

## ‘Participation of Community Development Societies and Inclusive Approach of Local Government in Planning’

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**Abstract:** The local planning initiated the growth of grassroots institutions of planning, activation of associational life and social network of women in Kerala. The present study intends to scrutinize to what extent, the community development societies serve as local actors of planning. Using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) the study explores what are the factors of effective participation, which may influence decision making in local planning. The study is presented in two sections. Section I attempts to characterize the convergence between Community Development Societies and local government and section II deals with the primary survey based exploratory factor analysis among the CDS chairpersons and discuss the factors of participation in local planning process.

*Key words: Community Development Society (CDS), Decentralised Planning (DP), Grama Sabha (GS), Local Governance Participation, Local Self government (LSG), Community Beneficiary Organisation (CBO), Women Component Plan (WCP), Area Development Society (ADS), Principal Component Analysis (PCA), Kaiser-Meyer-Olin (KMO).*

### I INTRODUCTION

Kerala, the southern state of India envisaged local planning giving greater thrust to participation of women in planning and a penchant for projects focusing strategic gender needs. The local planning initiated the growth of grassroots institutions of planning, activation of associational life and social network of women in Kerala. Much earlier to the introduction of decentralised planning, women’s agency was instrumental in generating a veritable development path in the state, equivalent to that of the development experience of the developed countries. In the post-nineties, Women Self-help Groups (SHGs) better called as participatory form of women’s agency animated new vistas of development like collective action, micro-finance, social capital and women empowerment. The then state government dragged a great section of women, hitherto barred out from the civic life, into the collective life. In 1998, the SHGs of poor women brought under the stewardship of State Poverty Eradication Mission and this state sponsored network of poor women was named as ‘Kudumbasree’. A unique feature of these women cooperatives in Kerala is that they are organised under the governance of Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs). CDS (Community Development Society) is the apex body of Kudumbasree in the local body, and it serves as the most active agent of local governance and this agency runs many ground level programmes for women and the poor, on behalf of the local government.

### II RESEARCH PROBLEM

Subsequent to the reformation in local self-governance accomplished through 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutionals amendments in 1992, the then state government of Kerala gave thrust to ensure woman entitled to have her voices heard and influence decision making. The state government formulated separate plan-head known as Women Component Plan (WCP) by which, every local government must set apart 10 per cent of the plan funds for women empowerment. There was wealth of evidence that in figures, female participation outwitted that of male in grassroots level institution of planning, however, their massive

participation could result in qualitative deliberations in the decision making units of grassroots institution of planning, was a question. Being the apex body of Kudumbasree in the Panchayaths, CDS (Community Development Society) office runs the Kudumbasree system in every panchayat and becomes the most active agent of local governance. CDS chairpersons act as the link between NHG and panchayat and this link runs empowerment programmes for women and the poor, executed on behalf of the local government. The present study, intends to scrutinize to what extent, the local government utilize these women as local actors of planning and what are the determinants of participation in local planning.

### III RESEARCH DESIGN

The study intended to cover women participation in local planning process. The state of Kerala has 14 districts, out of which Thrissur district situated in the central Kerala was selected for the study. The district has gained the reputation for a series of rigorous programmes done by local bodies and grassroots organizations of women. The Community Development Societies (CDSs) of the district have achieved state and national level recognition. The performance of CDS had complemented to win the best local body award to many local bodies in Thrissur district. Kudumbasree units of various local bodies in the district conduct innovative enterprises which have got wide recognition throughout the state.

In Thrissur district, there were 98 CDS chairpersons to manage the Kudumbasree network. The population of the present study consists of chairpersons of community development societies in the panchayats of Thrissur district. Around 35 per cent of them were randomly selected for the survey. Thus the study conducted a primary survey among 34 CDS chairpersons in 34 local bodies of Thrissur district. Chairpersons of Community Development Societies (CDSs) in each panchayat is recognized as the link between NHG and the panchayat. In this respect, the study conducted a primary survey using structured questionnaires among 34 CDS chairpersons who were randomly selected.

