

REPORT OF THE PROJECT ON
DOCUMENTING THE
EXPERIENCES OF THE SDC-CapDecK PROGRAMME

BY

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¹ PROJECT CONTRACT between SDC-CapDecK Programme Coordination Unit, Represented by the Chief Programme Coordinator, and Institute for Social and Economic Change, Represented by The Director, 29th November 2007.

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C O N T E N T S

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. FIRST PHASE**
- 3. CHANGES IN REGIME, SOCIETY AND ECONOMY OF KERALA**
- 4. NEW APPROACH**
- 5. APPENDICES**

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are different ways of understanding decentralisation of administration and local government. In India, Gandhi's conceptualization of 'Village Swaraj' as part of a wider slogan of 'Hind Swaraj' is by far the most significant among them.¹ In spite of various attempts at putting these different formulations including Village Swaraj into practice, none of them has reached anywhere near total success. The then Union Minister for Rural Development, G.Venkat Swamy said the following in the Indian Parliament in September 1991²

[The Panchayati Raj Institutions] have not been able to acquire the status and dignity of viable and responsive people's bodies due to a number of reasons including absence of regular elections, prolonged suppressions, insufficient representation of weaker sections like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and women, inadequate devolution of powers and lack of financial resources...

It was in such a context that the 72nd [Panchayats] and 73rd [Nagarapalikas] Constitution Amendment Bills were introduced in Parliament under the Prime Ministership of Sri.P.V.Narasimha Rao. After being referred to a Joint Select Committee they were passed by the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on the 22nd and 23rd December 1992, as the 73rd and 74th Amendments. The President of India gave assent, following they being ratified by more than half of the State Assemblies, and the 73rd Amendment Act 1992 came into force on 24th of April 1993, and the 74th Amendment Act 1992 on 1st June 1993. Thereby two new Parts were added to the Constitution of India [COI], Part IX "The Panchayats" and Part IX A "The Municipalities"³, granting Constitutional status to Panchayat Raj Institutions [PRIs] and Nagarapalika Institutions [NPIs].

The Constitutional Amendments gave mandate to the Union and State Governments "to establish institutions of local self-governments"⁴ The Article 243 G of the COI stipulate that the State by law may⁵

provide for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats for the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them...

¹M.K.Gandhi, Village Swaraj, [compiled by H.M.Vyas], Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1962

² George Mathew, "Enemies of Panchayati Raj", Mainstream, Vol.XXXX, No.8, February 9, 2002, p.19

³The State of the Panchayats, A Mid-Term Review and Appraisal, Ministry of Panchayati Raj [MOPR], Government of India [GOI], New Delhi, Volume-I, 22 November, 2006, p.32

⁴ M.A.Oommen, "Rural Fiscal Decentralisation in India: A Brief Review of Literature", L.C.Jain [ed], Decentralisation and Local Governance, Essays for George Mathew, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2005, pp.p.222

⁵The State of the Panchayats..., op.cit.p.33

In other words, the 29 administrative subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution [See TABLE I] which are to be transferred to the Panchayats are with the primary objective of achieving economic development and social justice.

TABLE I:1 Administrative Subjects Listed in the Eleventh Schedule

1.	Agriculture including agricultural extension
2.	Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation
3.	Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development
4.	Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry
5.	Fisheries
6.	Social forestry and farm forestry
7.	Minor forest produce
8.	Small-scale industries, including food-processing industries
9.	Khadi, village and cottage industries
10.	Rural housing
11.	Drinking water
12.	Fuel and fodder
13.	Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication
14.	Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity
15.	Non-conventional energy sources
16.	Poverty alleviation programmes
17.	Education including primary and secondary schools
18.	Technical training and vocational education
19.	Adult and non-formal education
20.	Libraries
21.	Cultural activities
22.	Markets and fairs
23.	Health and sanitation including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries
24.	Family welfare
25.	Women and child development
26.	Social welfare including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded
27.	Welfare of the weaker sections, in particular of the Scheduled Castes [SCs] and Scheduled Tribes [STs]
28.	Public distribution system
29.	Maintenance of community assets

[SOURCE: Table 2. Matters listed in the Eleventh Scheduled, reproduced from The State of the Panchayats..., op.cit. p.33]

Along with other states, Kerala also passed enabling or conformity legislations to the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments. They were the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994 [KPRA] and the Kerala Municipal Act 1994 [KMA]. In 1996, when the Left Democratic Front [LDF] got elected to power at the state level, they appointed a

Committee on Decentralisation, popularly known as the Sen Committee⁶. On the basis of its recommendation, in 1999, both the KPRA 1994 and KMA 1994 were comprehensively amended. Similarly the State Finance Commission [SFC] was first appointed in 1994, to be followed successively in every five years to analyse resource mobilization by local governments and to suggest necessary changes in the pattern. The Administrative Reforms Committee [ARC] was appointed to suggest necessary changes at other levels of government as a result of building up “transparent and participatory structure at the local level”.⁷ More importantly, in 1996 the LDF government initiated a campaign-styled Programme for decentralized planning and called it the People’s Planning Campaign [PPC].⁸

Through the PPC, significant number of planning responsibilities were transferred to local governments, encouraging them to review local issues comprehensively, to estimate available resources, to prepare development plans and conceptualise feasible development projects. The state government initiated action towards transferring properties associated with the 29 subjects listed in the 11th Schedule of the COI and also for transfer of officers to LGs. The most significant step taken by the government through the PPC (which aimed at people’s participation) was to devolve more than 35 per cent of the state’s Annual Plan [SAP] outlay or investment budget to LGs.⁹ In many ways, the Kerala experiment at decentralized planning [though there were earlier experiments elsewhere in India¹⁰], caught the attention of citizens, activists, academicians and policy makers even internationally.

