

**Decentralized Planning And Development :
Theoretical Issues and Experiments in Kerala**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled “Decentralized Planning and Development : Theoretical Issues and Experiment in Kerala” which is being submitted by **BIJUKUMAR V.** for the award of the **DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** is his own work. It may be placed before the examiners for evaluation. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or elsewhere.

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List of Abbreviations

ARC	-	Administrative Reforms Committee
BDO	-	Block Development Officer
BLEC	-	Block Level Expert Committee
BNA	-	Basic Needs Approach
CAARD	-	Committee on Administrative Arrangement for Rural Development
CDP	-	Community Development Programme
CDS	-	Centre for Development Studies
DCs	-	Developed Countries
DLEC	-	District Level Expert Committee
DPC	-	District Planning Committee
DRPs	-	District Resource Persons
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	-	Gross National Product
ICKS	-	International Congress on Kerala Studies
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
KRPs	-	Key Resource Persons
KSSP	-	Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad
LDCs	-	Less Developed Countries
LDF	-	Left Democratic Front
LRPs	-	Local resource Persons
NEP	-	New Economic Policy
NGOs	-	Non Government Organisations
OGI	-	Open General License
PHCs	-	Primary Health Centres
PQLI	-	Physical Quality of Life Index
PRMP	-	Panchayat Resource Mapping Programme
SAP	-	Structural Adjustment Programme
SC	-	Scheduled Caste

SCP	-	Special Component Programme
ST	-	Scheduled Tribe
TINA	-	There Is No Alternative
TSP	-	Tribal Sub Plan
UDF	-	United Democratic Front
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	-	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VTC	-	Voluntary Technical Corps
WB	-	World Bank

Preface

This dissertation is about failure, and about hope. The failure is that of the mainstream models of centralized planning and development; their inability to redress the massive problems of poverty, illiteracy and environmental sustainability. The hope is the emerging practice of an alternative development with its claim to democratic decentralization, popular participation, empowerment and socio-economic equity.

The ironic fact is that on the one hand, one sees compulsions for a total integration of the national economy, and finally the establishment of a 'Global Village' and on the other there existing demand for more regional/local autonomy for establishing a self-sufficient 'Village Swaraj'. The hegemonic processes of globalisation are bringing out the intensification of 'social exclusion' and 'marginalisation, of large sections of the population all over the Less Developed Countries (LDCs). It questions the self-initiative capacity of man. Its interference is very clear in all aspects of life. The exploitation of the majority by the minority for its development threatens the very existence of the former. As a result the basic needs of life become alienated from the people. The free flow of 'finance capital' creates a consumerist culture in the LCD's. After the destruction of their indigenous industries and production, these countries are forced to consume the products of the Multi National Corporations (MNCs). The indigeneous culture also faces a threat from such a 'market imperialism'. The promised benefits of this system is confined to the affluent minority, leaving the vast majority in a state of deprivation and poverty. It affects the social, political, economic and even family relations. The very instinct of being 'human' deteriorates mere that of a 'consumer'. Growing social tensions, violence, unemployment etc. Develop consequently to threaten the civil society. Thus, the life of man deteriorates into a 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' (as Hobbesian State of Nature) existence that is totally devoid of any social meaning.

Such processes are being met with resistances, grass roots initiatives, community innovations and popular movements. The 'struggle for inclusiveness' by various socio-economic, political and environmental movements all over the LDCs tries to counteract social exclusion, opening up spaces for democratic participation, for community building for alternatives to the dominant forms of development and knowledge. The demand for ensuring the inclusion of 'social capital' in economic development has gained greater importance in the course of a 'unidirectional path of development (which aims at economic growth denying socio-economic equity in the distribution of growth).

In this global context, the State of Kerala is implementing decentralized planning. The local people of each region find out their needs and necessities and developmental projects are determined by them. Development is not only treated as some assistance given by the government but it also generates a feeling that development includes 'man' as such. It is the planning and development of the people, by the people and for the people. The ideas of grass-roots/participative democracy is its ideal goal.

This study concentrates on merely two years of experiment. As a new initiative the sources material on the study are very limited. But the available literature on this area have been fully used. The trend created by the new development initiative and the responses of the people are also analysed.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

I

Changing Paradigms of Development

The concepts of 'development' and underdevelopment' constitute a continuing debate in development theories. The various theories which ensued, tried to define and contextualise development in the context of the Developed Countries (DCs) and Less Developed Countries (LDCs). The Liberal Theory of development as advocated by eminent classical liberalists like Adam Smith, Ricardo and Malthus suggested in a unidirectional path that emphasised 'economic growth'. As such, the west became the model of development and all Liberal theories emerged with this paradigm as the reference point.

The Great Depression of the 1930s necessitated an alternate approach to development. It proved that economic growth alone cannot be a criteria for development. Since the 1950s, the debate on the concept of development was accelerated in various circles. The newly independent countries were in an dilemma as to which kind of development model was to be adopted to catalyse development and alleviate poverty. The LDCs were confronted with both domestic compulsions (to arrest growing poverty) and international pressures (from the bipolar world). They had two competing models to choose from : one, the free market approach which encouraged private enterprises, and planning as experimented in the Soviet Union. But most of them were forced to adopt the economic-growth oriented development strategy followed by the west.

But decolonisation and adoption of growth-oriented development did not solve the problems faced by the LDCs. Rather, it increased the dilemma. Subsequently numerous theories which professed a panacea for the economic problem of the LDCs evolved. These include: the dual theory, labour surplus economy, low level equilibrium trap, imbalanced growth, various circles of poverty, big push

industrialization, foreign exchange bottlenecks, unequal exchange, “dependencia” redistribution with growth and basic needs strategy¹.

By the mid 1960s, it became clear that high rates of growth did not guarantee the well being of the poor and the marginalised of these countries. During the colonial period the LDCs supplied raw materials to the DCs. The DCs in turn converted the LDCs into viable markets for finished goods. The continuation of such persistent exploitation led to the colonizer emerging as a ‘developed’ nation, leaving the colonised in the throes of underdevelopment. Thus, underdevelopment of the LDCs owed less to late development than to the unequal relations between DCs and LDCs that dated back to the colonial period. This rethinking about development contributed to the emergence of Dependency Theory of the 1970s.

The Dependency Theory holds that no society can be understood in isolation from the international economic order. The condition of underdevelopment of LDCs is precisely the result of its incorporation into the world capitalist system which is dominated by the developed North.² The rich countries which comprise less than one-third of the world population, enjoys almost 85 per cent of the world’s total income. This created over-dependence of the LDCs to the DCs. All development issues directly or indirectly affecting LDCs are the result of this relationship.

In the 1970s dissatisfaction with the mainstream development crystallized into an alternate people-oriented approach. According to the 1975 report of the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, ‘What Now? Another Development’, development should be: ‘geared to the satisfaction of needs’, endogenous and self-development’ and in harmony with the environment.³ Thus, development theory turned towards Basic Needs Approach (BNA) which gave priority to meeting the basic needs of the people like food, shelter, education, health etc. It focused ‘man’ as a measure of

¹Lal, Deepak , “The Misconceptions of Development economies ”in Stuart Corbridge (ed.) Development Studies : A Reader, (London, Edward Arnold, 1995) p.56

²Randall, Vicky and Robin Theobald, Political Change and Underdevelopment : A Critical Introduction to Third World Politics, (London, Mac Millian Press Limited, 1998) p.120

³Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, “What Now ? Another Development”, Development Dialogue, 1975, 1-2

development. The key themes were equity, poverty, unemployment and growth. The solution to the problems could not be found by accelerating the growth of GNP and Per capita income, but the whole process of development strategy should be turned towards man.⁴ Basic Needs Approach continued to be an important component of many national plans, but they are no longer accepted as viable strategies for development. During this period development had been redefined as an enlargement of people's capacitation.⁵ As such people play a dual role in the development process : as beneficiaries and input into the process of production, growth and transformation.⁶

With questions of democratization, citizenship, liberalisation, institution building and the environment coming into focus in the 1980s, the need for adopting a new strategy of development was inevitable. The craze for augmenting growth to the benefit of a few has led to the deterioration of the ecological system culminating in adverse effects on large sections of the society. As a result, there arose a growing demand for development with equity, taking into consideration the ecological factors. This resulted in the debate on 'sustainable development'. The Brundtland Commission Report defines sustainable development as one that 'meets the needs of the present without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.'⁷ The concept of sustainable development originated as a concerned plea against the concept of growth dominated and market oriented development.

Gilbert (1991) emphasised that the key to sustainable development lies in harmonising economic production, environmental production functions and the physical law of thermodynamics. The approach must be multi-disciplinary, integrating the social sciences, particularly economics and the natural sciences, particularly ecology and physics.⁸ The concept of sustainable development gained significance in recent years due to : (a) inadequacy of the existing development

⁴UNESCO, Different Theories and Practice of Development, (Paris, UNESCO, 1982) p.12

⁵Sen, Amartya , Commodities and Capacities, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985) p.24

⁶Gills, Malcolm , Economics of Development, (New York, W.W.Norton and Company, 1983) p.157

⁷As quoted from Seragddin, Ismail, "Evaluating Environmentally Sustainable Development", Proceedings of the World Bank Conference on Evaluation and Development, (Washington, World Bank, 1995) p.23

⁸Gilbert, A.J. , 'Introduction: Issues and perspectives', in A.J. Gilbert and L.C.Braat (ed.), Modelling for Population and Sustainable Development, (London, Routledge, 1991) p.5

process in wiping out socio-economic inequality and (b) the well-evident nexus between environmental degradation, resource depletion, economic disparity and poverty.⁹

Demand for a New Development Strategy

The failure of contemporary development to meet popular needs underscores the need to devise more people-centered approach which stresses empowerment and participation. The model adopted by the LDCs is 'handicapped' - because it aims only at one aspect of development - i.e. economic development and undermines social development. Poverty stricken states need two basic ingredients of development-growth and distribution. In the absence of distributive equity, development process leads to maldevelopment. Economic growth is not always accompanied by greater participation, empowerment and democracy. Many states that have promoted economic growth have been far from democratic.¹⁰ Development which involves only economic development is anti-democratic as it promotes social inequality.¹¹

In order to tackle the problems of poverty, illiteracy and exploitation (both human and environmental) the existing pattern of development should be revamped and alternative models should be formulated. By the early 1970s, the large and growing numbers of the poor in the LDCs, despite high rate of growth, led to a greater effort to revamp the development process.

Scholars in developing nations have been contesting the application of the western development model due to its drawback of maldevelopment. Kothari (1994) rejects the modernisation and stability approach for its 'historicist', 'teleological' and 'apolitical' model in the fulfillment of the values of freedom, justice and democracy.¹² Shiva (1994) argues that 'development' was thus reduced to a continuation of the

⁹Chattapadhyay, Srikumar et. al., "Micro/Village Level Resource Survey with People's Participation for Sustainable Development", Paper presented for the International Seminar on Monitoring Ecosystems : Perspectives for the 21st century, (New Delhi, 1991) p.2

¹⁰UNDP, Human Development Report 1996, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996) p.58

¹¹Lumps, C.Douglas, "Development Against Democracy", Alternatives : Social Transformation and Humane Governance, Vol.16, No.1, 1991 p.33

¹²Kothari, Rajini, State and Nation Building in the Third World, (New Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1976) p.3

process of colonisation, it became an extension of the project of the wealth creation in modern western patriarchy's economic vision which was based on exploitation.¹³ The mainstream development is increasingly caught in a dilemma between the aims of human and social development, and the constraints of structural adjustment and global monetarism represented by the international financial institutions.¹⁴

In spite of belonging to different schools of thought in development theory, Almond, Powell and Riggs of the 'Structural Functional Approach', Lucian Pye, Eisenstadt, Barrington Moore and Bendix of 'Comparative history approach', Daniel Lerner, David Apter and Karl Deutsch of the 'Social Progress Approach' and Huntington, Almond and Rustow of the 'Political Change approach'- all emphasise the significance of citizen participation in development process.¹⁵

Gunnell (1970) thinks that the problem of defining development is not merely a semantic difficulty, the lack of agreement about the concept is the result of deeper theoretical problem in social sciences.¹⁶ According to UNESCO, the new concept of development process marked a departure from the old in two basic respects. Firstly, the process is viewed in the unity of all its aspects - environmental, technical, economic and social. Secondly, there was a very keen awareness of man as the central link and principal agent of the whole development process.¹⁷ This is aimed at an integral process, characterised by the achievements of both economic and social objectives.

Putnam (1993) emphasises the role of 'social capital' in economic development. She argues that civic involvement influences socio-economic

¹³Shiva, Vandana, 'Development, Ecology and Women', in Rajanikanth (ed.) Paradigms in Economic Development: Classic Perspectives, Critiques and Reflections, (New York, M.E.Sharpe, 1994) p.244

¹⁴Pieterse, Jan Nederveen, "My Paradigm or Yours ? Alternative Development, Post-Development, Reflective Development", Development and Change, Vol.29, No.2, 1998 p.345

¹⁵As quoted from Bhava, Noorjahan , People's Participation in Development Administration in India : An Empirical Study of Tamil Nadu, (New Delhi, Uppal Publishing House, 1984) p.18

¹⁶Gunnell, John G., 'Development, Social Change and Time'in Dwight Waldo (ed.), Temporal Dimensions of Development Administration, (Durham, Due University Press, 1970) p.76

¹⁷UNESCO, op.cit., p.11.

development.¹⁸ Such development can strengthen social cohesion and can provide opportunities for people who have been excluded from the global market.¹⁹ The focus of development should be a “qualitative” one as measured by the participation of the people in matters affecting their lives; the nature of social and interpersonal relations; and the relationships of the people to their environment.²⁰ According to Kothari (1989), without citizen involvement on a continuous basis, development will become autocratic and will lead to an authoritarian and fascist orientation.²¹

Development for equity entails the recognition of the primacy of local development and also the reality of external dependence. The goal of development should be the actualization of the potential of each locality involving maximum reliance on renewable resources, regulation of the speed of such resources, and recycling of resources within the locality.²²

The pitfalls of the development model was hitherto due to the non-participation of the people. This demands an alternative model for development. Kothari (1988) contributes meaningfully to the evolution of an alternate strategy of development.²³ According to Nerfin (1977), alternative development is the terrain of the citizen, or ‘Third System’ politics, the importance of which is apparent in view of the failed development efforts of government and economic power.²⁴ The demand for a new path of development has more significance in the context of the changing socio-economic and political situation. The crisis of capitalist economies, especially East Asia threatens the hollowness of the much professed World Bank idea of ‘There Is No

¹⁸Putnam, R.D., Making Democracy Work : Civic Traditions in modern Italy, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993) p.24.

¹⁹Danson, M.W. (ed.), “Sustainable Wealth Creation at the Local Level in the age of Globalization : Debates and Review”, Regional Studies : Journal of the Regional Studies Association, Vol.32, No. 9, 1998 p.867

²⁰Grangrade, K.D., ‘Economic and social Development : A Gandhian Perspective’, in R.P. Misra (ed.), Gandhian Model of Development and World Peace, (New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1988) p.55

²¹Kothari, Rajni , Politics and the People ; In Search of a Humane India, Vol.II, (New Delhi, Ajanta Publishers, 1988) p.428

²²Kothari, Rajni , Rethinking Development: In Search of Humane Alternatives, (New Delhi, Ajanta Publishers, 1988) p.18

²³Ibid. p.153

²⁴Nerfin, M. (ed.), Another Development : Approaches and Strategies, (Uppasala, The Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, 1997) p.122

Alternative' (TINA) to capitalist development. The setback of this model meant a need for a new path of development based on people's empowerment, social and ecological stability.

The socio-economic reality compels the LDCs to a redefinition of the philosophy and objectives of development in terms of human and ecological orientation. Mainly four trends demand an alternative development paradigm: (i) the enormous growth of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs); (ii) the importance of ecological concerns; (iii) the glaring failures of several development decades contribute to unsettling the mainstream paradigm growth; and (iv) The growing challenges from Bretton Woods institutions.²⁵ Absence of indigenous development in LDCs adversely affects the best utilization of its natural resources. The dependence on developed countries makes the condition even worse. Consequently, programmes and projects have been drawn devoid of national interest but with the lenders' interests as the prime determinant. In the long run, these interests dictate the form, character, content and direction of the development plan.

The LDCs are increasingly being integrated to the world economy. With the economic boundaries of the nation-states disappearing fast, the world is getting transformed into a 'global village'. The economic decisions of the national governments are increasingly being determined by vested interests of multilateral institutions (like International Monetary Fund and World Bank etc.). The entry of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and finance capital has sidelined the small-scale traditional industrial products and the public sector units themselves. Their subsequent marginalisation even in domestic markets has had an adverse impact on the rural poor who are dependent on these for their livelihood. Ultimately, this would lead to a consumerist culture which would inturn deprive the local population even a minimum level of self-sufficiency. Rahman (1993) contrasts a consumerist view of development, which treats people as passive recipients of growth, with a creativist view, according to which people are creative forces of development, the means as well as the end of development, for development is defined as 'people's self-

²⁵Pieterse, *op.cit.* p.350

development'.²⁶ It is in this context that such new development strategies derive their significance.

II

Theoretical Issues in Decentralized Planning and Development

In the context of the inability of economic growth to provide equity and alleviate poverty, the LDCs started thinking over the adoption of an alternative development strategy of decentralized planning and development with popular participation. It derives its rationale from the failure of the central and state level planning and development. Raj (1988) contends that centralized thrust has lost its central relevance or importance, and in a strictly functional point of view, decentralization becomes increasingly important.²⁷ According to Bardhan (1996) 'decentralization with local accountability improves services in publicly supplied facilities. As the daily livelihood of the poor, particularly in rural areas, depends vitally on the local environmental resources like forestry, grazing, irrigation, fisheries and so on, it can thus help in sustainable development'.²⁸

Centralized Planning and development can be criticized at various levels. While there is common agreement that greater equality should be a paramount goal for planning, the actual development usually goes towards increased inequality.²⁹ It is bureaucratic, for plans are formulated by technocrats, economists and econometricians with no actual feel of the ground reality. Such a system produces, 'a growing discontent and disenchantment among the people and isolation of power centres from them, with a yawning vacuum in the spaces that divide the two. It is in these spaces that deeper pathologies like 'communalism' and 'fundamentalism' find a feasible ground, while the normal democratic process gets stymied and rendered impotent as a

²⁶Rahman, M.A., People's Self-development : Perspectives on Participatory Action Research, (London : Zed : Dhaka University Press, 1993) p.78

²⁷Raj, K.N., 'Issues in Decentralised Development Planning and Implementation', Development Perspectives, (Delhi, B.R.Publishing Corporation, 1988) p.173

²⁸Bardhan, Pranab, "Decentralised Development", Indian Economic Review, Vol.XXXI, No.2, 1996 p.142

²⁹Myrdal, Gunnar, Asian Drama : An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nation, (London, Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1971) p.121

result of these maladies.³⁰ Both the 'ethnic upsurge' of identities and the 'regionalist' movements are as a result of this maldevelopment.³¹

Decentralization implies the devolution of decision-making authority and control over the management of development initiatives and resources from the centre to periphery.³² Its measures are often advocated to promote more appropriate forms of development and assist in the mobilization of local human and material resources.³³ Thus, the term becomes significant in the context of the changing paradigms of development - i.e., growth to growth with social justice.

Decentralized planning is a mechanism to make the process more people-oriented ensuring maximum utilization of resources. It aims at the development of those areas which are neglected by the centralized development process. In this sense, it can be said that it focuses attention on the development of the weaker sections and the local areas. When these people and their organisations are involved in the planning process, planning becomes people-directed, people's need-oriented, and implementation is likely to be cost effective.³⁴ Decentralization implies development from below and not an imposition from above. Decentralized development means 'not only deconcentration, delegation and devolution of power within the government; but also the effective functioning of a number of participatory organisations to support, complement and supplement government activities and also to promote a measure of self-reliant development within the community.'³⁵ The basic characteristics of decentralized development are basic-needs oriented; labour intensive; small scale in

³⁰Kothari, Rajni, Growing Amnesia : An Essay on Poverty and Human Consciousness, (New Delhi, Viking, 1993) pp.121-22

³¹Kothari, Rajni, State against Democracy : In Search of Humane Governance, (New Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1988) p.193

³²Grow, David D., and Jerry Van Sant , 'Decentralisation and Participation : Concepts in Needs of Implementation Strategies' in Elliot R. Morss and David D. Grow (ed.), Implementing Rural Development Projects :Lessons from Aid and World Bank experiences, (Washington, Westview Press, 1985) p.107

³³Brohman, John, Popular Development ;Rethinking in Theory and Practice of Development, (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1996) p.226

³⁴Aziz, Abdul and P.V.Shenoy, "District Planning: Principles and their Operationalisation", Journal of Rural Development, Vol.16, No.4, 1997 p.577

³⁵Sundaram, K.V., Decentralised Multi Level Planning: Principles and Practice (Asian and African Experiences), (New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1997) p.62

nature; regional/area based; rural centered; based on “appropriate rather than highest technology”.³⁶

Decentralized planning can contribute to development in the following ways : “close contact between potential beneficiaries and government officials allows to respond more effectively to the local needs and conditions; local capacity to plan implementation and maintain development activities increase with experiences; and the balance of political power in a specific locality can be altered by encompassing, strengthening or compromising, with traditional leaders”.³⁷

Kothari (1985) emphasises that the position of the poor and the weak in the rural areas would not improve so long as power and decision-making remain outside their reach. It is not until the levers of state power move downwards that the poor majorities can aspire to stake a claim.³⁸ It is from the fact that man and his concerns become the central phenomenon of the whole process of development, that concept of ‘man-centered development’ originated.³⁹

In the development debate, popular participation constitutes one very important element. Participation means that people are closely involved in the economic, social, cultural and political process that affect their lives.⁴⁰ Through popular participation, their grave problems (like poverty, illiteracy, inequality and material deprivation) get top priority. The democratic spirit becomes more vibrant and strengthened. On the contrary, people becoming onlookers in their development, would lead to the alienation of the marginalised sections from the mainstream development. Only decentralized polity, based on participatory democracy can succeed in overcoming the alienation and apathy of the people by effecting a realisation of their vast potential for human and material development.

³⁶Ibid. p.104

³⁷Bryant, C. And L.G. White, Managing Development in the Third World, (Boulder, Westview Press, 1982) p.161.

