**Study of Decision-Making Process
in Selected *Panchayats*
and Municipalities under the
People's Planning Programme**

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1. Introduction

Decision-making and plan implementation prior to People's Planning

State government departments took most of the decisions on plan schemes and their implementation, and on non-plan expenditure during the period prior to the introduction of the *Nagarapalika* Bill and the subsequent decentralisation introduced in Kerala in 1996. The local bodies performed mainly traditional civic functions and their autonomy was severely restricted by departmental interventions.

The process of planning and budgeting in the Government departments was as follows: Preparation of the budget for the year starts six months in advance. The Heads of Departments, through their district offices and other sub-offices obtain revised estimates of revenue for the current year, and budget estimates for the ensuing year. After scrutiny and consolidation, they send departmental estimates to the Finance Department. The Finance Department has prescribed a time schedule – (for Non-Plan Estimates –30 September and for Plan Estimates – 30 November) – for the receipt of estimates. On the basis of these estimates and supporting data, the Finance Department prepares the Revised Estimate for the current year. The Revised Estimates form the basis for the budget estimates for the next year.

Plan programmes coming up from the departments and resources for the plan are discussed with the State Planning Board, which prepares an annual plan. This is then taken up with the Planning Commission for approval. Then the budget estimates for plan programmes are finalised.

Once the legislature approves the annual financial statements, the printed volumes entitled Demands for Grants and Detailed Budget Estimates Vol. I to Vol. VI will show the revenue

expenditure, capital expenditure, and loan expenditure, which the different departments may expend. The budget allotments are placed at the disposal of the Heads of Departments and they are supposed to regulate expenditure in accordance with the budgetary appropriation. The Head of Department distributes the budget provisions to the various subordinate officers who are to implement the plan and non-plan activities. The only deviation from this was in respect of Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes and Tribal Sub-Plan for Scheduled Tribes and Provisions earmarked to District Councils after their formation in 1991.

Grants for specific schemes may be given to the local bodies as provided in the budget from the budget allocations for the Department of Municipalities and the Department of *Panchayats*. The local bodies were accountable to the concerned department and were controlled by the departments. The local bodies had freedom to make own budgets based on own revenue only. The local bodies are empowered to levy taxes, rates, and duties. A comparison of budgets for some years prior to decentralised planning and during the years of decentralised planning are given for Attingal Municipality in Annexure 1.1.

The next stage of the budget work is to consolidate the plan and non-plan estimates. A note highlighting the salient features of the budget and the issues on which decisions are sought is submitted to the Council of Ministers. After the approval by the Council of Ministers, budget documents are printed and presented to the legislature. The estimated receipts and expenditure of the State laid before the legislature is called the Annual Financial Statement.

Local Bodies: The pre-1994 status

The Kerala *Panchayats* Act, 1960 governed the affairs of *panchayats* prior to its revision in 1994.

The *panchayats* under Kerala *Panchayats* Act, 1960 had little autonomy and functional freedom. Though there was an elected body in charge of the *panchayats*, the Government had tremendous power over them under Section 55 of the 1960 Act. The Government had powers to dissolve and supersede *panchayats*, if in the opinion of the Government a *panchayat* was not competent to perform or persistently made default in performing the duties imposed on it by law, or exceeds or abused its power.

The *panchayat* activities were limited to those specified in Section 3: Functions, Powers, and Property of *Panchayats*. Essentially these consisted of construction and maintenance of *panchayat* roads, lighting of public roads and public places, construction and disposal of drainage water and sewage, and a host of such maintenance functions. To defray the expenses of the above functions, the *panchayat* was empowered to levy in its area a holiday tax, a professional tax, and a vehicle tax, service taxes such as for sanitation and water supply, duty on transfer of certain property and land cess. Government paid to the

panchayat a basic tax grant. The money received by the *panchayat* constituted a fund called the *Panchayat* Fund. It was to be applied and disposed of in the manner specified in the Act.

The Fund could be utilised for everything necessary for or conducive to safety, health, education, convenience, and welfare of the inhabitants of the *panchayat*. The executive authority of the *panchayat* was to prepare each year in the prescribed form and manner, a budget showing the probable receipts and expenditure during the following year and forward it to the Deputy Director, *Panchayats* for scrutiny. The Deputy Director, if not satisfied that adequate provisions had been made in the project, had the power to modify it in such manner as was necessary and return it to the Executive Authority with his observations regarding the modification. The *panchayat* had to consider these observations and pass the budget with such modifications, as it deemed fit.

As per the provisions of the Kerala *Panchayat* Budget Rules, 1963, provision in the budget was not to be treated as sanction. The Executive Authority had to obtain such sanction before the expenditure was incurred. Separate elaborate rules had also been laid down for obtaining such sanctions.

In these circumstances, it is clear that the *panchayats* were not to play any serious role. To undertake developmental activities, plan funds were required to be specifically placed by the government with the *panchayat*. The *panchayats* had large responsibilities in relation to the welfare of the people in terms of maintenance activities. But the budget had to be *de facto* approved by the Deputy Director of *Panchayat*; and for incurring expenditure, sanctions had to be obtained through *Panchayat* Department. In most cases the officers of the *Panchayat* Department was the executive authority of the *panchayat*. Thus, in reality, the *panchayat* became more or less an arm of the *Panchayat* Department; **i**t had little autonomy or decision-making power. In those days people looked up to the elected representatives in the *panchayat* mainly for help in the maintenance of roads and drainage, and public health activities.

Current position

The 1994 Act enhanced the scope of activities and size of the budget manifold. The Act changed the balance of power between the government, the *Panchayat* Department, and the *panchayat*. The elected representatives have become the ultimate authority within the *panchayat*. The government cannot anymore supersede or disband a *panchayat*. The previous 'executive authority' of the *panchayat* is now metamorphosed to be mere staff of the *panchayat*. At present, the *Panchayat* Directorate has to serve the elected body of the *panchayat*. At the same time the *panchayat* has become responsible for budgeting and accounting plan funds.

This transformation of the *panchayat* from little or no power to the ultimate authority for local government is traced below with the help of publications of Thomas Isaac on the subject of decentralised planning in Kerala.

As in other States, Kerala also had experimented with decentralised planning from time to time before the *Nagarapalika* legislation. These were half-hearted attempts resulting in partial successes and in some cases blatant reversals.

In 1961 an attempt was made through legislation to integrate into a unified system the *Panchayat Raj* and Municipal arrangements that existed in the different parts of Kerala.

In 1978, the District Council Law was passed. However, elected representative bodies under the Act were set up only in 1991.

Kerala established District Planning Offices for identification of district schemes in 1970. A number of efforts for district-level planning were also carried out. In the mid-Eighties the Special Component Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) were in one sense decentralised by setting up a working group chaired by the District Collector, all senior line department officers as members and co-ordinated by the District Planning officers. Each department of a particular district was to set apart funds for the SCP from their departmental plan allocation. The working group prepared the schemes by taking into consideration the local conditions. The working group could sanction schemes up to a fairly large limit without seeking permission from the government. Every year, a plan was to be prepared and placed before the District Advisory Committee of Scheduled Castes for approval. However, there was very little participation of the people. Plan formulation remained an exclusive activity of the bureaucrats. Integration of projects was only formal. There was no mechanism to ensure transparency.

An effort was made in the formulation of the Eighth Five-Year Plan to introduce district-level planning. Line department heads were asked to formulate proposals for the State sector schemes. Each district was given a rough indication of the maximum outlay for which proposals were to be made. The District Development Council (DDC) was asked to prepare the district plans in consultation with the Block *Panchayat* Committee (BPC) and the *Grama Panchayat* Committees. The DDC was required to form three sub-committees, each with 20 members divided equally between government and non-government persons, for agriculture, industry, and social welfare. A non-official was to be the Chairman and an official the Convener. The sub-committees were to integrate the district- and block-level proposals into sectoral plans and into a comprehensive plan for the district.

The plans approved by the DDCs were to be forwarded to the State Planning Board for inclusion in the State Plan.

Though a district-level planning focus was introduced into the building up of the State Plan, integration was limited. In many cases the proposals from the district had to be set aside to accommodate alternative proposals from the departmental heads. In most cases the proposals from districts turned out to be mere reformulation of the departmental schemes. In the absence of elected district councils in 1990-'91, the 24 percent district

sector scheme could only have been implemented through the line departments.

District councils were formed in 1991. For the 1991-'92 annual plan, the district plan outlay was increased. The newly formed District Councils were to implement them. In the meanwhile the ruling government was defeated in the election. The plan proposals were implemented through departments with hardly any outlay for district-level implementation.

Constitutional amendments

The 73rd and the 74th Constitutional amendments came into effect on 20 April 1993. All State governments had to enact laws to conform to the broad framework enunciated in the constitution. The Constitutional amendments heralded major departures with regard to the authority and powers of the local bodies.

The amendments gave each local body a constitutional right to prepare its annual plans, subject to the revenues made available and to the guidelines given by the State government. A constitutionally mandated District Planning Committee (DPC) was created, which replaced the official approach to decentralised planning. It also ensured that the State governments could no more postpone elections to local bodies. The Constitutional amendments have thus created an enabling framework for the State Legislatures to determine the scope and extent of actual decentralisation to local bodies.

We may discuss the State Legislation in Kerala subsequent to the 73rd and the 74thamendments and the introduction of People's Planning Programme in Kerala in the next section.

2. Introduction of People's Planning in Kerala

In the wake of the 73rd and the 74th constitutional amendments, the Kerala Government carried the decentralisation process further through a bold step in 1996, which has come to be known as People's Planning. The salient features of the programme are the following:

(1)   Thirty-five to 40 percent of the State's Ninth Plan outlay was devolved for projects and programmes drawn up by the local self-governments. High autonomy was given to the local bodies to determine their own priorities.

(2)   Each local body was required to prepare a comprehensive area plan before it could claim grant-in-aid funds. Untied funds were provided to the local bodies for this project in the 1996-'97 budget. (However, in the first year the actual experience was that the local bodies divided funds equally among ward members for various works, mostly roads selected by them).

(3)   The State had to confine itself to State-level schemes.

(4)   The planning process was to start from the grassroots with the maximum involvement of the masses through meetings of *grama sabhas* in *panchayats* and ward conventions in urban areas. The officials were to work alongside non-officials.

(5)   Administrative reorganisation and statutory changes to institutionalise the process of local-level planning and plan implementation, and redeployment of employees were initiated. During the interregnum the local bodies were empowered informally to undertake the process of preparation and implementation of the plan as per the schedule of the Ninth Five-Year Plan.

(6)   The State Planning Board, in a publication in three volumes, provided a summary of the administrative reorganisation and statutory changes made during the period 1996-2000 (State Planning Board, 2000).

The system prevailing consequent to the introduction of People's Planning in the *panchayats* and municipalities is as follows:

(1)   A Ward Committee is formed for each ward comprising representatives of all political parties and voluntary organisations, and resource persons. The committee is organised by the ward councillor.

(2)   Ward conventions/*grama sabha* meetings are held, usually in a school with publicity through notices, posters, and mike announcements. Committee members are responsible for getting as many citizens as possible to attend. In the convention the officials from the *panchayat*/municipality cell also take part and disseminate information.

(3)   In ward conventions/ meetings projects for public benefit as well as for benefit of individuals/families are finalised each year.

The process of project implementation is as follows:
1. There are four ways in which a local body could get works/projects implemented.
        a. Through engineers of the local body;
        b. Through bodies like KWA and KSEB as deposit work;
        c. Through NGOs like *Nirmithi Kendra* and Costford; and
        d. Through Beneficiary Committees.

2.   Government Order (Ms) No. 31/98/LAD dated 13 February 1998 covers the responsibility of preparation of estimates, technical sanctions, supervision, preparation of bills, measurements, and scrutiny of bills and payments. Those local bodies which do not have their own engineering staff may use the services of engineers of other local bodies, engineers of various government departments, public sector organisations, Block Level Expert Committee (BLEC)/ Municipal Level Expert Committee (MLEC)/ Corporation Level Expert Committee (CLEC) members who are qualified engineers, retired engineers from government service and other qualified engineers. Rates of remuneration are also specified in the G.O.

