and delivery of social security services to the under privileged and individual/households at risk to the next level..

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Book Review

Bringing Governments and People Closer: A Development Practitioner's Prescriptions Dr. M.Ramachandran IAS (retd), Copal Publishing 2021 pages 126

V. Srinivas IAS

Dr. M.Ramachandran, a distinguished civil servant, former Union Secretary and former Chief Secretary Uttarakhand, an innovator and institution builder has analyzed the critical policy issues in ensuring hassle-free governance and service delivery at the ground level. The book focuses on key areas such as “What do People Expect”, “Procedures and Red Tapism”, “Urban Complexities and Citizens’ Woes”, “How Messy It is in Rural Areas”, “The Much-Needed Governance Changes” and “Towards Becoming a Global Model”. The author discusses the challenges to be overcome to make governance transparent and accountable.

Dr. M.Ramachandran is eminently qualified for undertaking this policy analysis having served 38 years in the IAS and 10 years of active post-retirement life. He has remained concerned about governance delivery at the ground level. His enthusiasm for simplifying a citizen’s journey through labyrinthine governance process stands out. Further, issues like empathy, ethics and morality, which are foundational and non-negotiable qualities of Governments have been discussed. The emphasis is on scaling up State capacity, digital inclusiveness and process re-engineering.

The Vice President of India in his foreword says that the author has drawn from his long and rich experience to outline the possible directions in the quest for good governance aimed at ease of living for citizens in tune with their 21st century aspirations. In his foreword, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, says that in India’s 75th year of Independence, it is incumbent on us to redouble our efforts to ensure that life becomes easier for those who are deprived and disadvantaged, to ensure that every citizen gets in a smooth and hassle-free manner whatever he is entitled to.

The Chapter “Life After Retirement – Living with Dignity and Being of Service to the People” says that if you have been a pro-active officer and taken the pains to understand the various intricacies of the job, that is bound to generate interest in a cross-section of people associated with the sector. Dr. Ramachandran’s tremendous interest and value addition to good Governance is evident in his post retirement

years also - he chaired the Indian Heritage Cities Network Foundation, delivered talks and published articles, wrote books and attended book discussions, each of these activities requires tremendous commitment and discipline.

The Chapter “What Do People Expect” commences the discussion by appreciating the huge changes brought about by the Central Government and State Governments in making services faceless, paperless and cashless through electronic service delivery. Subsidy disbursement using Aadhar-enabled Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Public Distribution System (PDS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), LPG and Pensions are well recognized success stories. People expect that services and information are available and delivered on time without hassle. Successful examples in digital service delivery include the Digital Land initiative of the Government of Uttar Pradesh and the MahaRERA portal of Maharashtra Real Estate Regulatory Authority. There remain three specific public offices where there is a need for a more genuine change – property registration, issue of driving licences and police verification. State digital service delivery systems like e-Mithras, Mee Seva, MP online have scope for further improvements. Benchmarks for performance need to be established and independent assessment systems are necessary.

The Chapter “Procedures and Red Tapism” says that one of the main reasons why people get harassed while trying to get something done through government systems is that the process takes time and ambiguities in guidelines exist. It should be possible to bring in systems to where work is done in a time bound manner and purposeful monitoring is the key. The Secretariat system needs to be strengthened with an emphasis on institutional memory. File disposal melas and Janata Adalats for time-bound decision-making are good initiatives to reduce pendency in government. An institutional and professional grievance mechanism at all levels is beneficial. The Good Governance Index, created as a tool to assess the status of governance of States should be further expanded to cover indices of different cities and rural areas.

The Chapter “Urban Complexities and Citizens’ Woes” says that in urban areas, expectations of citizens revolve around basic amenities. Mega cities like Hyderabad and Bangalore get water for a few hours on alternate days. Service level benchmarks for water sector are required based on international standards. A responsive

and performing electricity distribution system, timely availability of gas cylinders, and affordable housing remain areas of concern. Water and sanitation missions along with urban mobility have also been discussed. A utilities regulator to oversee service level benchmarks and a Liveability index are recommendations made for taking stock on how city residents feel about living conditions.

The Chapter “How Messy It is in Rural Areas” says that day to day governance related concerns in rural India are centered around land records, and the challenges of interacting with multiple government agencies during a crop cycle. Public grievances in rural areas largely pertain to corruption in land matters and indebtedness. The Telangana Rights and Pattadar Passbook Act 2020, combines mutation and registration into a single process. It has standardized the registration process and enabled generation of digital records. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has been a path breaking initiative for clean cooking energy in villages. The focus of the total sanitation campaign should now be shifted to personal hygiene. Health, education and safety along with road connectivity need focused work in rural India. The importance of digital connectivity has been visible under the PM Grameen Digital Saksharata Abhiyan with 6 crore Indians benefitting from the campaign. Several examples of village level best practices have been presented, Mawlynnong in Meghalaya earned the prestigious tag of ‘cleanest village in Asia’, Hiware Bazar in Maharashtra has a record 60 millionaires and barely any poor.

The Chapter “The Much-Needed Governance Changes” says that it’s important to lay down accountability at all levels of governance. Decision making levels must be clearly known and there must be clarity about discretion. Arbitrariness in decision-making can be checked by greater transparency with easy access to information. Staff must be trained in dealing with public and mobile phone protocol is required. Technology has to be easy and meaningful and grievance redressal more effective. The new initiatives need to be proactively shared and best practices published. A hassle-free governance system would be the best way to celebrate India’s 75 years of independence.

The chapter “Towards Becoming a Global Model” presents ten key steps for India’s governance. Identifying the most important issues for the common man, preparing a comprehensive action plan on the requirements of a cross-section of society, creating an eminent public persons’ oversight mechanism, creation of a template for six monthly feedback from MP’s and MLA’s, expanding the Good Governance

Index to cover ease of common man's interaction with government, common man's assessment of governance delivery, enlarging the role of the Department of Administrative Reforms, major role for national institutions in the area of public administration and recognizing State performance are the suggested steps.

A thoroughly enjoyable read...