³⁸Kothari, Rajni, Foreword to L.C. Jain, Grass Without Roots : Rural Development Under Government Auspices, (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1985) p.11

³⁹see UNEP/UNCTAD, Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974, (Paris, UNESCO Secretariat document, 20 April, 1979)

⁴⁰UNDP, Human Development Report 1993, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994) p.21

People's participation would benefit the planning process in two ways : their contribution in the forms of cash, materials and labour to the official programme at the local level and their direct participation in the proceedings, formulations of policies, decision-making and its implementation.⁴¹ The ever-growing significance of participation in development process is not only the will of the majority of the people, but the way to ensure moral, humanitarian, social cultural and economic objectives of a more humane and effective development.⁴² But participation is not the reducing of the people to a common denominator, but accommodating them as sensible human beings who are able to determine their own destinies.⁴³ As a result of this mode of thinking, the concepts of 'participatory development' and 'democratic planning' became popular.

Decentralized planning and development aims at a more effective mobilization and utilization of local resources. Resources is not meant in the narrow sense of term, for it includes not only financial resources/natural resources but also human resources. The mobilization of a nation's human resources needs to include all the people, ideas and their managing skills not only labour.⁴⁴ Scientific knowledge and techniques have to be applied in a concrete way to the natural and human resources available in the given area and an operationally feasible programme has to be worked out. This urges the need for the preparation of local resource mapping. This can be done if there are effective planning agencies at the grass-root level. This creates the need for a people's common forum or a Gramasabha. It would strengthen social accountability in the development process by inculcating a new arena of cooperation between rural masses, their local resources and policy formulators and technicians.

Decentralized planning and development gains fuller meaning if the participants are empowered. This would strengthen the roots of the democratic

⁴¹Sebastin, S.J. and Leonard, S.J. 'Regional Planning and Industrial Development 'in V.S. Mahajan (ed.) Studies in Indian Planning, (New Delhi, Deep and Deep Publications, 1980) p.320

⁴²Rahnema, Majid, 'Participation' in Wolfgang Sachs (ed.) The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power, (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1997) p.162

⁴³Kothari, Rajni, Rethinking Development : In Search of Humane Alternatives, (New Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1988) p.21

⁴⁴Uphoff, N., Local Institutions and Decentralization for Development, (Comilla, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, 1985) p.16

process. Ghai (1989) contends that 'the concept of participation as empowerment comes close to the notion of development as fulfillment of human potentials and capabilities.⁴⁵ Thus the new paradigm of development assumes new dimension like democracy, participation and empowerment which are in consonance with growth, equity and social justice. When political, economic and social systems are dominated by some elite sections of society, empowerment is necessary for those who are excluded from the development process.⁴⁶ Wolf (1983) argues that hitherto excluded social groups should be brought under the purview of power relations and decision-making process in order to ensure access and control over resources and regulations of institutional mechanisms.⁴⁷ Without empowerment, decentralization becomes meaningless and it simply results in the transfer of power from one elite group to another, without bringing any real benefits to the poor.⁴⁸

Friedman (1981) connects political empowerment with social empowerment. He argues that 'political empowerment would seem to require a prior process of social empowerment through which effective participation in politics become possible'.⁴⁹ Community empowerment can play a powerful role in creating a sustainable development with an eco-friendly approach. Selection and use of locally appropriate technologies are essential for decentralized development. The local units should be capable and free to choose the most appropriate methods, techniques and designs for the activities in their area. Such an empowerment of the people and local level community actions assumes special importance in the context of the ongoing process globalisation.

⁴⁵Ghai, "Participatory Development: Some Perspectives from Grassroots Experiences", Journal of Development Planning, Vol.59, No.1, 1998 p.216

⁴⁶Cox, David, "Towards people-centred Development : The Social Development Agenda and Social Work", The Indian Journal of Social Work, Vol.59, No.1, 1998 p.515

⁴⁷Wolf, Marshal, Participation : The View from Above, (Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1983) p.2

⁴⁸Brohman, op.cit, p.235

⁴⁹Friedman, J., "The Active Community : Towards a Political-territorial framework for rural development in Asia", Economic Development and Change, Vol.29 p.228

To sum up, instead of applauding the achievements of decentralized planning and development, the growing socio-economic, political and environmental compulsions create the need to seek the possibilities of an indigenous decentralized planning and development. The hegemonic processes of globalisation are bringing about an intensification of 'social exclusion' and 'marginalisation' of large bodies of population in the LDCs. Such processes are being met with staunch resistance, grassroots initiatives, community innovations and popular movements that try to counteract the social exclusion, opening up spaces for democratic participation. The 'struggle for inclusiveness' can be achieved only through empowerment of these sections by means of greater participation in a decentralized development. Sundram (1994) emphasises that mainly three imperatives have increased the awareness and need for operationalising decentralised planning and development in the contemporary scenario: Firstly, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) adopted by the LDCs cutting back the social safety networks of the poor. This situation necessitates an alternative "self-reliant approach" in which local initiatives must lead the development efforts. Secondly, the environmental crisis of the mid 80s surfacing as an important concern, and 'sustainable development' emerging as the strategy appropriate to all countries to arrest the rapid depletion of global natural resources. The need to approach this in a decentralized manner follows. Thirdly, the collapse of the centrally planned regimes of Eastern Europe which proved ineffective in implementing local development⁵⁰ has further underlined the need and significance of the decentralized approach to development.

III

Decentralized Planning and Development in India

Like all other LDCs, India also faces a crisis in the model of development strategy due to the gap between economic growth and social opportunity. Its proclaimed aim of 'ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity' still remains a dream. The GNP and GDP have increased rapidly, but

⁵⁰Sundaram, K.V., 'The Emerging New Paradigm : Issues, Considerations and Research Agenda', in Amitava Mukherjee and V.K.Agnihotri (eds.), Government and Development : Varies from the East and the West, (New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1994) p.25

the country remains handicapped economically and socially by its overwhelming illiteracy, backwardness in health care and other crucial deprivation.⁵¹

After fifty years of planning and development experience, 320.3 million people are below the poverty line.⁵² India ranks a poor 139th amongst the 174th LDCs in the area of human development.⁵³ While India is doing significantly better than LDCs like Ethiopia and Zaire with reference to most of the development indicators, there are large areas within India where living conditions are not very different from those prevailing in these countries.⁵⁴ In short, the model of development pushed the country from 'traditional poverty' to 'modern destitution'.⁵⁵

The agonising inadequacy of development in the last fifty years have led to a revision in the development model. The crisis points out that it is necessary to provide an alternative development which provides minimum conditions for the rural masses; stops (or atleast keeps within limits) the influx into urban areas; and gives rise to an integral approach to both rural and urban development, each sector supporting the others, (instead of the present parasite relationship) are both becoming part of a common continuation of human settlements and productive relationships that have

⁵¹Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen, India ; Economic Development and Social Opportunity, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997) pp.180-81

⁵²Government of India, Planning Commission, Draft Ninth Five Year Plan (1997 - 2002), Vol. I, p.33

⁵³UNDP, Human Development Report 1998, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999) p.21

The World Bank's latest assessment on poverty defined as those living on one US dollar per day has shown that the number of Indians living below the poverty line in the has risen to 340 million by the end of 1997 against 300 million at the end of the previous decade. More than 30 percent of the world's 1.2 billion poor live in India indicating the enormity of the problem. In terms of per capita income, India ranks 124 out of 157 nations listed in the latest World Bank atlas. The World Bank's finding that there has been no reduction in rural poverty with their number rising from 224 million in early 90s to 250 million by the end of 1997 and virtual stagnation in urban poor numbers at 73 million confirmed the belief that the economic reforms initiated since mid 1991 have failed to attack poverty. This has happened despite a per capita annual growth of 1.9 per cent between 1991-95 and anticipated 3.7 per cent growth during 1992-2000 against the required 1.3 per cent growth necessary for reducing poverty by fifty per cent by the year 2015. In shot, India has produced a paradoxical situation of substantial economic growth and increased poverty. While the economy will have to grow faster than 8 per cent annually, the poverty alleviation programmes will have to be retargeted. As quoted from The Hindustan Times, 5th June, 1999.

⁵⁴Dreze and Sen, op.cit, p.29

⁵⁵Kothar, Rajni, "Towards a People's Democracy", Biblio, Vol.II, No.8, July-August, 1997 p.10

one single focuses; the well being and dignity of all individuals irrespective of location or class'.⁵⁶

The demand for decentralized planning and development is the result of the previously mentioned 'maldevelopment' arising out of the deficiency of centralized planning and development. Varying criticisms have been levelled from different points of view. The core issue being challenged is that most of the benefits from the planning policies have not reached the poor, even if such was the proclaimed aim and motivation. The benefits have accrued instead to the strata above them. More generally, the policies pursued have nowhere led to greater economic equality and a lessening of concentration of economic power.⁵⁷ As a result, the essence of distributive justice collapsed.⁵⁸

The planning concentrates only on broad considerations without taking into account specific regional necessities. As a result, unequal development between the regions exists. This has contributed to the phenomenon of 'two Indias'. One on a very modern path of 'progress' and the other utterly underdeveloped.⁵⁹ Chakravarthy (1987) is of the view that the planning in India may be good on paper, but are rarely good in implementation.⁶⁰ But some others have the view that Indian planning is not good both in implementation and formulation. According to Kabra (1997), 'project identification, formulation, appraisal, organisation and concurrent monitoring have found to be inadequate, faulty and uncoordinated. Clear-cut guidelines and direction for lower level decision-making is not provided.'⁶¹

Departmentalism is the hall-mark of Indian planning. This tendency worsens the possibility of planning by the people and changes it into a planning without

⁵⁶Kothari, Rajni, India : An Alternative Framework for Rural Development' in Nerfin (ed.), op.cit., p.211

⁵⁷Myrdal, op.cit., p.117

⁵⁸Kothari, Rajni , State against..... op.cit., p.178

⁵⁹Ibid., p.220

⁶⁰Chakravarthy, Sukhamoy , Development Planning : The Indian Experience, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987) p.39

⁶¹Kabra, Kamal Narayan , 'Some Aspects of Economic Growth and Planning : A Long-Term Retrospect', in Sushila Ramswamy (ed.), Political Science Annual, (New Delhi, Deep and Deep Publications, 1998) p.265

participation. Consequently, as Dandekar opines, when 'vested interests' had an undue influence upon Indian Planning; 'plan resources (had) passed into the hands of the vested interests and been employed in market-oriented uses'.⁶² Thus, development processes in India has not yet become a mass movement; the development policies and process cannot become effective until it becomes a mass movement.⁶³

The centralized approach of planned development adopted in India is quite against the federal spirit of the country itself. The centralized schemes and centrally sponsored schemes mean more central control. Chakravarthy (1987) argued that the 'political system gravitated towards a more unitary form of federalism partly as a result of the result of the process of planning'.⁶⁴

Kothari (1985) aptly describes the inadequacy and impact of centralized planned development in India :

".....lopsided development of India is a direct consequence of centralized government and planning, has rendered the Indian state weak, vulnerable to onslaughts from a variety of sources and unable to meet even the minimum needs and expectations of the people. Meanwhile, the institutions designed to service a democratic process of nation-building have been allowed to decay. With this organic ties between the government at the centre and the people inhabiting this vast sub-continental poverty have been eroded".⁶⁵

The socio-economic, political and ecological realities of India demands the adoption of decentralized planning and development. As the Indian society is multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural, more decentralized, people-centered, region-based development should be adopted.⁶⁶

The decentralized development approach involving participatory processes assumes greater importance in the context of the growing marginalisation of the

⁶²Dandekar, V.M. 'Dhananjaya Ramachandra Gadgill : Making of the Man' as quoted from Terence J. Byres, 'State, Class and Development Planning in India', in Terence J. Byres (ed.), The State and Development Planning in India, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994) p.29

⁶³Kurien, C.T., "New Development Strategy", Seminar, No.149, January, 1971 p.39

⁶⁴Chakravarthy, op.cit., p.50

⁶⁵Kothari, Rajni , Foreword to L.C. Jain op.cit., p.7

⁶⁶Misra, R.P. and K.V. Sundaram , Multi-level Planning and Integrated Rural Development in India, (New Delhi, Heritage Publishers, 1980) p.52

weaker sections from the mainstream development in India. As a country where 75 per cent of the population are living in villages and engage in agriculture and allied works, the participation of the deprived majority is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Planning technology which can be handled by the people themselves should be implemented. In essence this means that the techniques and tools of planning which can stimulate the people towards self-reliant development have to be adopted. Decentralization of industrial activity and the promotion of small scale industries too as projects for the utilisation of unused manpower in the villages is also vital to this endeavour.

As India is identified as a social formation - combination of various modes of production- decentralized planning and development is most desirable. In sectors like agriculture, small scale industries and related sectors, central plan guidelines for development is ineffective. Specific schemes of development have to be formulated on the basis of detailed knowledge of the local situation. In the political sphere, as India has adopted a federal structure of government, its constituents like states, districts, blocks and village panchayats at the various levels have the constitutional authority to formulate plans and implement it at their own spheres of action. However, the revenues of the state governments are so limited and the central outlay in many cases is so inadequate that, it is essential to explore the possibility of local mobilisation of resources for local development. Kothari (1989) emphasises the relevance of decentralized planning and development in India in the context of increasing centralization and continuous erosion of both the federal structure and the whole framework of local self-government in both rural and urban areas as well as a variety of autonomous institutions and voluntary bodies. - In this country with continental dimensions, amazing diversity in natural resources, economic structure and cultural features, planning has to be decentralized. Again, the problems of physico-climatic, agro-climatic, agro-economic, infrastructural and socio-economic milieu, have to be addressed not at the national or state level but at the grass-root level. Inter-regional disparities in development, heterogeneity in social structure, the

problems of poverty and unemployment are 'area-specific' and 'group-specific'. It demands a decentralized approach to reach a solution.⁶⁷

Decentralized planning and development deserves its significance in the context of losing control of the Indian technocrats in nation planning due to compulsions from the international organisations and authorities. This situation where the control over planning, exercised by the indigenous technocrats are handed over to international technocrats awakens the self-determining consciousness of the people. It should be tackled with popular participation in planning and development. This would strengthen the democratic fabric of the country.

Gandhian influence

During the nationalist movement, Gandhi conceptualised a free India with decentralized planning and development. Gandhi was aware of all the evils of centralization and pleaded for industrialisation to be decentralized. The core idea of the Gandhian strategy was planning and development from below. It should provide social justice along with growth. 'Real planning', according to Gandhi, 'consists in the best utilisation of the entire manpower of India'.⁶⁸ He felt that this was the only remedy to the increasing poverty and degradation of life in the villages. He was quite critical of the western model of centralized development because it was hostile to the existence of a non-violent social order.⁶⁹ Thus, Gandhi's approach of development is 'indigenous' and 'man-centered' as against the Nehruvian approach of centralized, bureaucratic and 'modernising' development.

Constitutional Ethos

The Gandhian perspectives on development have been incorporated into the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India.⁷⁰ As these policies are obligatory part of the state, the ruling class in India have done only a lip service to

⁶⁷Mishra, Anil Dutta , Decentralised Planning : A study of Objectives and Operational Framework, (New Delhi, Uppal Publishing House, 1998) p.69

⁶⁸Gandhi, M.K. , Harijan, Vol.XI, No.8 23rd March, 1947 p.79

⁶⁹Gandhi, M.K. , Harijan, Vol.VII, No.47, 30th December, 1939 p.391

⁷⁰ Constitution of India, Articles 38 &40.

it. As a result, the Nehruvian model of centralized planning and development got engrained as the path to be followed.

Five Year Plan and Decentralized Planning

Despite its rhetorical emphasis and commitment to decentralized planning and development, the Five Year Plan remains as a centralized affair, without popular participation. The Community Development Programmes (CDP) was initiated as a bold experiment vitally integrated to rural development with decentralized initiative at the block level. It did not achieve its goals satisfactorily. This was due to the fact that the programmes were viewed basically as a 'people's programme' with the government participation. The Panchayats deteriorated into an 'implementing agency of the centre'. It widened the gulf between the lowest bureaucrats and the people. It also lacked in giving adequate attention to agriculture particularly to food production.⁷¹ Similarly, the area level programmes such as Command Area and Drought Prone Area did nothing to ensure the participation of the people in the development problems of the country.

Following the report of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee Report (1957) Panchayat Raj system was established in various states which provided the basic institutional structure of decentralized planning and development. The Asoka Mehta Committee (1977) on Panchayat Raj favoured District level planning. The Dantwala Report (1978) on block level planning and the Hanumantha Rao Report (1984) on district planning endorsed the view. The committee to review the existing Administrative Arrangement for Rural Development (CAARD) stressed the need for decentralized planning in its formulation and implementation.

Consequent to this, efforts were made to adopt decentralized planning and development in various states. During the late 1960s decentralized planning was introduced in Maharashtra and Gujarat. In 1969 Tamil Nadu started the District Planning under the guidelines of Planning Commission. But these plans never

⁷¹F.A.O., "Towards improved Multi-level Planning for Agricultural and Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific", FAO Economic and Social Development Paper, 1990 p.10

became operational because of the absence of an executive body with elected representatives at the district level. Karnataka started the experiment of district planning in 1978 and made a clear demarcation of the areas for planning at district and state level local institutions.⁷² In 1985-86 West Bengal formally undertook decentralized planning. The procedure adopted required each gramapanchayat to first prepare a statement of the pressing needs of the people in the Grama Panchayat area. In 1985 Tripura started its experiment on decentralized planning and development.⁷³ In 1996 Kerala formally started decentralized planning titled as “people’s planning”.

In 1991, India entered into a phase of ironic dichotomy. On the one hand, attempts began to integrate the Indian economy into the global economy and thus endorse the “Global Village” concept. On the other, the demand for decentralization of power and establishing a “Village Swaraj” gained much voice. The adoption of New Economic Policy (NEP) by the Government necessitated attempts to forge a new strategy to regain the confidence of the people. The initiation and immediate reintroduction of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act deserves special attention in this context. It was reiterated that only through decentralized planning and development could India be self-sufficient. Involving the local people in the plan formulation and its implementation was inevitable.

Democratic decentralization has been given a boost with the enactment of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. Consequent to this, most of the State Governments/Union Territories have enacted enabling legislations, providing for elected bodies at the village, block and district levels with adequate representation from the weaker sections and the women. This situation forced the Ninth Plan to adopt a detailed provision for decentralized planning and development with greater people’s participation.

⁷²Palanidurai, K.V., ‘Decentralised Planning in India : experiences of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu’, in R.P.Mishra (ed.) District Planning : A Handbook, (New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1990) p.99

⁷³Ghosh, Arun , “Lessons for the Future”, Seminar, No.360 August, 1989 p.21

Drawing its agenda from the Ninth Plan, the Kerala State for the first time in India adopted the principle of 'planning from below.' Around 35-40 per cent of the Ninth Plan programmes are allotted to the schemes formulated and implemented by the local bodies within the respective areas for their responsibilities. The gramasabha of various Grama panchayats convened, discussed problems affecting the region and the people, and also the plans that are to be formulated. All hitherto excluded sections from the development process have been attracted to the process. The selection of beneficiaries are done in the popular bodies like Gramasabhas, neighbourhood forums etc. It tried to ensure maximum people's participation at every stage of the planning process till the implementation. The monetary, material and labour sources at the level of the implementation of the plan is adequately tapped. Thus, it is a unique experiment in the development history of Kerala as well as India, the instrument of mass conscientisation being utilised in regard to the issues in development.

IV

The Study, Methodology, Description of the Selected Area and Levels

Despite widely acclaimed social sector achievements, which are comparable not only to other states, but also the whole world, the 'Kerala model of development' faces a grave crisis due to its failure in the productive sector. It is now felt that the crisis would take away all that the state achieved in the earlier half of the century. Decentralized planning and development adopted by the Kerala Government in the mid 1990s is a notable step towards a triggering of growth in the productive sector.

The basic questions of the study are; why forty-seven years of centralized planning and development in India failed to arrest growing poverty, illiteracy and unemployment despite its rhetorical emphasis on decentralized planning and development; why the LDCs are forced to rethink in the way of decentralized planning and development; what is the intended model of people's planning in Kerala; how it works at various levels of government (Grama Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayat); the applicability of this experiment to India as a whole; how people's participation is ensured in the decentralized planning; its possibility of success on a politically divided society like Kerala.



Relevance of the Study : The study is relevant in the context of the development crisis faced by Kerala and the experiment of decentralized planning with popular participation to counter it. The study becomes important in the context of the introduction of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Acts in various states. The seventy fourth amendment of the constitution makes it mandatory for every state to constitute the District Planning Committees(DPCs). Every DPC has to prepare draft development plans with regard to matters of common interest between the Panchayat and the Municipalities including spatial planning. Article 243 ZD states that ‘there shall be constituted in every state at the district level a DPC to consolidate the plans prepared by the Panchayats and the Municipalities in the District, and to prepared a draft development plan for the district as a whole.

Finally, the study is essential in the context of the demand for the adoption of a new strategy of development in the LDCs, which followed the centralized path of planning and development in the earlier decades.

Objectives of the Study : The objectives of the study are : to assess the growing importance of decentralized planning and development and the drawbacks of its counterpart; to study the development crisis in ‘Kerala model of development’ and how the people’s planning tries to find a solution to it; to examine the ways and means in which decentralized planning and development can achieve popular participation and empowerment; to study the working/implementation of decentralized planning at various levels (such as Village Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayat) and the different stages involved in it.

Description of the Area

Located between the western ghats in the east and the Arabian sea in the West, the width of the Kerala State varies from 35 km. to 120 km. According to the geographical features, the state can be divided into hills and valley, midlands and coastal belts. Agriculture forms the main occupation of the people. About 42 per cent of the population depends on agriculture and allied works for their livelihood. A

unique feature of the State is the predominance of cash crops. Production of food crops continue to stagnate or decline in recent years.

The state was formed in 1956 with the reorganization of three areas- Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. It has 990 Gram Panchayats, 55 Municipalities, three Corporations, 152 Block Panchayats and 14 District Panchayats. The study concentrate on two Grama Panchayats (Vithura and Karakulam), one Block Panchayat (Nedumangad) and one District Panchayat (Thiruvananthapuram).

Vithura Gram Panchayat

Vithura is situated at the eastern part of Thiruvananthapuram District and it borders the state of Tamil Nadu. On the eastern side of the Panchayat is the Ponnudi hills. On the southern part we have the Aryanad and Tholikodu Grama Panchayats. Peringamala Panchayat is in the Northern part of Vithura. The Panchayat came into existence on 28th December, 1963. At first, it was one of the wards of Aryanad Grama Panchayat (i.e., Aryanad B). The Vithura Grama Panchayat came under the jurisdiction of Vellanad Development Block.

The total area of Vithura is 31.56 sq.km. with population of 26,613. Among these, male constitute 13,165 and female 13,448. The Panchayat comprises of areas populated predominantly by tribals. In fact, it is a Scheduled Tribe reserved Grama Panchayat of the Thiruvananthapuram District. The Panchayat under consideration is highly backward and underdeveloped. Most of the people live in isolated hilly areas, performing their traditional work (smallscale handicrafts, traditional medicines etc.). In spite of its backwardness, the panchayat's successful experiment in decentralized planning and development with considerable popular participation deserves its selection for the study.