3.   Technical sanction is to be given by BLEC/MLEC/CLEC/DLEC. The different categories of engineers already adverted to have to carry out supervision, measurement of works, and preparation of bills. Scrutiny of bills is to be done by the same group, which gave technical sanction. In circular no. 21944/P3/ (8/LAD) dated 2-6-98, it was clarified that any member of the BLEC/MLEC/CLEC could supervise, take measurements, and prepare bills. Government Order (P0 No.270/98/LAD) /15 December 1998 approved the outer limits of rates for projects like water supply and electrification.

4.   As per circular No.10949/P3/99/LAD dated 3 March 1999, the government clarified that local bodies have the option of executing works directly without having competitive tendering or beneficiary committee. It was also clarified that the ceilings prescribed for execution through beneficiary committees would apply in the case of direct execution also. When works got executed through agencies like KWA and KSEB the local bodies have to deposit the estimated cost with the concerned agency. However, local bodies were exempted from payment of departmental charges.

5.   Government Order (P) No. 21/99/LAD/28-1-99 laid down instructions regarding implementation of public works through *Nirmithi Kendras*/Costford.

6.   In order to eliminate contractors and to ensure participation by beneficiaries, the local bodies were empowered by government order to entrust implementation through beneficiary committees which came forward to execute works/projects.

7.   Most of the implementation is, at least in theory, through beneficiary committees.

The procedure for entrusting implementation to beneficiary committee is as follows:
A meeting of the beneficiaries of the concerned project is to be held by the local body by giving three days' notice. The *Panchayat* President or Chairperson of the Standing Committee concerned or the concerned Ward Member could convene the meeting after giving wide publicity. In the meeting, the implementing official or the ward member should explain the project, its technical aspects, time limits, machinery required, material requirements, and requirement of labour. Then, if the beneficiaries present are willing to undertake the work, a committee for implementation consisting of 7 to 15 members is to be elected together with a chairman and a convenor for the committee. One-third of the committee members should be women. If the project is for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, there should be sufficient representation for them, and the Chairman / Convener should be from that community. The beneficiary committee should then execute an agreement with the local body in a prescribed form. All the members of the committee should sign the agreement. Mobilisation advance, and bills for work done could be received by the convener, for which the convener should sign a separate agreement with the local body. (In the first year of implementation in practice, however, beneficiary committees got projects implemented through local contractors or through employing labour at piece rates.)

The first step in the implementation of decentralised planning was the launching of a campaign in 1996. The objective was to rally behind elected local bodies, the officials, experts, volunteers, and the masses and to create an attitudinal change towards making the process participatory and transparent. This Campaign is known as People's Campaign for Decentralised Planning.

A summary of the campaign activities is given below:
a.   The campaign was formally inaugurated on 17 August 1996.

b.   In 1996-'97 (August-October 1996) *grama sabhas* and ward conventions were convened for identification of felt needs of the public. Efforts were made to obtain the maximum participation of people. Nearly 2.5 million persons participated in *grama sabhas*/ward conventions. Of the participants, 25 percent were women. It is also estimated that around one lakh resource persons at local level were mobilised and given training to act as facilitators for discussion in groups of 25-30 persons in the *grama sabhas*/ward conventions. Groups were formed for each development sector in addition to one group for SC/ST development and one for women development.

c.   The achievements claimed for this phase of the campaign are:
The felt needs, priorities, and development perceptions of the people in different localities all over the State could be listed.
A general awareness was created among people regarding the decentralisation programme.

d.   A review undertaken by the State Planning Board revealed the following weaknesses:

1. Participation varied from locality to locality. Much seemed to depend on the interest of the elected representatives in mobilising people.

2. The average participation was only 180, though the number was more than the quorum of 50. Women were only around one quarter of the participants. The representation of SC/ST too was unsatisfactory. Discussions in many of the *grama sabhas* were confined to the listing of demands than analysing the problems and prioritising needs.

3. The Phase II of the campaign consisted of development seminars organised after collection of data on natural and human resources of the locality. Data collection involved compiling secondary data, study of local geography and natural resources, review of ongoing schemes, survey of local history and consolidation of *grama sabha* reports. A development report was prepared for each *panchayat*.

4. Development seminars were organised to discuss the reports prepared. About three lakh persons from different walks of life participated in the seminars. Task forces were formed in these seminars to prepare development projects for each sector.

5. A schematic diagram of the objectives of the different phases and sequence of events in the campaign (Thomas Isaac) is given in Annexure 2.1.

The next step was the annual plan finalisation in March-May 1997.
Grant-in-aid to local bodies for 1997-'98 was Rs 1025 cr of a total plan outlay of Rs 2835 cr (i.e., 36 percent). This had two components (a) State-sponsored schemes to be implemented through local bodies (Rs 276 cr) and (b) Grant-in-aid (Rs 746 cr).

The grant-in-aid had three components: 1. Tribal Sub-Plan, 2. Special Component Plan, and 3. General Sector.

The plan allocation for each of the local bodies is separately indicated. According to the broad guidelines regarding sectoral allocations to be made by the local body, the position is as follows:

	Rural	**Urban**
	(% of total)	
Productive	40-50	20-30
Service	30-40	40-50
Infrastructure	10-30	10-35

Block and District *Panchayats* were to start preparation of their annual plans after the *Grama Panchayats* had drawn up their plans. Owing to delay in the preparation of the *Grama Panchayat* plans, the integration of the plan of the different tiers could not be effectively undertaken.

Plan Appraisal conducted by the State Planning Board revealed that a significant proportion of the projects prepared by the local bodies had to be technically and financially improved.

Technical specifications and even designs had to be prepared. More than one lakh projects had to be evaluated. As the official machinery would not be able to cope with the task, a Voluntary Technical Corps (VTC) was constituted utilising retired technical experts and professionals. More than 4000 technical experts were enrolled. They were given orientation. Expert Committees were formed at Block (BLEC), Municipal (MLEC), and Corporation (CLEC) levels drawing from the VTC members and certain categories of mandatory officers, with a non-official as the chairperson and the Block *Panchayat* Secretary or officer from the Town Planning Department as convener. The Expert Committees function through subject committees with membership confined to those who have expertise in the particular field. They had no right to change the proposals of the local bodies, but had to confine to technical and financial appraisal. In course of time the expert committee was given the power of appraisal of technical sanction and tender excess within certain limits.

Elected members, officials, resource persons, and non-official experts had to be oriented through training. Key Resource Persons, District Resource Persons, and Local Resource Persons were created through training. About 660 KRPS, 11800 DRPs, and 10000 LRPs were trained. There was criticism that local bodies selected resource persons on partisan basis and that some sections were left out. The training consisted of seven modules. A basic handbook was prepared for each session with the help of experts.

The following are the sources of finance for the annual plans of local bodies:
- (i) State Assistance
- (ii) Internal funds
- (iii) State-sponsored schemes
- (iv) Centrally-sponsored schemes
- (v) Loans from co-operatives
- (vi) Loans from financial institutions
- (vii) Voluntary contributions
- (viii) Beneficiary contributions
- (ix) Others

About 20 percent of the financial resources was expected to come from beneficiary contributions. Only in-depth field studies would reveal the extent of overstatement, if any, involved in beneficiary contribution and voluntary contribution. The allotments are made in four instalments from government. The condition for claiming the fourth instalment is that at least 60 percent of the allotments received till then are actually utilised.

Though the procedure above enabled good monitoring, there were several problems during implementation. Even though the process started as early as May 1997, due to delays in finalisation of plans, transfer-credit mechanism, and issuing guidelines for local rates it was only by January 1998 that the implementation procedure came into position.

A major weakness in the first two annual plans was the delay in finalising the plan document and the consequent short time available for implementation. This situation improved in 2000-2001. Plans would be finalised in June and funds sanctioned by July-August 1998.

In 2001-2002 fund release occurred only in October due to change of guard in political power.

Based on the recommendations of the Sen Committee, the Kerala *Panchayat Raj* Act 1994 and the Kerala Municipalities Act 1994 were amended to reduce the scope of government interference in the day-to-day functions of the local bodies. Local self-governments were empowered to allocate work to the staff transferred to them on a functional basis cutting across departments even if the transferred officials continue in their original parent cadres. The minimum required number of *grama sabha* meetings was raised from two to four per year. Review reports of the Plan implementation and local administration had to be placed before the *grama sabha*. All plan documents including those related to beneficiary selection, bills, and vouchers of works should be exhibited on a notice board at the worksite. The identification of the eligible and finalisation of the priority list of beneficiaries are to be undertaken by the *grama sabha*.

Based on the experience in the first two years, government orders were issued on a number of aspects to make implementation easier. Procedures were laid down in Government Order (P) No. 676/97/Fin. dated 6 August 1997 to regulate the flow of grant-in-aid funds as well as their project-wise utilisation. Designated officers were authorised to issue allotments of grant-in-aid to different types of local bodies in quarterly instalments. The first instalment will be issued when the DPC approved the local plans and the second instalment, on request from the local body with a certificate of utilisation. The third is to be released on receipt of a certificate of utilisation of 30 percent.

As far as Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub-Plan were concerned, as much as 67 percent of the Plan funds stood devolved to the local bodies.

The Women Empowerment Plan suffered from inadequacy of grant-in-aid set apart for the purpose (4.26 percent as against 10 percent envisaged) as well as from the poor composition and quality of the projects. Gender sensitiveness was thus found to be far from sufficient. The People's Planning Programme marched ahead and has now reached the fifth year of implementation. The present study outlined in the sections that follow would look at how the programme is being implemented now. The next section reviews the available literature on decentralised planning in Kerala.

3. Literature Review

This section reviews available literature on the theoretical and implementation aspects of the People's Planning Programme in Kerala.

The 73rd and the 74th constitutional amendments themselves represent the culmination of a number of attempts at decentralised governance since Independence. The historical developments leading to the 73rd and the 74th amendments and the consequences are dealt with in: (1) Isaac, Thomas T. M. and Frank, Richard W (2000), and Nair, Gopinathan N.D. (2000).

Thomas Isaac's book is divided into chapters covering the genesis, the campaign, and evaluation of the People's Planning Programme in Kerala as it was implemented in the first three years.

The introductory chapter, Significance of the Kerala Experiment, touches upon how the Indian democratic system has remained highly centralised, the arguments for decentralised development, and how the State of Kerala is ideally suited for an experiment in decentralised governance.

Chapter 2 traces the history of decentralised planning in India prior to and after the 73rd and the 74th Constitutional amendments in general and the situation in Kerala in particular. Emphasis is placed on the steps taken by the Left Democratic Front Government and on its decision to devolve 35-40 percent of the State plan funds to the local bodies.

Chapter 3 presents the political vision of E. M. S. Namboodiripad and the CPI (M) and the need for campaign on decentralised governance.

Chapter 4 presents a number of micro-level experiments in numerous developmental projects spread over earlier decades in the making of the campaign. These consisted of the experiments organised by the Kerala *Sastra Sahitya Parishad*, other non-governmental organisations and co-operatives.

How the campaign was organised? What were the experiences during the first three years of the People's Planning experiment in Kerala? These are graphically brought out in the book, and also in Isaac, Thomas T.M. (1999).

Chapter 5 is a description of the first phase of the campaign in which *grama sabhas* were convened to identify local needs. It discusses many issues including the way large numbers were mobilised, the agenda for the *grama sabhas* was set, the small group approach was adopted, semi-structured discussions were conducted and resource persons were mobilised and channelised. The role of the State Planning Board as the implementing agency for the campaign, the convening of *grama sabhas*, the determinants of participation, and the quality of the deliberations were also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 6 deals with the second phase of the campaign, i.e., development seminars to decide activities based on the needs expressed in the *grama sabha* meetings. The objective was to collect database for local level planning, identifying micro-economic zones, and preparation of development reports. It was also necessary to select additional resource persons and train them. Developmental seminars were held between November 1996 and February 1997.

Chapter 7 deals with the third phase. Project formats were specified, and task forces were given training prior to the preparation of projects. The quality of projects was unsatisfactory in terms of both financial and technical analysis. The experience of the third phase brought into sharp focus the uneasy relationship between the bureaucracy and the People's Planning Campaign. The task forces were given further training and revitalised.