### IV COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (CDS) AND LSGS

In 1998, the state government formulated Kudumbasree; the state sponsored Community Beneficiary Organisation (CBO) of women for implementing participatory poverty alleviation programme. The minister of local self-government is the chairperson of Kudumbasree Mission and secretary to LSG is Vice-chairperson. District coordinators are appointed in all the 14 districts of Kerala. The three tier system built with Panchayat Raj was replicated in the Kudumbasree structure. The NHGs are federated into Area Development Society (ADS) at the ward level and Community Development Society (CDS) at the panchayat level. Neighborhood Groups is the basic pillar of both local governance and Kudumbasree.

CDS is an apex body of Kudumbasree for coordinating its activities at the panchayat level. It is treated as subsystem of local government. CDS is entrusted with the task to implement poverty eradication programme through women based participatory approach and mobilisation of resources in coordination with various departments of the state. The members of CDS are selected from the members of ADS. The president of the local body is the patron of CDS. The welfare standing committee chairperson, all elected women representatives and panchayat secretary are the members of CDS. The CDS meeting is supposed to be held at least once in every month. CDS and ADS together conduct many training programmes for women to start micro enterprises, health education camps and cultural programmes. The major functions of CDS are given here.

CDS executes a state sponsored mandatory project called *Ashtray*, a major poverty alleviation programme entrusted to the local body by the state government of Kerala. CDS is assigned to identify the poorest of the poor, recognize their needs and report to the GP. It makes use of NHG network for supplying necessities and fund allocation forwarded by the LSG towards the Ashtray beneficiaries. NHGs assist LSG to identify the potential beneficiaries by scrutinizing their applications and apply wealth ranking index to prioritise these beneficiaries.

## V PARTICIPATION

Participation can be valued relative to its process and goals. The aim of the participatory approach is to give voice to the excluded sections whose voices are ignored or not heard (Kumar Praveen 2003). Rather than being a 'nominal voice' participation must be tuned with the spirit of decision making process. According to Putnam (1993), good governance needs 2 fundamental features- First is active participation of civic community in public affairs and the second is participants are bound by bottom to top approach. According to Putnam (1993) adds that the bottom to top approach generates people's involvement in plan formulation and execution.

According to Pauline Peters (2000), participation means ability of the people to share, influence or control, design, decision-making and authority in development projects and programmes that affect their lives and resources. Participation involves identifying problems, influencing decision making, implementing development programmes, monitoring and evaluating the project.

## VI ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Participation is a process through which people influence and control planning and decision making. Here participants raise their needs, make suggestions and participate in decision making. Hence participation means something more than mere physical attendance and the variables are the following:

- Physical presence in Grama Sabha (GS), working group and development seminar. GS is a body of voters in the electoral roll of a particular area or ward of a panchayat. Being a constitutional body, it is a platform to formulate and discuss ward level plans in accordance with the needs of that particular area.
- Active in discussion
- Raising issues and needs
- Active in setting priorities and selecting beneficiaries
- Influence decision making

Participation is the output of inclusive approach of local government. The inclusive approach of local government can make local planning participatory. Principal component analysis (PCA) has been applied in the study to identify the factors affecting the participation of CDS chairperson in local planning process. The PCA helps to fix the variables influencing effective participation of women in local planning process. . Based on the principles of local governance, the study has crafted five point scale statements to figure out the factors of participation in planning. The five point scale can be listed as strongly disagree, disagree, strongly disagree or agree, agree and strongly agree with score values 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

## VII FACTOR ANALYSIS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL PLANNING: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to these observed statements, the study identified the critical factor or latent variables influencing the significant participation in local planning process. Based on the primary survey conducted among the CDS chairpersons, the study chose 17 variables. The primary step is to apply Kaiser-Meyer-Olin (KMO) and Bartlett's test to the given variables. The KMO statistic measures the ratio of the squared correlation between the variables to the squared partial correlation between the variables. Its value ranges from 0 to 1. The study is feasible for factor analysis if the KMO statistic is greater than 0.5. The test certifies that KMO statistics 0.567 is significant at 5 per cent level, so factor analysis is feasible for the current study.

**Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.567
Approx. Chi-Square	268.561
Df	136
Sig.	.000

The Bartlett's test checks the null hypothesis of identical relationship among the variables in the correlation matrix. If the null hypothesis is true, then the correlation coefficients are zero. In the Bartlett's test given in the table 1, the study rejects the null hypothesis as the P value is significantly less than 0.05. The test evidently shows that, the correlation matrix is not identical and the factor analysis well suits to the study.

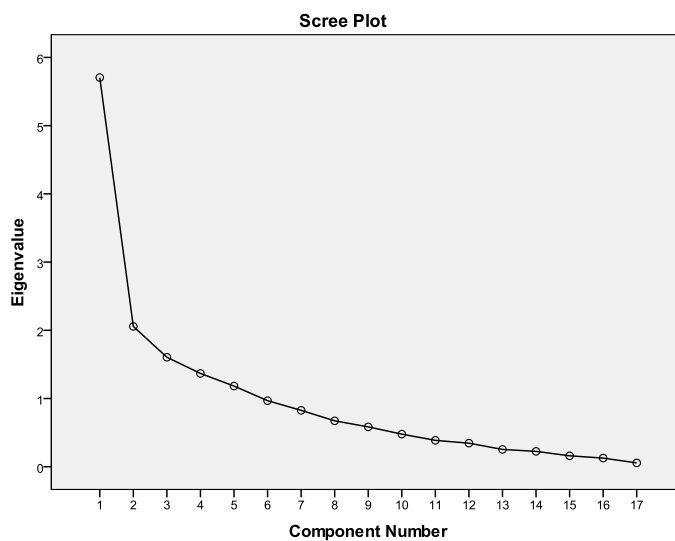


Figure1: Association between Eigen Value and Observed Variables

The analysis applied orthogonal factor rotation method-varimax for interpreting the factor loadings. The screen plot depicts the association between observed variables and Eigen value and (Figure 1). Eigen value shows partitioning of the total variation contributed by each factor. Based on the Kaiser's rule, five factors which have Eigen values more than one are extracted from the data. These five factors explain 70.098 per cent of total variance. The total variation accounted by each Eigen value is given in the last two rows. The PCA extracted the following factors, which had influenced the participation of the CDS Chairpersons.

**Table 2: Rotated Factor Loading Matrix: CDS Chairpersons**

Rotated Component Matrix					
Variables	Components				
	1	2	3	4	5
Role of CDS in gender budgeting				-.856	
Gender positive attitude of GP committees	0.754				
Participation in social auditing					0.848
Consultation with CDS in gender budget	0.835				
CDS role in drafting chapter on women in plan document	0.823				
Exposure to empowerment schemes	0.631				
Display of beneficiary list				0.580	
Group discussion in the GS		0.827			
Discussion on beneficiary selection in the GS		0.683			
Political interest			0.581		
Influence of Kudumbasree network				0.800	
Tolerance in GS		0.821			
LSG attitude to complaints			0.685		
Male domination in decision making			0.625		
Gender attitude of welfare standing chairperson			0.676		
Priority to strategic gender needs	0.654				
Women in monitoring committees					0.816
Eigen value	5.075	2.056	1.605	1.367	1.183
Variance explained ( <i>in per cent</i> )	20.487	14.213	12.772	12.232	10.389
Cumulative ( <i>in per cent</i> )	20.487	34.669	47.472	59.709	70.098

**Factor 1- Inclusive Approach of Local Body**

The inclusive approach of LSG has the highest Eigen value 5.075 explaining 20.487 per cent of the total variance. This factor is composed of variables such as (a) consultation with CDS in gender budget allocation, (b) Their role in drafting women empowerment agenda in plan document (c) Gender friendly attitude of GP (d) Priority of GP to focus on strategic gender needs (e) her access to information to the empowerment schemes. Factor (a) has the highest loading factor with value 0.835 followed by factor (b), (c), (d), (e) with factor loadings 0.823, 0.754, 0.654, and 0.631 respectively. The inclusion of CDS in the decision making platforms of gender budget and preparation of women’s strategic needs and gender sensitive outlook of GP are the major factors of participation (Table 2 and 3). A consultation with the CDS members regarding the allocation of Women Component Plan assures more participation and obviously results in objective utilisation of the fund. Every year, the local body publishes plan document, which incorporates the agenda of action plan of each development sector. Women and children is a separate chapter in it. Consultation with the CDS chairperson in drafting the chapter helps to identify the strategic needs of women. Priority to the strategic gender needs is the fourth factor. Women’s strategic and practical needs have to be separated. Her access to information on the existing and novel schemes is accounted as fifth factor punctuating her inclusion in local governance.