On the other hand, the task undertaken, especially with regard to capacity building and training were enormous. The responsibilities of capacity building and training were to be shouldered by the Kerala State Planning Board [KSPB] along with the Local Self Government Department [LSGD] of the Government of Kerala [GOK]. The People’s Planning Campaign Cell [PPCC] created within the KSPB, designed a multi-stage cascade-type training model for capacity building. This was to be carried out by

⁶ For details, see Jos Chathukulam and M.S.John, Panchayat Rajum Sen Committiyum [Malayalam], Current Books, Kottayam etc., 1998.

⁷ T.M.Thomas Isaac with Richard W Franke, Local Democracy and Development, People’s Campaign for Decentralised Planning in Kerala, Leftward Books, New Delhi, 2000, pp.312-3.

⁸ There are several writings on PPC. For immediate reference, See, T.M.Thomas Isaac, “Campaign for Democratic Decentralisation in Kerala”, in Social Scientist, [Guest Editor, P.K.Michael Tharakan and Vikas Rawal], Vol.No.29, No.s 9-10, September-October, 2001, pp.8-47, T.M.Thomas Isaac and Patrick Heller, “Democracy and Development: Decentralised Planning in Kerala”, in A.Fung and E.O. Wright [eds], Deepening Democracy, Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance, London and New York, 2003, pp. 77-110, and Prabhat Patnaik, “Theoretical Reflections on Kerala Style Decentralized Planning”, Note Presented at the Workshop on Panchayat Human Development Report, organised by Kanjikuzhi Grama Panchayat, Kerala Health Studies and Research Centre and Sree Narayana College, Cherthala, in Collaboration with UNDP, at Cherthala, 1-3 January 2004.

⁹ For details of how it could have impacted upon the financial resources of local governments in Kerala, see M.A.Oommen, “State-Local Fiscal Relations in India: A Search for an Analytical Framework”, State-Local Fiscal Relations in India, Manohar, New Delhi, 1998, pp.38-51, O.John, “Panchayat Raj Finances in Kerala: Tasks Ahead”: Local Government Finances India, Manohar, New Delhi, 1998, pp.197-206.

¹⁰ For details see, C.T.Kurien, Decentralised Planning: The Indian Experience, Himalaya Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987, A.Mukherjee Foundations of Decentralisation with Special Reference to District Planning in India, Heritage, New Delhi, 1990.

Key Resource Persons [KRPs] and at the local level by District Resource Persons [DRPs] who were mostly “either ‘deputed’ officials or volunteers of social organizations”.¹¹ Apart from lack of procedural knowledge and professional skills even among the potential trainers, the training programmes had to face the sheer enormity of numbers of persons to be trained. Various levels of functionaries and elected representatives from different types and levels of local government had to be trained not once but several times. In the light of these, the KSPB approached the Human and Institutional Development Sphere of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC] to collaborate to strengthen and support their efforts in capacity building for democratic decentralization and devolution of power to Panchayati Raj Institutions [PRIs].¹² The SDC which had earlier association with other development projects in Kerala¹³ was interested in such collaboration and a joint Fact Finding Mission on Kerala [Panchayat Raj Institutions] was appointed which consisted of MK Prasad, P.K.Michael Tharakan and Andreas Tarnutzer. It was followed soon by another joint Planning Mission consisting of A.R.Velayudhan Pillai, Andreas Tarnutzer and T.Narayana Kutty. Drawing upon the Report of the Fact Finding Mission¹⁴ which proposed a joint Framework for collaboration and basing itself upon the Planning Mission Report, the Project on Capacity Development for Decentralisation in Kerala [CapDecK] was approved by a Joint Project Committee in January 2000.¹⁵

The Project was to have three Thrust areas.¹⁶ The first Thrust area was concerned with the future of Capacity Building. This thrust area was in turn to consist of three Components. The first Component visualized “re-vamping and re-launching” the Kerala Institute for Local Administration [KILA] as a centre of excellence for capacity building. The second component visualised combining of the various lines of activities which will lead to the development of a comprehensive strategy and programme for future capacity building under the leadership of KILA. The third Component was to provide the necessary information on actual training needs and requirements. The Second Thrust Area focussed on providing immediately-required support to on-going activities in the sector of decentralization. Within this Thrust Area the fourth Component visualized support to on-going training activities by different organisations such as the PPCC, KILA, State Institute for Rural Development [SIRD], Institute for Management in Government [IMG], and Centre for Development of Imaging Technology [C-DIT]. The Component Five which was supposed to come under this Thrust Area visualized the formation of ten mobile field teams to assist elected representatives, officials, and various committee members in solving different problems they face in the decentralization process. In the Third and final Thrust Area it was

¹¹MK Prasad, P.K.Michael Tharakan and Andreas Tarnutzer, Report of the Fact Finding Mission on Kerala Panchayati Raj Institutions, KSPB and SDC, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, Executive Summary, p.i.

¹²Ibid, p-1.

¹³For instance, the Indo-Swiss Diary Development Project

¹⁴M.K.Prasad et.al... op.cit. pp.31-36

¹⁵ A.R.Velayudhan Pillai, Andreas Tarnutzer and T.Narayana Kutty, Planning Mission Report on Cap Deck, Project on Capacity Building for Decentralisation in Kerala, GOK and SDC, Thiruvananthapuram, September 1999, had marked the beginning of the CapDecK in 1999 itself though it was officially approved with retrospective effect only in January 2000.

