

Institutional Foundations of Decentralized Planning in Kerala

Maya P K^{1*}

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^{1*} Maya P K, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, KSM DB College, Sasthamcotta, Kerala, India.

With the goal of empowering local self-governments and promoting inclusive development throughout the state, decentralized planning has become a fundamental component of Kerala's governance. Kerala's distinctive institutional architecture and participatory model have drawn attention to its decentralization strategy, especially under the People's Planning Programme. The purpose of this study is to examine how local governance has changed in Kerala, examine the institutional processes that have influenced decentralized planning, and perceive the function of the People's Planning Program in this regard. The study aims to investigate and evaluate Kerala's different local governance phases. Additionally, it conducts an extensive examination of the state's decentralized planning system, paying special attention to the People's Planning Program.

The success of Kerala's decentralized planning model in enabling local self-governments through the devolution of authority, resources, and functions is well known. Participatory and needs-based development have been made possible by the substantial budgetary finances that have been transferred to local entities. Governance has been reinforced by important reforms such greater public participation, transparency, responsibility, and technical assistance. Kerala has established itself as a model for other states because to this strategy, which has enhanced service delivery, decreased poverty, and promoted inclusive growth.

Keywords: decentralized planning, local self government department (lskd), kerala institute of local administration (kila)

Corresponding Author

Maya P K, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, KSM DB College, Sasthamcotta, Kerala, India.
Email: mayaeco@ksmdbc.ac.in

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1. Introduction

Decentralisation came to the forefront of the development agenda from the 1980s onwards and today both developing and developed countries are following decentralisation policies. While western countries recognized decentralisation as a substitute for the efficient distribution of public services developing countries use it as means for reducing economic inefficiencies, macro-economic instability and ineffective governance. There are different reasons for decentralisation and there are several forms and degrees of decentralisation (Ebel, 2002). In Kerala, decentralization is crucial because it gives local self-governments the ability to actively engage in planning and development procedures, resulting in more inclusive and responsive governance. Kerala has promoted more public involvement, accountability, and openness in decision-making by giving grassroots institutions more authority, responsibilities, and resources.

Kerala's institutional mechanism for decentralization consists of a well-organized system of local entities, including corporations, municipalities, and panchayats, backed by state-level organizations like the Local Self Government Department (LSGD) and the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA). These organizations enable customized development projects that cater to the particular requirements of local communities by coordinating planning, resource allocation, and implementation. At the local level, Kerala's strong institutional framework has helped to enhance service delivery, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable development, making it a model state for decentralized governance. This Study focus to explore the conceptualisation of decentralisation and local governance to provide an institutional framework in the context of Kerala's decentralised planning process.

2. Objectives

1. To explore and analyze the various stages of local governance in Kerala.
2. To undertake a detailed examination of decentralized planning in Kerala, with a particular focus on the People's Planning Programme.

3. Methodology

The present study primarily utilizes secondary data sources to gather comprehensive information at the state level. The key sources include the Economic Review, Kerala State Planning board, reports from the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Kerala, and Panchayat-level Statistics Reports. Additionally, data was collected from the Sulekha website for plan monitoring managed by the Information Kerala Mission, as well as resources from the Kerala Institute of Local Administration. Supplementary information was drawn from various publications and the Local Self Government Department (LSGD) website. These diverse secondary sources collectively provide a detailed and multi-dimensional understanding of decentralized planning and local governance in Kerala.

4. Phases of Local Governance in Kerala

The development of local governance in Kerala can be viewed in three Phases, Phase one before the formation of Kerala State, phase two after the formation of Kerala state in 1957 and phase 3 after the introduction of the Peoples Planning Campaign.

1. Local Governance before the Formation of Kerala State: Phase I

The evolution of local bodies in Kerala including the princely states of Travancore, Cochin, Malabar and Madras Presidency influenced by Lord Ripon's resolution 1882, Royal Commission of Decentralisation 1909 and Government of India Act 1919 and formed Panchayat Act in Cochin and Travancore.