Karakulam Gram Panchayat

Karakulam Grama Panchayat is a special grade Panchayat near Thiruvananthapuram city, under Nedumangad Block Panchayat. Its total area is 25.01 sq.km. According to the 1996 Panchayat Level Survey Report, the total population is

43,606. Among them 20,305 are men and 23,301 are women. The Scheduled Caste constitutes 3,905 of the population. Among them 1,856 are men and 2,049 are women. The Panchayat has been selected for the award of the best panchayat for implementing decentralized planning. It has achieved a good reputation within a short period of two years, not only within India but also abroad. It is one of the model panchayat in Kerala.

Nedumangad Block Panchayat

The Nedumangad Block Panchayat is under the Nedumangad Taluk in Thiruvananthapuram District. Out of total population of the Block, 65 per cent are farmers and 10 per cent are government and non-government officials. It includes five Grama Panchayats - Anad, Aruvikara, Karakulam, Panavoor and Vembayam. The area of this Block is 124.30 sq.km. The Block is surrounded by Vellanad Block in the west, Thiruvananthapuram Rural Block in the south and south-west, and by the Vamanapuram Block in the north-east and north-west.

Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat

Thiruvananthapuram, the southern most district of the state, is enclosed on the north by Kollam, Kottarakkara and Pathanapuram taluks of the Kollam district, on the south and south-west by Vilavancode Taluk of the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and on the west by the Arabian sea. The experiments of decentralized planning in the last two years in the district have attracted the attention of many.

Levels Selected : The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act (1994) gives a three- tier structure of the Panchayat Raj system (i.e., Grama Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayat). The Grama Panchayat is the lowest constitutional body, the Block Panchayat is at the intermediary level and District Panchayat at the apex. Each level performs its own function including formulation, implementation and integration. The study focusses on the three levels and its experiments in decentralized planning and development.

Methodology

The data and information for the study have been collected from published and unpublished documents, both primary and secondary. The primary sources include government documents and state planning board documents. The secondary source of data have been collected from books and journals dealing with specific issues of decentralized planning. A field level study was conducted on the experiment of decentralized planning process at grassroots level at the two village Panchayats, the block Panchayats and the district Panchayat mentioned before. The study refers to the two year period of 1996-1998.

Panchayat Presidents, members of Panchayat, secretaries of Panchayats, people related to planning process, local political leaders (including opposition party members of Panchayats), local people etc. were consulted. They included 4 Panchayat presidents, 4 Panchayat secretaries, 2 members of Kerala State Planning Board, 7 activities of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), 12 Local Resource Persons, 6 District Resource Persons, 5 expert committee members, 6 local political leaders (belonging to opposition party of the Panchayat) and 25 local people from various Panchayats. Their views, experiences and observations helped in the study. While participating in the meetings of the gramasabha of Kulathoor Grama Panchayat in Thriuvananthapuram District the researcher's direct experiences, views of local people, discussion in the Gramasabha, contact with different sections of people, observation from the proceedings, have also been used for the study.

Plan of Study

The study starts with an Introduction which consists of four parts dealing with an analysis of the changing paradigms of development and the different approaches to development at various times; the theoretical issues on decentralized planning and development and its contemporary relevance; critical analysis of centralized planning in India.

Chapter 2 elaborately narrate the development crisis in the Kerala model of development and the experiments of decentralized planning and development.

Chapter 3 deals with the experiments at Grama Panchayat level.

Chapter 4 analyses decentralized planning and development at the Block and District levels. It includes earlier initiatives of Block and District level planning and also the new experiments in the state.

Chapter 5 is a conclusion dealing with problems and prospects of the experiment of decentralized planning.

Chapter II

Decentralized Planning and Development in Kerala

Kerala has been portrayed as a 'land of experiments' both in the political and socio-economic spheres. In political terms, it is considered as the 'political laboratory of India'.¹ In the socio-economic sphere, the world widely acclaimed its model of development. Its achievements in the socio-economic sectors are comparable even with that of the developed countries.² But these experiments are not a one day wonder. It took many years and decades to reach these achievements.

Kerala is way ahead of the rest of India in terms of the social indicators of development like health, education etc. There prevails a high quality of life, low infant mortality rate, increase in nutritional status and greater accessibility to essential services like health, water, electricity, public distribution system etc. Kerala has ensured a big reduction in income disparities. The State has achieved a high literacy rate, particularly a high female literacy rate and it has succeeded to a great extent in providing mass education .

Despite its achievements in the social sector, the State faces a grave development crisis in the productive and environmental sectors. The very sustainability of the model is being questioned in the wake of the crisis in the

¹In the socio-economic sphere, the radical reforms and introduction of land reforms, by ending existing land relations, the network of rural libraries and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) giving education to the rural masses are unique experiment of Kerala. With the misuse of Article 356 of the Constitution (dissolution of State Governments) for the first time, Kerala drew the attention of various circles. The Communist experiment in Kerala (power through 'ballot') for the first time in the world political scenario trembled.

²Amartya Sen praised Kerala's remarkable achievements in the social fields, including an achieved life expectancy of well over 72 year (69 for males and 74 for females by 1991) that compares with China's (69 years) and South Korea's (71 years) achievements. In case of literacy also Kerala does significantly better than China. In adult female literacy rate, India's 39 per cent is well behind China's 68 per cent, but Kerala's 86 per cent rate is much higher than China's. In terms of rural female literacy, Kerala has a higher achievement than every individual province in China. See, Sen, Amartya , 'Radical Needs and Moderate Reforms' in Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen (eds.) Indian Development : Selected Regional Perspectives, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997) Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen , India : Economic Development and Social Opportunity, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997)

development model. The important problems are : industrial backwardness, low economic growth and per capita income, crisis in traditional industries (like coir, cashewnut, handlooms and handicrafts) and growing unemployment in the recent years. The most important amongst them is the issue of stagnation in agricultural production due to the cultivation of food crops being replaced by the cultivation of cash crops'.³

In spite of rich resource endowments and a high intensity of cropping, the productivity of most of the crops grown in Kerala is lower than those in the other states of the country. The contribution of the agricultural sector to the State GDP declined from 66 per cent in the early fifties to 30 per cent in the mid-nineties. The area under food crop cultivation declined from 14.8 lakh hectare to 8.8 lakh hectare, while the area under non-food crop cultivation increased from 7.0 lakh hectare to 19.6 lakh hectare. The internal production of foodgrains declined from 14 lakhs tonnes in the mid seventies to 7.8 lakh tonnes making the State increasingly dependent on external sources for meeting her food requirements. The area under rice production (the staple food of the people) declined from 4.3 lakh hectare in 1996-97 to 3.87 lakh hectare in 1997-98. Consequently, rice production declined from 8.71 lakh tones in 1996-97 to 7.65 lakhs tones in 1997 - 98. The relative contribution of the agricultural and allied sectors declined from 31.5 per cent in 1991-92 to 30.8 per cent in 1997-98. While the secondary sector's contribution remained more or less constant, the service sector's share increased slightly from 44.7 per cent to 45.3 per cent in the same period.⁴

Namboodiripad (1996), the first Chief Minister of Kerala, describes the acuteness of the development crisis as follows: "..... the vast natural resources of the State remain untapped, agricultural land is turned into non-agricultural land, human (labour) resources that can be used for increasing production and productivity

³Namboodiripad, EMS, The National Question in Kerala, (Bombay, People's Publishing House, 1952) p.77

⁴Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, Economic Review 1998, p.32

in the state are being exported to the Gulf and other foreign countries".⁵ To Patnaik (1991), the most obvious problem is the virtual stagnation of output in per capita terms in the basic commodity producing sectors, agriculture and industry.⁶

Many other observers have concluded that the Kerala model is unsustainable because of a threefold economic crisis : a progressively worsening fiscal situation, prolonged economic stagnation and even decelerating growth, and the continuing inability of the economy to generate employment for Kerala's people. Under these fiscal crises, Kerala is not able to sustain its achievements and it is losing its lead in social development itself.⁷ It is also seen that about 15 per cent of state's people have been left out of the model.⁸ This in turn tends to threaten the very maintenance of a high Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI).⁹ Moreover, the contemporary crisis affects the very ideology of the unique democratic project of modernisation.¹⁰

The causes of the development crisis are simultaneously regional, national and international. These economic problems that are inherent in the model are not anomalies that can be easily overcome.¹¹ The crisis in the agricultural and small scale sectors can be traced to the growing share of pension payment and social welfare schemes. Internally, Kerala's development problems spring from accumulated under utilisation of its natural resources, industrial potentials and manpower.¹² At the national level, the central outlay only helped in meeting a small part of the state's

⁵Namoodiripad, EMS, "A Kerala Experiment : Planning from Below or Above", Frontline, October 18, 1996 p.92

⁶Patnaik, Prabhat, in Maria Helena Moreirh Alves, "Four Comments on Kerala", Monthly Review, Vol.42 No.8 1991 p.337

⁷Tharamangalam, Joseph, "The Perils of Social Development without Economic Growth : The Development Debacle of Kerala, India", Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, Vol.30, No.1, 1998 p.27

⁸Franke, Richard W. and Barbara H. Cashin, "Power to the Malayalee People", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXXII, No.48 November 29, 1997 p.3065

⁹Subramannian, K.K., "Industrial Development : Need for new Policy Directions", The Economic Times, 11 July, 1991

¹⁰Isacc, T.M. Thomas and K.N.Harilal, "Planning for Empowerment : People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning in Kerala", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXXII, No.1&2, January 4-11, 1997 p. 54

¹¹Tharamangalam, op.cit., p.26

¹²Desai, B.S. , "Factors Inhabiting industrial growth of Kerala : Causes and Remedies", in P.K.B. Nayar (ed.) Development of Kerala : Problems and Prospects, (Trivandrum, Department of Sociology, University of Kerala, 1972) p.146

expenditure.¹³ The Planning Commission has been turning a blind eye towards some of the second generation problems generated by the very success of the 'Kerala model of development'¹⁴. Also, certain policies adopted by the central government are detrimental to the socio-economic development of the State.¹⁵ Finally, like every other LDC region, the State faces the menace of the New World Order in its Third World avatar : Structural Adjustment.¹⁶

While inaugurating the International Congress on Kerala Studies, Namboodiripad (1994) said :

“Within the limitations imposed by the global and national structures, we will have to find a practical solution to reach a consensus as to what measures are to be adopted to accelerate economic growth without sacrificing the welfare gain and the democratic achievements of the past”.¹⁷

This gave much impetus to adopt a new development strategy like decentralized planning and development with the direct participation of the people and the mass organizations for the better utilization of local resources.

¹³Tharamangalam, op.cit., p.27

¹⁴George, K.K. , “Kerala’s Fiscal Crisis : A Diagnosis”, Economic and Political Weekly, Vo.XXV, No.37 September 15, 1990 p.2097

¹⁵The policies followed by the Central Government under the dictates of multilateral organisations are detrimental to the interest of Kerala. The New Economic Policy adversely affect the process of socio-economic development achieved by Kerala. For Example, curtailment or reduction of public expenditure affect mass education programme, social welfare schemes, public health etc. Kerala has been able to establish a network of primary health care units in the PHCs. As State retreats from health care to the poor. The cost of health care rose steeply. Cut in food subsidies adversely effect the widely acclaimed statutory PDS of the State. By allowing foreign trollers on Indian seas, large-scale of commercialised fishing has led to the destruction of adequate sand coastal ecosystems and the marginalisation of traditional fisherfolk of Kerala. This affects the revenue position of the State. In 1997, the Central Government announced its ‘New Commercial Policy’ made the provision for Open General License (OGL). It allowed free flow of industrial goods from the MNCs which affected the small-scale and traditional industries of the State. By allowing the free import of 894 items and converting export processing zone into free trade zone, would facilitate the exploitation of workforce. The import of cardamom from Gutemala would spell the ruin of Kerala farmers. Most of them, which employ women such as coir, handloom, handicrafts etc., are today steeped in crisis. A large number of such units become sick and are closed to competitive pressures. The recently concluded ‘India - Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement’ also against the interest of the State. The free flow of rubber, tea and coffee, coconut and coconut oil etc. from Sri Lanka affect the backbone of Kerala economy.

¹⁶Franke and Chasin, op.cit., p.3065

¹⁷Namboodiripad, EMS , International Congress on Kerala Studies (Abstract), Vol.I, (Thiruvananthapuram, AKG Centre for Research and Studies, 1994) p.5

Earlier attempts of decentralized planning and development

The planning process prior to the existing one in the State had the State Planning Board, with the Chief Minister as the Chairman, formulating a Five Year Plan. It was a collection of documents prepared by the different state departments. It was to be mechanically carried out in every Panchayat without any role for the participation of the people of the Panchayat in either preparing or implementing the plan. In the development projects that were initiated, the decisions were solely by the bureaucracy.

The first step towards decentralization in Kerala was started in 1957 (a year after the formation of the State) during the period of the first communist led ministry. The Administrative Reforms Committee headed by EMS Namboodiripad (the then Chief Minister) recommended various measures towards the formation of institutions for devolution and decentralization at different levels. But these recommendations couldnot be implemented because of the dissolution of the ministry in 1959.

With the enactment of Kerala Panchayat Act of 1969, the panchayat system came into being. But these Panchayats functioned with very little power to effect local development through efficiently organised local administration. The first experiment in District level Planning was started with the Kollam District in 1978. But it failed due to the over dominance of the bureaucracy. The end of the 80s witnessed new experiments in planning at District level. These were started in Kannur and Kottayam districts. Attempts were made for more decentralization and planning. But the short life of the government shattered these attempts. By mid 1989, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government initiated various schemes for decentralized development. Consequently, a panchayat level people's resource mapping was undertaken. This democratic regional development was designated as "alphabet literacy to land literacy".¹⁸

¹⁸Krishnakumar, R., "A Kerala Initiative : The People's Campaign for the Ninth Plan", Frontline, August 23, 1996 p.103

Kalliasseri experiment

The Kalliasseri experiment of decentralized planning is the inspiration for much of Kerala's decentralized planning efforts. The Programme was started as part of the Panchayat Resource Mapping Programme (PRMP) along with other 24 panchayats in different districts in the state during April, 1991. Due to the systematic completion of the voluntary mapping, Kalliasseri was selected as the first panchayat to attempt a Panchayat Development Plan on the basis of Resource Mapping. Based on the data collected by the people themselves regarding the natural and human resource status of their village, discussions were held at various levels and an integrated Village Development Plan was drawn up. By ensuring the participation of the people, in data collection and resource mapping aimed at better resource utilization, the programme hoped to become a mass campaign for local development and resource mobilization. The significant developments of Kalliasseri experiment on decentralized planning and development are : socio-economic survey, institutional survey, secondary data collection, demand survey, health survey.¹⁹ Thus Kalliasseri's strong tradition of voluntarism, people's participation in resource mobilization, inspired the Ninth Plan to adopt decentralized Planning and development in Kerala.

Meanwhile, based on the framework of the Central legislation, the Government of Kerala formulated and initiated the Kerala Panchayat Act in 1994. The three-tier Panchayat Raj system came into existence in the State on October 2, 1995. Later, certain modifications were made on the Act, on the recommendations of the Committee on Decentralization of Powers (popularly known as Sen Committee after its late Chairperson Dr. Satya Brata Sen.) The basic principles of decentralization as recommended by the Committee are :

1. **Autonomy** : The local self-governments are to be autonomous, functionally, financially, and administratively.. The different tiers of local self-governments should be seen as complementary units rather than hierarchically organised bodies.

2. **Subsidiary** : It means that what can be done best at a particular level should be done at that level itself and not at higher levels.

¹⁹see. Isaac, Thomas et. al. , "Kalliasseri Experiment in Local Level Planning", (Thiruvananthapuram, Centre for Development Studies, 1995)

3. Role clarity : There should be clarity regarding the roles of each tier in the development process and a clear division of the functions of the various tiers should be set down.

4. Complementarity : The functions of the different tiers should not overlap, but it should be complementary to each other.

5. Uniformity : There should be uniformity of norms and rules

6. People's participation : the functioning of the local self-governments should be such that it facilitates maximum direct participation of the people in the development process.

7. Accountability : The elected representatives' accountability is known to be confined to the periodic electoral verdicts. This should be changed and a continuous social auditing of their performance should be ensured.

8. Transparency : The people should have the right to information regarding every detail of the administration.²⁰

These amendments would reduce the scope for Government interference in the day-to-day functions of the local bodies. It would also redefine the powers and functions of the different tiers based on the principle of subsidiarity, complementarity and role parity.

Ninth Plan on Decentralized Planning and Development

Kerala's Ninth Plan emphasises coordinated village level plans with the individual government departments playing subsidiary roles. A significant feature is that the bureaucrats become assistants to the people's plan rather than remaining as order giving officials. As part of decentralization, the government transferred many powers to the local bodies. The responsibility for managing, supervising and controlling these institutions is vested with the elected representatives of the local bodies. In the implementation stage also, the power to choose priority projects is given to the elected bodies. They can fix the norms for the selection of beneficiaries, decide the agency of implementation, and the method of implementation too.

²⁰Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, Economic Review 1998, p.225

Until the Seventh Five Year Plan, the Planning had given high priority for investment in the tertiary sector. This helped the advancement of the social sector. Public works such as roads and buildings constituted the main developmental activities of the local bodies. They were the biggest component of the expenditure both for the rural bodies (42 per cent) and also the urban local bodies (33 per cent) (see Appendix III). The involvement of the local bodies in the plan has been confined to the utilisation of the united plan grants and the implementation of schemes, particularly, the centrally sponsored schemes that are implemented through the local bodies. On the contrary, a significant feature of the Ninth Plan is that it concentrates on the secondary sector to generate more employment opportunities and to change the plan strategy to encounter the crisis in the 'model'/economy. Agriculture, including cropping, animal rearing, fisheries and agro-forestry are seen as vital areas that need responsible planning and development and hence they have been handed over to the local bodies.

Introduction of Decentralized Planning

Decentralized Planning aims at empowering the panchayats and the municipalities to undertake the task of plan formulation and its implementation in a scientific and participatory manner. The State Planning Board resolved to organise a 'people's campaign for the Ninth Plan' as an instrument of mass conscientisation with regard to the issues in development. On 16th July, 1996, the newly constituted Planning Board in its first meeting officially announced decentralized planning in Kerala.

People's planning is a mechanism in which people decide their own destiny. It means that the local bodies will have to plan for themselves, identify the needs of the people, analyse the development problems, assess the local resources, make feasible development schemes and finally prioritise and integrate them into a local Five Year Plan document.²¹

²¹Isaac and Harilal, *op.cit.*, p.55

Objectives of the Plan

The primary objective of the campaign was to ensure that the Panchayat Raj/Municipal bodies prepared and prioritised a set of integrated schemes, in a scientific manner and consequently evolve a functionally relevant and purposeful people's participation. At least 35-40 per cent of the plan consisted of schemes formulated and implemented by the local bodies within their respective areas of responsibility. The local bodies had to ensure maximum people's participation at every stage of the planning process right from the proposals to the implementation. Throughout the campaign, the planning process became an instrument of mass conscientisation in regard to the issues in development.²² It aimed at empowering the panchayat bodies through mobilization of the masses, in support of change and in defense of decentralization. Finally, the implementation of the schemes was devolved to the local bodies.²³

People's planning also intended to create greater awareness in economic development along with social progress by way of a closer association of scientists, experts, technocrats, administrators and academicians for the common cause of the development of the state. The core of this people's campaign was to 'make use of the legacy of collective social intervention and the strength of the mass movement to meet the contemporary crisis of development.'²⁴

Kerala's rich experience in mass mobilization and conscientisation gave greater inspiration for launching this massive movement. The total literacy campaign, group farming and resource mapping programmes were the notable achievements during the evolution of the state's popular development programme. This testified to the potential of joint action between mass organizations and the government in developmental activities. The KSSP campaign 'Adhikaram Janangalilekku' (Power to the People) demanded genuine decentralization and the strengthening of village level

²²Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, People's Campaign for Ninth Plan : An Approach Paper, (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala State Planning Board, 1996) p.1

²³Ibid. p.2

²⁴Bandyopadhyay, D., "People's Participation in Planning : Kerala Experiment", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXXII, No.39, September 27, 1997 p.2451

capacities to promote self-reliant growth. According to Franke and Chasin (1997) 'Kerala's rich history of mass movement and its high level education means that local participation could overcome the basis of much international participation oriented development where democratic structures on paper just become new mechanisms for elite dominance and exploitation of the poor'.²⁵

Phases of People's Planning

The process of Planning from below has been divided into the following phases. Each has roughly a duration of one month.

Phase 1 : Gramasabha

The first stage in the planning process is the identification of the needs of the people and the gaps in local development. This is sought to be achieved through discussions at Gramasabhas in the Panchayats and Ward Conventions in the Municipalities. The Gramasabha is considered as the gateway to grassroot democracy. It has been defined as the 'collectivity of all the voters in a gramapanchayat.' It should meet atleast twice a year. Gramasabha and Ward Conventions (in Municipalities and Corporations) are chaired by the Grama Panchayat President or the Municipal Chairman respectively. The elected representatives of the ward are answerable to the Gramasabha for the activities of the last six months. The queries regarding the activities of the Gramapanchayat are subjected to scrutiny in the Gramasabha.

To ensure maximum participation, the gramasabhas are convened only on holidays. Various novel propaganda methods such as development quiz, development festivals that include lighting of 'development lamps', 'vilambara jathas' (declaration processions), and so on have been innovated by the panchayat themselves. In the metropolitan corporation areas, meetings of residential associations or subdivisonal meetings of voters are convened before the ward conventions.

²⁵Franke and Chasin, op.cit, p.3065

Functions of Gramasabha

- i) selecting the schemes and beneficiaries;
- ii) mobilisation of voluntary labour;
- iii) rendering assistance in the implementation of development schemes and rendering social services to the villagers;
- iv) considering and scrutinising the existing schemes and all the other activities of the panchayat;
- v) promoting unity and harmony among all sections of the society.²⁶

The group discussions involved in the Gramasabha are three-fold :

Firstly, certain qualitative, and to a very limited extent, quantitative information with reference to the particular development sector of the ward is elicited. Secondly, the development problems of the ward with reference to the sector are listed. The group may also prioritise the needs . Thirdly, the people are also guided to analyse these problems on the basis of their experience and, to the extent possible, make suggestions of solutions.²⁷

Phase 2 : Development Seminars

The second phase is the development seminar at the panchayat and the municipal level. The Panchayat/Municipal development seminars are held to discuss the problems identified at the lower level, to constitute task forces of experts, officials and activists, to identify, prioritise and prepare schemes coming under the different sectors. An expert group will then prepare a Panchayat Development Plan based on the reports of the taskforce. The discussion in the development seminars could be based on the printed, Panchayat Development Report.