¹⁶For the immediately following details see, Ibid. p.2-3

expected to provide required decentralised infrastructure and facilities. Under this Thrust Area, the Component Six visualised support to address the most urgent infrastructure needs. Within this, sufficient flexibility was provided to decide on the final needs for decentralized infrastructure. Further, the focus was to be on facility upgrading to enable the involved organisations to effectively perform their tasks.¹⁷

The initial conceptualization of the CapDecK, almost 'naturally' lent itself to be divided into two phases. The first two Thrust Areas that of capacity building for the future, and the second Thrust Area, that of providing immediately required support to on-going activities in the sector of decentralization can both be considered as similar concerns. While the first planned for the future, the second took care of the present. The approach that was visualized to be adopted and the institutions through which the programmes were to be implemented, were also more or less of the same type. The remapping, reorganization and possible integration of the major training institutes in the State, with KILA as the central institution was clearly visualized. The SDC's contribution in these two Thrust Areas was to be in the form of financial, pedagogical and programme planning assistance. In other words, these two Thrust Areas as they were initially envisaged provided a case that can be documented, without much complexity.

Within this specific context, a most fundamental conceptual clarification (as far as this Project of documentation is concerned) have to be made. The Project Contract between the SDC-CapDecK Programme Co-ordination Unit and the ISEC clearly mentions "Documentation of the Experience of SDC-CapDecK Programme".¹⁸ In the light of this whatever that has happened as a result of or in the Programme or even in the general context of the Programme has to be recorded as comprehensively as possible. Even if one is limited to do such a documentation; its outer limits could be debated. If the documentation is to be truly comprehensive, then it should contain both process-documentation and outcome- documentation. The CapDecK was a bilaterally agreed internationally funded programme of assistance towards capacity development in a state-wide campaign to develop a methodology of people's Plan and thus strengthen the aim of establishing democratic decentralization. Such a mass programme like the PPC inevitably could be subject of several deliberations at several levels of decision making. In these deliberations several stake-holders with different interests would have played their parts. Therefore, if such a programme is to be documented from the point of view of process- documentation, it has to be made upon several analytical as well as assumption-based perceptions. In other words, such a documentation cannot remain purely as a record of events but will have to contain analytical insights too.

If we broaden the scope of documentation into outcome documentation it will call for several additional analytical points. On the one hand the process is capable of determining to some extent the outcomes. On the other hand, the

¹⁷ It was said as the following , "Overall project support and supervision is proposed through a Joint Project Committee [JPC] that provides overall guidance to the collaboration. The Project Executive Committee [PEC] is the core implementing body in charge of management, coordination and monitoring", See Ibid. p.3.

¹⁸See. Project Contract, op.cit.

earlier outcomes are capable of influencing further processes and outcomes. Therefore the documentation has to be sensitive to the inter-face between the two throughout.

Even otherwise, a “pure” documentation is likely to be a “blow-by-blow account” alone. Such an account will not be able to enrich the readers’ understanding of the over-all context of decentralisation and people’s planning and within that the specific role played by the SDC-CapDecK programme. The lessons learnt, the lessons to be learnt, the mistakes committed and achievements made are all to be part of such an account. Such a reporting will occasionally call for “judgemental” or “evaluative” conclusions too. It is quite natural to come to the conclusion that any documentation is in effect evaluative documentation. CapDecK could have been documented in comparison with some other similar programme or by a set of indicators evolved out of its own initial assumptions. Both these are not attempted in this Report. To find a comparative programme to the SDC-CapDecK was practically impossible. Analytically a set of “self-generated” indicators could be constructed and an evaluation could have been made against them. Even if such a work was planned; the basic parameters upon which the whole Programme was initiated seems to have changed drastically through the period of the existence of SDC-CapDecK [1999-2008]. Therefore trying to build a “self-generated” set of indicators by itself would not have been feasible. In fact; such drastic changes in the initial parameters on which the Programme was envisaged is one of the most important issues that the SDC-CapDecK had to face. This Report is trying to narrate as truthfully and comprehensively the special experience through which the CapDecK had to go through and to illustrate how the CapDecK overcame it. This is to be done in such a way as to inform the readers the anxieties and excitements of the period. Even though as already admitted, there could be some evaluative observations in this Report, it is not to be seen as a pure evaluation, alone.

The author of this Report is a Historian by training. Within his own discipline, he is mostly engaged in Narrative History. Such training has certain advantages in undertaking a documentation Project. It has already been said that this will not be an evaluative documentation. Therefore, one might raise the question as to what will be the guiding or narrative principle of this Report? Without such a principle to guide its narration, a Report is likely to loose focus. The CapDecK was meant to be a Programme for Capacity Development in Decentralisation in Kerala. Therefore its experiences are to be documented on the basis of whether they conformed to the objectives of Decentralisation in the State.

Decentralization is discussed now in diverse and sometimes contradictory discourses. They can be submerged into three broad perspectives.¹⁹ They are, [a] stressing democratic decentralization, [b] decentralisation for efficient service delivery and [c] Project-based or sector-focussed decentralization. Of the three the first one is the perspective adopted in Kerala,²⁰ though the other two were not totally excluded.

¹⁹ SLSA Team, “Decentralisations in Practice in Southern Africa”, *IDS Bulletin*, Vol.34, No.3, 2003, 7, pp.79-96.

²⁰ There is a substantial number of writings on this subject. For the Readers in English only the following are referred to here.. T.M.Thomas Isaac, “Campaign....” *Social Scientist*, op.cit, T.M.Thomas Isaac and Patrick Heller “Democracy...” in A.Fung and E.O.Wright [eds], op.cit, and T.M.Thomas Isaac with Richard W Franke, *Local Democracy*..., op. cit.

Democratic decentralization means that at the local level there will be free and fair democratic elections. Through traditional or customary or even Non-governmental Organisations [NGO]-based authority may continue, they will be subjected to elected peoples' representatives and their democratic authority at the local level. Money and resources to the local government will be ensured adequately and in time, from national, state and local tax revenues. Initiatives for and approval of expenditure and plans for the locality's development will be taken at the local level. It is also expected that capacity is to be developed not only at the local level but also elsewhere too in democratic bodies by all sections of the people. This Report follows this working definition of democratic decentralisation to guide its narration of the experience of the CapDecK. Wherever the CapDecK has failed to conform to the ideals of democratic decentralisation, it has to be pointed out and wherever it has succeeded, it has to be acknowledged. It is to be done with the constant understanding that CapDecK was only a support programme for a State-led campaign. Therefore whatever claims and descriptions of success or of defects are to be strictly limited, to its role as a supplementary programme alone.