To promote rural development in 1940, a new form of Panchayat called Village unions were constituted in Travancore. In 1949, after the formation of Travancore-Cochin state, the Village union was changed into Panchayat and its number rose from five to 87 Panchayat. There were 892 Panchayats when Malabar was integrated with Travancore-Cochin State. During the formation of Kerala, there was a single-tier arrangement in the Travancore-Cochin region having 495 reconstituted Panchayats and a two-tier arrangement in Malabar having 399 Panchayats.

Table 1: Committees of Decentralisation in Kerala – Phase I

Area	Year	Name of Committee / Commission	Importance
Malabar District of Madras Presidency	1865	Madras Towns Improvement Act	Municipalities were established in Urban Centres of Malabar & Cochin
	1871	Town Improvement Act	Elections of Councillors
	1884	Madras Municipal Act (amended in 1920 & 1930)	1. Extended elected councillors to three-fourths of the total membership.
			2. Enlarge the taxation powers and functions of Municipalities
	1884	The Madras Local Boards Act	1. A three-tier structure of local bodies; a group of villages constituted a Union, taluk boards at Taluk level and District Boards at District level.
			2. The expenditures are met from taxes on land, houses, carts and animals
			3. Provision for election
	1920	Madras Village Panchayat Act & Madras Local Boards Act	Malabar District Board became an elected body with the president and the president was a local landlord.
	1950	Madras Village Panchayat Act	1. In every Village that has a population of 500 and above a Panchayat was constituted
			2. Reservation for SC and ST
			3. Direct election for the office of the President.
			4. Panchayat members are elected as per the population of the Panchayat.
			5. Panchayat have obligatory and voluntary functions.
			6. Major Sources of Revenue was taxes. There were limited grants.

Source: Compiled from Various Publications of KILA, Kerala

2. Local Governance after the Formation of Kerala State: Phase II

Kerala State was formed in 1957 and the first ministry was formed under the leadership of E M S Namboodiripad and observed several reforms in agrarian relations, education, administration etc. Important measures for decentralisation of powers at different levels after the formation of the State are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Committees of Decentralisation in Kerala – Phase II

Sl. No.	Year	Name of Committee / Commission	Importance
1	1958	Administrative Reform Committee	1. Two-tier system of Panchayat administration having village panchayat at the bottom and District Council at the district level. Kerala Panchayat Bill and Kerala District Council Bill for strong self-governing body laid in 1958
2	1960 & 1961	Kerala Panchayat Act & Kerala Municipalities Act, Kerala Corporation Act 1961	Unifying laws governing the Travancore-Cochin and Malabar region. Local bodies could discharge traditional civic functions as compulsory functions.
3	1967	Kerala Panchayat raj Bill	1. Two-tier structure with panchayat as the basic unit and Zilla parishad/ District Council at the district level. 2. District council delegated with duties like the collection of taxes, registration, labour welfare & Police administration.
4	1978	Kerala District Administration Bill	Remove Police function from the district administration and restrict district administrative revenue function
5	1992	73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment	Complete self-governance at the grassroots level. Three tiers of Rural local bodies
6	1996	The Committee on Decentralisation of Power (Sen Committee)	The committee recommended local self-government legislation linked to administrative matters.
7	1996	Chairman –Satya Brata Sen	1. Autonomy - LSGIs are autonomous, functionally, financially and administratively. 2. Subsidiarity - All that can be completed at the lowest level should be retained for that level. 3. Role Clarity – Clear division of conceptual and operational levels between different tiers. 4. Complementarity – Different tiers functions are not overlapping and complementary to each other. 5. Uniformity - Specific criteria for the pattern of selection of beneficiaries. 6. People's participation – facilitates maximum direct participation 7. Accountability- social auditing 8. Transparency - Right to information Based on this recommendation Kerala Panchayat Raj Act and Municipality Act amended and institutionalized people's planning.