Panchayat Development Report

A Panchayat Development Report is a virtual compendium of local history, resource, problem analysis and development potential. It is drafted on the basis of a consolidation of the Gramasabha reports, review of the ongoing schemes, collection of secondary data, geographical study of the areas and a brief survey of the local

²⁶see, Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, People's Campaign for Ninth Plan : An Approach Paper.

²⁷Isaac and Harilal, op.cit, p.55

history.²⁸ It has five parts. In the introductory part, the campaign activity so far is achieved and a brief administrative introduction to the panchayat are presented. The second part consists of a brief narration of the local history, mass movement, geographical regions and an analysis of the natural resources. Part three consists of an environmental appraisal of the panchayat. Part four which constitutes nearly three fourths of the length of the Report has 12 sections, each dealing with a specific development sector.²⁹

Phase 3 : The Task Forces

In the third phase, the task forces convert the solutions into project/ scheme proposals in a format that could be included in the plan. There may be one taskforce for each sector. It shall undertake a detailed review of the ongoing programmes in their respective sector, analyse the development problems and solutions suggested at the seminar and then prioritise and schematise them into projects. They shall also classify the schemes according to the agency for implementation viz. (a) the various tiers of the Panchayati Raj institutions and municipalities; (b) the State Government; (c) the cooperatives and (d) private individuals.³⁰ The development priorities identified by the gramasabhas and the ward conventions will be screened and translated into schemes that will finally form the basis for the Panchayat Development Plan.

Phase 4 : Panchayat Plan

The fourth phase of the campaign is the actual formulation of the Panchayat or Municipal Plan. The local bodies are to be encouraged to take-up additional schemes on their own. The process of mass mobilization and conscientisation would be such that the plan allocation from the state would be supplemented by voluntary contribution of labour, material and money. The local plan could be much larger than the state's plan for the panchayats and municipalities.³¹

²⁸Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, The People's Campaign for Ninth Plan in Kerala : An Introduction, (unpublished) p.11

²⁹Isaac and Harilal, op.cit., p.56

³⁰Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, op.cit., p.5

³¹Ibid., p.5

The major preparatory stages for the Panchayat Plan are : resource mapping, socio-economic mapping, preparation of draft-plan, coordinating the resource review reports and the socio-economic status and the finalisation of the Panchayat Plan.³² For finalizing the plan, the panchayat makes a clear assessment of their capacity to mobilize resources from various sources to finance the plan, their competence to evolve a development strategy and then decide on a monitoring mechanism for the successful implementation of each project selected.³³

Phase 5 : Integration of local problems into a wider, district level plan

The fifth phase of the campaign consists of the integration of the local plans at the district level. The proposals of the gramapanchayats will be integrated at the block level along with the Block Panchayat's own plan proposal at the Block Panchayat Development Seminar. The Plans of the Block Panchayats and Municipalities will be integrated at the District level. The District Planning Committee may constitute a taskforce to evolve a broad strategy for the district level development within the framework set up by the Planning Board.³⁴

State Plans

The State Planning Board constitutes steering Committees and taskforces for formulating the State Plan. The departments will be directly represented in the taskforces so that their suggestions are taken care of. The State Plan so formulated would have to integrate with the district plans drawn up from below.³⁵ The Board should ensure due weightage to the proposals made by the Panchayati Raj and Nagar Palika institutions through their District Planning Committee (DPC) for their plan allocation. According to Isaac (1996), it is not that all the plans that are drawn up by the panchayats can be accommodated in the state plan. But each local area will have a priority list of development programmes and schemes for implementation, many of which can be done through local resource mobilisation.³⁶

³²Mariyamma, K.P, Decentralised Planning Experience in Kerala : Malappuram District, (unpublished paper) p.4

³³Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, (unpublished), op.cit., p.1

³⁴Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, op.cit., p.5

³⁵Isaac and Harilal, op.cit., p.57

³⁶quoted from Krishnakumar, op.cit., p.104

At the State level, the taskforces (with representatives from government departments) appointed by the Planning Commission integrate the district development plans to a State Plan.

Training Programme

The training and orientation of the various functionaries and voluntaries is an important component of the Planning process. To assist the local bodies in the Planning exercise, an intensive training programme will provide 300 resource persons at the state level, 6,000 at the district level and nearly 30,000 at the panchayat-municipal level with a basic knowledge of the region's economy, the ways to improve the productivity and the quality of services, the various components of the planning process, data collection techniques and the functioning of the local body establishments in the state, their rules and regulations and lessons from the previous development experience in the State. The State level trainees are called Key Resource Persons (KRPs), at the district level there are referred to as District Resource Persons (DRPs) and at the municipal/panchayat level they are called Local Resource Persons (LRPs). They are expected to work on a voluntary basis. Each phase will be preceded by training and orientation workshops to be organised at the State, district and local levels. In the Draft of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1999 - 2002), the Planning Commission applauded the efforts at extensive training of personnel at the grassroots level which formed a crucial component of the Kerala experiment'.³⁷ However, the ultimate goal is a substantial relaxation of the central control and a considerable increase in community empowerment.³⁸

Organisation

The State Planning Board is the highest agency of the programmes. The programmes will be undertaken directly in collaboration with the Local Administration Department. Above the Planning Board there is a high Level Guidance Council comprising of eminent personalities from the state. This has been

³⁷Government of India, Planning Commission, The Draft Ninth Five Year Plan (1999 - 2002), Vol.I, Publication Division, 1999 p.310

³⁸Franke and Chasin, op.cit., p.3065

constituted so as to ensure the widest possible consensus behind the proposed Campaign.

The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act (1994) provides for the constitution of a 15 member Planning Committee at the District level. It is to be chaired by the President of the District Panchayat. The District Planning Committee (DPC) coordinates the Programmes at the district level. The District Level Expert Committee (DLEC) comprises a group of technical experts who work on a voluntary basis. Apart from KRPs, it also includes non-official experts like retired hands and district level impending officers. This forum makes the plan documents for the Block Panchayats and their suggestions are send for approval to the DPC. It is the DLEC which acts as the appellate authority whenever disputes arise between the Voluntary Technical Corps (VTC) and the Panchayat Boards. This unique experiment presents a viable model in the process of planned development.

The Block Panchayat is in charge of the programmes at the block level. Like the DLEC, the Block Panchayat can have its own technical expert groups called as Block Level Expert Committee (BLEC) or the Voluntary Technical Corps (VTC). The BLEC shall consists of official and non-official experts as its members. The non-official expert in the Block Level Technical Corps and selected KRPs will also be members of the Committee. The secretary of the Block Panchayat (i.e., Block Development Officer) shall be the convenor of the BLEC.

The functions of the General Body of BLEC shall be :

- i) rendering all necessary technical assistance and advice to all the Gramapanchayats in the Block with regard to the formulation of projects;
- ii) appraisal of projects of the Gramapanchayats in the Block Panchayat through detailed examination; and
- iii) approval of technical sanctions of projects of the Gramapanchayats costing upto Rupees six lakhs.³⁹

³⁹Government of Kerala, Planning and Economic Affairs (A) Department, G.O. (Ms) No. 21/97/Pfg., Thiruvananthapuram, 7th November, 1997 p.3

In the Gramapanchayat level, there is also an expert committee consisting of the Local Resource Persons (LRPs). It renders technical advice to the programme at the Gramapanchayat level. In addition, several well known institutions and organisations of Kerala like the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), KSSP etc. have provided technical advice at various levels.

Other important popular committees with regard to implementation of the programmes are Ward Development Committee (Ward Vikasana Samithi), Panchayat Development Committee (Panchayat Vikasana Samithi), Neighbourhood Forums (Ayalkootums) and popular executive committees. These work below the level of DPC, Ward Committees, Gramasabha, as mentioned by the state legislation.

1. Ayalkootums (Neighbourhood Forums)

The Ayalkootums work below the level of functioning of the Gramasabha. An Ayalkootum comprises of people from 20-50 households of a particular ward of a village panchayat. They assemble together to discuss various matters such as selection of beneficiaries, cultural and household affairs and their various matters. They try to solve their problems as well as settle disputes through discussions and interactions. The Ayalkootums are not merely forums for more discussion but they also have a collective function i.e. a joint action of the representatives of the households through cooperatives. The activities of the Ayalkootum include the functioning of self-help groups, training for women in small scale cottage industrial skills and financial assistance through the healthy intervention of Banks and PRI officials.

Ayalkootums are successfully functioning in those panchayats where the Gramasabhas have grown as well established institutions of the rural folk. There are places where Ayalkootums act as vigilance forums and corrective forces to the functioning of the Gramapanchayats. They even activate the rural masses, especially the large number of housewives whose unutilised, underutilised human power (labour) can be channelised and oriented towards useful activities.⁴⁰ The Ayalkootums

are not statutory institutions like Gramasabhas. It is the outcome of the hard core voluntarism spread through the people's campaign. Ayalkootums act as the basic link in the participatory activities leading towards the ideal of a self-sufficient village or Grama Swaraj as visualized by Gandhiji.

2. Ward Development Committees :

It is constituted by members (one woman and man) elected from the Ayalkootums. The Ward member becomes the ex-officio chairman of the committee. Apart from this the Committee has its own convenor also.

3. Panchayat Development Committee

It is the general assembly constituted by the two representatives elected from the various Ayalkootums of the Panchayat, ex-officio chairman of various ward development committees and less than 10 nominated members. It prepares development projects and arranges for money loans from funding agencies.

4. Executive Committees

It acts as the executive agency for the activities regarding each project. It supervises and monitors the voluntary labour.⁴¹

Resource Mobilisation of Local Bodies

The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act (1994) provides a detailed Chapter (19) for the distribution of financial resources and the income of the panchayats. It emphasises the need for the establishment of a fund for every panchayat. As far as the transfer and settlement of economic and income sources of panchayats are concerned, it is to be referred to the State Finance Commission. The duty of the Commission is to enquire and suggest ways and means for strengthening the financial position of the panchayats. This is possible only if a democratically decentralized structure of the planning body (viz. State - District - Panchayat Bodies) is maintained. The revenue

⁴⁰Lathif, P.T. Abdul and P.P. Kumaran, 'Bharanathele Jena Pankalitham', in T.P. Kunhikannan (ed.) Padhathi Nirvahanam : Oru Pravarthana Sahai, (Malayalam), (Kochi, Kerala State Planning Board, 1998) p.84

⁴¹Ibid., p.85

receipts of the local bodies include : own taxes, Assigned Taxes, Share Tax, non-tax revenue, Grants from Government, Revenue Receipts, Capital receipts, etc. The plan's grants-in-aid is the single most important receipt of the local bodies accounting for more than three times the sum of all other receipts put together.

In the State budget of 1996-97, Rs.69 crores was provided for the urban local bodies and Rs.143 crores for the rural local bodies as united plan grants. Of the united funds to the rural local bodies, Rs.100 crores was allocated to village panchayats, Rs.15 crores for block panchayats and Rs.28 crores to the district panchayat. Out of the provision for the urban local bodies Rs.15 crores was for the three corporations and Rs.54 crores for the municipalities. These allocations were in addition to the schematic transfers that were made in respect to the functions that were delegated to the Panchayati Raj institutions.⁴²

For 1997-98, the budgetary provision for grant-in-aid to the local bodies was Rs.749 crores. The total grants-in-aid had three components, Rs.39 crores for the Tribal Sub Plans, Rs.194 crores for the Special Component Plan and Rs.516 crores for the General Sector. Plan funds under each of the above heads were allocated between urban and rural local bodies on the basis of the population ratio. Between urban local bodies again, funds were distributed on the basis of the population share of each local body. As for the rural local bodies, the total general sector allocation of Rs. 438.6 crores was distributed to the Grama Panchayats, Block Panchayats and District Panchayats in the ratio of 70:15:15. For the SCP of Rs.176.41 crores, a share of 20 per cent each was fixed for the higher tiers. With respect to TSP, while 60 per cent of the plan funds was allocated to the District Panchayats, the Grama Panchayats and the Block Panchayats received 20 per cent each. Table 2.1 gives a compressive picture on the allocation of grants-in-aid among different tiers of local bodies.

⁴²Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, Economic Review 1998, p.198

Table 2.1

Distribution of Grant-in -Aid to the Local Bodies

(Rs. in crores)

Local Body	No. of local bodies	General	SCP	TSP	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Grama Panchayat	990	307.02	105.85	7.62	420.49
Block Panchayat	152	65.79	35.28	7.62	108.70
District Panchayat	14	65.79	35.28	22.87	123.94
Municipalities	55	49.54	12.15	0.65	62.34
Corporations	3	27.86	5.44	0.24	33.53
Total	1214	516.00	194.00	39.00	749.00

Source : Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, Economic Review 1998,

p.204

Table 2.2 gives a comparative statement of the total outlay of local level plans and financing pattern with respect to different categories of projects. The total proposed annual plan outlay of the 1214 local bodies added upto Rs.1735 crores while the grants-in-aid from the State Government according to figures shown in the local plans was only Rs.755 crores. This was possible by (i) integrating State and Centrally sponsored schemes with the local plans; (ii) drawing upon the non-plan surplus from the own funds of the local body and (iii) mobilising additional local resources from financial institutions and beneficiaries.

Table 2.2

Financing Pattern of the Annual Plans of the Local Bodies

(Data of 1214 local bodies)

(Rs. in crores)

	No. of Projects	State assistance	Internal funds	State sponsored	Centrally sponsored	Loan from cop. inst.	Loan from fin. inst.	Voluntary contribution	Beneficiary contribution	Others	Total
General	52946	526.52	93.44	57.83	110.64	23.74	169.93	60.50	316.92	47.85	1407.37
%		37.41	6.64	4.11	7.86	1.69	12.07	4.30	22.52	3.40	100.00
SCP	12538	190.45	7.41	12.54	6.68	3.38	12.80	6.48	37.20	4.60	281.54
%		67.65	2.63	4.45	2.37	1.20	4.54	2.30	13.21	1.64	100.00
TSP	2303	38.53	0.55	0.83	1.00	0.16	0.82	0.74	3.12	0.64	46.38
%		83.08	1.18	1.79	2.15	0.33	1.76	1.61	6.73	1.37	100.00
Total	67787	755.51	101.39	71.20	118.31	27.27	183.55	67.72	357.24	53.09	1735.28
%		43.54	5.84	4.10	6.82	1.57	10.58	3.90	20.59	3.06	100.00
Women	4412	32.21	2.15	2.79	2.87	3.44	18.25	2.17	32.46	2.95	99.29
%		32.44	2.16	2.81	2.89	3.47	18.38	2.19	32.69	2.97	100.00

Source : Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, Economic Review 1998,

p.205

Sectoral Allocation

In order to ensure the overall thrust of the State plan, certain broad guidelines were given regarding sector allocation in the plans of the local bodies. It must be emphasised that these guidelines did not impinge in any serious manner on the autonomy of local level planning. Certain broad bands of minimum and maximum percentage share of investments were indicated for the three broad development sectors, namely; productive, service and infrastructure sectors. The guidelines were applicable only to the grant-in-aid of the State Government and not to the investment outlay proposed to be financed from other sources.(see Table 2.3)

Table 2.3

Guidelines on Sectoral Allocation Indicated to the Local Bodies

Sector	Rural Local Bodies	Urban Local Bodies
Productive	40-50	20-30
Service	30-40	40-50
Infrastructure	10-30	10-35

Source : Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, Economic Review 1998, p.206

Annual Plan 1998-'99

As can be seen from Table 2.4 the budgetary provision for the plans' grants-in-aid to be distributed among local self-governments was enhanced significantly.

Table 2.4

Distribution of Grant-in-Aid of Local Bodies, 1998-99 (Rs. in crores)

Local Bodies	No. Of Local Bodies	General Sector	SCP	TSP	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Gramapanchayats	990	426.02	108.21	15.31	549.54
Block Panchayats	152	91.29	36.07	7.66	135.02
District Panchayats	14	91.29	36.07	15.31	142.67
Municipalities	55	71.18	10.17	0.54	81.90
Corporations	3	36.22	4.48	0.18	40.87
Total	1214	716.00	195.00	39.00	950.00

Source : Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, Economic Review 1998, p.211

The total plan devolution to local bodies was raised from Rs.1025 crores in 1997-98 to Rs.1178 crores in 1998-99. The share of the grants-in-aid component was enhanced from 75 per cent to nearly 85 per cent i.e. Rs.749 crores to Rs.950 crores. As can be seen from Table 2.4 the grants-in-aid consists of Rs.716 crores for the general sector, Rs.195 crores for the SCP and 39 crores for the TSP.

Criteria for distribution of Plan Grant-in-Aid

For the distribution of grants-in-aid, the rural development demarcation was made on the basis of population share with respect to general sector grant-in-aid. In the distribution of plan grant-in-aid under SCP/TSP, greater weightage was assigned to the gramapanchayats and the ratio was adopted was 40:20:40 for gramapanchayats, block panchayats and district panchayats. Instead of a mere population criterion, the geographical area of the local body, area under paddy and a composite Index of backwardness based on houses without latrines and houses without electricity. (See Table 2.5)

Table 2.5

The Criteria for Intra-Tier Distribution of Plan Grant-in-Aid

Indicators	Weightage (percentage)			
	Grama Panchayat	Block Panchayat	District Panchayat	Municipalities/ Corporations
1. Population (excluding SC/ST)	65	65	55	75
2. Geographical area excluding area under forests	5	10	15	5
3. Area under paddy	5	-	-	-
4. Own Income of grama panchayat	10	-	-	-
5. Composite Index of Agricultural Labourers, Persons Engaged in Live Stock, Fisheries etc. And Marginal Workers	15	25	20	-
6. Composite index of backwardness houses without latrine and houses without electricity	-	-	10	20
Total	100	100	100	100

Source : Government of Kerala, State planning Board, Economic Review 1998, p.211

To sum up, there is no model of grassroots level planning and development below the Grama Panchayat. All attempts hitherto at decentralized planning and development experimented in India extend only upto the level of the Block. As such, the innovations in Kerala is unique in the sphere of planned, decentralised development the world over. This process of planning created a new awareness in

the minds of the people about development . It rejected the 'traditional' concept of development. But, as a new experiment, it has some problems and constraints at the formulation and implementation level. The coming chapters try to concentrate more on these experiments through a field study at various levels - Village, Block and District.

Chapter III

Decentralized Planning and development At Vithura and Karakulam Grama Panchayat Levels

Case study I - Vithura Grama Panchayat Level

Most of the people in this area are engaged in agriculture and allied works. The major cultivation in this Panchayat comprise of tapioca, rubber, tea, pepper etc. Since 1970 there is a growing crisis with paddy fields being displaced by the cash crops. In the recent years, the areas under paddy cultivation got reduced from 400 hectares in 1987 to 175 hectares in 1997.¹ The nonavailability of agricultural labour, lack of productivity to compensate for the growing production expenses and the increase in wages, all these factors forced the farmers to switch over to the cultivation of cash crops.

Apart from agriculture, most of the people are engaged in animal husbandry for their livelihood. Even though a dairy farm was started in 1976, milk production has not increased. The reduction in area of paddy fields also affects this sector. Displacement of paddy cultivation adversely affects availability of hay for cattle rearing. Lack of scientific information and training for farmers associated with both farming and animal husbandry also act as constraints. In the power sector, the crisis is more acute. Electricity connection is not available in most regions of the Panchayat, especially the SC/ST areas. In places with access to electricity, low voltage is a grave menace. Lack of transport facilities to connect the interior parts of the panchayat, paticularly the adivasi regions also creates problems. The deteriorating condition of roads and the lack of public drainage facilities acutely affects smooth transportation.

With regard to industrial development also, the panchayat is very backward. The major industrial units in the area are engaged in rubber processing, tea-processing and mineral water production. The locally available agricultural products like coconut and rubber are not exploited much for industrial development. It is also seen that

there is less employment opportunities for women and a lack of proper technical knowledge. The lack of marketing facilities has forced the producers to sell the agricultural products in the local market.

The Panchayat has around 150 fully financed low cost housing facilities for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Most of the houses in the area are in bad condition. The general health conditions in the panchayat are as follows : Of the 6,873 houses in the Panchayat only 3,158 houses have latrines. Only 4,589 houses have drinking water facilities. Amongst the 3,627 mothers only 2,497 have adopted family planning methods.² Other grave health problems that affect the development of the Panchayat are, lack of infrastructure facilities in hospitals and non-availability of transport facilities to approach the hospital. The adivasis are still superstitious and they are reluctant to use modern medical facilities. One also finds that there is a lack of proper nutrition among the SC and ST mothers.

In the educational sector, the first school at Vithura was opened in 1902. In 1957 a Girijan Welfare School was set up at Maruthala Mamoody for the STs . In 1955 the first High School was started at Vithura. However, the low quality of education, lack of educational concessions to SC/ST students, reductions of working days due to various reasons, lack of institutions of technical education, lack of infrastructure facilities in schools has affected the general level of educational standards.

According to the 1991 census, the women constitute 51 per cent of the total population of the panchayat. From them 90 per cent are unemployed.³ Lack of women co-operatives and small-scale industrial units result in low employment for women. Further hindrance is created by the legal technicalities that block credit facilities for the womenfolk.

¹Vithura Grama Panchayat, Development Report 1996 p.16

²Ibid. p.52

³Census of India, District Census Handbook 1991, Trivandrum, p.32

The relative percentage of STs in the Panchayat is the highest of all the panchayats in the Thiruvananthapuram district. Lack of education among STs, high drop-out rate, lack of competitive prices for the products of adivasis, lack of drinking water, power etc., in the ST areas, crisis of traditional small-scale industrial products - all affect the ST community badly. Of the total population of the panchayat the SCs constitutes 13 per cent. Majority of them remain below the poverty-line. They also confront more or less the same problems as that of the STs.

The Vithura Grama Panchayat started the decentralized planning experiment in 1996. The first phase was the convening of the Grama Sabhas - 'collectivity of all the voters in the Grama Panchayat'. All the eleven wards convened their own Gramasabhas. As per Table 3.1, despite higher women population, in many wards of the Panchayat the participation of women was relatively less in comparison to men.