Chapter 8 deals with the elected bodies and formulation of grassroots-level plans. In this phase the elected representatives were sensitised through special orientation programmes. A format of the plan document was introduced. Sectoral guidelines and devolution scheme were laid down. Confusions persisted in spite of these steps and only some local bodies had finalised their plans by March 1997.

Chapter 9 deals with the fifth phase, namely preparation of higher-tier plans at block- and district-level *panchayats*. A seven-part methodology was formulated for the block-level analysis and developmental proposals. Integration had also to be done with centrally-sponsored schemes. Several problems of integration were encountered. The guidelines for District *Panchayat* plans were modified versions of those for Block *panchayats*.

Chapter 10 deals with the formation of Voluntary Technical Committees for plan and project appraisal (which later culminated in the form of District Level, Block Level, Municipal Level, and Corporation Level Expert Committees) and the issue of technical sanctions through these committees.

Chapter 11 presents a stocktaking of the local plan for 1997-'98. Decentralised planning should lead to a greater correspondence of investment choice with local needs and local development potential, and should also facilitate additional resource mobilisation from the locality. The extent to which both these happened is discussed by looking at shifts in financial plans and local priorities. Productive sector projects, projects in the service sectors and the extent to which integration could be achieved are also discussed. The situation in respect of Special Component Plan, Tribal Sub-Plan, and Women Component Plan is also touched upon.

Chapter 12 looks into the situation relating to plan implementation during 1997-'98. Financial procedures, procedures for selection of beneficiaries, for fixing of local rates, and for execution through beneficiary committees were laid down. Much confusion and controversy developed around the financial procedures. The utilisation of plan funds by the local self-governments was very tardy during 1997-'98. However, a large number of *panchayats* implemented their plans in a transparent manner.

The write-up makes vivid the enormity of the task of generating awareness among people to make them attend meetings, get their demands listed, mobilising resource persons and volunteers and training them, getting them and the elected representatives to prepare proposals, obtain technical sanction through BLEC/MLEC/CLEC, getting budget allocation for projects from DPC and thus obtaining projects implemented and that too through beneficiary committees. The State Planning Board also had a key role to play in terms of producing afresh, necessary orders, guidelines, and movements. The difficulties experienced and the shortcomings identified are brought out. One major problem was that the bureaucratic set-up of the government consisting of an army of experienced specialists and administrators, was not much involved in the whole campaign. This army was supposed to be deployed to local bodies to work under their administrative control, an objective which could not be realised adequately. The gap was sought to be bridged by mobilising a large force of retired technical people and volunteers. Two questions arise in this context: one, the wisdom in keeping out the bureaucracy, which is a permanent system and two, the sustainability of the option adopted. The net result, as this and several other studies reveal, has been that the quality of planning and formulation of developmental projects and programmes suffered. At the implementation stage, the technical supervision and support needed was absent. To a detached observer, it would appear that the protagonists of the People's Planning Programme wanted to prove that the development programmes could be executed without bureaucratic machinery. It may be that the alternatives showed signs of success in the beginning but proved to be unsustainable in the long run. *To run a system parallel to the bureaucracy out of volunteers so that the ills of bureaucracy are avoided is a costly and probably not sustainable experiment.*

Together with operationalising of People's Planning, certain institutionalisation measures were also adopted by the State government. These consist of the implementation of some recommendations of Sen Committee Report, Legislative amendments, Administrative Reforms, Information Kerala Mission, Perspective District Plan Preparation, Institutional Training, and the State Financial Commission. The extent to which institutionalisation through these steps has been achieved in reality is debatable, as at the end of five years the system is yet to stabilise.

Kerala marched ahead of other States in decentralisation process by devolving 35-40 percent of the Plan funds to the local governments. Whether this devolution could have been done in stages, starting at a lower level and building up the capacity of the local self-government as well as the local people to plan and implement decentralised governance, is a relevant question. Some of the problems of implementation could possibly have been avoided and the elected representatives, officials, and citizens at large could have been trained to carry on decentralised governance more effectively, if the experiences during the past five years were utilised for a learning process.

N. D. Gopinathan Nair also dealt with the historical development of decentralised governments in India. He starts with the Gandhian concept of *Grama Swaraj* and traces the emphasis given in the various Five-Year Plans for strengthening local self-government institutions. He also touches upon the Balwant Rai Mehta Report, Dantawala Committee

Report, G. V. K. Rao Report, and L. M. Singhvi Report and the culmination of the intentions into legislation through the 73rd and the 74th constitutional amendments (Nair, Gopinathan N.D 2000). He then traces the implementation of the concept of decentralisation in different States like Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Maharashtra and points out that lack of political will was one of the main reasons for the slow progress of decentralisation. It is against this backdrop that he seen the steps taken in Kerala, following the Constitutional Amendments and its decision to launch the Ninth Five-Year Plan as a democratically decentralised People's Plan by devolving 35 to 40 percent of the State's annual plan outlay for 1997-'98 to the three-tier *Panchayat Raj* Institutions, as bold and historic.

Once the decision was made, tremendous amount of work had to be done in changing administrative procedures, and capacity-building among elected representatives, officials, and people at large. A large number of volunteers and resource persons also had to be mobilised and trained. All these were initiated through a campaign, which was inaugurated by E.M.S. Namboodiripad on 17 August 1996.

On the institutionalisation achieved, Nair has arrived at a series of conclusions mentioned below:

i.   The campaign for People's Planning created cognitional awareness among most of the people of the *panchayat* about the existence of a programme under which the government gives funds to *panchayats* for carrying out some developmental work. However, the people are not aware of the exact nature and content of the programme.

ii.   In terms of programme mix, quality, relevance, and local specificity of the individual programmes, the annual plans of the two *panchayats* (studied by Nair) were not distinctly different from the earlier plans and programmes. In the earlier years the Rural Development Department had implemented the programme.

iii.   Infrastructure development continues to be lopsided, as had been the case earlier under the top-down planning.

iv.   In the over-enthusiasm to distribute favours among own supporters and constituencies, elected representatives flouted functional jurisdictions and allocation principles, and encroached on the functions of the three-tier *Panchayat Raj* institutions.

v.   The present system of equal sharing of funds by members, which had also been the pattern followed in the utilisation of untied funds in the past, leads to spatially inequitable distribution of plan funds and inefficient allocation of resources on non-priority and non-essential projects.

vi.   The level of mis-utilisation of benefits by the beneficiaries was significantly higher than the level observed in the earlier IRDP, but the practice is not rampant.

vii.   More than a quarter of funds/ assets distributed under individual beneficiary programmes in the production sector has turned out to be counter-productive.

viii. The organisational set-up on non-governmental lines for the conduct of plan activities is highly politicised.

ix. Bulk of the benefits under individual beneficiary programmes has gone to the poor.

x. In one *panchayat*, distribution of multiple benefits to the same persons was observed.

xi. The quality of more than half the assets /materials distributed under the individual beneficiary programmes was bad or poor.

xii. Ward members were the best disseminators of information about the plan programmes.

xiii. Majority of the beneficiaries is of the view that the People's Planning system is better than the earlier system of planning.

xiv. Majority of the beneficiaries is women.

xv. Sudden flooding of the *panchayats* with plan funds to be spent within a short span of time and rigid sectoral pattern of allocation thrust upon them were the two underlying factors that encouraged misuse and wastage of funds.

xvi. Approximately two-thirds of the beneficiaries of individual beneficiary schemes were given assistance in the form of cash. Cash assistance is found to have been more prone to misuse.

xvii. A large majority of beneficiaries did not experience any difficulty in receiving benefits from the concerned implementing authorities.

xviii. The magnitude of corruption in the delivery system has come down marginally under the People's Planning.

xix. Active participants in the programme in the *panchayats* are mostly those owing allegiance to the ruling parties.

xx. In the execution chain of common /public works projects, voluntary services (including donations from the public) remain a weak link belying the State Planning Board's expectation that it would form about 25 percent of the Plan grants.

xxi. Many beneficiaries did not spend their personal resources to implement the schemes for which *panchayats* gave financial assistance.

xxii. The quality of programmes included in the annual plan of the *panchayat* for 1999-2000 has improved in terms of local relevance and development orientation.

xxiii. Co-operatives continue to be the principal route of distribution.

xxiv. A majority of non-beneficiaries expressed the view that functioning of the *grama sabha* has been helpful for the development of their respective wards.

About 20 percent of the sample beneficiaries stated that they are aware that persons have been selected as beneficiaries in violation of the norms on political, personal, and other considerations.

A few publications bearing on the achievements of the switch-over to People's Planning are available. (eg: Ravindran P. R, et al, 2000; Puthiyavila and Kunhikkannan, 1999).

These publication's indicate that the introduction of People's Planning in Kerala has brought about several positive changes such as the following:
  i. Financial resource mobilisation at local level
  ii. Participation of people through voluntary work and donations
  iii. Participation and team work in project formulation
  iv. Transparency in project activities
  v. Monitoring and social auditing
  vi. Contributions by beneficiary committees
  vii. Positive changes in production sector, infrastructural facilities, service sector, women development programmes, SC/ST development and environmental aspects.

To substantiate these claims a number of case studies are given in Ravindran P. R et al. The case studies reveal a bias towards projecting only the bright side. They do not reveal a methodology for assessment of the value of people's contributions in terms of voluntary work or donations. Developmental activities and implementation had been going on even under the centralised system of planning. The extent to which people's participation enhanced their pace is not clear. It is difficult to believe that a change in the system was free from any problem and that everything went smoothly. It is also not clear whether investments were made after conducting social cost-benefit analysis of alternative proposals.

The work by Puthiavila and Kunhikkannan is a collection of success stories of local people collaborating in the People's Planning Programme. The book mentions the tradition of Kerala in people's collaborative efforts some decades ago, namely *Nattukkoottam*. It traces how the traditional strength suffered as a result of several happenings among which was the switch-over to centralised governance. The ill-effects of liberalisation and globalisation are emphasised. Even then, the authors argue, there were notable successful collaborations at the local level, which in the wake of People's Planning Programme, became well-established. At the end of the first year of the Programme, it is claimed that by bringing people together at local levels what had been thought impossible prior to the introduction of People's Planning was rendered possible.

Seventeen success stories in the production sector, 21 in the service sector, and 14 in the infrastructure sector are presented.

The authors suggest that the people collaborated voluntarily. Some cost-effective or timely suggestions came from individuals or groups. However, the process, which generated the collaboration, or the factors, which led to such collaboration and joint efforts, are not discussed. What were the factors of success? Absence of party politics? A new approach for local level development by politicians? Quality of decision-making and support given by social leaders? Or the *panchayat*'s readiness to get the idea generated by people? These questions are not addressed and analysed.

The State Planning Board (1999) published a booklet on the formation of Beneficiary committees and the guidelines for implementing works through Beneficiary Committees. This booklet lays down the guidelines as to when and how a beneficiary committee should take up developmental works. The first part of the booklet is about the People's Planning Programme in general and the system of getting works done through beneficiary committees. Reasons for the shortcomings experienced in plan implementation are also discussed.

The booklet's value lies in the presentation of the guidelines in Malayalam.
The procedures for decentralised planning and the preparation of projects are dealt with in a textbook type publication by the Language Institute. It traces the conceptualisation of People's Planning Programme and the manner in which the programme implementation is envisaged.

As reference material covering the procedures and systems for People's Planning, the book is of immense value to all those who are connected with the Programme. However, the claim of success of the People's Planning made in the book is not supported by evidence or analysis.

One of the positive aspects of implementation of People's Planning in Kerala is the tremendous effort that has been put in by the key actors and the State Planning Board in documentation. The State Planning Board compiled all government orders in three volumes. Guidelines for execution of works through beneficiary commissions were issued. Training manuals in Malayalam for the different phases of the campaign were made.

A publication of the State Planning Board (Sreedharan, E. M. et al. 2000) presents an interesting study on the aspects of relationship between development and party politics, and the extent to which people's representatives actively participated in the People's Planning. This volume does a self-evaluation of those in the forefront of People's Planning in Kerala. Three aspects are covered:
  (i)   Relation between development and party politics;
 (ii)   The socio-economic background of the people's representatives;
(iii)   The extent of participation of people's representatives in People's Planning and the resultant changes in their attitudes and capabilities.