8	1994	Kerala Panchayat Raj Act	Strengthening Gramasabha and wide people's participation Changes in the structure of panchayat Emphasis on transparency New institutions Ombudsman and Appellate Tribunals
9	1999	Kerala Panchayat Raj Act (Amendment)	New auditing system, decision making power to elected members

Source: Compiled from Various Publications of KILA, Kerala

3. Introduction of People's Planning Campaign and Decentralised Planning: Phase III

The impact of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992 emphasized the importance of local self-governance and implemented complete self-governance at the grassroots level. To develop decentralisation Kerala followed a campaign Approach known as the 'People's Planning Campaign'. The main objectives of Kerala's Decentralisation experiment are; allocating resources to priority areas fixed by the local people, solving developmental problems through improved planning, technology and implementation, exploiting local production potentials, to ensure people's participation for better implementation, improvement in the developmental and welfare services. The Process of decentralisation in Kerala in the third phase is discussed widely in the next section (KILA, 2009).

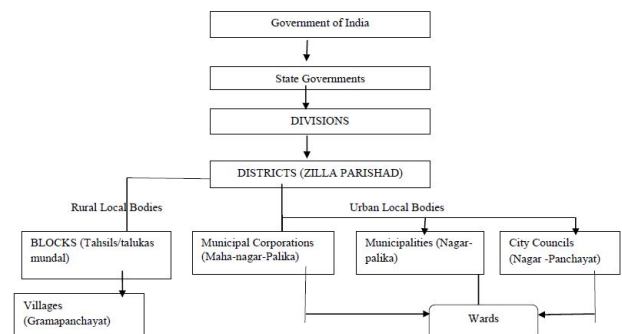
5. Decentralised Planning in Kerala under People's Planning Programme

It is necessary to understand the framework or process of Kerala's decentralisation since the 9th Five-year plan. From October 1995 Kerala started its decentralisation process and transferred functions and responsibilities to local self-government. Following the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment, Kerala's State legislature passed the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act and Kerala Municipality Act in 1994 and facilitated Local Self Government Institutions to act as a third tier of the Federal Government.

6. Constitutional Amendments in Kerala

Local Self Governance was introduced in India through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. 73rd and the 74th Constitutional amendment Act came into force on April 24 1993 to establish a three-tier Panchayats Raj system at the village, Block and District levels and Municipalities at the urban level by giving them constitutional status. After this, the constitution added two new parts, Part IX titled "The Panchayats" by 73rd Amendment and Part IX-A titled "The Municipalities" by the 74th amendment. At the villages, the basic unit of the democratic system is *Grama Sabha* and at the Municipalities, the basic unit is *Ward Committees* comprising adult voters. Article 243C (2) stipulates that through direct elections seats at all levels must be filled and one-third of the total number of seats must be reserved for women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. After the completion five-year term period, an election must be conducted to constitute new local governments before the expiry date. The Act offers a facility for constituting State Finance Commission and makes recommendations regarding the financial powers of the Panchayats and provides a *District Planning Committee (DPC)* to consolidate the plan prepared by Panchayats and Municipalities. The 73rd amendment specified for certain obligatory provisions on the part of the State Governments to integrate into their respective Acts and state legislature to make suitable necessities in their Act and the state legislatures can provide power to Panchayat to levy and collect appropriate local taxes and grants-in-aid to the Panchayat (Singh, 1994).

Chart 1: Administrative Structure of Decentralisation



Source: <https://Coomons.wikimedi.org/wiki/File:Administrative structure of India>

The state government introduced the Kerala Panchayat Raj Bill and Kerala Municipalities Bill with the transfer of schemes, institutions and personnel to rural and urban local governments in March 1994 in the State legislature. As per this Act, the first local bodies elections were held in September 1995 and assumed power on 2nd October 1995. *People's Plan Campaign* was commenced in August 1996 with the devolution of 40 percent of the State's plan fund to LSGIs in 1997. For providing financial assistance to Panchayats state Budget included Appendix IV in 1996. In July 1996 the Sen Committee constituted and based on this committee's recommendations in 1999, Kerala amended Panchayat Raj Act 1994 and Kerala Municipality act 1994 and started '*People's Planning Campaign*' for the successful implementation of a five-year plan for decentralisation. The main features of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act are the following.