Based upon the above-mentioned guiding principles and also upon the 'natural' division feasible by the initial conceptualization of the CapDecK, this Report approach the subject in two phases. The documentation of the first phase-consisting of the Thrust Area one and two-will be done in the following Chapter II. Most of the experiences of the First Phaze have been documented by a set of internal evaluations conducted earlier by the CapDecK. Though this Report will also depend on those internal evaluations, it is expected to go beyond them. The implementation of the First Phase itself is believed to have influenced the implementation of the second Phase or the Thrust Area III. Therefore the First Phase (to be documented in Chapter II) require a closer look. Between the First and Second Phase of the CapDecK the ground-level reality in Kerala economy, society and politics seems to have undergone tremendous changes. Most directly applicable to the area of decentralization was the result of the State Elections in 2001. In that election the United Democratic Front [UDF] a political formation which was highly critical of the PPC (but not of decentralization as such) initiated by the Left Democratic Front [LDF], came to power. There were other important changes too; such as sustained high economic growth which went against the general understanding that Kerala's economic development was trapped into a low economic growth and high social development pattern.²¹ These changes have to be analysed as the shifting context for decentralisation as well as for the CapDecK. This will be covered in Chapter III.

Integrating possible links with the First Phase of the CapDecK Programme and the changing socio-economic and political scenario, in the IVth Chapter a documentation of the Second Phase of the CapDecK is undertaken. The Second Phase consists mainly of the third Thrust Area, specified in the initial conceptualization of the CapDecK. Nevertheless some remnants of the First Phase continued in the Second Phase. Those who visualized the CapDecK in 1999 could not have foreseen the nature and

²¹Achin Chakraborty, "Kerala's Changing Development Narratives", Economic and Political Weekly [EPW], Vol.XI, No.6, 5-11, February, 2005 ,541-547.

direction of changes that were to happen in Kerala society in between its initiation and subsequently. Nevertheless, compliments should be payed to them for the way in which the Thrust Area III and the Component 6 (which was supposed to be contained with it) were drafted. As referred to earlier it wanted CapDecK to “address the most urgent infrastructure needs”. Moreover it offered sufficient flexibility to decide upon the needs at that stage for decentralised infrastructure; and to take steps to upgrade facilities to enable involved organizations to effectively perform their tasks. If such flexibility was not provided at the initial stage itself the whole CapDecK Programme would have been in a deep crisis with no room for manoeuvre. It is to the credit of the initial planners and those who managed the CapDecK through such drastic changes, that they could carry it through such difficult times.

Since further planning resulted practically in re-formulation with new set of aims and objectives, the Second Phase has to be documented much more carefully, sensitively and comprehensively. This is attempted in Chapter IV. The Chapter IV with its sub- divisions should be taken as the crucial section of this Report. It will be followed by the Chapter V consisting of Summary and important insights. The Report will have three appendices. The Appendix I will provide a write-up based on a Focus Group Discussion [FGD] held among different Stake-holders of the Programme. The Appendix II will be the Project Contract between SDC-CapDecK Programme Unit and the ISEC and Appendix III will provide a list of Key Informants.

CHAPTER II

FIRST PHASE

INTRODUCTION

The main task undertaken by the SDC-CapDecK Programme was capacity building. One of the key focus of the PPC in the context of which the SDC-CapDecK Programme was negotiated and set up, was also capacity building of all stakeholders and institutions. The earlier attempts at decentralization in Kerala were either half-hearted or incomplete²². If one draws a parallel between land reforms, (the other important attempt at restructuring Kerala society) and decentralization, one can clearly see that while the land reforms were backed by a wide people's movement, the efforts at decentralization never had anything similar. Peter Ronald De Souza has pointed out for the whole country that even the Constitutional Amendments for decentralization "were driven not by the demands of social or political movements, or pressures from below for delivery of public goods, but by the concerns of the policy community and the political elite for improving governance"²³. Effective administrative decentralization like land reforms also aimed at fundamental reorganization of social institutions and attitudes. To achieve this, vast preparatory work in the form of dissemination of the idea of decentralised power, setting up of necessary institutions and evolving of supporting social practices are necessary. Decentralisation was an important slogan of Indian national movement and was used under Gandhian leadership to effectively mobilise the rural masses. After independence, at the time of the drafting of the Constitution of India, the idea found a place at least in the Directive Principles²⁴. Immediately after independence, various experiments such as those under the Community Development Programme [CDP] and National Extension Project [NEP] and various "stages" of

²² Hardly any review of long term decentralisation efforts for the whole of Kerala has been undertaken so far. A possible exception is E.K.Santha, Local Self-Government in Malabar (1800-1960), ISS Occasional Paper Series -12, Institute of Social Science [ISS] Delhi, 1993. Thomas Isaac in his essay on "Adikara Vikendreekaranam, Oru Puthia Kazchapad" in P.Rajeev [ed], 1957 EMS Manthri Sabha Charithravum Rashtreeyavum, [Malayalam], Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2007, 82-99, briefly undertook the task. In that essay he goes as far back as 1938 and the publication in Mathrubhumi of an essay titled "Madirasi Governmentum Pradesika Swayambharanavum" by EMS Namboodiripad as the possible beginning of the Left movement's pre-occupation with decentralisation. He also argues that the first Communist Ministry in Kerala, saw land and administrative reforms (including decentralization) as the main programmes to be introduced, the latter following the former. These reforms could not be implemented fully as EMS Ministry was dismissed by the Central Government. EMS Namboodiripad saw the PPC as the greatest revolutionary step in post-independent Kerala, after the establishment of United Kerala and comprehensive land reforms. Nevertheless, the earlier attempts even under left initiatives have failed including the attempt at establishing District Councils in 1991. In 2008-09, a committee under the chairmanship of M.A Oommen made an evaluation of the post 1996 decentralisation efforts in Kerala. See, GOK, Report of the committee for Evaluation of Decentralised Planning and Development, KILA,2009.