The authors draw the following conclusions: a new developmental political approach different from typical party politics is needed; more training for enhancing the effectiveness of the people's representation is essential; much more remains to be achieved though many positive changes have occurred.

The book stresses the view that it is impracticable to create a party-less democracy in local government. What is needed is the acceptance of party politics, but suitable changes should be made in the approach of the politician towards developmental issues. Another view stressed is that already many persons with technical capabilities have come into politics and that political parties would give more weightage to technical capabilities of their candidates in future. The authors expect a major change in the attitudes and capabilities to support People's Planning.

An analysis of the socio-economic background of general and technical volunteers in People's Planning is also presented. The authors conclude that the contribution of such volunteers was significant, but the style of functioning of the politician and of governance is not adequate to make maximum use of their contributions. The politicians generally prefer the bureaucratic style. This is more evident among male representatives of people than female representatives.

The quality and effectiveness of training undertaken at various stages of the People's Planning Programme is also discussed. At the district level, the training given in the first two stages was more effective than that given in the third stage. The training on financial aspects seemed to have created much confusion and affected the quality of project proposals.

The last part of the book examines the extent to which the bureaucratic system was restructured to meet the needs of the People's Planning Programme. Some case studies of success are presented. However, the general conclusion seems to be that much more remains to be done.

An interesting publication covering a range of issues and questions relating to People's Planning is, Isaac, Thomas Dr. T.M (1999).

This book is a compilation of answers to a wide range of questions and criticisms raised about different aspects of the People's Planning Programme in Kerala. The questions cover a wide spectrum, from significance of decentralised planning to integration, impact of globalisation, political affiliation of trainers, conceptual issues, efficacy of beneficiary contributions, benefits to women, SC/STs and the effect of electoral defeats of political parties on the system. Many of the points covered in the earlier review are repeated.

Answers given in many cases are only viewpoints of the author. All of them are not supported by adequate data.
Now that five years of People's Planning have elapsed, the extent to which these questions are relevant and significant is a matter worth examining. We have come across in the present study inadequate awareness among the public at large on the purpose and objectives of People's Planning and their dwindling participation in consequence. As we shall see later, the quality of project formulation and implementation has diminished. The contribution made by the people has been on the decline too.

4. Objectives and Methodology

The following are the objectives of the study:

(1) To trace the decision-making processes in People's Planning in Kerala in planning, beneficiary selection, beneficiary participation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation in selected *grama panchayats* and municipalities, and assess their strengths and weaknesses;

(2) To study the group dynamics of decision-making at these various stages;

(3) To assess the extent to which the currently employed processes in municipalities and *panchayats* follow management practices such as:
   a. Allocating defined roles and responsibilities for elected representatives, departmental functionaries, and beneficiaries;
   b. Making arrangements for accessing and applying technological specialisations where needed; and
   c. Defining procedures for meetings and documentation of different stages.

(4) On the basis of the findings, to propose systems, procedures, and practices, which would make the local level planning and implementation process more effective. The need, if any, for modifying the interactions among the different groups of stakeholders and their interactive skills will also be examined. Inputs required for such modifications will be identified.

Methodology

Two *panchayats* and two municipalities in Thiruvananthapuram district were selected for study.

(i) The *panchayats* selected were: Vilavoorkal and Kadakkavur. Vilavoorkal is relatively rural, whereas Kadakkavur may be termed semi-urban. Salient geographic, demographic, and socio-economic features of these *panchayats* are given in Annexure 4.1.

The municipalities selected were Attingal and Nedumangad. Nedumangad is more rural in nature than Attingal which is semi-urban. Salient geographic, demographic, and socio-economic features of these municipalities are given in Annexure 4.1. Considerations of access to data have weighed in the selection of the municipalities and panchayats.

In Annexure 4.1, developmental problems identified by the *panchayat*/municipality and presented in the draft plans and *Vikasana Rekhas* are also listed.

(ii) The publications of the *panchayat*/municipality such as, *Vikasana Rekha* and the draft plans presented in the ward conventions were collected and studied. A list of publications and documents referred to are given in Annexure 4.2.

(iii) The research team attended *grama sabha* meetings/ ward conventions; and

panchayat/municipal committee meetings, such as standing committees and observed the decision-making processes. Data were collected from the offices of the *panchayats*/ municipalities. The team visited projects and studied the stage of the project and interacted with local people.

(iv)   In-depth interviews of councillors, officials, resource persons, and volunteers were conducted.

(v)   A survey of perceptions of the local people, who had attended four or more *grama sabha* meetings/ward conventions, was carried out.

(vi)   Discussions were held with Planning Board functionaries and members of BLEC/ MLEC/TAC.

5. Performance of People's Planning

The discussion in this section is based on responses of the following three sources: 1. elected representatives and officials of *panchayats* and municipalities, 2. BLEC/MLEC/ TAC members and Planning Board functionaries, and 3. observations of the research team of a few *grama sabha* meetings. Procedures, processes and performance of local planning are dealt with *seriatim*.

Procedures and process

The first step in the process is the convening of *grama sabhas/*ward conventions. The local body presents the achievements and financial accounts of the previous year and invites demands and suggestions in respect of individual benefits schemes as well as community needs for the current year. The demands are compiled and classified. Individual benefit schemes are apportioned among wards more or less equally. Applications for individual benefits are evaluated on the basis of specific criteria and rank lists are prepared. The lists are approved in subsequent *grama sabhas*/ward conventions. Even in respect of schemes for community benefit such as roads and street lights, members put claims for equal sharing among the different wards. Such claims are accepted except in cases such as the setting up of markets, school buildings and bus stands.

The next step in the process is conversion of demands into projects. The conversion is done, with the help of resource persons and departmental officials, by *Karma Samithis* (Task Forces). The standard format of the project contains details on organisation, implementation, monitoring and finances.

It is also found that in some instances, projects are taken up on the suggestions of elected members (including Chairpersons of Standing Committees) even without placing them before and getting approved by *grama sabha*/ward convention.

Local needs and availability of funds and other resources are the major considerations of task forces. Financial viability and social cost-benefit ratio were seldom taken into account. Though local level representatives had, in general, received 'training' in the preparation of projects and plans, the training received was only nominal and of a broad character imparted through seminars. The project proposals are approved by BLEC/MLEC/TAF after scrutiny and sent to DPC for sanction. DPC accords sanction to most of the projects on the basis of recommendations of BLEC/MLEC/TAC, rejecting a few for reasons such as wrong classification (eg. Inclusion of 'service sector projects' under 'production sector'), proposal for utilisation of funds for unauthorised purposes (eg. using plan funds for setting up of Co-operative Societies) and unwarranted expenditure (eg. expenditure on purchase of land when land is already owned). After sanction for DPC is received for a project, funds are drawn and project implementation is begun.

Once DPC clearance is obtained, a meeting is convened of the expected beneficiaries to

select a beneficiary committee to implement the project with the object of ensuring active participation of the beneficiaries, obtaining beneficiary contributions and elimination of contractors in the implementation of the project.

Monitoring of project implementation is entrusted to a monitoring committee.

Several shortcomings have been observed in the processes of planning and implementation of projects for a variety of reasons.

(i) Decline in participation in *grama sabhas*/ward conventions

Participation in *grama sabhas*/ward conventions has been continuously on the decline after the first two years of the People's Planning Programme. It is found difficult even to muster 10 percent attendance, which is the prescribed mandatory minimum, for such meetings.

During the first two years, there were several schemes benefiting individuals (eg: distribution of cattle, chicken, sewing machines, houses). Since then, the emphasis has been on common benefits such as roads, water supply and street lighting. With the eclipse of individual benefits, the interest of large numbers of local residents in participation in *grama sabhas*/ward conventions, has waned. People belonging to the well-to-do sections of the local population show scant attention to *grama sabhas* or ward conventions and consider them the business of elected representatives and families below the poverty line.

Grama Sabha meetings/ward conventions are tending to become mere formality, held with unconcern and lack of decorum and purpose. Meetings start behind schedule, participants come and go at will during meetings, speechification becomes the routine and participation by the audience is at best passive. Beneficiary lists prepared in advance of the meetings are read out and passed merely as a formality.

Most of the persons who attend *grama sabhas*/ward conventions do so under the pursuasion of ward members. No wonder, political considerations prevail in the determination of beneficiaries and location of common beneficiary schemes.

(ii)   Unfair distribution of benefits: Since most participants remain taciturn, they seldom express their views about the eligibility of applicants for benefits, even in cases of unfair allocation. Ineligible claimants sometimes collude with ward members to appropriate benefits. Ward members often try to distribute benefits on party considerations. In some cases, the same individual receives multiple benefits. Such cases are found more in the cases of benefits to scheduled castes and tribes.

(iii) Indifferent implementation of Projects: Entrusting beneficiary committees with the execution of projects is fraught with difficulties through the concept is

unexceptionable. The beneficiary committees have to mobilise funds in advance for implementation of the project since government funds are released only in instalments. They often bear the burden of excess expenditure over sanctioned project budgets due to cost escalation. However, genuine beneficiary participation in the implementation of community projects is rare. In most cases, works are carried out *benami*. Beneficiary committees lack professional and technical expertise too. Contributions by beneficiaries in the form of land and voluntary labour are also drying up. In several cases, works taken up by beneficiary committees remain incomplete. In a few cases, the works are 'completed' in a technical sense, when monitoring committees issue completion certificates without spot-checking. It is also alleged that many ill-conceived projects get executed indifferently resulting in sheer wastage of resources.

(iv)   Lack of social auditing: People's representatives are not conversant with rules and procedures. Local population remains uninvolved. Planning and plan implementation seldom comes under any kind of social auditing.

II   Performance of Local Level Planning: Findings of a Field Survey

Data were collected from a Simple Random Sample (SRS) of 253 respondents, of which 141 were from the two *panchayats*, and 112 were from the two municipalities. The sample comprised 66 persons from Kadakavoor and 75 persons from Vilavoorkal; 62 persons from Attingal Municipality and 50 persons from Nedumangad Municipality.
The age distribution of respondents is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Panchayat Frequency Number (%)	Municipalities Frequency Number (%)
<30	20 (14.1)	12(10.7)
30-40	39(27.7)	41(36.6)
40-50	39(27.7)	35(31.3)
>50	43(30.5)	24(21.4)
Total	**141(100.0)**	**112(100.0)**

In the two *panchayats* together, 58 percent of the respondents are above 40 years of age and only 28 percent belong to the 30-40 age group. In the two Municipalities, 37 percent, belonged to the age group of 30-40 and 52 percent were over 40 years of age. Diagrams A and B represent the data.