Table 3.1
Participation in Gramasabha Meeting

Gramasabha	Men	Women	Total	Number of Group
Koppam	86	53	139	8
Chettachal	120	50	170	9
Chennapara	107	59	166	10
Memala	100	54	154	9
Thallachira	194	121	315	9
Vithura	103	43	146	8
Anappara	151	113	264	12
Kallar	137	71	208	8
Theviyode	74	82	156	9
Maruthamala	270	126	396	12
Bonakadu	51	30	81	6
Total	1,393	802	2,195	100

Source : Vithura Grama Panchayat, Development Report, 1996 p.7

Theviyode was the only ward where more women than men participated in the meeting. The low participation of women was primarily due to the lack of effective propaganda about the significance of the programme. The domestic compulsions and shyness in participating in a public forum were also responsible for the low turn out. Eventhough the wards of the Panchayat are small in size, the distance between the venue of the Gramasabha meeting and the houses created an apathy amongst the people. Another important trend that has to be noted is the class break-up of the

people participating in the Gramasabha. The Gramasabha was found to be dominated by the economically and socially deprived sections of the society with the middle and upper class representation being minimal. An interview based survey conducted amongst the middle and upper classes revealed that this disinterest was because of the feeling that, since the programme was aimed to provide benefit to the backward classes, it was better to leave them to decide their own future. This ultimately meant that the decision making was not one that included all the social classes in the society.

Despite these setbacks this initial experiment, even with less participation, helped to create a mass attraction and also helped in raising a social awareness about these issues. A World Bank mission which visited the state recently reports : “Kerala’s decentralization programme is probably the largest of its kind in the world. Three million people (10 per cent of the State’s population) takepart in meetings. This is a far reaching, innovative and courageous new approach to rural development and local governance..... It reflects a profound commitment to a total change in which governments govern to empower disadvantaged groups to voice their demands, and to make institutions responsible and accountable to them”.⁴

The Gramasabha Committe constituted at the panchayat level supervised the development activities of the panchayat which included monitoring of the collective human resource, agro-industrial production, voluntary labour and donations from individuals and institutions. The Gramasabha discussed various development problems of the Panchayat as the basic unit for identification of felt needs of the people and gaps in development.

Development Seminar

After the Gramasabha meeting, the development seminar at the panchayat level was convened at Vithura. On the basis of suggestions as to the needs and necessities of the people, the collection of data regarding development problems in the various sectors, the Development Seminar prepared a Development Report for the Panchayat. The 100 page report deal with diverse aspects under various heads : socio-

⁴As quoted from Mathew, George, “Kerala’s Success Story”, The Hindu, 24th May, 1999

cultural history, geography and water resources, socio-economic sectors and 12 development sectors covering productive, service and infrastructural sectors.

The development problems in the various sectors were solved on a priority basis with the help of appropriate projects. Such a project was identified in the following manner : consulting people and noting their suggestions; examining the suggestions made by the panchayat and other bodies in the locality; consulting knowledgeable people of the locality as well as professional experts; obtaining suggestions from technical departments: agriculture, irrigation, PWD, forestry etc., examining the completed, ongoing and proposed projects, and identifying the missing links; reviewing projects that were suggested but not taken up earlier due to paucity of funds or other reasons and effecting necessary modifications in the light of current data and information; receiving and analyzing the resource inventory of the area and making a perusal of the various activities and seeing whether any of them has potential for development in the area.⁵

Structure of Project

Each project had eight sections : introduction, objectives, beneficiaries, activities, organisation, financial analysis, cost-benefit analysis and monitoring.⁶

- Introduction : explaining the necessity and relevance of the project
- Objectives : in well defined (as far as possible in quantitative/measurable) means.
- Beneficiaries : criteria proposed to be followed in selecting beneficiaries or benefiting areas.
- Activities : technical analysis and time frame of all project activities.
- Organisation : agencies and their role in implementing the project activities
- Financial Analysis : investment needed for each activity and identification of the sources of the funds.

⁵Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, How to Prepare Project? ; People's Planning Fourth Phase, (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala State Planning Board, n.d.) p.13

⁶Ibid. p.14

- Cost-benefit analysis : preliminary analysis of all direct and indirect benefits and costs including a gender and environment input statement.
- Monitoring : details of the proposed monitoring mechanism.

Functioning of Ayalkootums (Neighbourhood Forums)

One of the significant developments of decentralized planning in the Panchayat is the devolution of power at the grass-root level. Whenever the numerical strength of the Gramasabha gets very large, discussions are rarely constructive. For effective discussions and deliberations, Ayalkootums consisting of 50-60 households are constituted. It has a convenor who keeps the attendance register of the participants in each session. Below the Ayalkootum, the family forums constituting of 10 households make the functioning smooth. The activities of the Ayalkootums include providing beneficiary selection forms to all houses and preparing priority lists of beneficiaries for each schemes accordingly. The formation of Ayalkootum gave a considerable advantage to plan implementation. It even made the formulation of solutions to the everyday problems of the people much more easier and effective.

Table 3.2
Number of Ayalkootums in Vithura Grama Panchayat

Ward	Name of the Ward	No. of Ayalkootums
I	Koppam	10
II	Chettachal	12
III	Chennanpara	9
IV	Memmla	14
V	Thallachira	14
VI	Vithura	8
VII	Anappara	10
VIII	Kallar	18
IX	Theviyode	10
X	Maruthamala	14
XI	Bonakkad	7
	Total	126

Source : Vithura Grama Panchayat, Plan Document, (1998 - '99) p.24

Selection of Beneficiaries

The selection of beneficiaries was done by the Panchayat itself. The Gramasabhas in each ward identified the beneficiaries. Since the District Panchayat and Block Panchayat couldnot convene the Gramasabhas, they got the beneficiaries selected through the respective Grama Panchayat who carriedout the selection process

through the Gramasabha and gave select list to the Block or District Panchayats for approval. The Gramapanchayat ensured avoiding the duplication of beneficiaries both at the Grama Panchayat and Block/District Panchayat projects. There were no ward-wise targets and eligibility was considered at the level of the Grama Panchayat, keeping in view the priority list prepared by the Gramasabha, with clear weightage given to each criterion by way of marks.

The Grama Panchayat fixed priorities among the applicants who satisfied the basic conditions and criteria for eligibility. Eligibility and prioritization criteria were concretely verifiable and not vague. Marks are given to each criterion in such a way that the total marks for all criteria would add upto 100. This methodology with its inbuilt simplicity and transparency was clearly stated in the project. They were published and locally put up on the notice boards of the Grama Panchayat Office, the Village Office and other public places. Each applicant is given a copy of the criteria relating to the schemes for which he/she had applied.

The types of schemes were also prominently displayed on the notice board of the wards. The application form which was in the regional language clearly stated the eligibility criteria and prioritisation criteria. All the filled forms were received at the Gramasabha. The Grama Panchayat decided the system of verification through a designated sub-committee consisting of elected members, concerned officials task force members and resource persons. All the applications were scrutinised and a draft priority list was prepared based on the marks awarded for each criterion.

Immediately after the verification process was completed, the Gramasabha was summoned. All persons who had applied for a benefit were asked to be present in the Gramasabha. The Gramasabha sub-group discussed the selection of the beneficiaries and the final verification was done. The list of all the applicants from the ward along with their marks were displayed in the sub-group. For different schemes, different sheets were prepared giving the names and address of the applicant, marks given to each criterion and the total marks. The list was approved by the Convenor, the Chairman, the Coordinator of the Gramasabha, the Secretary of the Panchayat, the

Verification Committees members, the sub-group leaders and other present officials. Once the final list was passed, it could not be changed. Subsequently, the selection list for the Grama Panchayat as a whole was prepared. The comprehensive list is published as a draft, showing the rank and it indicated the factors which resulted in the rank in a tabulated form. Thereafter, the cumulated list was printed and published in the Grama Panchayat office, and then put up on the ward notice boards and other public places. The final list was also made available in the neighboring Gramasabhas for information. If anyone bypassed the priority list, the sufferer could question it in the Gramasabha. This ensured the validity of the ranking.⁷

The Panchayat also published a detailed beneficiaries list. It is this radical step which distinguished it from the other panchayats. At least one member of a family came as a beneficiary of any one of the schemes of the Panchayat. Separate lists were published for the Special Component Programme (SCP) and the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP). But members from these communities could be included in the general list if they got adequate marks to be eligible for the General Category. The fact that the SCP and the TSP had been allotted only a minimum number of projects as compared to the General section, necessitated such an inclusion.

First Five Year Plan (1997 - '98)

Vithura Grama Panchayat started its first plan in 1997 along with all the other panchayats of the State.

Development Strategy

In this plan, the development strategy focused on the acceleration of the productive sector. It aimed at the following objectives : to attain self-sufficiency in the economic field; to give employment to one person in each home; maximum people's participation in development activities; to ensure the benefits to all citizens through direct democracy; to create radical changes in the fields of education, art, sports and culture and to make progress in sectors like drinking water, health, etc.⁸

⁷Government of Kerala, Local Administration (P) Department, G.O. (P) No.181/98 LAD.
(Thiruvananthapuram, Government of Kerala, 2nd September, 1998)

⁸Vithura Grama Panchayat, Plan Document (1998 - '99) p.8

Resource Mobilization

The major monetary resources of the Panchayat was the State Grants-in-aid. Apart from this, additional resources were mobilized from the schemes sponsored by the State Government, voluntary activities, co-operative sector and other financial institutions. They complemented the plan outlay of the State in the Panchayat. During the first year plan, the Panchayat received a total outlay of Rs. 54.40 lakh from the state government. Out of this, Rs.132.75 lakh to General Sector, Rs. 13.73 lakh was granted to SCP and Rs. 7.92 lakh to TSP.(see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Plan Outlay to various Plan Sector (Rupees in lakhs)

Sector	Outlay	per cent
General Sector	32.75	60.2
SCP	13.73	25.2
TSP	7.92	14.6
Total	54.40	100

Source : Vithura Grama Panchayat, Plan Document (1997 - 2002), p.10

Sectoral Allocation

There were around 82 projects included in the first year plan. All the projects were small in nature, but the number of its beneficiaries was substantially large. This was a special feature unique to the Panchayat. The first year plan had envisaged higher expenditure in the productive sector As can be seen in Table 3.4, a significant proportion of the funds were allotted to all the plans (i.e., General Sector, SCP and TSP) for the productive sector during the preparation of the plan document. But the expenditure figures in Table 3.5 very clearly show that there was a major diversion of funds from the productive sector to the service and infrastructural sectors in the course of the implementation of the plan. So, the priority which was given to the productive sector could not be fulfilled.

Table 3.4

Development Strategy and fund allocation to various sectors 1997 - '98

Sector	General Sector	SCP	TSP	Total
Productive Sector	14,73,750 (45%)	6,17,850 (45%)	3,56,400 (45%)	24,48,000 (45%)
Service Sector	11,46,250 (35%)	5,49,200 (40%)	3,16,800 (40%)	20,12,250 (37%)
Infrastructural Sector	6,55,000 (20%)	2,05,950 (15%)	1,18,800 (15%)	9,79,750 (18%)
Total	32,75,000 (100%)	13,73,000 (100%)	7,92,000 (100%)	54,40,000 (100%)

Source : Vithura Grama Panchayat, Plan Document (1998 - '99) p.11

Table 3.5

Expenditure on Sector wise after the Plan

Sector	General Sector	SCP	TSP	Total
Productive Sector	12,72,155 (39.5%)	3,19,950 (23.2%)	3,46,420 (41.2%)	19,38,525 (35.6%)
Service Sector	14,58,936 (45.3%)	2,75,028 (19.9%)	3,91,180 (46.5%)	21,25,144 (39.1%)
Infrastructural Sector	4,89,397 (15.2%)	7,83,976 (56.9%)	1,02,958 (12.3%)	13,76,331 (25.3%)
Total	32,20,488 (98.3%)	13,78,954 (100.4%)	8,40,558 (106.2%)	54,40,000 (100%)

Source : Vithura Grama Panchayat, Plan Document (1998 - '99) p.11

Second Year Plan (1998 - '99)

The second year plan is still ensuing. Hence a final analysis is not possible. But the development strategy, plan allocation to various sectors and projects can be discussed.

The development strategy of the second year plan gives more priority to the service sector. The Panchayat has received Rs.73.92 lakh as its plan outlay from the State. Out of this, Rs.48.95 lakh is allocated to the General Sector, Rs.14.04 lakh to the SCP and Rs.10.93 lakh to the TSP.(see Table 3.6). Like in the previous plan, the panchayat expects to mobilize additional resources to complement the plan outlay of the State to the Panchayat.

Table 3.6

Plan Outlay to Various Plan Sectors (Rs. in lakhs)

Sector	Outlay	Per cent
General Sector	48.95	66.2
SCP	14.04	19
TSP	10.93	14.8
Total	73.92	100

Source : Vithura Grama Panchayat, Plan Document (1998 - 99) p.27

The Vithura Grama Panchayat has envisaged higher expenditure in the service sector. As can be seen in Table 3.7 a significant proportion of the funds were allotted both in the SCP and the TSP. for the productive sector. But in the case of the General Sector, the productive sector was allotted more funds. In the infrastructural sector equitable distribution was given to the General Sector, the SCP and the TSP.

Table 3.7

Development Strategy and Fund Allocation to various Development Sectors 1998 -'99

Sector	General Sector	SCP	TSP	Total
Productive Sector	19,82,475 (40.5%)	4,21,200 (30%)	3,27,900 (30%)	27,31,575 (37%)
Service Sector	16,88,775 (34.5%)	6,31,800 (45%)	4,91,850 (45%)	28,12,425 (38%)
Infrastructural Sector	12,23,750 (25%)	3,51,000 (25%)	2,73,250 (25%)	18,48,000 (25%)
Total	48,95,000 (100%)	14,04,000 (100%)	10,93,000 (100%)	73,92,000 (100%)

Source : Vithura Grama Panchayat, Plan Document (1998 - '99) pp.27-28

Case Study II - Karakulam Grama Panchayat Level

Karakulam Grama Panchayat started decentralized planning and development with the initiation of the Ninth Plan. Gramasabhas were convened in all 14 wards of the Panchayat. Below the Gramasabha, there are around 174 Ayalkootums. Each Ayalkootum comprises of 30-50 households and two convenors look after the plan implementation in this area.

The Panchayat is predominantly an agricultural region. The agricultural labourers are now migrating to the construction sector. Among the labourers, 30 per

cent are in the service sector.⁹ In the course of time, paddy cultivation was reduced considerably, having been replaced by cash crops such as rubber. As a result, the agricultural sector faces a grave crisis. Due to this, unemployment has risen. The unemployed number around 27,415. Amongst them women constitute 15 per cent.¹⁰ The lack of irrigation facilities, less recognition of the dignity of labour in the society, increase in agriculture related expenses, lack of good quality of seeds etc. are the main factors behind the crisis. In the industrial sector also, the decline of traditional small-scale industries is rampant.

The number of students in the government schools has been reducing considerably. This shows the decline of the quality of education in these schools. Apart from this, the students' backward family background, the ignorance and laziness of the parents, less infrastructural facilities in the schools, the lack of teachers etc. also make this problem very grave. The unsatisfactory functioning of Primary Health Centres (PHCs), the lack of health awareness among the rural people, the lack of drinking water facilities in certain areas of the Panchayat, etc. are the matters of concern so far as health is concerned.

Around 10 per cent of the total population in the Panchayat are SCs.¹¹ The programmes enunciated for the upliftment of this section could not benefit them due to the corrupt interference of the intermediaries. As a result, poverty and unemployment among the SCs. increased considerably. Ecological problems also adversely affected the panchayat. Specifically, the disappearance of the paddy fields and the emergence of cash crop cultivation on a large scale made the ecological structure fragile.

Like all the other Panchayats in Kerala, Karakulam convened a Development Seminar. On the basis of the suggestions, as to the needs and necessities of the people, the collection of data regarding the development problems of the various sectors, the Development Seminar prepared the Development Report of the

⁹Karakulam Grama Panchayat, Development Report 1996, p.18

¹⁰Ibid. p.23

¹¹Census of India, op.cit. p.31

Panchayat. The report comprised of the socio-cultural history, geography and water resources, socio-economic sectors and 12 development sectors covering the productive, service and infrastructural sectors.¹²

First Year Plan (1997 - '98)

The annual plan (1997 - '98) gave first priority to the paddy cultivation and to traditional small-scale industries in the productive sector. Emphasis was given in providing latrines to those families who lacked one. From the total development projects, 12 agricultural projects in the initial year of planning heralded a new era in the development history of the panchayat. The "My Village, Green Village" programme aimed to accelerate agricultural growth received accolades from various spheres.

Out of the 12,000 families, 700 were selected as beneficiaries of the intensive vegetable cultivation programme. Consequently, about 7000 units of vegetable were cultivated by a collective effort in 56 hectares.¹³ Apart from this, seeds, pesticides, fertilizers were given to the farmers. This innovative development made the panchayat one of the model panchayats in the state.

Beneficiaries of the various projects were selected through the Ayalkootums. The decision of the Ayalkootums were approved by the Gramasabha later. For the selection of beneficiaries, certain criteria were prepared. (For procedure of selection see as in Vithura Grama Panchayat)

Thirty-Nine projects were prepared and completed within the first year of people's planning. The paddy cultivation project aimed at increasing land under paddy cultivation to 6.5 hectares. The most important feature of the 1997-98 Annual Plan was the enhancement of people's participation in the development activities. Another important feature was the Resource Mapping with popular participation. The Panchayat Level Resource Mapping is used as an inventory of the available resources

¹²see Vithura Grama Panchayat, Development Report 1996

¹³Puthiavila, Manoj K. And T.P. Kunhikannan (ed.) Janakeeyathayude Ponkani : Vikasanathinte Vijyakathakal (Malayalam) (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala State Planning Board, 1998) pp.50-53

of the region. It helped the planning process to conduct an adequate and concise evaluation of the local resources. It considered the micro-level variations in terrain apart from the land holdings. The involvement of the local people in this process brought out genuinely relevant problems that affected the productivity. Through micro-level Resource Mapping, an eco-friendly developmental strategy was evolved through a series of action plans at the panchayat level. It acted as a fundamental guide to further planning and development.

Second Year Plan (1998 - '99)

Since the second year plan is currently under progress in the Panchayat, the time is not apt to critique its significant developments. However, certain trends can be closely analysed. Falling back on the experience of the first year plan, the second plan gives more emphasis to the agricultural sector. In this sector 13 projects were prepared to increase the production considerably. Around 20 per cent of the total fund allocation is given to the agricultural sector.

During the second year plan, the panchayat received a total outlay of Rs. 77.63 lakhs from the State Government. Additional resources are to be mobilised from other sources. Out of this, Rs.61.49 lakh was granted to the General Sector, Rs.16.11 lakh to the SCP and Rs.3,000 to the TSP. (See Table 3.8)

Table 3.8

Grants-in-Aid in 1998 - 99

Sector	Outlay	Percent
General Sector	61,49,000	79.0
SCP	16,11,000	20.7
TSP	3,000	0.3
Total	77,63,000	100.0

Source : Karakulam Grama Panchayat, Plan Document (1998 -99) p.13

The Planning process has envisaged higher expenditure in the productive sector. As can be seen in Table 3.9, a significant proportion of the funds in the General Sector was allotted to the productive sector. In the SCP, the highest priority was given to the service sector.

Table 3.9
Sectoral Allocation in 1998 - '99

Sector	General Sector	SCP
Productive Sector	40	30
Service Sector	39	70
Infrastructural Sector	21	-
Total	100	100

Source : Karakulam Grama Panchayat, Plan Document (1998 - 99), p.13

Monitoring

The decentralized planning process with popular participation not only aimed at plan formulation and plan implementation, but also envisaged a monitoring system with the participation of the people through popular institutions. The Karakulam Panchayat ensures the following monitoring structures.

1. Panchayat Level Monitoring Samithi

It consists of a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Convenor, a Joint Convenor and five other members. The total membership of the Samithi is eleven. The Panchayat President acts as the Chairman, the BLEC member acts as the Vice-Chairman, the DRP Convenor is the Convenor, and the Executive Director of the Village Learning Centre holds the post of the Joint Convenor. The members of the Samithi include the former members of the Panchayat, a representative from the cooperative bank, a representative from the voluntary organisation, a technical experts and a DRP representative. The function of the Panchayat Level Monitoring Samithi is to conduct a general appraisal of the annual plan.

2. Development Sector Monitoring Samithi

It comprises of a Chairman, a Convenor and the Samithi members. The total strength of the Samithi is seven. The Chairman has to be an elected representative of the people and the Convenor has to be a technical expert in the related sectors. The members include a planning activist, a representative of the co-operative Bank, a representatives of the beneficiaries and two officials who are not the members of the Organisational set up. It is the duty of the Development Sector Monitoring Samithi

that each project in each development sector performs its functions according to its objective.

3. Ward Level Monitoring Samithi

It consists of five persons comprising a Chairman, a Convenor and three members. The Chairman is usually a ward representative of the Grama Panchayat and the Convenor is usually a planning activist. The members include a technical expert/representative from the voluntary organisations, an Ayalkootum/Ward Convenor and a representative of the beneficiaries. It is the duty of the Ward Level Monitoring Samithi to monitor the plan formulation and its implementation in each sector.¹⁴

An analysis of the experiment of decentralized planning development in Vithura and Karakulam Grama Panchayat Levels shows that it is a monumental step. By involving direct participation, it can feel the pulse of the people. The experiments in these panchayats show how people's participation can be ensured in the development process by means of :

- 1) Development needs of the people being selected by them through the Gramasabha;
- 2) Projects being selected through discussion amidst local participation;
- 3) Development strategy and plan document being prepared by the people; with the help of technical experts;
- 4) Selection of beneficiaries and the benefited areas also being done by them;
- 5) People getting more voice in plan implementation committees and project implementation activities. The officials and Chairmen who are in charge of the programmes give more attention to the views of the people.
- 6) The evaluation of project implementation that is done by the Monitoring Committee consists of the representatives of the beneficiaries and the members of the Panchayat.

¹⁴Karakulam Grama Panchayat, Second Year op.cit. pp.23-24

It may be too early to analyse the impact of the new development process. But certain positive trends have emerged from people's planning. It could create a new development culture through people's participation in the Gramasabhas. Eventhough, the ultimate objective of decentralized planning is to stimulate the productive sector, in the initial years, priority was given to the provision of basic services and the infrastructural sector. The reasons are varied - to attract more people towards the planning process, to raise the living conditions and development levels of certain areas etc. By involving the people directly in the development activities corruption can more or less be checked. It is the nexus between politicians, bureaucrats and contractors in the development programmes which often creates corruption. The panchayats could utilise the expert man power of the local areas. As there is a long period between retirement age and life expectancy in Kerala, the Service of the retired persons could be best utilized. In spite of all these conducive situations, the net result of the development programme can be assessed only after a few years.

Chapter IV

Decentralized Planning and Development At Nedumangad Block Panchayat and Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat Levels

I

Nedumangad Block Panchayat Level

With the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments the three-tier Panchayat Raj system got Constitutional recognition and elected block administration came into being in many states. Before the Act, certain state governments had initiated decentralized planning at the block level. In 1977, the Planning Commission had appointed a working group under the chairmanship of M.L. Dantwala to prepare the guidelines for block level planning in the country. It recommended the best utilisation of the possibilities of economic development of a region and eradication of unemployment.