²³ "The Struggle for Local Government : Indian Democracy's New Phaze" in Publius : The Journal of Federalism, Vol.33, No.4, Fall, 2003,p.103

²⁴ See Dharmapal, Panchayat Raj and India's Policy, Other India Press, Mapusa (1962) (972) 2000.

Panchayati Raj do not seem to have resulted in building up extensive local knowledge or practices which could have made decentralisation effective²⁵.

In 1989 there was an attempt at decentralization under the initiative of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, through the 64th Constitutional Amendment. The effort failed in the Parliament²⁶. Soon after in September 1990, the then National Front Government introduced the 74th Amendment Bill. Before it could even be discussed in Parliament that Government fell²⁷. Alongside such setbacks at the national level there were two State-level experiments at decentralization which worked comparatively well and attracted fairly wide attention. The first among these was in 1978 in West Bengal²⁸ and the other in 1985/7 was in Karnataka²⁹. Though they were looked upon as “models”, their immediate impact were restricted to the two States concerned. In other words, even at the national level, there was a pronounced deficit of popular support for decentralization even just before the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. If the national situation was so bereft of grass-root level mobilization for decentralisation, the situation in Kerala was much worse. With accumulated experiences of centralized administration under monarchy and colonialism and without any significant precedent of effective local governments for most parts of the State, Kerala was ill-equipped to adopt decentralisation in terms of any former administrative traditions. Even when in July 1996, the KSPB approved an approach document which was approved in turn by the GOK and the PPC was initiated through a Government Order, concretely there was only one strong precedent, that of the failed attempt at instituting District Councils in 1991. The popular Campaign for local government through participatory planning was expected in its effervescence to make the idea of decentralised administration an attractive proposition to the people of Kerala, who were expected to internalize the idea. It was hoped that the civil society, mass and class organizations of Kerala society who have always effectively highlighted and defended

²⁵ See, Carl C Taylor et.al, India's Root of Democracy, A Sociological Analysis of Rural India's Experiences in Planned Development Since Independence, Orient Longman, Bombay etc. [1965], 1957, and L.C. Jain with B.V.Krishnamurthy and P.M.Thripathi, Grass Without Roots: Rural Development Under Government Auspices, Sage Pub., New Delhi etc., 1985

²⁶ The text of the 64th Amendment is available as Appendix to B.M.Verma, Decentralisation in Administration, Uppal Pub. House, N.Delhi, 1990, pp.243-255. For details of what happened to the Amendment, see D.Bandyopadhyay, “Rajiv Gandhi and Third Tier of Governance”, in L.C. Jain (ed), Decentralisation and Local Governance, Essays for George Mathew, Orient Longman, N.Delhi 2005.

²⁷ George Mathew, “Panchayats: The Local Self-government System in India”, in Abdul Aziz and David D Arnold (eds), Decentralised Governance in Asian Countries, Sage Pub., N.Delhi, 1996, p.131.

²⁸ See, Neil Webster, Panchayat Raj and the Decentralization of Development Planning in West Bengal – A Case Study, R P Bagchi & Co. Calcutta, N.Delhi, 1992, and Kirsten Westergaard, “Introduction to the Debate on Decentralization and Participation”, in Bodil Folke Frederiksen and Kirsten Westergaard (eds) Political Culture, Local Government and Local Institutions (Papers from the Researcher Training Courses held at Roskilde University Centre, 3-6 April, 1991) Occasional Paper No.7, International Development Studies, Roskilde University, 1993.

²⁹ A summary of the Karnataka Act 1983 (1985) is available as Appendix – A in George Mathew (ed), Panchayati Raj in Karnataka Today, Its National Dimensions, ISS and Concept. Pub. Co., N.Delhi, 1986. Also see, N.Sivamna, “Evolution of Panchayati Raj System”, in Abdul Aziz et al, Decentralized Governance and Planning, A comparative study in Three South Indian States, Mac Millan, Delhi etc., 2002, 109-139 and Ramakrishna Hegde, “Local Self Government in Karnataka: Planning from Below”, in Malcolm S Adiseshiah, (et al) Decentralized Planning and Panchayati Raj (Proceedings of the D T Lakadawala Memorial Symposium), ISS and Concept Pub. Co., N. Delhi, 1994.

the demands of the people will once again mediate the slogan of “power to the people” among the masses.

These steps which were expected to materialize could not have happened automatically. It required considerable preparatory work. To quote from the Report of the Fact Finding Mission on Kerala Panchayati Raj Institutions,³⁰

First, state-wide awareness had to be created about the Process that was to be put in motion, the participation of the people had to be assured and the necessary support and resources had to be mobilised. Secondly, substantive administrative changes had to be introduced and translated into appropriate rules and procedures. Thirdly, a large number and wide range of different actors and institutions that were to be involved in various functions and capacities in the process had to be provided with information, knowledge and essential skills to be able to play the additional and expanded role that was assigned to them

Though the Fact Finding Mission felt that “the scale of the exercise was made larger with the urgency and pressure due to the limited time available, before the knowledge and skills had to be put to use”, it also felt that Kerala was in a good position to have considerable numbers of persons with education and technical qualifications in almost every village. Yet, the task of harnessing and mobilising and appropriately training these potential group of experts as well as other stakeholders in a State wide campaign was no mean task.