Diagram. A Age distribution of the respondents of Kadakavoor and Vilvoorkal *panchayats*
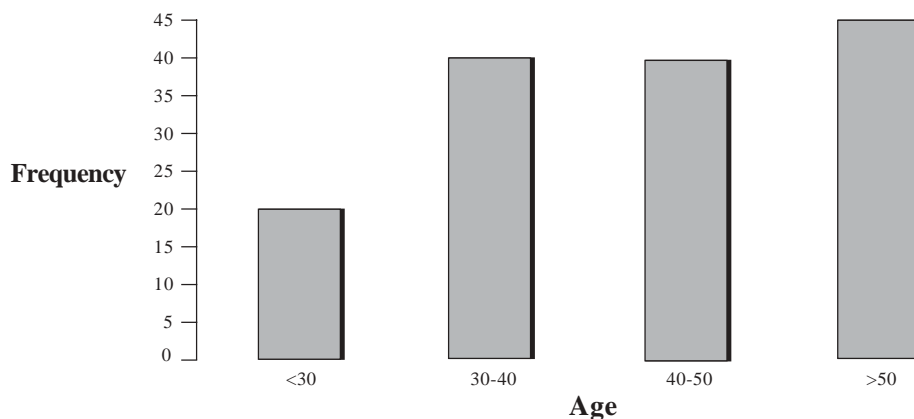
Diagram. B Frequency distribution of the ages of the respondents in municipalities
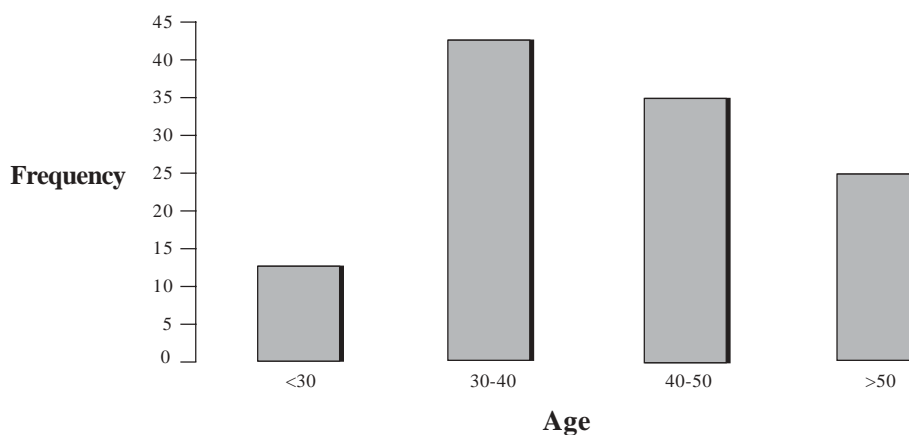
Only 20 percent of the respondents in *grama sabhas* are qualified above SSLC, whereas in Municipalities 42 percent were above SSLC.

The decision-making process in the *grama sabhas* starts in the planning stage itself with the listing of acute development problems of various sectors. In order to understand the participants' knowledge about the sequence of activities associated with *grama sabhas* / ward conventions, information about the following attributes was gathered: the source of information about the *grama sabha* meeting; the type of training received if any; knowledge about *grama sabha* activities; opinions about decentralised planning and its achievements; and views about monitoring of ongoing projects.

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 show the educational qualifications of the respondents in the selected *panchayats* and municipalities.

Table 5. 2 Educational qualifications of the respondents: *Panchayats* (in percentage)

Panchayats	Below SSLC	Above SSLC	TOTAL
Kadakavoor	39.7	7.1	46.8
Vilavoorkal	40.4	12.8	53.2
Total	**80.1**	**19.9**	**100.0**

Table 5. 3 Educational qualifications of the respondents:Municipalities (in percentage)

Municipalities	Below SSLC	Above SSLC	TOTAL
Attingal	25.9	29.5	55.4
Nedumangad	32.1	12.5	44.6
Total	**58.0**	**42.0**	**100.0**

The propaganda relating to the convening of *grama sabhas* /ward conventions is done through advertisements in newspapers, notice boards, posters, and house-to-house campaign using small squads including women. The sources of knowledge about the meeting through different forms are given in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Sources of knowledge of *Grama Sabhas*/Ward Conventions (in percentage)

	Printed Notice	Newspaper	Ward Member	Others
Panchayats	43.3	2.1	41.1	13.5
Municipalities	29.4	0.9	53.6	16.1
Total	37.2	1.6	46.6	14.6

Ward members and printed notices are the two major sources of information about *grama sabhas*/ward meetings, which together account for more than 80 percent.

More than 98 percent of the respondents in *panchayats* had attended four or more *grama sabhas* and ward conventions.

To encourage maximum participation, elaborate preparatory works were undertaken before the *grama sabhas* are convened. Did the respondents receive training in participation? The responses are classified in Table 5.6.

Information on the number of times respondents attended *grama sabhas* is given in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Distribution of Respondents According to Participation in *grama sabhas* / ward conventions (in percentage)

No. of *grama sabhas* / ward conventions	Attendance in *grama sabhas* (*Panchayats*)	Attendance in ward conventions (Municipalities)
1-3	1.4	1.8
4-6	73.8	66.1
7-9	9.2	19.6
All *grama sabhas* / conventions	15.6	12.5

Table 5.6 Training for participation in *grama sabha* /ward conventions (in percentage)

	Response	
Panchayats	**YES**	**NO**
Kadakavoor	0.0	46.8
Vilavoorkal	0.7	52.5
Total	**0.7**	**99.3**
Municipalities	Yes	No
Attingal	0.9	54.5
Nedumangad	—	44.6
Total	**0.9**	**99.1**

Hardly, less than one percent of the respondents had received any training irrespective of whether they were residents of *panchayats* or Municipalities.

At the beginning of the Ninth Five-Year Plan, *grama sabhas* were still to take shape. Later, a 'small group approach' was introduced predominantly for women, as they are the more susceptible to local level problems in sectors like health, sanitation, and water supply. The participation rate suggests that women have more stake in local level activities. The sex-wise classification of the respondents is given in Table 5.7.

Sixty-five percent of the females attended *grama sabhas* and 61 percent attended ward conventions, indicating thereby the dominance of the female population in *grama sabhas*/ ward conventions.

Table 5.7 Male and Female Participation in *Grama Sabha*/Ward Convention (in percentage)

Panchayats	Male	Female	Total
Kadakavoor	12.8	34.0	46.8
Vilavoorkal	22.0	31.2	53.2
Total	**34.8**	**65.2**	**100.0**
Municipalities	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Attingal	22.3	33.0	55.3
Nedumangad	17.0	27.7	44.7
Total	**39.3**	**60.7**	**100.0**

Grama sabha is the forum for identification and discussion of local level problems in various sectors and suggesting remedial measures for solution. The knowledge and purpose of the activities of the *grama sabha* is given in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Knowledge about Purpose of the Activities of *Grama sabha* (in percentage)

	Partial Knowledge	**No Knowledge**	**Full Knowledge**
Panchayats	46.8	39.0	14.2
Municipalities	66.1	16.1	17.8
Total	55.3	28.9	15.8

The respondents of municipalities had more knowledge about the purpose and activities of ward conventions.

Comments on the proceedings and quality of discussion in *grama sabhas*/ward conventions were recorded and the responses were classified. (Table 5.9). Respondents who merely listened to the discussions and those who did not express any views were classified in the category 'satisfactory' scale.

Forty percent of the respondents in *panchayats* were of the opinion that the quality of discussion was very poor whereas in municipalities the corresponding figure was 60 percent.

Table 5.9 Quality of discussions (*in percentage*)

	Good	**Satisfactory**	**Poor**
Panchayats	32.6	27.7	39.7
Municipalities	14.3	25.0	60.7
Total	24.5	26.5	49.0

More than one-half the number of participants of *panchayats* and municipalities did not get opportunity to speak in *grama sabhas*/ward conventions.

Feedback given by the respondents once the decision-making process is over is classified according to those who were aware about the decisions and those who were not aware (Table 5.10).

Table 5.10 Knowledge about decisions taken (*in percentage*)

	Response	
	Aware	**Not aware**
Panchayats	56.7	43.3
Municipalities	67.0	33.0
Total	61.3	38.7

After identification of the local level problems, the draft proposals are to be presented in the *grama sabha* /ward convention, prior to the beneficiary selection. The views of the respondents were collected in order to understand whether draft proposals were presented in the meetings held after approval identification of problems (Table 5.11).

Table 5.11 Presentation of proposals (in percentage)

	Responses	
	Presented	**Not presented**
Panchayats	48.2	51.8
Municipalities	82.1	17.9
Total	63.2	36.8

About 52 percent of the respondents in the *panchayats* were of the view that the draft proposals were not presented in *grama sabhas*; in municipalities the corresponding percentage was only 18.

The knowledge of the respondents regarding the budget of the *panchayat* /municipality is reflected in Table 5.12 below.

Table 5.12 Knowledge about the budget (In percentage)

	Response	
	Yes	**No**
Panchayats	17.0	83.0
Municipalities	34.8	65.2
Total	**24.9**	**75.1**

To evaluate the opinion about decentralisation movement and its implementation process, the respondents were interviewed and the reactions were classified as 'good', 'satisfactory', and 'not satisfactory'. Twenty-six respondents from *panchayats* and 13 from municipalities who had no comments were classified under the 'satisfactory' level (Table 5.13).

Table 5.13 Opinion about decentralisation (in percentage)

	Responses		
	Good	**Satisfactory**	**Not Satisfactory**
Panchayats	40.4	18.5	41.1
Municipalities	53.6	11.6	34.8
Total	**46.2**	**15.4**	**38.4**

Once the beneficiaries are identified and the projects finalised, there needs to be an effective management system to monitor the progress of implementation of the project. As monitoring is not a one-time job, periodical assessments have to be made. About the effectiveness of monitoring, the responses are given in Table 5. 14.

Table 5.14 Effectiveness of monitoring (in percentage)

	Response		
	Yes	**No**	**Not aware**
Panchayats	34.8	6.4	58.8
Municipalities	30.4	9.8	59.8
	32.8	7.9	59.3

From the above Table it may be seen that 58 percent of the respondents in *panchayats* and 60 percent in municipalities are not at all aware of the monitoring procedures.

The basic advantage expected in decentralised planning is that the felt needs of the grassroots population could be identified in village assemblies through participatory approach, and putting forward possible suggestions and plans for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Decentralised planning calls for good governance, transparency, and social audit of the plan. The responses regarding awareness about advantages after decentralisation in the sample *panchayats* and municipalities are given in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15 Responses regarding advantages after decentralisation (in percentage)

Local Bodies	Benefited	Same as prior to decentr-alisation
Panchayats	30.5	69.5
Municipalities	50.9	49.1
Total	**39.5**	**60.5**

Nearly 70 percent of the respondents in *panchayats* and 51 percent of them in the municipalities feel that the advantages are the same as those prior to the introduction of People's Planning.

Appendix

Tools and Techniques for Effective People's Planning: A Note

Definition of management

There are several definitions to the concept of management, of which the most relevant, from the point of view of application to People's Planning, is the functional definition that management is Planning, Organising, Directing, and Controlling (Koontz and O'Donnell). 'Modern Management' refers to the group of tools, techniques, and practices, which have evolved over the past few decades as a result of the influence of computers, technological innovations, globalised market situation, and the emphasis on quality and customer satisfaction.

Planning

Developmental programmes are conceived and implemented in the form of projects. Hence planning as far as developmental programmes is concerned, is mostly in the areas of Project Formulation and Appraisal. Cost-benefit analysis is at the root of project formulation and appraisal. Such cost-benefit analysis could be a Financial Appraisal for commercial projects and Social Cost-Benefit Analysis for community-oriented projects such as those conceived and implemented by the Government. In either case, criteria like Pay Back Period, Net Present Value, Internal Rate of Return, and Benefit-Cost Ratio are applied to evaluate and appraise projects. Invariably discounted cash flow analysis technique is adopted to take into account time value of money, which is a technique to forecast the continuing attractiveness of the project in the long run.

The subject of project formulation and appraisal is covered elaborately in a number of well-known publications, a few of which are listed below:

Little IMD and Mirrless JA, 1982; Prakash Mathur DM, 1985; Puttaswamaiah K, Ed., 1980; Shaghil M and Mushtaque M, 1993; Young,Trevor L, 1998; Pearce DW and Nash CA, 1983; Dasgupta,Ajit K and Pearce DW, 1978; Mishra SN and Beyer, John 1978; Chandra, Prasanna 1981; and Isaac, Thomas 1999

Another aspect of planning which deserves attention in this context is the aspect of integration. Sectoral, spatial, temporal, social, and cultural integration to different degrees are needed in the case of most community-oriented projects. Some of the treatises on the subject of integration are:

Nanjundappa DM, 1981; Munirathna Naidu K, Ed, 1984; Abdul Aziz, 1983; Baldev Singh, 1981; Mishra SN, 1981; Thomas Poulose K, 1979; Girish K Mishra and Amitab Kundu, 1981; Jagannadan V and Mohit Bhattacharya, 1977; and Specht Harry and Vickery Anne, 1978.