But all the experiments of Block level planning remained merely an attempt at coordination of the various programmes implemented through the line departments which had no horizontal coordination. The people's participation was very less in the plan formulation, implementation and the selection of beneficiaries in the above mentioned planning. Under the inspiration of the Constitutional Amendment, Kerala Panchayat Raj Act (1994) envisaged a three-tier system in which Block Panchayat was entrusted certain powers.

Schedule IV of the Act comprehensively describes the role of Block Panchayats. The important among them are; preparing development projects and fixing priorities in the economic and the productive sectors of its purview; engaging in development activities as recommended by the Grama Panchayats and the District Panchayats; coordinating and integrating the development activities of the Panchayats under its purview; organising technical training in order to facilitate the best possible utilisation of natural and human resources and generating employment opportunities at the Block level; and conducting spatial planning so as to ensure the maximum

utilisation of the services of the local population and preparing plans to solve the local imbalances in the Block.¹

Article 172(1) prescribes for the Block Panchayats the duty to formulate programmes to improve the agricultural and small-scale industrial sectors. It has to work towards poverty eradication and village development schemes. Public health, social welfare, public distribution system and other measures at social enhancement and equity have to be catered to.

Unlike the Grama Panchayat, where decentralized planning starts with the convening of the Gramasabhas, the Block Panchayat has no Gramasabha meetings and Development Seminars. In order to find out solutions to the various development problems and the fixing of priority, the Block Panchayat depends on auxiliary agencies like the Block Panchayat Steering Committees.² Certain projects are used for the integration of various Block plans to the District and State plans. As the Block Panchayat cannot convene the Gramasabha meeting, the beneficiaries for its projects are selected through the Gramasabhas of the Grama Panchayats.

The Nedumangad Block Panchayat (hereafter NBP) consists of five Gram Panchayats - Anad, Aruvikkara, Karakulam, Panavur and Vembayam. It started the decentralized planning experiment through the campaign named 'Ninth Plan, People's Plan'. The first step was the preparation of the Development Report. It was a detailed analysis of the developmental problems of the Panchayat and its possibilities. Also, it was a fundamental document regarding all the development activities of the Block Panchayat. The preparation of the Block Development Report (BDR) underwent the following stages : formulation of steering committees and task forces; analysis of the Development Reports of the Gram Panchayats under its jurisdiction; secondary data collection; collection of Resources Maps of the region and the analysis and evaluation of the present plan.³

¹Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994

²Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, How to Prepare Block Plan? : People's Planning 5th Phase, (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala State Planning Board, n.d.) p.23

³Ibid. pp. 71-73

The BDR of NBP consisted of three Parts. Part I deal with the general description of the Panchayat. It consisted of a preface, administrative history, geography, population and an evaluation of the continuing development programmes. Part II gave the details of the development sectors that include agriculture and irrigation, animal husbandry, industry, education, drinking water and health, transport and market, culture and sports, women's welfare, cooperatives and upliftment of the SC/ST communities. Part III included the development strategy, resource mobilization and the various development projects on the basis of sectoral allocation and monitoring.⁴

Development Problems

The BDR gave a clear analysis of the development problems and the prospects for its various sectors. The objective of the decentralized planning experiment was to find out solutions to the same. The economy of the Panchayat is basically agriculture-oriented. The main crops in this region are paddy, coconut, rubber, tapioca, pepper and banana. Consequently, the main occupations comprise of paddy farming, tapioca cultivation and other agriculture related work. In the course of time, large hectares of tapioca/paddy cultivated areas were converted to rubber cultivation. The unavailability of agricultural labour, the nonprofitability of paddy cultivation, the lack of credit and insurance facilities being provided to the farmers by the government are the major challenges in this field. Other problems also plague the agricultural sector. The farmers lack access to quality seeds and plants. They also suffer from the irregularities of technicalities of offices and the exploitation by middlemen and traders. Animal husbandry faces major crisis because of the reduction of the number of people engaged in it. As a result, the net local production of milk, eggs and meat has declined over time.

NBP is a backward area in the industrial map of Thiruvananthapuram District. The only notable industrial unit in this region is the Keltron unit at Karakulam Grama Panchayat set up in 1974. One can also point out the 20 Mini-industrial units at Chullimanoor. The decline of the small scale industrial units, the negative approach

⁴see Nedumangad Block Panchayat, Plan Document (1997 - 2002)

of the commercial banks, the lack of technical knowledge and the power shortage are responsible for the crisis in the industrial sector. The cooperative sector, which can contribute more in the sphere of industry and agriculture is also facing a grave crisis. It should also be noted that the remittance from the Middle East has a great influence in the region. Unfortunately, it is not directed towards the productive sectors.

The Panchayat has a total population of 1,47,296. Of these 51 per cent are women. From them 10 per cent women fall in the SC and 0.2 percent fall in the ST categories.⁵ There are about 50 women associations working in this region. The health conditions of the women are yet to witness any improvement. More industrial and small-scale units are to be initiated to increase the earning capacities of these women.

According to the 1991 census, the NBP have total of about 9 per cent SCs and 0.28 per cent STs. Of the total population of SCs women constitute 52 per cent. In the ST population 51 per cent are women.⁶ The main problems are the deteriorating conditions of the SC/ST colonies, the lack of drinking water and power, unemployment and health problems. The crisis due to the lack of infrastructure facilities and low quality of services in the government hospitals and the PHCs is compounded by the disinterest on the part of doctors to work in rural regions.

In the educational sector, the Block Panchayat doesnot have any special functions. The lack of pre-primary education facilities, lack of in service training and lack of Education Committees at the Block level makes the situation bad. In the transport and marketing sector, the major development problems are the lack of maintenance of roads, the lack of drainage facilities etc. On the power front, the low voltage and less consumption of solar energy constitute the main problems. Due to the high life-expectancy in Kerala, the Panchayat faces lack of oldage homes. In the housing sector, the lack of building materials and steep increase in prices are serious

⁵Census of India, 1991, District Census Handbook, Trivandrium 1991 p.18

⁶Ibid., p.24

problems. Less information about the technicalities of credit facilities amongst the people also leads to inadequate utilisation of the available provisions.

Preparation of Block Plan

The Block Plan was prepared only after the analysis of each sector separately to identifying its problems and possibilities and the consideration of the recommendations from the lower level. The Panchayat analysed the problems in the various sectors and suggested solutions in the due course of planning.

Development Strategy

The BDR (Part III) clearly emphasised the development strategy of the Panchayat. According to this, NBP gave first priority to the service sector. Productive and Infrastructural sectors came subsequently.⁷

First Year Plan (1997 - '98)

The NBP started its first plan in 1997. It received Rs.57.65 lakhs from the State Government as the plan outlay. Additional resources were mobilized through state sponsored schemes, central sponsored schemes, assistance from cooperatives and other fiscal institutions and donations from voluntary organisations. Out of the total outlay, 66.7 per cent was allotted to General Sector, 31 per cent to SCP and 2.5 per cent to TSP.⁸

As per Table 4.1, in the first year plan, the Panchayat envisaged high expenditure in the productive sector during the preparation of the plan document. There were around 30 development projects in this sector. But expenditure figures in Table 4.2 very clearly show that there was a major diversion of funds from productive sector to service sector. The number of projects in this sector also was reduced in the course of its implementation. A major diversion of funds also took place from the infrastructural sector to the service sector.

⁷Nedumangad Block Panchayat, Plan Document (1997 - 2002) p.156

⁸Ibid. p.157

Table 4.1
Sectoral Allocation in 1997 - '98

Development Sector	Number of Projects	Plan Allocation	Per cent
Productive Sector	30	25,94,250	45
Service Sector	20	20,17,750	35
Infrastructural Sector	16	11,53,000	20
Total	63	57,65,000	100

Source : Nedumangad Block Panchayat, Plan Document (1997 - 2002), p.9

Table 4.2
Expenditure of First Plan 1997 - '98

Development Sector	Number of Projects	Plan Allocation	Per cent
Productive Sector	23	17,40,895	30.2
Service Sector	28	29,89,472	51.8
Infrastructural Sector	10	7,20,656	12.5
Total	61	54,51,023	94.5

Source : Nedumangad Block Panchayat, Draft Plan (1998 - '99) p.10

Second Year Plan (1998 - '99)

The second year plan is currently in full swing in the Panchayat. It received Rs.72.75 lakh as its plan outlay from the State. Additional resources are to be mobilized. Out of the total outlay, Rs.53.59 lakh allotted to the General Sector, Rs.18.15 lakh to the SCP and Rs.1.01 lakh to the TSP (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3
Plan Outlay in 1998 - '99

Sector	Plan Outlay	Per cent
General Sector	53.59	73.6
SCP	18.15	25.0
TSP	1.01	1.4
Total	72.75	100

Source : Nedumangad Block Panchayat, Draft Plan (1998 - '99) p.24

The Panchayat in its second plan had envisaged high expenditure in the productive sector. As can be seen in Table 4.4, in the General Sector, a significant portion of the funds were allotted for the productive sector. But in the SCP and the TSP, major portions were allotted to the service sector. In both these plans, the

emphasis on the productive sector became secondary. The infrastructural sector in all these plans (General Sector, SCP and TSP) received only tertiary attention.

Table 4.4
Plan Outlay and Sectoral Allocation in 1998 - '99

Sector	General Sector	SCP	TSP	Total
Productive Sector	23,27,450 (43.43%)	6,42,200 (35.04%)	31,000 (30%)	30,00,650 (41.2%)
Service Sector	16,25,000 (30.32%)	9,92,800 (54.70%)	70,000 (70%)	26,87,800 (37%)
Infrastructural Sector	14,06,550 (26.25%)	1,80,000 (9.90%)	---	15,86,550 (21.8%)
Total	53,59,000 (100%)	18,15,000 0 (100%)	101,000 (100%)	72,75,000 (100%)

Source : Nedumangad Block Panchayat, Draft Plan (1998 - '99), p.25

There are around 182 projects in the second year to cover the various sectors. The high allocation of funds in the SCP and the TSP for the service sector aimed at the improvement of their quality of life by providing education, health, drinking water and setting up of schools etc. The block planning gave due importance to the agricultural and related sectors. The development and rejuvenation of small-scale industries is also attempted. However, the net result of the same can be assessed only after a few years.

Monitoring

Monitoring is an important step in decentralized planning and development process. It ensures whether the planning and the proposed projects fulfill its objectives. Each project has its own monitoring methods. In the NBP, the structure, composition and functions of monitoring are the following : Development Council (Vikasana Samithi) at the Block level acts as the monitoring system consisting of a Chairman, Joint Convenor and a few members. The President of the Block Panchayat acts its Chairman. The members of the Council include : members of Block Panchayat, Presidents of Gram Panchayats, Voluntary activities, technicians of different development sectors, women representatives, representatives of SC/ST and representatives from beneficiaries. A fifteen member executive committee is also selected.

The major functions of the Development Council are : to convene the Development Council every month and evaluate projects; to ensure the criteria adopted for the selection of beneficiaries and the areas; to ensure plan projects which were implemented in accordance with plan objectives; to ensure the dispatch of papers to District Planning Committee (DPC) and State Planning Board about the utilization of plan outlay; to examine the activities related to the mobilization of local resources and render advice to Grama Panchayat Council.⁹

An analytical study of the first year plan and the trends in the second year plan of decentralized planning and development at the Block level shows that the prime objectives couldnot be satisfied. The objective was the development of the productive sector. The high spending in the service sector shows that like all previous plans, the first year plan emphasised as providing education, health, drinking water etc. in contrast to the development of agriculture and allied sectors.

The predominant role of the technical expert committes like Block Level Expert Committe (BLEC) undermines the popularly elected body of the Block Panchayat. Their interference in the formulation of projects and even in the monitoring invites greater criticism. Compared to the Gram Panchayats, the people's participation in development activities of Block Panchayat are indirect. It depends on Ayalkootums and Gramasabhas for the selection of beneficiaries for its projects.

Another criticism is against the very necessity of Block Panchayat and its role in development activities itself. As the districts in Kerala are small and the direct contact between Districts and Gram Panchayats are possible, the role Block Panchayat is relatively nominal. But the two year experiment of the NBP proves that like all other levels (like Gram Panchayats and District Panchayats) the Block Panchayat has a vital role in its function as a development agency and as intermediary between the two.

⁹Nedumangad Block Panchayat, Draft Plan Document (1998 - 99), pp.49-50

Despite wide criticism about the short-comings of the experiment of decentralized planning and development at the Block level in the two years, one cannot totally rule it out as unnecessary. Such a short term experiment for any planning process cannot always generate objective results. With the previous years experiences and short comings , the project can go on to try for the realisation of fuller objectives.

II

Decentralized Planning and Development at Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat Level

Decentralized planning at the District level is a radical shift from the earlier practices of District Planning. Even though the district administration is headed by the District Collector and run by the bureaucrats under his control, no effective steps were taken for a proper district planning. Earlier, after the State Budget, the different heads of the departments were requested to make a district break up of the outlays presented in the Plan. This is then communicated to the various district authorities. After this communication is received the “District Plan” is prepared. It is merely an aggregate of the departmental schemes.

The first experiment of District Planning took place in the Wardha district of Maharashtra. Later, a number of experiments were conducted in various states, taking the district as the level of decentralized planning. The Asoka Mehta Committee concluded that there was considerable scope for decision-making at the district level. A crucial step in this direction was the 74th Constitutional Amendment. Article 243 ZD states that there shall be, in every state, a District Planning Committee (at the district level) to consolidate the plans prepared by the panchayats and the municipalities in the district. In the Panchayati Raj, the District Panchayat formulated the main strategy for district planning and also the assessment of resources for allocation to the various programmes.

The Kerala District Administration Act (1989) envisaged a two-tier system of democratic decentralized administration with the Gram Panchayats and the District Councils. But there was no clear provision for decentralized planning at the district level. Schedule V of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act (1994) describes the functions of the District Panchayat. The District Panchayat supervises all the development activities in the district. The Act made it clear that the District Panchayat should give priority to projects which are consistent with the resource availability, resource diversity, local needs, possibility of people's participation as against much plans formulated by the national and state level.¹⁰

Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat started its decentralized planning experiment as a part of the Kerala experiment of the Ninth Plan. For the implementation of development activities, the Panchayats are grouped into Community Blocks. On the basis of the developmental problems affecting the Block, further plans are prepared.

Development Problems

Agriculture has been the basic occupation of the people of the district from time immemorial. Paddy is the most cultivated crop in this district and it is the staple food of the population. Second only to rice, tapioca is the most important food crop in the district. Economically, the most important crop of the district is coconut. It is of vital importance to the domestic economy. In the course of the commercialisation of agriculture, most of the paddy fields and agricultural crops are giving way to cash crops. The district is forced to depend on other states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh for rice and vegetables.

Among the 8.36 lakh fisherfolk in the State, the District constitutes around 1.18 lakhs.¹¹ The lack of modern techniques and tools to utilize the sea resources is one of the major problems faced by the fishing sector. Since the People engaged in the fishing sector are backward, special plans and projects need be implemented to

¹⁰Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994

¹¹Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat, Plan Document (1997 - 2002) p.28

improve their quality of life. The lack of infrastructure, a permanent market centre, power, the incapability to make quality products, less investment, the rise in the prices of raw materials are the major problems affecting the industrial sector. Compared to the other districts in the State, the District has made significant achievements in general education, higher education and technical education.

The health sector provides relatively poor-quality service. The District is facing drinking water problems also. The lack of special employment enterprises for women has led to a major crisis in women's welfare. The growing unemployment is another challenge in the Panchayat. In 1996, among the total number of unemployed in Kerala, the District has 18 per cent.¹² According to the 1991 Census, the /district has 12 per cent SCs and 0.55 per cent STs.¹³ These sections face growing unemployment and also lack housing and other material facilities.

The development crisis confronted by the Thiruvananthapuram District are clearly indicated in its Plan Document (1997 - 2002).

Development Report

As part of the people's planning, the district prepares its own development report called District Plan Document. The Plan document defines the goals and activities of the Panchayat that are to be done within a specified time. The Plan Document contains four parts. Part I deals with general features of the Panchayat, Part II includes different development sectors like agriculture, industry, education, SC/ST welfare etc. Part III deals with development strategy, resource mobilization and development projects etc. And the Part IV includes documents of people's planning, outline of projects etc.¹⁴

Development Strategy

The District Panchayat in its development strategy for the Ninth Plan gave major emphasis to agriculture and allied sectors. It intended to extend the intensive

¹²Ibid, p.38

¹³Census of India, *op.cit.*, p.24

¹⁴see Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat, Plan Document (1997 - 2002)

vegetable cultivation programme and thus reduce the import from other states. In the social service sector, major emphasis was given to housing and provision of drinking water.¹⁵

Resource Mobilization

The major resource of the Panchayat is the grant given by the State Government. Apart from this, there is central assistance for and central sponsored schemes, resources from co-operative and other financial institutions, local donations and voluntary activities. The Panchayat should find out new income resources and mobilize voluntary labourforce to complement the plan outlay of the State in the district. (See Table 4.5)

Table 4.5
Resource Mobilisation as on June 30th (Percentage)

No.of local bodies	State assistance	Own state funds	state sponsored	Centrally sponsored	Loan from co-op.inst.	Loan from fin. Inst.	Voluntary contribution	Beneficiary contribution	Others	Total
79	75.60	0.66	0.02	0.15	0.13	0.22	5.00	17.20	1.00	100

Source : Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, Economic Review 1998,

p.224

In the process of the preparation of the district plan, the disparities within the district was taken into account and due consideration was given to rural and urban areas. The authorities have noted not only the anticipated plan outlays but also the non-plan outlays, institutional finances and availability of local resources and kept a constant view of the need for interdepartmental coordination of activities.

First Year Plan (1997 - '98)

During the first year plan (1997 - '98), the Panchayat received a total outlay of RS. 1,093.22 lakh from the State Government. Out of this Rs.599.5 lakh to General Sector, Rs.380 lakh was granted to SCP and Rs.113.72 lakh to TSP. (See Table 4.6)

¹⁵Ibid, p.47

Table 4.6

Plan Outlay to various Plan Sectors (Rupees in lakhs)

Sector	Outlay	Per cent
General Sector	599.5	54.84
SCP	380	34.76
TSP	113.72	10.4
Total	1093.22	100

Source : Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat, Plan Document(1997 - 2002) p.46

There are around 193 development projects in the Panchayat covering the various sectors like productive sector, service sector and infrastructure sector. The Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat is the only panchayat in the State which allocated a large portion (9.59 per cent) of its total outlay to the welfare of women. There are 15 development projects in various plans (General Sector, SCP and TSP) aimed at the welfare of women.

The District planning process had envisaged higher expenditure in the productive sector. As can be seen in Table 4.7, a significant proportion of the funds were allotted both in the General Sector and TSP for the productive sectors during the preparation of plan document. Only in the case of the SCP, the service sector was allotted more funds. But the expenditure figures in Table 4.8 very clearly shows that there was a major diversion of funds from productive sector to the service and infrastructure sectors in the course of the implementation of plan in the first year. So the priority still was given to the productive sector couldnot be fulfilled.

Table 4.7

Development Strategy and fund allocation to various development sectors.(Rupees in lakhs)

Sector	General Sector	SCP	TSP	Total
Productive Sector	244.37 (40.8)	149.34 (39.3)	50.71 (44.6)	444.42 (40.7)
Service Sector	229.02 (38.2)	198.22 (52.1)	43.01 (37.8)	470.25 (43.0)
Infrastructua l Sector	126.00 (21.0)	32.55 (8.6)	20.00 (17.6)	178.55 (16.3)
Total	599.39 (100)	380.11 (100)	113.72 (100)	1093.22 (100)

Source : Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat, Plan Document (1997 - 2002), p.47

Table 4.8

Expenditure on sector wise

Sector	General Sector	SCP	TSP	Total
Productive sector	1,89,25,187 (32.8%)	94,52,091 (28%)	17,40,569 (14.99%)	3,01,17,847 (29.20%)
Service Sector	2,11,39,051 (36.59%)	1,60,21,942 (47.45%)	52,31,378 (45.03%)	4,23,92,371 (41.09%)
Infrastructural Sector	1,77,15,975 (30.61%)	82,88,717 (24.55%)	46,43,316 (39.98%)	3,06,48,008 (29.71%)
Total	5,77,80,213 (96.39%)	3,37,62,750 (88.82%)	1,16,15,263 (102.13%)	10,31,58,226 (94.36%)

Source : Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat, Annual Plan (1998 - '99) p.6

Second Year Plan (1998 - '99)

The development strategy of the ongoing second year plan gave more priority to service sector. In the productive sector, it intended to increase production of paddy and diary farming, development of fisheries, an increase in the production of coir and handloom products. In the service sector the first priority was given to housing and improvement of quality of education. In the infrastructure development it aimed at completion of pending projects.¹⁶

Resource Mobilization

In 1998-99 plan period, the total Grants-in-from State Government to Panchayat in Rs. 1235.15 lakh. Out of this, Rs. 770.39 lakh is allotted to the General Sector, Rs.383.82 lakh to the SCP and Rs.75.94 is allocated to the TSP. (See Table 4.9). Like first year plan, it expects shares from the state Government sponsored schemes, the co-operatives and other financial institutions and also voluntary labour donations from voluntary associations.

The District planning in the second year envisaged a high expenditure in the service sector as against the previous year. As can be seen in the Table 4.10, both the General Sector, the SCP and the TSP have allotted more funds in this sector. Next to the service sector, the productive sector receives a high outlay and the infrastructural sector receives only a low outlay.

¹⁶Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat, Second Year Plan (1998 - 99) pp. 8-9

Table 4.9

Plan Outlay to various Plans Sectors (Rupees in lakhs)

Sector	Outlay	Per cent
General Sector	770.39	62.37
SCP	388.82	31.48
TSP	75.94	6.15
Total	1235.15	100

Source : Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat, Annual Plan (1998 - '99) p.11

Table 4.10

Sectoral Allocation under the Plan 1998 - '99 (Rupees in lakhs)

Sector	General Sector	SCP	TSP	Total
Productive Sector	326.24 (41.04%)	155.28 (35.94%)	9.25 (12.05%)	490.77 (37.85%)
Service Sector	330.44 (41.94%)	180.81 (41.85%)	59.24 (77.15%)	570.49 (43.99%)
Infrastructural Sector	131.29 (16.66%)	95.94 (22.21%)	8.29 (10.80%)	235.52 (18.16%)
Total	787.97 (100%)	432.03 (100%)	76.78 (100%)	1296.78 (100%)

Source : Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat, Annual Plan (1998 - '99) p.12

The Panchayat in its second year plan aimed at around 60 projects in the productive sector, 45 in the service sector and 55 in the infrastructural sector. Among the service sector projects, 22 projects were intended for the welfare of women.