In this context, various specific approaches such as Training of Trainers [TOT] and Cascading Training [CT] etc. were contemplated. A one-time training exercise was rejected as inadequate and a “permanent and related exposure and training efforts” was found to be required. The GOK, the LSGD, KSPB and more specifically the PPCC were very aware of the hugeness of the task. They approached among others, the National Planning Commission [NPC] which responded to the request for assistance from the state positively. It was also in this specific context that the KSPB approached the SDC for assistance. The SDC responded by evolving a joint programme called the CapDecK along with the KSPB and the LSGD. The CapDecK visualized³¹

contributing to the conceptualization, development and implementation of a capacity building strategy and programme that will strengthen local participation and enable rural and urban local bodies to effectively perform their duties and responsibilities.

Within this overall goal, certain specific objectives were formulated, One of them was to contribute to the development of a long-term capacity building strategy. This strategy and the ensuing programme was to be based on a comprehensive assessment of needs. It also was to

³⁰ M K Prasad, P K Michael Tharakan and Andreas Tarnutzer, Report of the Fact Finding Mission on Kerala Panchayati Raj Institutions, Kerala State Planning Board (KSPB), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p.12

³¹ Project on CapDecK, 1999, p.8.

optimize existing resources. Such a programme should also promote innovative training approaches. Such training programmes are expected to assist organizational development of core organizations involved in capacity building for decentralization. They eventually will support the stabilization of the decentralisation process by providing assistance to on-going training and problem solving.

At a more specific level, Training, Orientation Programmes and Exposure exercises were planned for elected representatives of LGs, LG officials, officers of decentralised line departments, members of Task Forces [TF] and Block and District Expert Committees [DEC] and members of the District Planning Committees [DPC]. The following expertise and skills were identified to be necessary to be transferred to them;

1. Acts, rules and procedures.
2. Project cycle related general skills; Planning skills in different Development Sectors
3. Project appraisal and plan integration skills
4. Perspective planning techniques and
5. Communication and participatory skills

In other words the role of CapDecK initially was conceived to be training, system building and facilitating needed change in rules and regulations. It also envisaged establishment of support systems and also providing opportunities for experiences sharing.

Within Kerala, at that time there were several institutions and agencies who could have been built up to assume the task of implementing such a collaborative capacity development programme. The Sen Committee appointed by the GOK in its first report of 1997 identified the Kerala Institute of Local Administration [KILA] as an institution to play a leading role in co-ordinating, implementing and sustaining capacity building for local government institutions.³² KILA was also envisaged to be the nodal agency which should ultimately take on the responsibility of capacity building from the PPCC as a Centre of Excellence by the CapDecK too. It was through the KILA and under the leadership of KILA, that the CapDecK visualised the development of a decentralised training system. KILA was to play a pivotal role in the platform for exchanging experiences on decentralisation. The First Phase of the CapDecK was planned for June 1999 to March 2003, during which the Programme was to “support the process of stabilization and institutionalisation of the decentralisation process in Kerala”.³³

It has already been mentioned that the collaborative Project or CapDecK was divided into three Thrusts and six Components. While the Thrust A was concerned about the future of Capacity Building for Decentralisation, Thrust B was to be focused on the current requirements. It was also to provide immediately required

³² Jos Chathukulam and M.S John, Panchayat Rajum Sen Committium; Current Books, Kottayam etc. 1998

³³ 1st Phase Review 24 Mar-08, p-1

support to on-going activities. The Thrust C was required to provide decentralised infrastructure and facilities. To guide the specific activities of the Phase one a few objectives were set. The Thrust A will require comprehensive assessments of needs, optimization of existing resources and promotion of innovative training approaches. The Thrust B will require assistance of organizational development of core organizations involved in capacity building. The Thrust C will require appropriate support for the development of decentralised infrastructure required for related activities to capacity building.

The Physical and Financial Progress Report for Phase 1-June 1999 to March 2003 of the CapDecK has grouped the activities of the period into three stages which were [a] PP Campaign [b] Transition from PPCC to KILA [c] Institutionalisation. The same Report, states that the CapDecK supported the PPC activities mainly through training programmes. It is also mentioned that some programmes for the empowerment of women, dalits and Tribal people were also undertaken in this period. The PPCC of the KSPB “faded out” by around April 2001. In the period immediately preceding that, the CapDecK claimed to have taken decisive steps to facilitate the KILA to take its place as a “lead organization, which can design, organise and supervise an overall training strategy and programme in capacity building for decentralisation”. Similarly, in terms of activities promoting institutionalizing the PPC, the KILA is claimed to have broadened its base and developed “into a nodal organisation by playing a pro-active role in capacity building”. KILA also developed a “concept, strategy and programme for capacity development of local self-governments and related organizations” with the help of the CapDecK.

The Report contains details of activities undertaken in the Six Components envisaged under the three Thrust areas. The first component was organizational strengthening of KILA. Quite a bit seems to have been done with regard to this, in terms of appointment of a faculty which had the facilities to develop as experts in their respective field of specialization, a process of internal team building , and internal decentralisation within the KILA. A faculty development programme and a series of internal Seminars were also conducted. Support staff (far from adequate) was also appointed. Further, and more importantly, an Organisational Development [OD] strategy was attempted on the basis of a Vision Statement for KILA which was finalized in September 2001. The Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode [IIM-K] was identified as the consultant for the development of the OD strategy.

Within the specific context of the transfer of responsibility of guiding the PPC (short of its policy making) from the PPCC to the KILA, the Component 2 became quite important. There was an “unexpected” speeding up of this process. The State Assembly Election resulted in a transfer of power from the Left Democratic Front [LDF] to the United Democratic Front [UDF] government. It was the LDF which had initiated the PPC and has for administrative purposes created the PPCC within the KSPB. There was a serious doubt among those who were associated with the PPC whether the PPCC would have continued to receive official sanction of the KSPB or GOK, under the UDF dispensation. Even otherwise, it was visualised that the PPCC’s responsibilities should be transferred to the KILA under the assistance of the CapDecK.