A) Gramasabha – The Gramasabha has formed as a fourth tier and the soul of the Panchayat raj institutions in the State. To achieve direct democracy all the electors of the ward are the members of a Gramasabha. Gramapanchayat member representing the constituency is the convenor of that Gramasabha and the meetings are presided by the President of the Panchayat. The main functions of the Gramasabha include approving the annual budget, prioritization of developmental programme needs, annual statement of accounts, identification of the beneficiaries and critical powers of social audit. The Panchayat raj amendment Act 1999 claimed Gramasabha should convene at least once every three months and also suggested incorporating Block and District Panchayat Committee members from the ward must be invited.

B) Gramapanchayat, Block Panchayat & District Panchayat – There should be a Gramapanchayat for villages, Block Panchayat at the Block level and District Panchayat at District level as per the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act. Based on population the total number of Gramapanchayat will be fixed and the total elected Panchayat members shall be 8 to 15. MLA will be the ex-officio member at the Block level and MP will be the ex-officio member at the District level. Gramapanchayat, Block Panchayat and District panchayat perform both general functions and sector-wise distribution of functions.

C) Officials – As per the act, there should be an official Panchayat Secretary at every Panchayat. The main duties of the Secretary are to participate in the meetings of the Panchayat Committee and Standing Committee, implement various decisions and provide administrative leadership etc.

D) Standing Committees – For every rural local body there should be a standing committee for fixing taxes, account verification, planning activities etc and the chairman will be elected from among its members.

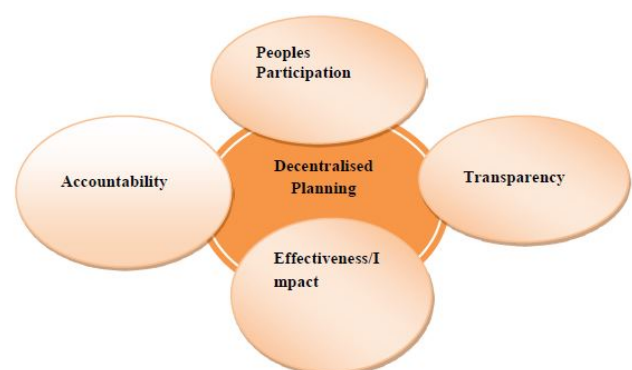
E) Accounts and Audit – The accounts of the Panchayat should be kept separately by the Panchayat committee. The official government auditor of the local funds will be the audit examiner.

F) Finance - According to the Act, State Government will transfer 40% of the budgetary allocations to the panchayat.

7. Process and Methodology of Decentralised Planning in Kerala

In Kerala, State Government in 1996 took a bold decision to earmark 35 to 40 per cent of the State Development budget down from a centralized Government to local self-Government to prepare local plans according to their development priorities. People's Plan Campaign strategy was to build the capacity of local governments and devolve powers and functions. The Strategy of the 'Big Bang' approach followed by Kerala devolves power, fund and functionaries to local Governments.

Figure 1: Aspects of Decentralisation

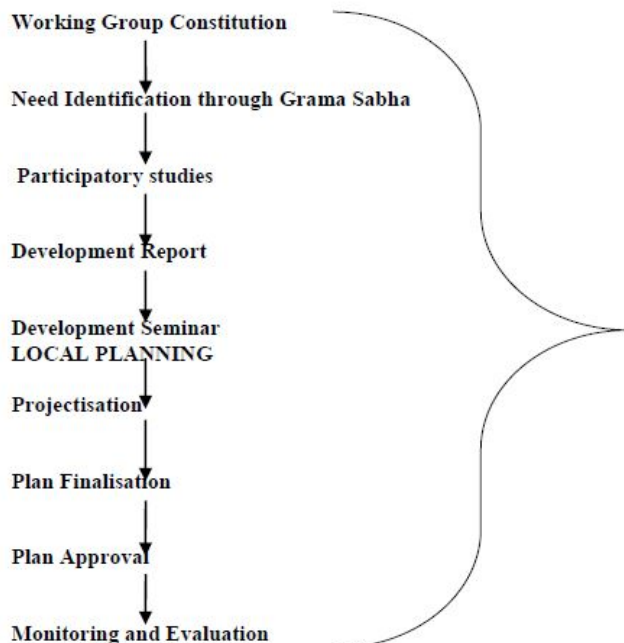


Decentralisation was started during the 9th plan under the accepted name '*People's Planning Campaign*' and during the 10th plan this name was changed to '*Kerala Development Programme*' and again inverted to the second phase '*People's Plan*' during the 11th Plan.