Many people do not possess the expertise in both the subjects of project formulation and integration. The different viewpoints from which a project has to be examined would receive adequate attention only when a multidisciplinary team spends time over the project formulation exercise. In the findings in the previous section, we have already seen that in People's Planning, the expertise inputs on project formulation and integration is found to be grossly inadequate. Cost-benefit analysis, integration, operation and maintenance aspects, organisation for maintenance and sustainability in the long run are not adequately addressed. The resource persons who formulate the projects, BLEC/MLEC which gives technical sanction, and the District Planning Committee, which sanctions the budget are the three levels at which the necessary inputs on project formulation and integration should get built into the project. For the improvement of quality of project proposals it would be necessary to build capacity among the personnel at these three levels, and also to insist that a project will get sanctioned only if it fulfils a set of standardised criteria.

Apart from capacity building, there is also a question of time. The number of project proposals to be made, scrutinised and technical sanction given every year is so large that adequate attention may not possibly be bestowed on each project. Before People's Planning was introduced each department had a number of subject specialists who were supposed to spend adequate time and attention on project formulation and integration, though due to various reasons of bureaucratic rigidities, adequate attention was not being given. After convening *grama sabhas*/ward conventions, the time available for preparation of project proposals is very limited, often a week or so. One obvious way of facilitating quicker project formulation is to use standardised formats and use of computer software, for which the personnel of local bodies have to be trained. One more step, which may be tried, is for the local body to convene *grama sabhas* at the beginning of the financial year itself without waiting for a government order.

The outputs from the planning of a project should ideally consist of a statement of a vision, objectives, strategies, activities, and objectively verifiable indicators of accomplishment and means of verification. A statement combining all the above is known as a Log frame. It is also necessary that project activities be scheduled, responsibility delegated, and linked to flow of money, men, and materials. Excellent computer software like MS-Project is available in the market. This software, utilising the technique of Critical Path Method, enables monitoring of projects effectively against schedules and linking to resources. The resource persons who prepare project proposals as well as functionaries of the local bodies need to be trained in the techniques of

1) Financial and Social Cost-Benefit Analysis;
2) Log frame development;
3) Project report preparation;
4) Use of techniques like CPM for scheduling project activities;
5) Use of computer software like MS- Project for scheduling and linking with resources; and
6) Use of MIS related to Projects for monitoring of project progress, rescheduling, and reallocation of resources.

While training could help the planners and decision makers in the local body to frame projects with better quality and also apply considerations of quality in approving projects for implementation, it is doubtful whether they will have the time and inclination to fully apply the considerations. It would be worthwhile to engage the services of a panel of experts consisting of one technical expert related to the sector of the project, one economist and one sociologist to study and give their comments on each project proposal. If these comments necessitate revision of project proposals, the resource persons who prepared the project report should be asked to revise the proposals before they are sent to the BLEC/ MLEC. Every project proposal should have a summary sheet in a format which lists the cost-benefit ratio of the project, the estimated investment, estimated operation and maintenance costs, schedule of the project activities in terms of calendar dates, sources of funds, allocation of funds against each activity, and beneficiary contribution. When it goes through decision-making at the sectoral committees, BLEC/MLEC and DPC, every proposal should have a separate file, which could be used to trace the genesis, planning, and decision-making on the project at different stages till its sanction. In this manner, through the services of experts, the information content of the process of decision-making in local self-government increases and becomes transparent before being considered at BLEC/ MLEC and the DPC.

Organising is the next stage in the process of management. Mobilising the right kind of resources for the right activity is at the root of organising. The four ways in which a local body could arrange implementation have been discussed earlier. There are certain merits for each of these four ways. Certain works may be executed only through specialised agencies like KSEB. For certain works such as construction of wells, it is expedient to entrust the work to experienced private agencies. The local body could directly do certain activities such as health-related activities in view of the availability of staff and their earlier experience. In respect of some other activities such as road construction and wastage removal where public participation is crucial to the completion of the project, entrusting the works to beneficiary committees would be ideal. This choice of the right agency is crucial in implementation and is an important step in the decision-making process.

More than the dogma of eliminating contractors, the suitability of the agency from considerations of competence should prevail. The present study reveals a number of problems in getting works executed through beneficiary committees, as a result of which several works are actually executed by *benamis*.

One agency that is currently left out is the NGOs. When community support is to be mobilised, NGOs may make meaningful contribution. The association of NGOs in the water supply projects of KRWSA is illustrative of this. The local people have to be made capable and willing, if we expect the community to operate and maintain the developmental assets created. NGOs can do this most effectively.

In selecting private agencies and NGOs, it is necessary to appraise their capacity. Requiring such agencies to submit detailed technical and financial bids separately can do this. First the technical bids should be evaluated against predetermined and published criteria including

previous experience, competent personnel, and financial capabilities. Among them, the most suitable two agencies should be short-listed. Financial bids of only such short-listed agencies need be considered in the final stage. The quality of decision-making could be improved by such steps.

It is also necessary to schedule the sequence of activities. Tying up of financial, material, and human resources to the scheduled activities is essential to get projects completed in time and to eliminate or minimise cost and time overruns. The management techniques of PERT and CPM (Programme Evaluation and Review Technique, Critical Path Method) are used by successful organisations all over the world. Today there is user-friendly computer software for application of these techniques. The local bodies could very well use such techniques and improve the quality of implementation of projects. Moreover, these software facilitate monitoring of projects, an aspect of which will be dealt with under 'Control'.

A number of treatises deal with implementation planning, resource allocation, monitoring, and rescheduling. Some of these are:
Naik BM, 1985; Moder, Joseph J et al., 1983; and Singh, Narendra 2000

The organisational structure for operation, maintenance, and sustenance of the project assets is one more aspect of organising. Hitherto the government not only established assets but also was also responsible for maintenance. In the People's Planning Programme, the community is expected to establish the assets and later manage them. However, this requires a change of mindset in the community.

For the community to manage the assets created, capacity must be built among designated members of the community. The general public needs to be made aware of, and participate, in a community-owned and community-managed developmental set-up.

In the context of organising function, responsibility and accountability are also relevant. Who does what and who is responsible for the different components of project formulation, implementing, and monitoring and evaluation have to be clearly defined and assigned. Prior to People's Planning, the departmental officials were squarely responsible and accountable. Instances of lapses were rare. When 35-40 percent plan funds were devolved to local bodies, there was no corresponding deployment of departmental officials to local bodies. Retired people and volunteers were engaged to fill the gap for subject specialists. To what extent they are responsible is not fully defined. Our enquiries reveal that no specific resource person could be made accountable for the quality of a project proposal. The BLEC and MLEC can examine the project proposal for technical sanction, but cannot question the need for a project as it is supposed to be the outcome of a demand/need of the local people. Once agreement is signed with beneficiary committee or specialised agencies, the monitoring committee, which is often the concerned sectoral committee, is supposed to be responsible for monitoring of implementation. The present study found that the whole process of monitoring is inadequate. The expectation is that the beneficiary committee will do evaluation, post-project operation, and maintenance. The present study reveals that they are all highly problematic under the People's Planning Programme.

'Directing' in management means instructing, guiding, supervising, motivating, and promoting teamwork. In the earlier set-up for developmental works, a hierarchy of departmental people was made responsible for directing project activities. They were also technically qualified. Under People's Planning the various government departments were not deployed to work under the local bodies. The technical staff of the local bodies is insufficient to undertake effective directing function. The regular departmental staff is, in principle, supposed to support the local body in developmental works. However, their roles and responsibilities remain vague and unspecified. The beneficiary committee often does not have the technical expertise nor is trained in directing. The resource persons whose services are taken to fill in the gap do not have clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the directing function.

Due to the several advancements in the field of Human Resources Development, main emphasis of successful organisations now is to harness the tremendous potential of the human resources for lifting them to greater heights. This is especially true in a globally competitive market environment. Successful organisations today employ a variety of tools and techniques to keep employee motivation high and teamwork harmonious.

Human Resources Development is crucial to the success of People's Planning Programme since it calls for a lot of voluntarism, commitment, and involvement on the part of elected representatives, officials, volunteers, resource persons, beneficiary committees, beneficiaries and public at large. Except for occasional training programmes and seminars, there are no planned efforts for HRD under People's Planning. The officials of the local bodies are overburdened with work. The enthusiasm of the general public is waning. It is high time to plan HRD activities.

Modern management has advanced much in the control dimension. The elements of developmental projects, which need control, are: 1. Physical achievements, 2. Cost, 3. Quality, 4. Timely information, 5. Behavioural aspects such as motivation, teamwork, and leadership, 6. Systems supporting the project.

With the help of computers it is now possible to analyse and control cost even on a day-to-day basis. People's Planning should utilise the ready availability of excellent software such as MS-Project, and Prima Vera, which enable both time and cost control by systematic scheduling, matching of resources with scheduled activities, resource levelling, and crashing. Another approach to control is by drafting the plan itself with a perspective of evaluation. This is an approach suggested by Dale Reidar in 1998. Normally, in planning certain objectives relating to the project features or components are set and then the project is implemented, monitored, and evaluated. The evaluation may reveal that some of the objectives are not achieved. It is in this context that Dale has suggested that the project be planned with an evaluation perspective. In setting objectives, together with the physical completion of the project, the socio-economic, technological, and organisational (organisations for operation and maintenance) outcomes should also be included. Activities have to be undertaken, monitored and controlled, relating to the socio-economic, technological and organisational goals also, so that there is convergence between the project

and the environment in which the project is to be operated and managed. This approach, it is felt, is particularly relevant in the People's Planning Programme. Projects like agriculture in hospitals and fish rearing in ponds undertaken in some of the local bodies die out after the first or second year for want of socio-economic and organisational factors, which should go together with the continuance of the project.

Information is now recognised as one of the most crucial resources. Earlier, information was gathered and stored as data so that it could be retrieved quickly. Now the trend is to apply information to take quality decisions and benefit from the value of information. Building up a Management Information System is less important now than Management of Information. There is tremendous scope for building up a proper MIS for the local bodies, especially with regard to utilisation of plan funds as well as results achieved.

Many a successful organisation demonstrates quality and customer care through Standard Operating Procedures and Certifications like ISO 9000, QS 9000, and TPM. Service organisations like banks are now getting certified under ISO 9000.

Environmental aspects of developmental projects receive great attention now. Certification like ISO 14000 is procured by many organisations to demonstrate their concerns and actions for environmental balancing.

Total Quality Management, which is essentially a system in which quality management is achieved through a participatory style of involving human beings, is the dream of many organisations. Organisations, which have implemented TQM, bag awards like Deming Award and Malcolm Balridge Award.

Thus, successful organisations try to build quality in everything they do; not merely at quality control of the product.

In the context of People's Planning, there is an element of TQM, as participation by people is the crux of the movement. However, if this is to be achieved tremendous amount of HRD efforts have to be put in to build capacity in people to participate, and the elected representatives and officials to provide necessary leadership.

One excellent tool, which could combine planning, organising, and controlling, is the preparation and adherence to a Log Frame Analysis adverted to earlier. It may be noted that the analysis starts at one end with a specified objective and then proceeds to specify strategies, activities, targets, objectively verifiable indicators, and the means of verification. The identification of objectively verifiable indicators, and the means of verification enable the creation of a framework for control.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Grama Sabha is an institution envisages by the proponents of the People's Planning Programme for undertaking the functions of (1) identifying the felt needs of people at local levels (2) evaluation, prioritisation and implementation of local plans, (3) Selection of beneficiaries (4) mobilisation of local resources including voluntary labour for plan implementation and (5) social audit. While it is a fact that awareness of the local population on the formulation and implementation of projects and its association with the planning process has increased, its involvement in consultations and participation has been minimal. Mostly it is the BPL families, particularly women, that participate. There is dominance of females in attendance in the *grama sabha* /ward convention. Eighty percent of participants in *panchayats* and 74 percent of participants in ward conventions have education below SSLC. Because of their social upbringing and experience combined with low education, they can only listen, partly understand, and rarely react. Though the situation in regard to knowledge about the purpose and activities of *grama sabhas* /ward convention is more in municipalities, the overall picture is depressing. Unless people are trained and equipped to participate, the current system could only assure their physical presence. The survey has made it amply clear that they receive no training to participate. Training on articulation, group discussions, presentations, questioning, and comprehension (in short, personality improvement) for people who attend *grama sabhas* is necessary before they may be expected to move to higher levels of participation. The way meetings are organised also determines the extent of participation. For example, the incorporation of group discussions and presentations by small groups enhances participation. How and by whom could such training be given and the question of finding funds for such training are to be decided. Local NGOs supported by elected representatives may do this provided some funding is made available for such training.