In such circumstances, it was only natural that the CapDecK should take necessary steps towards this crucial transfer. The dominantly campaign-styled mode had to be transferred into a more institutionalized training set-up. To guide this transition, KILA was to develop a realistic capacity development strategy and programme that was need based. The CapDecK's role was in facilitating this. The fact that, according to most of the participants in this process as well as key-informants, the transition was carried out quite smoothly, supports the conclusion that the KILA-CapDecK team managed it well.³⁴

The Component 3 envisaged undertaking of field studies to provide systematic and comprehensive information on the status as well as needs of the capacity development programme. It involved not only monitoring of on-going training but also extensive documentation and making of such documentation available at one place. The PPC corner in the KILA Library seemed to have served the purpose. In addition, there was a mail survey through which information with regard to felt needs of the capacity development programme was collected. A research project on Tribal issues was also helpful in this regard. As far as the Fourth Component was concerned, it was to provide selected support to on-going programmes. It was meant also to help in producing training materials, and to establish systematic monitoring system to evaluate attendance, training impact, training methodology and trainer quality of the training programmes.

It was under the Component 4 that much of the activities undertaken by the CapDecK in collaboration and through KILA, were conducted. In the earliest stage of the first phase, following the initial training that was organised by the PPCC, there was a distinct stage in which the KILA in association with the CapDecK jointly organised such training with the PPCC. It finally led to a third stage where the training was institutionalized by the KILA-CapDecK with the active partnership of State Institute of Rural Development [SIRD] and the Institute for Management in Government [IMG]. About 1.2 lakhs of persons from various stakeholders groups were trained in the initial stage wherein the focus was on holding orientation programmes on planning and implementation for different stake-holder's groups. It was in the second stage when KILA- CapDecK was associated with PPCC that focus was given to Women, Dalit and Tribal empowerment programmes. In the third stage of institutionalization of training was carried out with the active participation of educational, professional and research institutions like the Kerala Agricultural University, Medical Colleges, State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT), IRTC, COSTFORD etc. The KILA and CapDecK were involved deeply in the massive training programme for the preparation of the Tenth Five Year Plan under the Kerala Development Plan [KDP] to which the PPC has by then changed. During this period KILA also initiated an innovative approach to capacity development through Praxis intervention in Tribal-significant Panchayats. Yet another innovative programme initiated at this stage was to share the experiences of Panchayat to Panchayat training programme. KILA mobile /extension team faculty members participated in training programmes conducted at the district and block level. For each of these programmes, curriculum and training materials were prepared by

³⁴ Conclusion based upon a survey of perceptions conducted among key observants and participants.

KILA with the support of CapDecK. At the end of this massive programme a training needs assessment workshop was held and in its light a Training calendar was also prepared. A systematic training monitoring and evaluation system was also developed; which included a reporting and evaluating mechanism. The reporting covered the quantitative aspects of training programmes while the evaluation mechanism, through 'exit polls' and mail surveys dealt with its qualitative aspects.

The Component 5 of Mobile Field Teams was envisaged under the Thurst B of Implementation and Monitoring of on-going Capacity Building Activities. As early as the first half of the year 2000, 43 Mobile teams consisting of three members each (an engineer, a financial expert and a planning expert) were in place to assist LGs. These teams were to provide on the spot advice and to help solve problems which are likely to emerge in the course of implementation of the decentralisation process. These teams were organised under the supervision of the PPCC itself. The teams underwent training to make them familiar with implementation of rules, procedures, acts and financial procedures of LGs. They were provided with a kit consisting of relevant Government Orders [GOs], rules and procedures and handbooks on various subjects. After an initial pilot phase, a corrective workshop was held. The services of the Mobile Teams were made use of very widely; particularly during financial year end. Yet, after KILA took over the responsibility from the PPCC, the teams underwent significant changes. The mobile teams were renamed the Extension faculty of the KILA, and they also directly contributed to organising district level workshop and training programmes. The members of the extension faculty also participated in specific programmes organised by the KILA. Further, through a newsletter and a phone-in-service organised through the KILA library, doubts arising from LGs were cleared.

The Component 6 envisaged provision of selected infrastructural and other facilities. This component required to "assess overall situation in relation to availability of appropriate infrastructure in the districts". It also was meant to support the KILA by providing infrastructure and in facilitating smooth functioning of training institutes. In the first phase, more attention was paid to strengthening the KILA as an institution. The Library was upgraded with assistance from CapDecK as well as from the State government and funding from other projects. Campaign facilities, computer lab, acoustically treated auditorium, expanded accommodation facilities, residential quarters etc. were set in place, in KILA and in some other organizations too.

So far we were following the internal reports that were prepared by the CapDecK team itself. Depending upon them alone can have several shortcomings. The listing of the specific activities undertaken by the CapDecK through or with the KILA reported by their documentation cannot be doubted. They are reported elsewhere by other sources too. This Report could not check them in any great detail because the first phase of the CapDecK programme (by the time the data collection for this report was conducted) have become very much part of the history of decentralization in Kerala. If at all any verification of its veracity is to be done, it has to be through a methodology which will facilitate dynamic data collection. Therefore we have had in-depth discussion with 25 "stake-holders" and 15 participants and observers of the activities and collected their perceptions. The 25 stakeholders consisted of elected

representatives to LGs, officials and staff members including retired secretaries of LGs, state level bureaucrats, and participants of early training programmes as trainers and trainees. The 15 participants and observers included activists in the area of decentralisation, mostly activists of the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad [KSSP], academics and journalists. The discussion points used in conversation with them are given below:

TABLE II.1. Discussion points used in in-depth conversations with 25 stakeholders and 15 participants and observers with regard to important activities mentioned in internal documentation of CapDecK.