Monitoring

A distinguishing feature of the people's planning process is the system of monitoring. The District Panchayat constitutes a Monitoring Samithi which consists of representatives of the people, bureaucrats, beneficiaries, technical expert and the members of taskforce and voluntary activists. Its functions are to ensure that all planning processes are done within the timelimit, that the projects are aimed at the fulfillment of its objectives, that the criteria for the selection of beneficiaries and benefited areas are properly allotted and finally, a complete evaluation of the projects.

There is a three level Monitoring system working the District Panchayat - District Level Monitoring Samithi and Division Level Monitoring Samithi.

District Level Monitoring Samithi

It comprises of the District Panchayat President as the Chairman, the District Planning Officer/Technical Expert as the Vice Chairman and the District Panchayat Secretary as its Convenor. The other members of the Samithi include the Chairman of the District Panchayat Standing Committee, bureaucrats, representatives of voluntary activists related to people's planning and technical experts. The Samithi is to be convened once in a month to evaluate activities of District Panchayat and to help in the implementation of the plan.

Sectoral Monitoring Samithi

Like District Level Monitoring Samithi, it includes of the Chairman of the Standing Committee as the Chairman, a Technical Expert or the member of the taskforce as its Vice Chairman, the District level official as the Convenor and Voluntary activists of the Development sectors as Joint Convener. The members include members of the standing committee, voluntary activities, representatives of Bureaucrats. The Samithi ensures the implementation of the various schemes for the different sectors - productive, service and infrastructural.

Division Level Monitoring Samithi

It consists of the member of the District Panchayat as the Chairman, the Technical Expert as the Vice Chairman, Voluntary activists/official of the development sector as the Convenor and the Technical member as the Joint Convenor. The members include President and Secretary of District Panchayat, Block level coordinator, activists of people's planning, two voluntary activists and Block members. The Samithi evaluates the development activities of the division/ward and render advises to them.¹⁷

To sum up, district planning has a vital role in the development process as an agency to integrate and supervise all activities of the District. Decentralized Planning doesnot mean planning by isolated entities at various level, but systematic integration to higher levels. Like the Block Panchayat, the District planning has no right to select

¹⁷Ibid. pp.32-33

individual beneficiaries for its projects. It depends on the Gramasabhas of the Grama Panchayat for the selection of beneficiaries. Despite the unfulfilment of its plan objective in the initial years, there are greater possibilities for expanding the scope of district planning in Kerala.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The experiments in decentralized planning and development were significant events in the development history of Kerala. It was a radical step initiated by the Government after the widely acclaimed 'land reforms' and the 'total literacy' programme. For the first time in India, the planning process was done at the very grassroots level bearing the idea of 'development from below'. It tried to achieve mass conscientisation in the development process in its true spirit. The salient feature of this new development process is not only the decentralization of the administration, but also the decentralization of planning and finance.

Admittedly, it is too early to attempt an evaluation of the ongoing decentralized planning in the first two years, the experiment has led to varying criticisms from numerous circles. The study reveals certain shortcomings despite profound goals and objectives. There are many areas where the fund allocated remains grossly under utilised. There are also instances of diversion of funds from the sector to which originally allotted. Most of the plans in the various panchayats during the two years gave priority to the productive sector. Amongst them, agriculture and allied sectors were given priority. But more spending was done on service and infrastructural sectors. This shows that the concept of development is yet to be changed. Despite the higher female population in many Panchayats, their participation in Gramasabha has been nominal. The participation of the SCs and STs and other weaker sections has also not reached the desired level. In most of the Panchayats, in the selection process of the beneficiaries, the SCs/STs are not included in the General Sector. They are included only in the SCP and TSP respectively. Eventhough the rules provide that, the SC/ST should be included as the beneficiaries of the general sector, the panchayats donot follow this norm strictly. As the projects under SCP And TSP are limited, the SCs/STs are forced to be content with minimum benefits. Their condition could be improved by their inclusion in the General Sector which

contains a large number of projects. Interdepartmental conflicts (e.g. Local Government vs. Revenue, Education, Public Work Division Departments) is also seen to be detrimental to the successful working of the people's planning. The predominant role of the technical experts and expert committees like BLEC and DLEC undermines the popularly elected representatives of the panchayats. To a certain extent, these 'extra-constitutional bodies' have an upperhand in the activities of these institutions. It can also be seen that the financial support of the commercial banks in the state for the development schemes are highly inadequate. This is primarily due to the critical stand that the banks maintain towards such schemes.

The compulsions of coalition politics in the state is a major hurdle to properly implement decentralized planning. Not only the opposition parties but also some constituents in the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) are critical of the Plan. They criticise it of being highly politicised. There is a growing demand that the State Planning Board should be revamped with nominees from different parties. At first, MLAs and elected representatives didnot show interest in the campaign, fearing a loss of power. During the preparatory phase of planning, even the people felt that the interference from political front would not be forthcoming.

Within a short span of time, decentralized planning created certain suspicions and criticisms from many other quarters. Some argue that decentralization is an agenda of the World Bank which is implemented in Kerala under the guise of 'people's planning'. Since planning in India is losing its relevance in the age of globalisation, the people's planning has no meaning. It protects the interest of the ruling class by imposing burden on the common man by forcing on them the burden of resource mobilization. It is a deliberate attempt on the part of the government to shy away from its responsibilities.

There are various sections in the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act which empowers the State and its agencies to interfere with the functioning of the panchayat. An ironic fact that is meted out as a criticism is the ratio of voters who take part in the Gramasabhas.

How far can one claim the spirit of democracy when it is seen that the Gramasabhas which are convened and legitimised by 20-30 per cent of the total voters get the right to control the panchayat representatives who are elected by a majority of 70-80 per cent of the voters. One of the serious criticisms levelled is that decentralization creates regional parochialism as people think wardwise. The cooperation of the officials was minimal during the initial years. There existed a tug of war between Secretaries of the Panchayat and the popularly elected presidents and members over the jurisdiction of power. Most of the Secretaries in the various panchayats felt that the people's planning as a device that delimits their power. The most acute criticism levelled against the ongoing planning is its very sustainability in future. As Kerala is known for the cyclical rule of 'front politics' scepticism prevails over the continuity of the scheme as had happened with the District Council 1991. (The LDF Government enacted District Council Act (1989), elections conducted and new administrative set up came into force in 1991. The Government could win majority of the districts. But in a few months, the UDF Government came into power in the State took away all the powers of the District Council and finally dissolved it.)

While most of these criticism lack any relevance, quite a few are rational and are based on perceptive study. These criticisms are tested within the literature on decentralized planning and development and its two years experiment in the State. The idea of decentralized planning and development is not a new idea as proclaimed by the World Bank. Whenever centralization and planning was implemented the demand for decentralization and local planning has almost always been expressed. The nationalist movement visualised a decentralized structure of economic development which was upheld by Gandhiji himself. Certain provisions in the Constitution of India highlights the need for decentralization. Moreover, in the age of 'Global Village', 'Village Swaraj' becomes more relevant. The efforts for more decentralization started in the State in 1957, only a yearafter its formation.

Resource mobilization by the people was the cardinal feature of the development history of Kerala. In its very beginning, various Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and public spirited men collected money and material from the public and setup a network of rural libraries, schools etc. The role of Kerala Grandhasala Sangam and Kerala People's Science Movement (later Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad -KSSP) are noteworthy in this regard. The functioning of the Gramsabha and Ayalkootums does not act against popularly elected members of panchayats. It acts as a feedback mechanism between the elected representatives and the people. It is a forum where the people directly participate and the grievances are addressed.

Decentralized planning and development will not create regional parochialism in development. On the contrary, it aims at an integrated development programme. Gandhiji emphasised that India lies in her villages and their development will be India's future fundamental to prosperity. Transparency and their sharing of responsibility through monitoring should be seen as an antidote to corruption. Whenever the contractor-politician nexus had lead the development process, it has been a long story of flashy projects, environmental degradation, short term gains and long-term loss.¹ Regarding the sustainability of decentralized planning at the political front, once it become a popular movement, no government can neglect it. This was clear in the case of total literacy campaign - the next government was forced to continue it, though with some minor changes.

Despite the criticism and shortcomings, the two year experiment created certain positive trends and an awareness among the people. When the plan was initiated, there were only a dozen panchayats (like Kalliasseri, Kanjikuzhi, Madikkai, Thanalur, Olavenna etc.) that would qualify as a model of the new development culture. But today, more than three dozen panchayat are notable. (See Appendix IV) It has changed the hitherto passive attitude of the people towards the development problems.

¹Prabhu, Rajendra , "Demise of Marx and Keynes", The Observer of Business and Politics, October 19, 1998.

Bandyopanday's (1997) evaluation concluded that "the campaign has to an extent broken the pervasive atmosphere of general cynicism within the State towards the development process".² For the first time in the development history of Kerala, 990 Grama Panchayats, 152 Block Panchayats, 55 Municipalities, 3 Corporations and 14 District Panchyats prepared their development reports. Another significant development was that 30-40 percent plan outlay was given to the local bodies to prepare plan projects in their own spheres of activities. It helped the local bodies to use hitherto untapped sources of local resources both human and material. As there is a long period between retirement age and life expectancy in Kerala, the service of retired persons who are highly qualified are widely made use of. The democratic decentralization of SCP/TSP creates opportunity for the weaker sections to directly participate in planning for their own wellbeing. If these opportunities are properly utilised, this could very well be a turning point to the development of the weaker sections in the State.

There is always a danger that decentralization may degenerate into decentralization of corruption. It can be checked through transparency in the proceedings, more public involvement etc. The planning process made transparency in all its process like beneficiary selection, make available of public documents with access to any member of the public, essential facts about any public work in common language should be exhibited on a notice board at the work site etc.

The new development process more or less softened the strait-jacket of the bi-polar front politics at the local levels. This is evident from the experience of around 40 percent of Gram Panchayats ruled by the opposition led United Democratic Front (UDF) and their attitude towards the new development process. According to Namboodiripad, the first Chief Minister of Kerala, "the merit of people's planning from below is that there

²Bandyopadhyay, D. "People Participation in Planning : Kerala Experiment", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXXII, No. 39 27th September, 1997 p.2454

is a growing realisation that there is something more important for the two combinations than merely contesting for ministerial offices”.³

The Gramasabha became the cornerstone of participatory democracy as it established direct democracy at the grassroots level. The real democracy was moulded to take its true shape when the people’s ability to take decisions regarding their daily life was ensured. The functioning of Ayalkootums below the gramasabhas in the various panchayat represent the true spirit of grassroots democracy. It acts as a catalyst for an informed democracy. According to Bandyopadhyay (1997), “the people’s planning could develop a ground swell to create a massive wave to submerge and washaway many an established landmarks. But it is also the only way by which masses could have some say over their own destiny. Through this process they become active subjects of development from being mere passive and inert objects of development”.⁴

While evaluating the working of the gramasabha, Mathew (1997) comments, “while thousands came together in the gramasabha in many areas, in some places it was difficult to get the quorum and urban villages didnot attract large participants. The enthusiasm was evident in the countryside. Wherever the women had come forward, the gramasabha had better attendance. Advance publicity and awareness campaign produced better participation”.⁵ But, according to Planning Commission, “the initiative taken in Kerala towards making the Gramasabha a more dynamic and transparent system of democratic decentralization, where the power goes to the people and not to the people’s representatives’ is the ideal perspective but as it a new process, time will tell if it can be successfully pursued”.⁶ Ghosh (1999), former member of Planning Commission, is of the view that “..... recent experience with regard to the decentralized planning programming parts of Kerala holds out the hope that if the process of decentralization and

³Namboodiripad, EMS , “A Kerala Experiment : Planning from Below - and Above”, Frontline, 18th October, 1996 p.92

⁴Bandyopadhyay, op.cit. p.2452

⁵Mathew, George , The Hindu, 9th May, 1997

⁶Government of India, Planning Commission, Draft Ninth Five Year Plan (1997 - 2002) p.312

devolution of authority and funds is carried out throughout the country positive results can be expected".⁷

The micro level resource mapping programme that supplements decentralized planning and development experiment is typically visualised as a vital step from 'Word Literacy' to 'Land Literacy' in Kerala's development process. People's participation in resource survey ensures their participation in the implementation of the various schemes and monitoring and updating of land/water/asset information. By integrating this scientific evaluation of each panchayats on its natural resources, it leads to an eco-friendly development strategy. Spatial planning and sectoral planning as the best solution to local/regional development.

The two years experiment of decentralized planning indicates that certain effective steps are needed for its successful working. Aziz (1993) suggests that "to make implementation effective, the decentralized governments, may do well to ensure inter-departmental co-ordination; avoidance of mismatch of available resources, mis-identification of target group and misallocation of resources and full utilisation of available infrastructure".⁸

Finally, for the successful working of people's planning, a 'new political culture' has to be developed in the state. Both the ruling front and the opposition front should have a common understanding to sort out problems affecting the development of the state. The government should take into account the confidence of the opposition in the planning process and the criticisms of the opposition should be creative rather than destructive. Political parties should set aside their partisan interests while taking the development issues at the local level, which are of common interest to the people. Politicisation of the planning process should be avoided. In this context, the words of

⁷Ghosh, Arun , "Development Issues : Decentralised Planning in Kerala", *Frontline*, 7th May, 1999 p.92

⁸Aziz, Abul , Decentralised Planning : The Karnataka Experiment, (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1993) p.23

EMS are relevant : “..... whosoever wins election, that party should seek the co-operation of those have been defeated and they in turn should extend cooperation to the victors. In this fashion, the ruling party should use the powers that have been given to the local bodies, for the welfare of the people. This is to be the political culture of the future. If such visionary steps are taken in this perspective in the Panchayats and municipalities, great strides can be made in the development of Kerala”.⁹

The decentralization process in the state of Kerala, in fact, is noteworthy due to the wide popular participation in the various stages of planning and implementation. The cultural and political history of the state, which has to its credit achievements like cent per cent literacy has a lot to do with such large turnout. Moreover, the mass movements in the state in the earlier decades like the library movement, Kerala People’s Science Movement, Total Literacy Campaign and of agitation for land reform has dramatically changed the social structure of the state, i.e., the rural-urban continuum, has also constituted to the wider social transmission of knowledge. The success of the decentralized planning project in the state owes a lot a set of unique conditions. It should be noted that any attempt at achieving equally successful result for the same in the other states need not bear the same results.

The class distinction in the society could adversely influence the process of participatory planning. Traditional socio-economic hierarchy, primarily based on caste system, ownership of land, patriarchal society based on gender inequality are also a stumbling blocks to the participation of the rural people in decentralized planning. Without a redistribution of power, accompanied by a genuine democracy at the local level, effective local participation is not possible. If power remains concentrated in the hands of elites , decentralization might empower the elites rather than the people. Under such circumstances, the decentralized system, as Ambedkar contends, would be a ‘very dangerous system’. He argued that in the existence of the village system, all people saturated with local particulars, local patriotism and there is no room for larger civic

⁹Namboodiripad, EMS , Desabhimani (Malayalam), 21st August, 1995

spirit; “whatever be the merits of the rural republics I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that they have been the bane of public life of India”.¹⁰

Complete decentralization in planning and development is neither feasible nor desirable. There must be a synthesis of the centralized process of panchayati raj. Centralized planning may confine itself to planning for strategic commodities and services needed for the country as whole as well as for the purpose of international transactions. Decentralized planning would be concerned with major sectors of activities - agriculture and allied activities, irrigation, power, roads, transport etc.

To sum up, Kerala’s new initiative towards decentralized planning and development with popular participation makes its relevance felt not only in Kerala, but the entire LDCs who are under the clutches of “parasitic capitalism” and its multilateral organisations. Through massive participation in the development process, the people can be empowered. Such empowerment assumes special importance in the context of the ongoing process of globalisation. In the context of the adverse effect of market economy and growing consumerism and their brutal attack on the self-initiative taken by smaller communities and its people, the decision of the people on their own development through people’s planning deserves special attention. As Frank and Chasin comment, “Kerala’s new democratic initiatives could be the start of a second generation of Kerala model. If these initiatives succeed in mobilizing and empowering the people, they will present a genuine alternative to the inequality and exploitation of the emerging world order”.¹¹

¹⁰Ambedkar, B.R., “On Village Panchayat Bill”, in Vasant Moon (ed.) Dr. Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol.2 (Bombay, Educational Department; Government of Maharashtra, 1982) p.106

¹¹Frank, W.Richard and Barbara H. Chasin, Relevance of the Kerala model in the emerging World Order (Thiruvananthapuram, International Congress on Kerala Studies : AKG Centre for Research and Studies, 1994) p.12

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Appendix I
Percentage and Number of Poor in India

Year	Poverty Ratio			No. Of Poor (in million)		
	Rural	Urban	Combined	Rural	Urban	Combined
1973-74	56.4	49.0	54.9	261.3	60.3	321.3
1977-78	53.1	45.2	51.3	264.3	64.6	328.9
1983	45.7	40.8	44.5	252.0	70.49	322.9
1987-88	39.1	38.2	38.9	231.9	75.2	307.1
1993-94	37.3	32.4	36.0	244.0	76.3	320.3

Source : Government of India, Planning Commission, Draft Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002), Vol.I p.33

Appendix II

India's Rank in Human Development Index (1992 - '98)

Human Development Report	Total Countries	India
1992	160	121
1993	173	134
1994	173	135
1995	174	134
1996	174	135
1997	175	138
1998	174	139

Source : UNDP, Human Development Report 1992 - '98,

Appendix III

Total Expenditure of Local Bodies, 1993-94

Item	Grama Panchayat (Rs. In lakh)	Percentage	Municipalities & Corporations (Rs. In lakhs)	Per centage
Establishment	4525	36.7	1856	15.9
Public Works	5236	42.4	3831	32.9
Education	322	2.6	147	1.2
Drinking Water	212	1.7	1042	9.0
Street Lighting	782	6.4	720	6.2
Public Health	256	2.1	2470	21.2
Others	698	5.7	584	5.0
Debt Servicing	297	2.4	1007	8.6
Total	12337	100	11659	100

Source : Government of Kerala, State Planning Board, Economic Review 1998 p.198

Appendix IV

Model Panchayats in Kerala (Performance on Sectoral wise)

I. Grama Panchayats

1. Productive Sector

1. Adacheri
2. Chottanikkara
3. Kalliasseri
4. Kanjikuzhi
5. Karakulam
6. Koduman
7. Kunnothuparambu
8. Madakkathara
9. Pappinasseri
10. Paruvathur
11. Peringom-Vaykkara
12. Thannirmukkam
13. Vallikunnu
14. Vaniyam kulam

2. Service Sector

15. Athirapalli
16. Balusseri
17. Eddiva
18. Kandallur
19. Karasseri
20. Kathirur
21. Kayyur-Chemmeni
22. Kudappanakkunu
23. Madikkai
24. Malapattam
25. Mayyil
26. Olavanna
27. Pilikkodu
28. Thanalur
29. Vazapadi

3. Infrastructure Sector

30. Chapparappadav
31. Chanthamangalam
32. Karimba
33. Kumarakam
34. Narammuzhi
35. Ranni-Perunadu
36. Thrumaradi
37. Valiyapparambu
38. Varappetti
39. Vithura

II. Block Panchayats

1. Productive Sector

1. Thaikkatusseri
 2. Vellanad
- ##### 2. Service Sector
3. Ariael
 4. Erikkur
 5. Thodannur
- ##### 3. Infrastructure Sector
6. Vamanapuram