With the use of information technology some solid steps to support the planning process were visualized in the 12th Five-Year Plan. Now, Kerala is facing second-generation social and economic issues and therefore 13th five-year plan envisaged second people's plan campaign with the important target to raise production in nature-friendly agriculture, agro food-based manufacturing, waste management, watershed-based approach etc.

For local economic development and social justice, Kerala has provided a concrete methodology and guideline for participatory planning. For formulating a unique local development plan every Rural and Urban local government must follow the same methodology of participatory planning. The features of unique guidelines for plan formulation under LSGIs are discussed here for understanding the process of decentralised planning in Kerala.

The decentralised planning process involves the following distinct phases.



We shall now briefly discuss each of the above processes in the preparation of local plans. This description will be useful when we shall discuss the performance of different sectors and the challenges in the formulation and implementation of local plans in the analysis chapters.

- **Working Group Constitution:** The constitution of working groups/Taskforce in each development sector is the first stage of the plan preparation process. The task force includes experts concerning relative sectors. The strength of the working group is envisaged as 10 to 12 members. The major responsibilities of the working groups are to Prepare project proposals, assist to organise Grama sabha meetings and monitor development projects. The working group have two volunteers, a local resource person was the convener and a minimum of 30 per cent of task force members are from women, SC and ST members. The responsibilities of the working groups have been limited to the technical aspects of planning.
- **Need Identification through Grama Sabha:** Grama Sabha mobilises voters in every Gramapanchayat and acts as an ideal starting block for People's planning. The felt needs of the community are identified through the gram sabha meeting. Several statistics reveal that participation in Grama sabha has been declined over the years. Working group members were assigned the responsibility of preparing draft development proposals related to different subjects after the group-wise discussion at Grama Sabha. The recorded decisions are forwarded to the Local Governments.
- **Participatory Studies:** The objective judgment of the natural and human resources of the locality was the next phase of the planning process after the identification of the need. Here the planner's idea was to a careful blend of local needs with local resource availability. The participatory studies were needed for optimum utilisation of local resources with local needs. A series of participatory studies were undertaken by every local body and most important of which is the collection of secondary data for analysis, the study of local geography and natural resources and review of ongoing schemes.
- **Development Report / Vision Document:** Based on the needs identified by gramasabha and development data at this stage special development reports have been prepared by each local government that describe the status of sectoral development, problems and points of importance for economic development. It is a continuous report formulated every year.