If the *grama sabha* meeting or ward convention is organised as a day-long affair the forenoon session could de devoted to the training component and the afternoon session for the agenda items. Within one to three hours of time allotted for such meetings now, it may not be possible to ensure higher degrees of participation.

The president/secretary/ward member/resource persons make long speeches, often repetitive in content, in the current style of organising meetings. The time left for participation in decision-making is eaten away by the speeches. Resource persons have to be found who could explain clearly and repeatedly the procedure and process of meeting, and criteria for decision-making every time the meeting is held, as the same people do not attend every time.

To achieve effectiveness, the proceedings must start at the announced time and be kept within the announced schedule.

The agenda for the meeting must be announced in advance in the notice board, bit notices, and newspapers.

A good public address system is essential for the meeting. Many of the speakers do not speak loud enough for all present to hear. Those who speak from the audience may also be extended the facility of the public address system. Half of the things that are now spoken in the meetings are not audible.

Those who attend meetings would be able to understand more of what is being said, if a visual tool such as a black board, flip charts or overhead projector is used to support what is being said. Mere reading out of the achievements and plans, or a list of beneficiaries to be selected, is a futile exercise now. If at all the participants are to react, it is also necessary to exhibit marks awarded to the beneficiaries based on specified eligibility criteria.

People have not yet fully understood the purpose and objectives behind the People's Planning Programme. They now consider it mainly as a venue to demand or obtain individual benefits. People have to be educated and trained repeatedly on the schemes and guided progressively towards thinking of common good of the community. Again, local NGOs, supported by people's representatives, could be the best agencies for such education/ training.

The attitudes and ways of people's representatives and officials also have to undergo changes. Most of them think that a speech in which they get an audience is a synonym for participation. They are not trained to adopt any other method to achieve participation of people who are probably just literate, poor, and who want their day-to-day problems to be addressed then and there. The elected representatives and officials need training for attitudinal changes and skills in mobilising participation through techniques like PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal). In the present system in vogue the people who attend are merely physically present without the ability to participate.

The ward member wields influence in taking decisions on beneficiary selection and allotment of benefits. This influence draws people to him/her for raising demands. As a result, they are afraid or unwilling to express their views and knowledge about ineligibility of certain people to receive benefits suspecting that it might antagonise the ward member. There are also allegations by ward members belonging to parties in opposition that benefits violating norms are given mostly to the people who hold allegiance to the ruling party. In these circumstances the poor people, whose needs are urgent, will go after influential ward members. The solution to this problem lies in making the proceedings of *grama sabha* meeting transparent where only applications should be received, discussed, and beneficiaries decided.

The rule of sectoral allocation of the plan funds, and the practice of dividing sectoral allocations more or less equally among the ward members lead to inequitable distribution of benefits. In comparison to the beneficiaries selected from other wards, those who genuinely deserve in some wards were left out. This has led to loss of confidence in the system. A solution to this would be to go strictly by the criteria of selection of beneficiaries in the *panchayat* as a whole and not ward-wise. Dividing sectoral allocations among different wards equally is only a short cut measure adopted at *panchayat* or municipality level to

appease all ward members and could be rectified at that level itself. As far as the limits of sectoral allocations specified, government may consider appointing a commission in each district before which the *panchayat*/municipality may make representation for changes in the limit. Government may specify that the decision of the commission will be final.

The group dynamics of the decision-making revolves around party politics in most situations. When one party is in power, it desires to prove that what it is doing is right and that what the opposition party had done in the past, or what it demands now, was wrong. It is true that party politics cannot be kept out, but at least at the local level if party politics is not subjugated to local development, the scene will continue to be the same as that at the State level or the Central level. Discussions with ward members revealed that they are often compelled to violate norms in the interest of advancing party interests and also to retain allegiance of voters in the ensuing election. This situation has to change. Probably it is advisable that codes of conduct be laid down for ward members that in local development interference on party basis should be avoided.

Except in a few cases, the system of recording minutes of the *grama sabha* meetings is far from satisfactory. The discussions that took place, the points raised by the participants, and the modifications and amendments proposed/accepted are not recorded effectively. Allotting more time for the meeting, and recording and reading the minutes at the end of the meeting itself, could improve the faith of the people in the proceedings of *grama sabhas*/ward conventions. As of now, most participants are ignorant of what gets recorded. The attendance in *grama sabhas*, except in some wards, is coming down. Key players say that it is because the share of schemes from plan funds for individual benefits is coming down compared to community-oriented schemes. They say that more people will attend if the scale of individual benefits is increased. This is a dangerous tendency, which should be checked at the earliest. As already discussed, the solution to this problem lies in enhancing the awareness of people at large and increasing their capacity to participate. Our survey revealed that 52 percent of people in *panchayats* and 34 percent people in municipalities are not satisfied with the decentralisation process.

Participation in implementation

Implementation through beneficiary committees is the main instrument for people's involvement in the projects undertaken for community needs.

Interviews with key people's representatives and officials of *panchayats* and municipalities revealed that projects are implemented *benami*. Only a few functionaries spoke high of the execution of works by beneficiary committees. All others pointed out various difficulties experienced by the beneficiary committees such as absence of technical knowledge and support, inability to raise working capital till instalments are received, delays in fund flow, and problems associated with costs in excess of original estimate. A few members even pointed out that only contractors are able to procure labour at estimated (below market) rates and complete the works in time. One suggestion was that beneficiary committees may be directed to subcontract works and oversee their implementation through

subcontractors. Thus the participation of people has become really a matter of concern and a burden for members, particularly for the convener of the beneficiary committee. Examples of success do exist; but they are few. The extent of contributions from beneficiaries has also come down. In fact, no accounts are maintained on beneficiary contributions received for projects. If in the project estimate a beneficiary contribution is indicated, then the local body limits payment by deducting the indicated beneficiary contribution. The primary requirement for a solution to this problem would be insistence on maintenance of accounts of contribution by the beneficiaries. Such contributions may be in the form of labour, land, materials and / or supervising time or time for organising and directing the project or cash contribution. A methodology for accounting has also to be specified.

Participation in monitoring and evaluation

The functioning of the monitoring committees is also far from satisfactory. The members of the committee allegedly sign stage certificates without proper verification. One of the solutions to this problem is to engage the services of retired engineers or other experienced persons to do periodic monitoring on payment of a standard fee. The *panchayat* may approve a panel of such persons. A standard format for reporting may be prescribed. The monitoring committee should support every stage certificate with the report from the external evaluator. Members of such panels should be given proper orientation to do monitoring/concurrent evaluation of projects.

Another aspect which we found wanting is social auditing/ impact evaluation of projects. In the interviews we conducted several instances of bad planning and implementation of projects were pointed out. A few newspaper reports have appeared relating to audit observations on irregularities and mismanagement. All these point to the necessity of efficient project formulation and appraisal. In order to improve the quality of project proposals it is necessary that resource persons, volunteers, and ward members involved in project preparation be intensively trained and retrained. It is suggested that project proposals, especially those that have a dimension of social change in terms of behaviour change among beneficiaries, be planned from an evaluation perceptive. Also a system has to be introduced by which committees persons with the required expertise do periodic impact assessment of randomly selected projects. Such evaluations should also cover the question of whether the various developmental issues identified by the local bodies in their *Vikasana Rekhas* are getting satisfactorily addressed during implementation. The results should be disseminated in specially convened *grama sabha* meetings to serve as a forum for social auditing.

Middle and higher income groups and professionals seldom attend *grama sabha* meetings/ ward conventions, because they do not perceive direct-benefits to them from participation. It is suggested that the *panchayats*/municipalities extend special invitations to professionals and higher income group people and make an earnest effort to bring them also into the process. People's representatives in the *panchayats*/municipalities have to take initiatives on this aspect.
Women form bulk of the participants in *grama sabha* meetings and ward conventions. The success of the women development programme, for which 10 percent of the funds are to

be specifically set apart will depend upon women's active involvement. It is therefore necessary to sensitise women on gender issues and women development, as against mere welfare measures. Special efforts are needed for capacity building of women.

BLECs/MLECs are to examine the project in detail before giving technical sanction. To improve the quality of project proposals, it is necessary to give intensive training to BLEC/MLEC members in project formulation and appraisal, including social cost-benefit analysis and the methodology to develop project proposals with an evaluation perceptive.

People and people's representatives alike welcome People's Planning as a better alternative to the earlier system, as this provides a forum for people at large, especially the poor, to have some say in planning and implementation of developmental schemes. The system also fosters greater transparency on the activities of the local government. Yet, the local populations perceive that the benefits, advantages, and disadvantages associated with People's Planning are not much different from those of the earlier system. This may be due to poor understanding among people about the objectives, purpose, and achievements of People's Planning. Again, the need to educate and train people to get involved and participate in People's Planning is obvious.

Developmental programmes are carried out as projects. Several modern management tools and techniques may be applied to improve the quality of project formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Cost-benefit analysis, integration, operation and maintenance aspects, organisation for maintenance, and sustainability in the long run are not adequately addressed in the projects that are framed and implemented. The resource persons who formulate the projects, BLEC/MLEC which gives technical sanction, and the District Planning Committee which sanctions the budget, are the three levels at which the necessary inputs on project formulation and integration should get built into the project. For the improvement of quality of project proposals, it would be necessary to build capacity among the personnel at these three levels and also to insist that a project will be sanctioned only if it fulfils a set of standardised criteria.

The implementation of the People's Planning Programme by the local bodies suffers from a number of defects discussed above. So, it may be worthwhile to reduce the percentage of plan funds allocated to local bodies to say 20 percent, and then progressively increased to 40 percent, over a period of four years, so that the local bodies would go through a learning process of progressively enhancing their capabilities.

To enable the local bodies to function effectively, it is necessary to complete the process of deployment of departmental staff as quickly as possible and strengthen the technical capabilities of local bodies.
1. To build capacity of poor people, especially women, to participate;
2. To generate positive attitudes in the key functionaries of the local bodies towards involving people in the real sense; and To introduce system changes in organising and conducting meetings of the *grama sabha* / ward conventions.

List of Abbreviations

BLEC	:	Block Level Expert Committee
BPC	:	Block *Panchayat* Committee
BPL	:	Below Poverty Level
CLEC	:	Corporation Level Expert Committee
DLEC	:	District Level Expert Committee
DPC	:	District Planning Committee
IRDP	:	Integrated Rural Developmental Programme
IURD	:	Institute of Urban and Regional Development
JRY	:	*Jawahar Rozhar Yojana*
KRP	:	Key Resource Persons
KRPLLD	:	Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development
KSEB	:	Kerala State Electricity Board
KWA	:	Kerala Water Authority
MLEC	:	Municipal Level Expert Committee

Annexure 1.1

Attingal Municipality: Comparison of Budgets before and during People's Planning

Source of income	90-91	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	98-99	99-2000
Professional tax	228788	247476	277203	283715	365611	348393		5033200	6762200
Building Tax	1324137	1263370	860289	1774519	1965524	1752875	5188245	2348000	3370100
Entertainment tax	1119187	1217448	1293536	1400319	1335384	1239540		2728100	2594000
Share of than taxes from Govt.	145700	286390	931889	1409058	1430406	2411749	845860	12426000	2755000
Grants from Govt.	514310	216310	413733	251619	524665	437818	1452500	2786500	3579000
Other income	49795	37870	55218	64947	66652	64557	2764760	266000	268000
Income other than taxes	1865371	4242029	1983427	1782250	2369512	2125594	700000	985600	1096800
	5247288	7510893	5815295	6966427	8057754	8380526	1.1E+07	26573400	20425100

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Annexure 2.1 Objectives and sequence of events

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┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│ Development  │───│ Self of  │───│ GP/M     │───│ Block        │───│ Block        │
│ Reports      │   │ Projects │   │ Plans    │   │ District     │   │ District     │
│              │   │          │   │          │   │ Plans        │   │ Plans        │
└──────────────┘   └──────────┘   └──────────┘   └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
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(Subjective Felt Needs)