**Table 3: Factor 1: Inclusive Approach of Local Body**

Variables	Factor loadings	Eigen value	Variance (%)
Consults with CDS in gender budgeting	0.835	5.075	20.47
Consults with CDS for the preparation of Women & Children chapter in plan document	0.823		
Gender sensitive attitude of local government	0.754		
Priority to gender needs	0.654		
Access to information to schemes	0.631		

**Factor 2-Transparency in GS**

With reference to this analysis, transparency in the GS, the second important factor of participation in planning, boots up democracy through individual participation in the GS. This factor is evolved from three variables such as group discussion in beneficiary selection and tolerance of the public (Table 2 and Table 4).

Being sanctified as epitome of democracy, GS is designed with the mission for imparting information about various projects and a platform for sound discussion on various projects. All the entire participants are divided into various groups dealing with different development sectors. Each group represents any particular development sector and it has to analyse the problems and prioritise the needs and finally present before the sabha. This micro group approach can voice their local needs and promote their assertive power. With reference to GS minutes books of various local bodies, the number of women participants exceeds three or four times that of their male counterparts. The development process becomes more participatory when the participants engage in discussions.

The second component is public tolerance in the GS. The politically motivated vested interests plausibly lead to public obstruction in the GS. The hassles of patriarchal views and sarcastic attitude towards neighborhood groups of women coerce her to step down from her presentation in the GS. This suppressive force discourages women to self-express. The tolerance of the public is a great factor to make her deliberations fruitful to the society.

**Table 4: Factor 2: Transparency in GS**

Variables	Factor loadings	Eigen value	Variance (%)
Group discussion on various schemes in GS	0.827	2.056	14.213
Public intolerance in the GS	0.821		
Discussion on beneficiary selection in GS	0.683		

**Factor 3: Service of the LSG**

It is the third factor component of participation. This factor comprises four variables such as, service delivery of LSG, attitude of welfare standing chairperson and political interest of the elected representatives. The variable, service of LSG has the highest loading value 0.685. The LSG which consists of front office,

various departments, secretary, member secretary, office clerks, and elected representatives has critical role in encouraging her participation in all dimensions. Member secretary (MS) is the channel between the LSG and the Kudumbasree. The MS can give them information on new schemes and give guidance to participate in innovative programmes. Kudumbasree is under the charge of welfare standing chairperson. The latter's gender vision is a decisive factor of the empowerment of the respondents. The welfare stranding chairperson has direct contact with Kudumbasree and can understand its needs and problems. A woman standing chairperson having Kudumbasree background obviously will have a benevolent attitude towards Kudumbasree. The patriarchal values coupled with the political and other vested interests of the ward members may overturn the noble vision of local governance and undermine the role of women in local planning (Table 2 and Table 5).

**Table 5: Factor 3: Service of LSG.**

Variable	Factor loadings	Eigen value	Variance (%)
Service of LSG	0.685	1.605	12.772
Approach of welfare standing chairperson	0.676		
Patriarchal decision making	0.625		
Political interest of ward member	0.581		

#### **Factor 4: The Role Assigned to CDS**

The role assigned to CDS by the GP is the fourth factor, which encompasses the participatory role of CDS in preparing gender budget, transparency in beneficiary selection and the impact of Kudumbasree network. There is laxity on the part of local government in gender budgeting and in effect, the amount due to gender planning is diverted to general (non-women) sectors. The consultation with the CDS in gender budgeting can impart positive changes and this factor has been given the highest loading -0.856 in the fourth factor component. This negative value indicates that the CDS has trivial role in the budget allocation for women empowerment. The CDS/NHG members make deliberations in GS in the selection of beneficiaries. The presentation of priority list of the beneficiaries conveys transparency, the core principle of local governance. If there is any anomaly in the selection process, the NHG women are credible enough to question it in the grassroots bodies. This effective participation elevates Kudumbasree network as a guide to LSG for identifying the persons who deserve schemes issued by the local body. (Table 2 and 6).