- **Development Seminar & Strategy Setting:** After preparing a development report a one-day seminar was conducted by the local government including participation from experts, Panchayati Raj Institution members, Grama Sabha nominees and selected members from the public. From this seminar, broad priorities and general strategies of the plan projects for a particular year were evolved. The printed copy of the draft plan documents was circulated at the development seminar and the recommendations were read and adopted at the plenary session.
- **Re-orientation by Local Government:** The working group members with the elected council of local governments meet and consider the development seminar's recommendations and suggestions to make the suitable modification of the priorities, strategies and allocations.
- **Task Forces and Projectisation:** To prepare project proposals based on the recommendations of the seminar, the twelve task forces of around 10 persons for each development sector were constituted. The projects are prepared with the participation of officials, technically qualified people and local-level experts. The chairperson will be an elected representative and the convenor was an officer from respective line departments. The project prepared by the task force generally has the following constituents.
- **Plan Finalization:** Local bodies plan allocation as indicated in the State Budget and the sectoral allocation, special funds to different categories like SC, ST, Women and Destitute etc. to be made by concerned local bodies. The projects prepared by the task force were prioritised and put into the local government's plan document. The Plan documents comprised eight chapters: Introduction, Development Strategy, Resource Mobilisation of Resources, Sectoral Programmes, Integrated Development, Welfare of Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, Women's development programmes and Monitoring. To avoid duplication among the projects, higher local bodies start their plan preparation after drafting gramapanchayat's annual plan. The finalized plan for the year is submitted to the District Planning Committees.
- **Plan Approval:** The local government starts its plan implementation after the formal administrative approval by the District Planning Committee (DPC). Earlier, the final approval of the development projects was done by DPC, who was the final authority. From 1997 to 2000 Voluntary Technical Crops (VTC), assisted DPC with the project appraisal and from 2001 onwards a new committee called the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed to appraise the Projects. From the 11th plan, its name changed to Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs). From the 12th Plan onwards considerable changes occurred in the appraisal procedure and development projects are vetted by a concerned implementing officer.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Decentralised planning visualized institutional conditions for the transparency and accountability of LSGIs through auditing by government staff and monitoring set up by local people. Annual local fund audit and performance audit are two types of audit. As per the guidelines both the audit systems considers financial transactions and efficiency in fund use under LSGIs. The second type of institutional mechanism is monitoring by Working groups/Taskforce. Social auditing is another type of transparency and accountability measurement, it is the by-product of people's advice for decentralised planning.

8. Financing Pattern of Projects

There are several sources of funds for the gramapanchayats. They are:

- 1. Development Fund** – Development fund included in the Budgetary provision for grant in aid to local bodies i.e., Appendix IV of the State Budget. As per the conditions given by the Government, Gramapanchayats are undertaking developmental activities at their discretion.
- 2. Maintenance Fund** - Maintenance fund are divided into two types: Road maintenance funds and non-road and maintenance funds. The first is for management Gramapanchayat –owned roads, while the second is for the maintenance, repairs, modernisation and enhancing service delivery of institutions of Gramapanchayats and their assets.

3. General-Purpose Grant-This fund is for the expenditure of traditional functions and establishment expenses of Gram Panchayat.

4. State Sponsored Schemes Fund- All Gramapanchayats are assigned the responsibility for implementing certain schemes of the State Government. These funds are provided through the Budget and allotted through the department concerned gramapanchayat's role is only agency function.

5. Discretionary Grants - Various departments contribute to this fund, which is used to cover the administrative expenses of transferred institutions of the Gramapanchayat.

6. Devolution from Union Government - Union Government's devolution is of two forms-Central Finance Commissions' (CFC) devolutions and devolution for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). The Central Government transfers funds as per the recommendations of the Central Finance Commission. The CSS fund shall be received according to the guidelines and procedures of the Government of India.

7. Funds from External Agencies- For developmental activities, the State Government receive funds from international agencies like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank subject to the conditions of the schemes concerned.

8. Loans from Financial Institutions - Gramapanchayat can avail of loans from financial institutions as per the Kerala State Local Authorities Loan Act 1963. This fund shall be utilised for specific purposes for which it is availed as per requirements.

9. Donations and Contributions - Gramapanchayat can collect donations and contributions from the public and non-governmental agencies for supplementing the resources for various schemes.

10. Own Source Revenue (OSR) - These are taxes directly demanded and collected by Gramapanchayat, Municipalities and Corporations.

9. Financial Procedures

Once the local body received allotment, funds for specific projects were released in four quarterly instalments.

Each project would have an implementation officer. In the case of CSS and SSS, the schemes were implemented by transferred officers to a local body and transfer credit to their Deposit account opened in the treasury. All plan expenditure from grants in aid would be through the plan PD accounts of the treasury and the expenditure may be incurred by the implementation officers only for the implementation of approved projects and authorisation needed from the head of the elected body. For Plan implementation of deposit work or beneficiary committees, the funds may be transferred to other government departments based on the written agreement. (Isacc,2000)

- **Beneficiary Committees:** Local bodies are encouraged to form committees for the implementation of public works to generate a new environment for creating effective transparency.
- **Beneficiary Selection:** The selection of beneficiaries for the development projects was an important component of the implementation because most of the projects engaged distribution of assets like a cow, goat, hen, home up-gradation loan, subsidy etc.