III. Municipalities

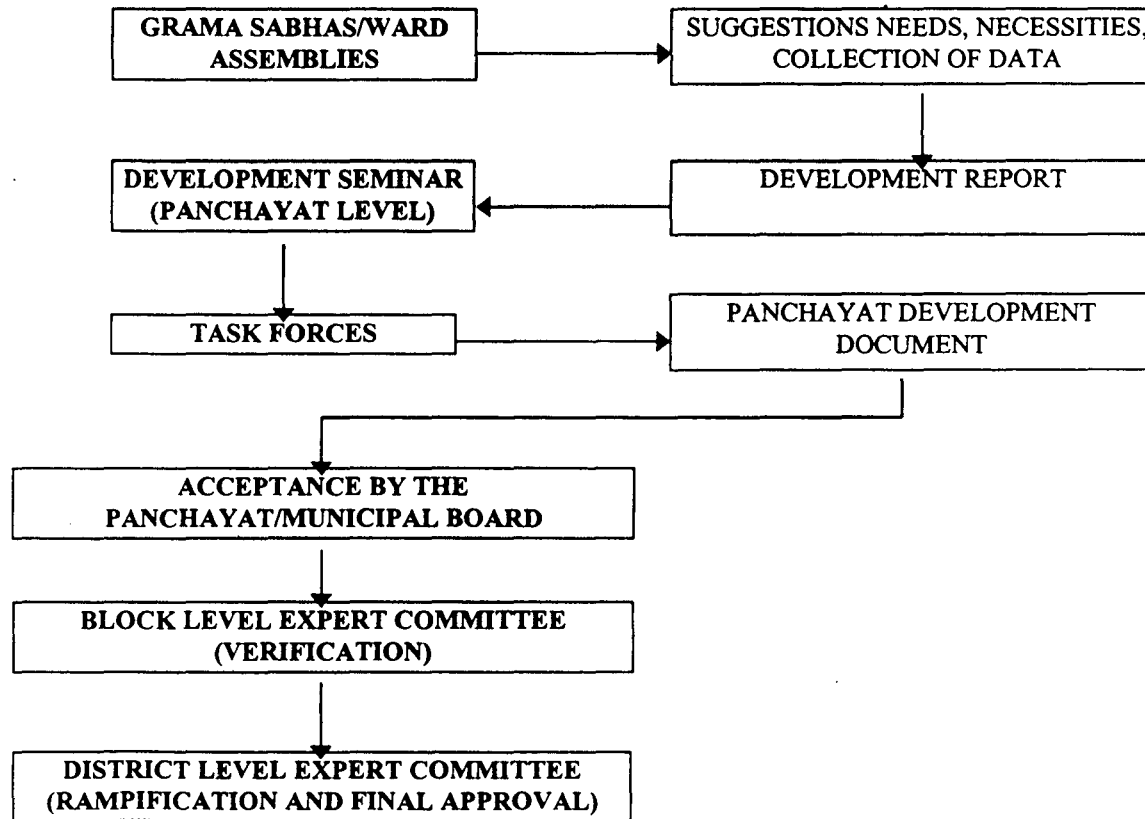
1. Productive Sector

1. Punalur
- ##### 2. Service Sector
2. Cherthala
 3. Poonani
- ##### 3. Infrastructure Sector
4. Nedumangad

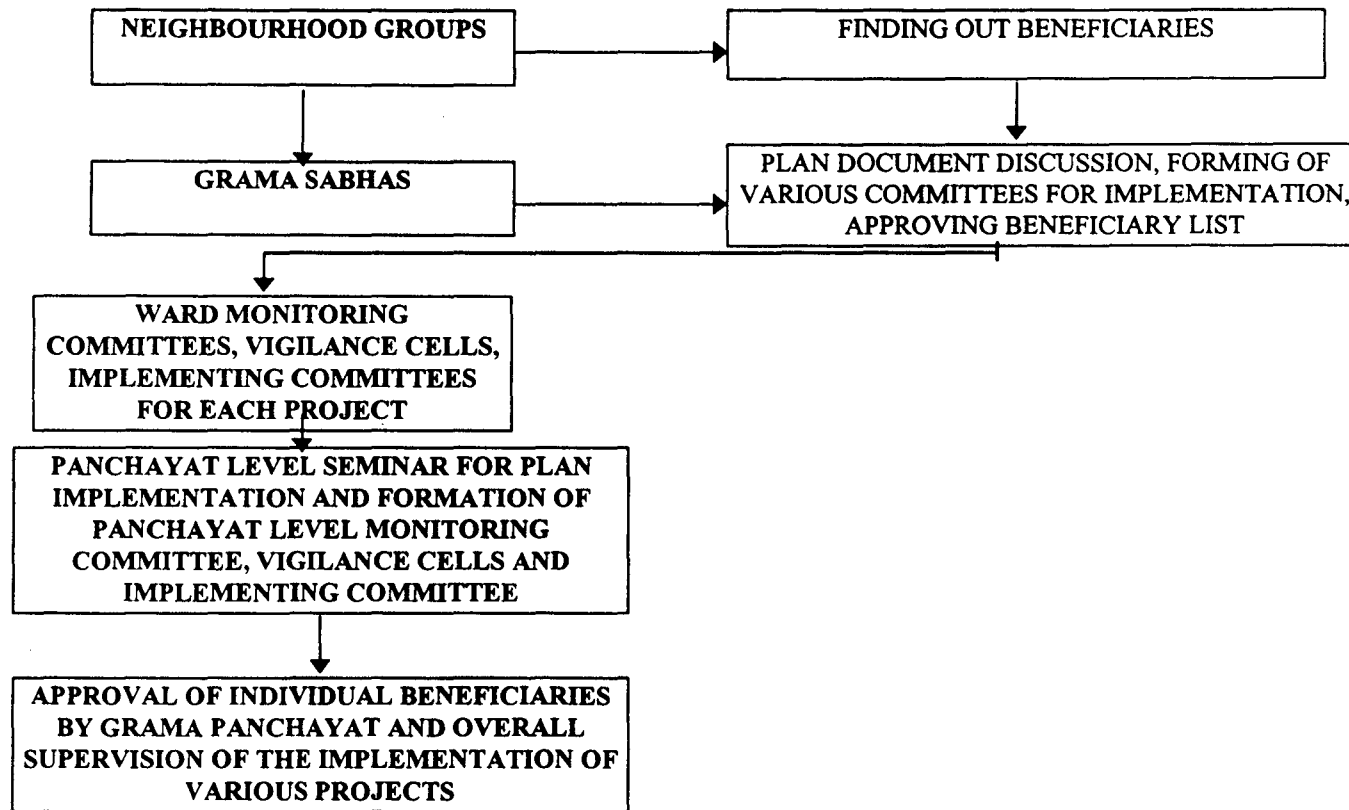
Source : Puthiavila, Manoj K. And T.P. Kunhikannan (eds.), Janakeeyathayude Ponkani : Vikasanathinte Vijayakathakal, (Malayalam) (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala State Planning Board, (n.d.))

Appendix V

Planning At The Grass Root Level

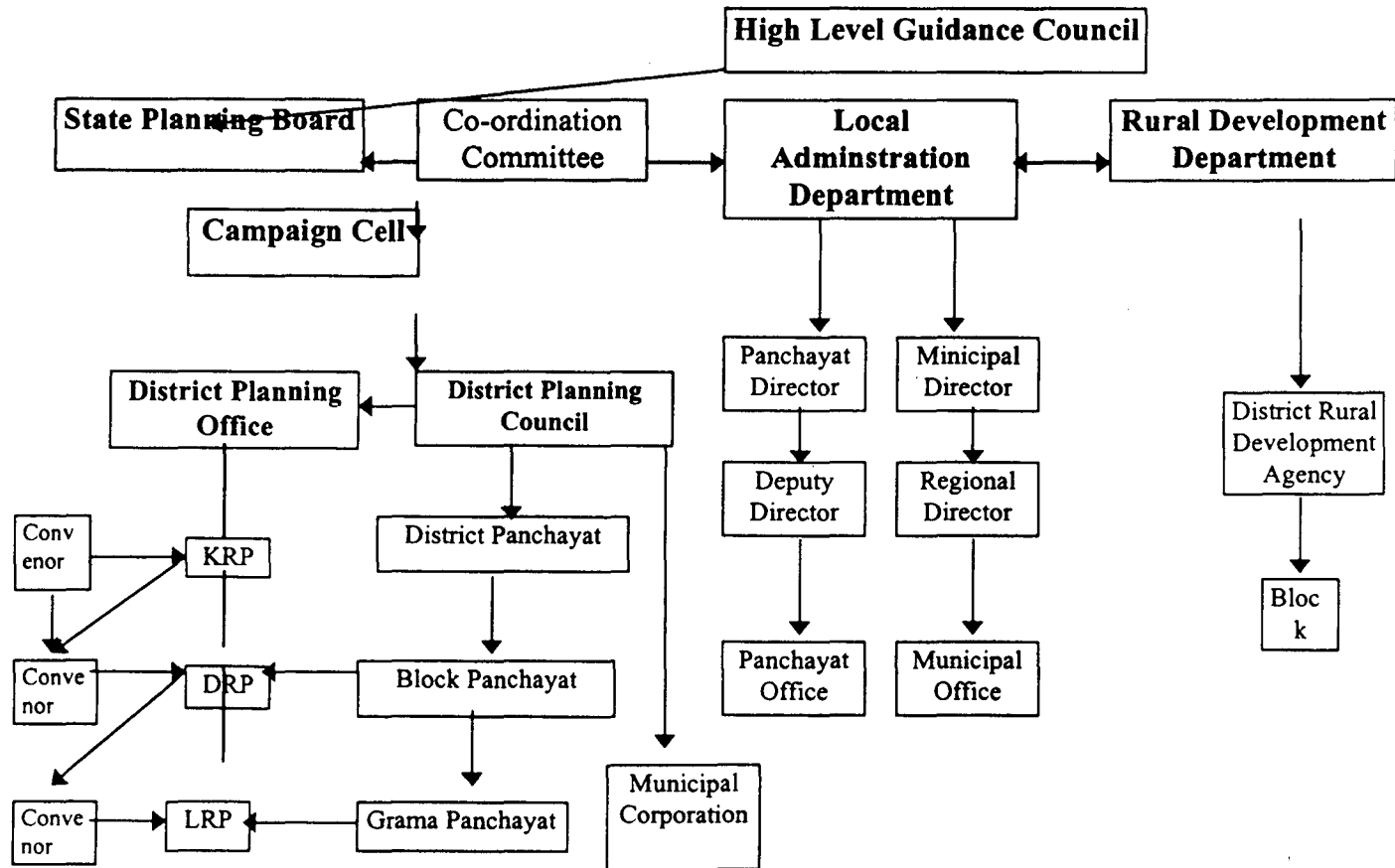


Appendix VI
Project Implementation



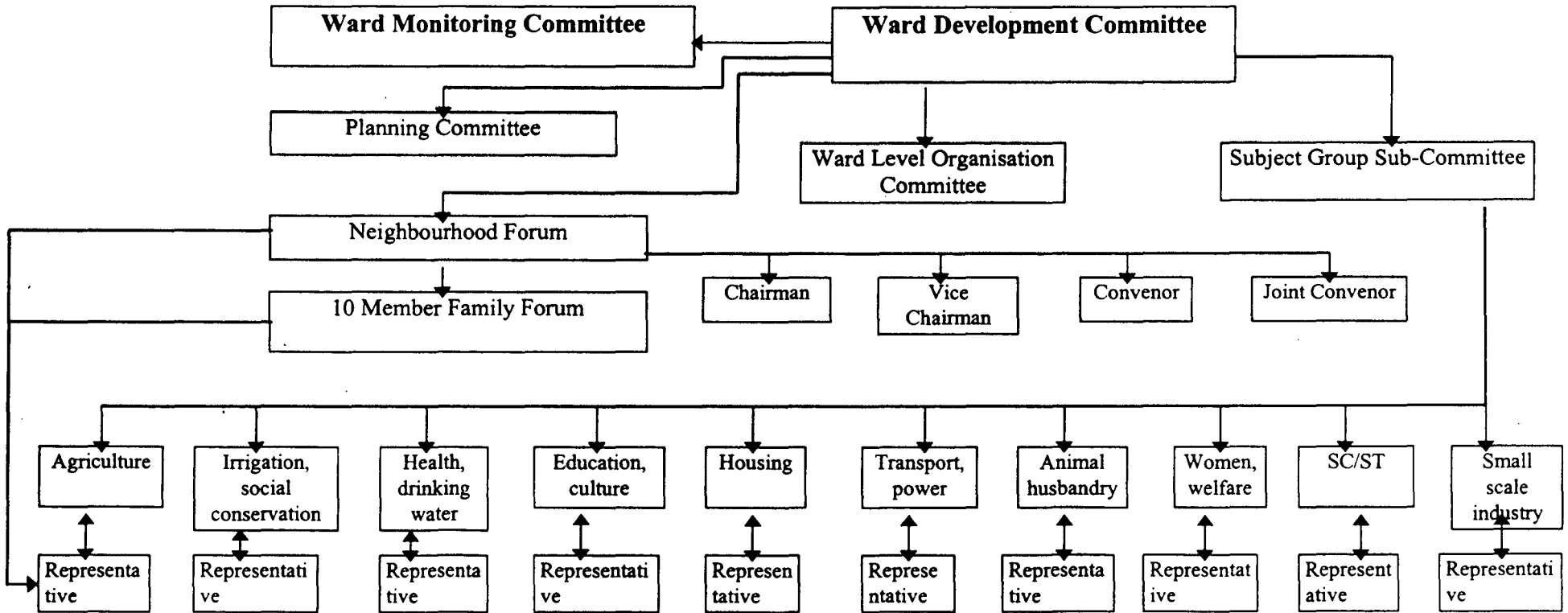
Appendix VII

Ward Level Administration Setup Of Vithura Grama Panchayat Under People's Planning 1997-98



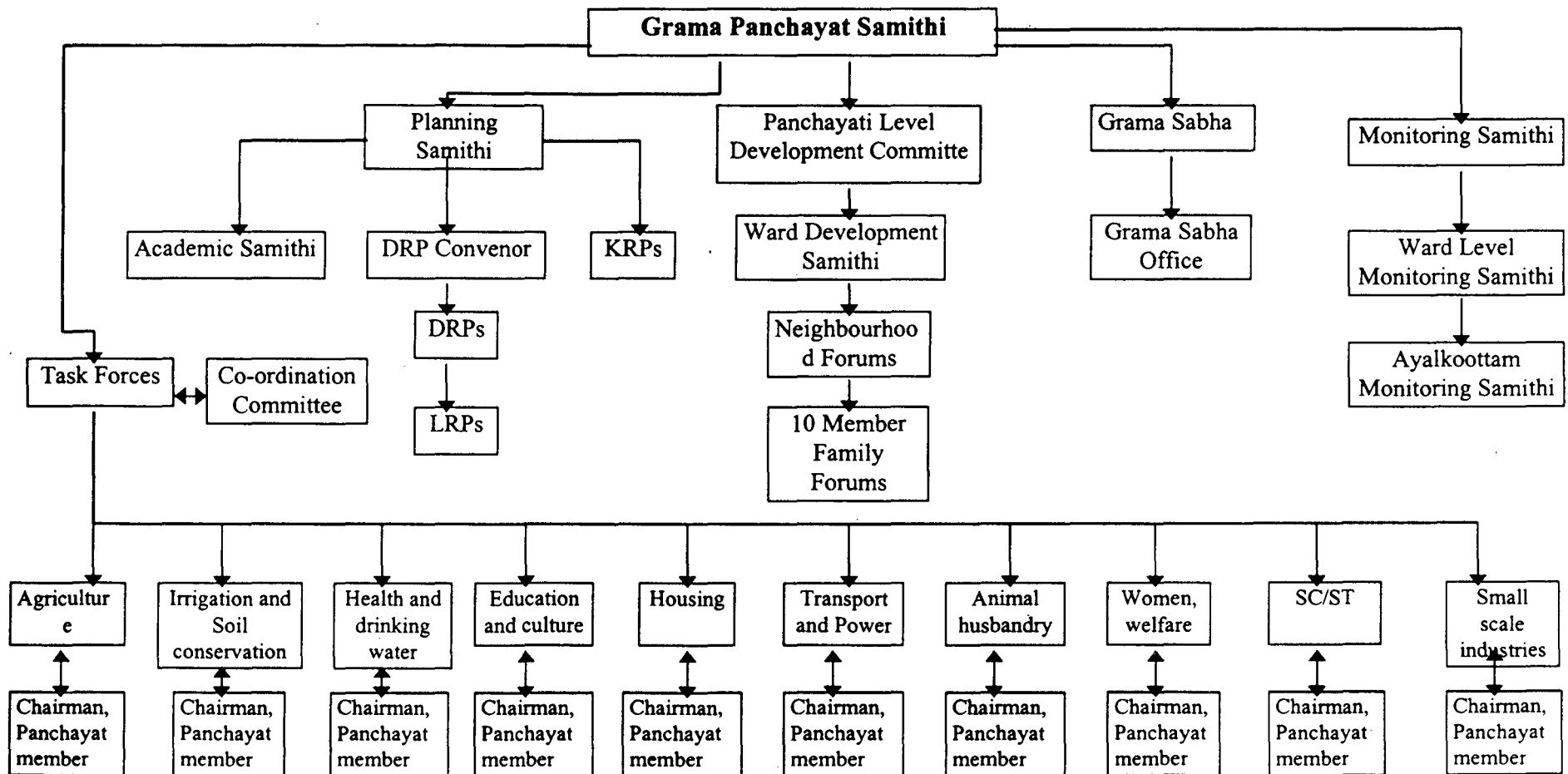
Appendix VIII

Ward Level Administrative Set up of Vithura Grama Panchayat Under People's Planning, 1997-'98.



Appendix IX

Panchayat Level Administrative Set up of Vithura Grama Panchayat Under People's Planning, 1997-98.

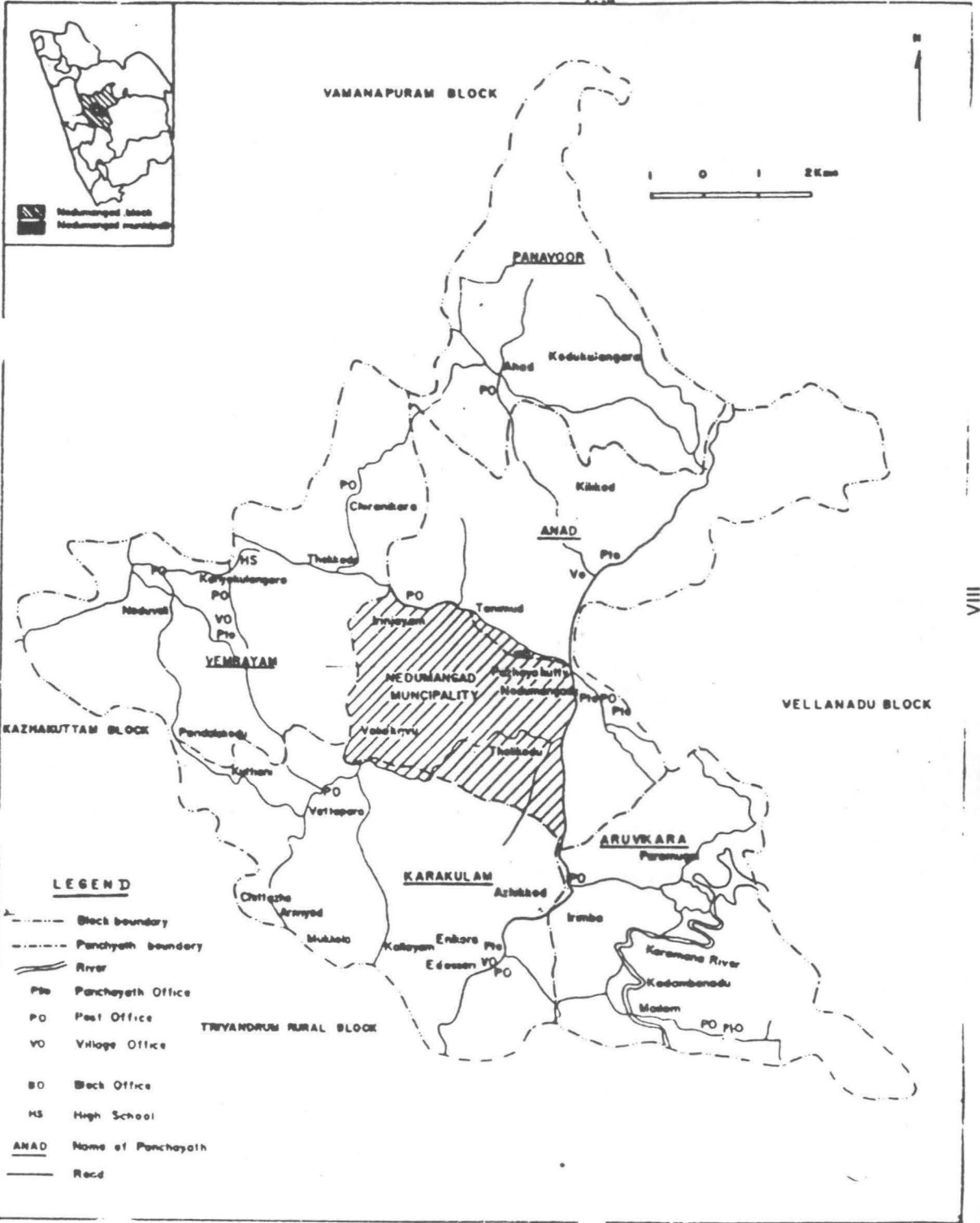


NEDUMANGAD BLOCK & NEDUMANGAD MUNICIPALITY

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

Appendix X

Nedumangad Block Panchayat



LEGEND

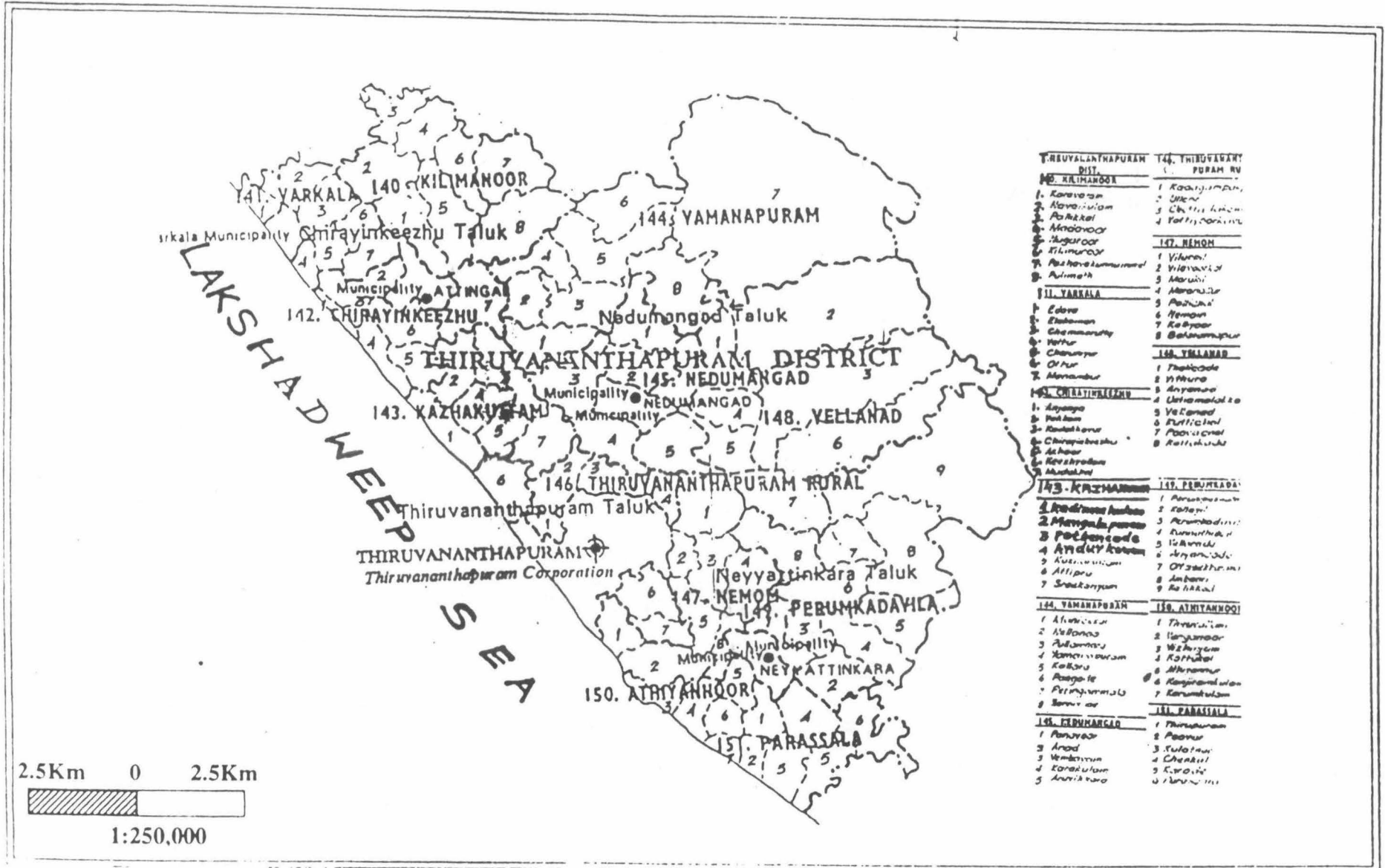
- Block boundary
- - - Panchayat boundary
- ~ River
- Pto Panchayat Office
- PO Post Office
- VO Village Office
- BO Block Office
- HS High School
- ANAD Name of Panchayat
- Road

TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT

CESS

Appendix XI

Thiruvananthapuram District Panchayat



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DIST.	144. THIRUVANANTHAPURAM RU
140. KILIMANOOR	1 Kooljilappu
1. Kooljilappu	2 Mela
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