**Table 6: Factor 4: Role Assigned to CDS**

Variable	Factor loadings	Eigen value	Variance (%)
Role assigned to CDS in gender budget	-0.856	1.367	12.232
Influence of Kudumbasree network	0.800		
Transparency in beneficiary selection	0.580		

#### **Factor 5: Accountability of Local Government**

Accountability maintained by the local body is the fifth factor which incorporates the variables social auditing and participation in monitoring committees. Social audit is associated with MGNREGS and selected Kudumbasree women are the members of the audit team. The audit report is prepared by the office clerks and the stakeholders inadvertently sign the document. Those who sign the report are not aware about the process of auditing and the very mission of this national programme. CDS chairpersons are involved in the social auditing and in various monitoring committees. Their service has never been used in the social auditing and they are totally ignorant about it. The social audit report is just a clerical exercise and the duty of its members is

only to sign it. The Kudumbasree women are members of Vigilance and Monitoring Committee (VMC) which is set up for monitoring MGNREGS and it is functioning for the name sake. The beneficiary schemes are distributed without adequate monitoring and planning and some of them have to be dropped after spending huge amount of money.

**Table 7:Factor 5: Accountability**

Variable	Factor loadings	Eigen value	Variance (%)
Participation in social auditing	0.848	1.183	10.389
Effective participation in monitoring committees	0.816		

**Participation of Women in Local Planning: Correlation Analysis**

The Spearman correlation matrix given in the table 8 shows the interrelationship between the dependent variable i.e., participation of CDS chairpersons in local planning and independent variables i.e., factors of participation. Evidently, the following variables, inclusive sensitive approach of LSG (0.621), transparency in GS (0.626), role of LSG (0.439), role of CDS (0.379) and accountability of LSG (0.490) have positive and statistically significant association with the participation in decision making. The variables, inclusive approach of LSG (0.621), service of LSG and accountability of GP has positive and significant association with transparency in GS (0.446). Accountability of LSG and service of LSG have significant association (Table 8).

**Table 8: Correlation Matrix: Factors of Participation in Participatory Planning (CDS Chairpersons)**

	Participation in decision making	Inclusive approach of LSG	Transparency in GS	LSG service	Role of CDS	Accountability of LSG
Participation in decision making	1.000					
Inclusive approach of LSG	.621** .000	1.000				
Transparency in GS	.626** .000	.446** .008	1.000			
LSG	.439** .009	.600** .000	.298 .087	1.000		
Role of CDS	.379* .027	.308 .076	.284 .104	.109 .541	1.000	
Accountability of LSG	.490** .003	.353* .041	.151 .393	.358* .037	.213 .227	1.000



\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### VIII Conclusion

Community Development Societies could be seen as an example for participatory planning with social mobilisation evolving direct role in planning and governance. Social reforms embedded with public interventions in female education and poverty alleviation programmes brought lofty social development indicators, but they were hardly successful in pulling them from the four walls of the house. Aftermath of decentralized planning there has been conscious efforts to mainstream strategic needs of women in local governance in Kerala.

The factor analysis highlights gender inclusive approach of local body as the most significant factor of participation. Gender inclusive approach of LSG can make planning more participatory and top to bottom level. Transparency the second factor can promote greater responsiveness and fairness in decision making and contributes to local development. Transparency in gender planning enables women participants to be informed about the current schemes, decision making criteria, and the selection process of beneficiaries at the local body level. LSGs with transparency in governance, obviously can lead women to the heights and later in turn they can be used as productive force for generating national output. Service of LSG, the role given to CDS, accountability of the mechanism and access to information remind the obligatory principles of LSG in planning and execution. To conclude, Substantial participation in local planning is possible, when participants are given opportunities to act. These opportunities enable them to make effective deliberations and thus influence the decision making process in local planning.

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