10. Components of Decentralised Planning

A separate section of people needed special attention in plan formulation for ensuring inclusiveness, they are

- **Women Components Plan for Women (WCP) -** The plans that will improve the status of women, ensure economic self-reliance, ensure protection and overcome the problems in the society are included under WCP. The plan guidelines provide 10% of the total plan outlay and direct women beneficial projects are given priority in the plan.
- **Scheduled Caste Sub Plan for Scheduled Caste Category (SCSP) -** A separate fund is allotted to the local body for the development of Scheduled caste people and it should not be recommended for the other categories.
- **Tribal Sub Plan for Scheduled Tribe Category (TSP) -** Along with the general plan fund, plan prepared by local bodies for Scheduled Tribes are called Tribal Sub Plan.

- **Sub Plan for Children, Aged, Differently-abled** – The 5 per cent of local bodies plan fund allotted to plan preparation for the Children, the aged, the differently-abled and for old-age care.
- **Anti-poverty Sub Plan like Asraya** – The Working group on Anti-poverty Sub Plan prepare the projects through the Block Panchayat and District Panchayat. The project Asraya is part of the poverty eradication programme.
- **Plan for Maintenance of Assets** - Every local body prepares the asset management plan and asset register and the maintenance fund received are used for the maintenance and repair and improvement of assets.
- **Special Plan for Fishermen** –The strategy for the fisheries sector projects includes a sustainable development approach, plan formulation by ensuring beneficiary equalization and improvement of fishermen welfare activities.

11. Profile of LSGIs in Kerala

Today in Kerala, there are 941 Gramapanchayats, 152 Block Panchayats and 14 District Panchayats in Rural areas; 87 Municipalities and 6 Corporations are in Urban Areas, having a total of 1200 Local Self Government Institutions (Table 3).

Table 3: Profile of LSGIs in Kerala

Level of LSGIs	Number	Number of Wards/divisions	The average area per LSGI(sq. km)	The average population per LSGI
District Panchayat (DP)	14	331	2651.7	1903357
Block Panchayat (BP)	152	2079	244.24	175309
Gramapanchayat (GP)	941	15962	37.16	26674
Corporation	6	414	95.6	491240
Municipalities	87	3122	23.65	51664
Total	1200	21908	-	-

Source: Panchayat Guide 2017 and Census Report 2011

12. Conclusion

In conclusion, Kerala's decentralized planning experiment has received a lot of praise for its creative and effective methodology on a national and worldwide level.

Many people consider the Kerala model of decentralized planning to be an effective framework for giving local self-governments (LSGs) more authority by delegating resources, functions, and powers. Other governments can use this concept as a model to see how decentralization might promote more inclusive and participatory governance.

Participatory planning methods are systematically implemented and monitored at different stages, which is a major accomplishment of Kerala's decentralized planning. The distribution of a third of the state's yearly budgetary allotment to local entities in the form of untied grants is among its most noteworthy aspects; it allows LSGs to organize and carry out initiatives that are in line with the goals of their communities. Local governments now have far more autonomy, which enables them to better meet the requirements of regional development.

Furthermore, a number of significant improvements brought about by Kerala's decentralization process have improved governance:

- Increased public knowledge and participation in the planning phase.
- The adoption of a transparent system for identifying beneficiaries and ensuring equitable distribution of resources.
- Establishing accountability measures, such as the right to information (RTI).
- Outsourcing technical know-how to assist with local project execution and planning.
- Administrative systems were reinforced with a focus on timeliness, openness, and good governance.

In addition to improving local administration, the decentralized model has improved service delivery, reduced poverty, and helped underprivileged groups meet their fundamental requirements. Decentralized planning has the ability to promote more equitable development, lessen regional inequities, and establish a more responsive, transparent, and accountable form of governance, as Kerala's experience shows.

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