Grama Sabha

(Objective Resource Assessment)

STUDIES

SEMINAR   TASK FORCE   LOCAL BODIES   LOCAL BODIES TASK FORCE   VTC

Phase 1   Phase 1   Phase 1II   Phase III   Phase 1V   Phase V   Phase VI

Implementation

49
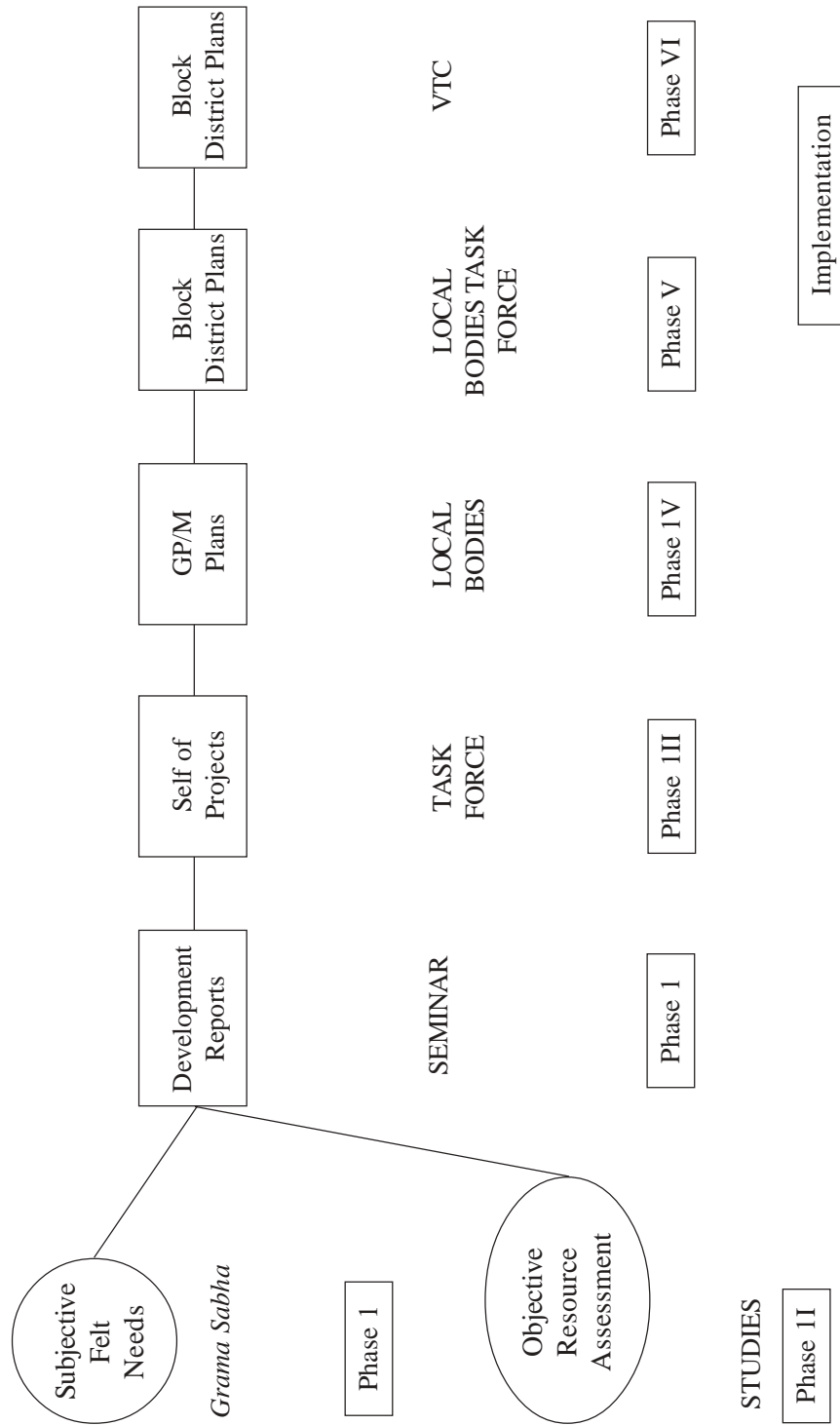
Annexure 4.1

Geographic, Demographic, and Socio-economic Data and Developmental Problems Relating to the Selected *Panchayats* and Municipalities

1.   Vilavoorkal *Grama Panchayat*

Village	Vilavoorkkal
Block *Panchayat*	Nemom
District *Panchayat*	Malayinkizhu
Assembly Constituency	Nemom
Parliament Constituency	Thiruvananthapuram
Taluk	Neyyatinkara
District	Thiruvananthapuram
Police station	Malayinkizhu
Post office	1.Peyad
	2.Malayinkizhu
Electrical section	1.Peyad
	2.Nemom
Primary Health Centre	Pottayil
Krishi Bhavan	Vilavoorkkal
Panchayat office	Pottayil
Area	12.5 sq.km
Population (1991)	22,748
Number of wards	10
Boundaries	East-Malayinkizhu *Panchayat*
	South-Pallichal *Panchayat* (Mookkunni mala)
	West (Karamana River) North (Tiruvananthapuram-Neyyar Road) (Vilappil, Malayinkizhu *Panchayat*)

Developmental Problems Identified by the *panchayat* (source: *Vikasana Rekha*)

Once a centre of rice and cash crops, the situation at present is that not only the area of cultivation has come down but also the paddy fields are getting converted into units for country brick baking leading to environmental hazards. Some of the land has been converted into plots for housing. At one time the main occupation of the people in the area was agriculture. Most people, however, believe that agriculture is not economical and look for other occupations. Factors like absence of irrigation facilities, lack of facilities for soil testing, absence of subsidies for paddy cultivation, ignorance of modern methods of cultivation, and high labour cost of agricultural labour have contributed to this situation. These problems should be addressed through integrated agricultural programmes. Some of the programmes needed are improvement of infrastructural facilities of *Krishi Bhavan*, addressing *mandari* among coconut trees, constructing wells for vegetable cultivations, installation of pump sets, and popularisation of mechanical equipment for harvesting coconuts.

The people in the *panchayat* who rear animals also have to face several constraints. Not even 50 percent of the requirement of eggs and meat is being produced in the *panchayat*. Most of the requirements are met from outside the *panchayat*. Some of the reasons for this state of affairs are: (1) Absence of scientific approaches to cattle breeding, (2) absence of nutritious feed for cattle, (3) low prices for products which the primary producers get, and (4) lack of awareness about diseases, which affect animals etc.

Programmes needed are the following: (1) Subsidy for rearing of cows; (2) Awareness generation about diseases and how to address them.

There is scope for several activities related to fisheries in the *panchayat*. Several welfare programmes especially housing are a major requirement of the *panchayat*. Not only many need housing but also some need improvement for existing houses. Sanitation facilities for poor people through subsidised latrines are urgently needed.

Infrastructural facilities for schools and libraries are also urgently required.
Several welfare measures for SC/ST in the Panchayat are also urgently needed. Housing, drinking water supply, sanitation, construction of roads, provision of TV kiosks at *Anganwadis* etc deserve immediate attention.

2. Kadakkavur *Grama panchayat*

Grade	Special grade
Villages	Kadakkavur, Keezhattingal
Taluk	Chirayinkeezhu
District	Thiruvananthapuram
Block *Panchayat*	Chirayinkeezhu
Assembly Constituency	Attingal
Parliament Constituency	Chirayinkeezhu
Area	10.39 sq.km
Population	24,265
Male	11,049
Female	13,216
Literate	19,069
Male	9,026
Female	10,043
Wards	13

Developmental Problems Identified by the *Panchayat* (source: *Vikasana Rekha*)

1. Rice cultivation needs to be improved considerably.
2. Coconut cultivation needs improvement.
3. Irrigation facility for agriculture should be improved by protecting ponds and canals properly.
4. Self-employment opportunities need to be stepped up through mini dairy units, tailoring units, orchid cultivation, soap production, and pickles production.

5. Housing, drinking water supply, improvement of facilities in *Anganwadis*, mid-day meal scheme for schoolchildren, improvement of hospitals, and improvement of libraries are urgently required.
6. Roads and street lighting require need immediate attention.

3. Attingal Municipality

District	Thiruvananthapuram
Taluk	Chirayinkeezhu
Villages	Attingal, Avanavancheri, Alamcode, Kizhuvilam, Edakkode (Part), Manampur, Keezhattingal
Wards	24
Assembly Constituency	Attingal
Parliament Constituency	Chirayinkeezhu
Population	32,615
Female	17,037
Male	15,518
Area	14.775 sq.km

Developmental Problems Identified by the Municipality (source: *Vikasana Rekha*)

1. Since rice cultivation is not economical, most paddy cultivators are moving out of paddy.
2. Because of *mandari* and other diseases of coconut plants, income from coconut cultivation has drastically come down. The impact of globalisation on coconut prices also has contributed to this situation.
3. For want of encouragement and protection, vegetable cultivation and banana cultivation are affected.
4. Programmes to bring the agriculturists back into intensive vegetable cultivation, banana cultivation, and fruits and pepper cultivation are needed.
5. Animal husbandry activities should be supported by distribution of cows, lambs, and chickens and also supporting milk production through creation of more societies for milk production and marketing, making available loans from financial institutions.
6. Traditional industries based on handlooms, clay, and cane have almost vanished. Brick making and metal manufacture are on the decline. Women who used to find employment in these occupations are much affected by this. Programmes to form societies for handloom cloth production, modernisation of looms, reopening of coconut processing units, programmes for self-employment opportunities for women are also needed.
7. Welfare activities towards addressing shortages in educational infrastructure, health, and housing are urgently needed.
8. Solid waste removal in the Municipality is a major problem, which needs attention.
9. Drainage in the town also needs immediate attention. Most of the drainages are choked.
10. Welfare activities for meeting the needs of SC/ST in terms of their education, housing,

animal husbandry, industries, and infrastructure are urgently needed.

4. Nedumangad Municipality

Villages	Nedumangad, Karippuru, Vattappara (part)
Taluk	Nedumangad
District	Thiruvananthapuram
Area	32.52 sq.km
Population	49,875 (1991 census)
Females	25,646
Males	24,229
SC/ST	6,449
Total wards	28
Wards reserved for women	1, 6, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, and 27
Wards reserved for SC/ST	2, 9, and 25
Date on which the Panchayat became Municipality	1978, Nov.1

Developmental Problems Identified by the Municipality (source: *Vikasana Rekha*)

i.   High intensity of population (1533 per sq.km), in the Nedumangad town.

ii. Undeveloped areas like Arasuparambu, Poovathur, and Karippuru.

iii. Once the municipal area was a centre of agriculture and agricultural marketing. Nedumangad was famous for its production of spices and hill produces, coconuts, arecanut, pepper, and tapioca. However, rubber and concrete constructions are replacing most of these. Yet there are no rubber-based industries in Nedumangad. Further, the fall in the price of rubber has affected the rubber cultivation also.

iv. The only industrial unit tin the area is a private cashew factory at Pazhakutti, which provided nominal employment for about 400 women. Lack of infrastructural facilities and absence of entrepreneurship are the problems in the industrial sector. Fall in prices of agricultural crops forced agricultural labour to shift to construction sector that is undergoing a slump at present.

v.   The urban water supply scheme commissioned in 2000 has become operative only partially. Half of the houses do not get drinking water.

vi. The KSRTC bus stand is far from sufficient to meet the growing needs of traffic.

vii. Nedumangad is accessible only by road. No important National Highway or MC crosses through Nedumangad. Roads are narrow.

viii. Hospitals need much improvement.

ix. Market places need improvement.

x.   Schools and *Anganwadis* need much better facilities.

xi. Housing needs are huge.

xii. Community-based drinking water projects are yet to be fully operative.

xiii. Project for setting up infrastructural facilities for industrial units is not progressing well.

xiv. Slums need improvement.

Annexure 4.2

List of Documents referred

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6. Strategy for Development, Allocations for Projects and Projects
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General
1. Details of Provisions Earmarked to *Panchayat Raj/ Nagarapalika* Institutions: revised Budget for 2000-2001: Appendix 5

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