1. KILA have developed into nodal organization by broadening its base and developing a strategy for capacity development.
2. KILA faculty was strengthened
3. Transition from Campaign-mode to Institutionalised system of training and PPCC to KILA was smooth and complete
4. Training given was good
5. Mobile Team/Extension Faculty/Phone-in service was Effective

Since in -depth discussions were conducted in the form of unstructured conversations their results could not be specifically quantified. What is given are only judgments of the trends their opinions took. There is considerable subjective assessments by the Report-writer in the presentation made. They are given in the following Table II.2 and Table II.3.

TABLE II. 2. Opinions of 25 stakeholders with regard to the activities claimed in internal Report of the CapDecK.

	COMPLETELY CORRECT	SOME WHAT CORRECT	NOT CORRECT
Discussion Point 1	25	0	0
Discussion Point 2	18	7	0
Discussion Point 3	15	10	0
Discussion Point 4	5	18	2
Discussion Point 5	5	15	5

TABLE II. 3. Opinions of 15 participants and observers with regard to the activities claimed in internal Reports of the CapDecK.

	COMPLETELY CORRECT	SOME WHAT CORRECT	NOT CORRECT
Discussion Point 1	15	0	0
Discussion Point 2	11	4	0
Discussion Point 3	15	0	0
Discussion Point 4	0	12	3
Discussion Point 5	4	11	0

Certain amount of explanations are necessary in the case of these TABLES. First of all, these “surveys” were of only perception of persons who have had

involvement with the larger process of decentralisation that took place in Kerala. Secondly, these perceptions were surveyed long after their involvements and therefore could be impaired by recall lapses. Thirdly when the activities claimed in CapDecK internal report were recounted in this report [earlier than the TABLES] the name CapDecK was used prominently. If anything has come out without any doubt in these perception survey, it was that the name of KILA was projected prominently. At the time of the activities mentioned-at least in their earlier stage-the name of CapDecK was hardly known or was ever tried to be publicised. This was a deliberate decision of the CapDecK Team which worked mainly behind the scenes. If later on, and particularly when the perception survey was taken, the name of CapDecK was well known among the stakeholders, participants and observers, it was due to other reasons.

Further, these surveys were not undertaken to verify the activities mentioned in the internal documentation of CapDecK alone. As already mentioned these activities are broadly mentioned elsewhere too; if not in the same fashion. In addition, in the early stages of the CapDecK this Report-writer himself had direct access to some aspects of the developments mentioned. He was one of the three members of a joint Fact Finding Mission on Kerala Panchayati Raj Institutions appointed by the KSPB and the SDC; in 1998. He was also the Director of the KILA from 4th September 2000 to 15th December 2001. Therefore he can claim to have been a participant at least in the early stage of CapDecK activities. Yet, therein lies certain added weakness of this part of the documentation. So far, this documentation heavily depended upon internal documents by the CapDecK used by the Report-writer who himself partially was part of the development mentioned. Therefore the survey aimed at seeing whether the quality of the activities claimed by the CapDecK were such as claimed could be biased in favour of the internal reports of CapDecK.

Since the surveyed persons were not selected through any systematic or deliberate sampling methods, they cannot claim to have any representative character. Nevertheless, it was felt that even if a selection of persons who were at one time involved in the process of decentralisation in Kerala do indicate certain opinions of what happened at one stage of that process, it should be taken seriously. There were the LSGD, KSPB, PPCC, KILA and the CapDecK involved in various aspects of the training and Capacity Development programme which was an important part of the process discussed. Of these the CapDecK deliberately played a subdued role and its role can easily be merged with that of the KILA. Nevertheless the distinctive roles played by the other agencies as well as KILA-CapDecK cannot be expected to be clearly demarcated even in the minds of the 25 stake-holders and 15 participants and observers who were surveyed.

If we look at the perception of the 25 stake-holders, we are struck by the unanimity of the view with regard to the first discussion point. All of them with whom in-depth discussions were held, thought that KILA had transformed itself into an institute which could take up responsibilities of providing appropriate training. In other words, the perceptions of these 25 persons were of a positive nature. These were strictly in relation to the KILA's role as the apex-body from which training was expected by the LG personnel. If we extend the expectations to the nodal institution which could have served the purposes of the decentralisation process altogether, there is no guarantee that

the perceptions would have remained the same. At the moment it is not the purpose of our enquiry at all. In addition it was not strictly recalled in terms of chronology or with reference to the earlier KILA and the apparently “new” KILA. Nevertheless we have to give due credit to the unanimous understanding that KILA emerged at least in the perception of people who ought to have been concerned, as a positively equipped institution. In this positive institutional framework which played a major role in training or capacity development for decentralisation, the CapDecK have played a significant role.

With regard to the second discussion point, there seems to have been difference of perception, with 7 persons holding that the KILA faculty was strengthened only somewhat well. These differing perceptions were mostly in terms of possibilities of improvement. Out of the 7, three felt that KILA should have had at least one accounting specialist in their permanent faculty; while, quite importantly one felt a Tribal development Expert should have been added to the faculty. The other three felt that the KILA faculty required further general strengthening. Irrespective of the 7 different perceptions the overwhelming unanimity in favour of a positive assessment is worth noticing. The third and the fourth discussion points were quite important. Among them the third one did not get any unanimous approval. Among the 10 who gave only medium-approval, 8 felt that the PPCC or some other organization like it should have continued to carry on the training for a while too. In other words, they were not indicating their disapproval of the execution of the transfer from PPCC to KILA, but were critical of the idea of the transition itself at this stage. According to this opinion, the transition to KILA’s initiative or institutionalization was one of the factors which slowed down the momentum of the PPC. Two out of the 10 admitted that they never realized that there was such a transition taking place. In their opinion the transition of which they were not quite aware, could be given moderate approval. In other words, they felt that the post 2001 training could be rated medium on the basis of their own personal expectations. Three of the 15 who gave complete approval also admits that they were not fully aware that there was a transition of responsibilities between the PPCC and the KILA. Nevertheless in their opinion-transition or not-the end product was excellent. We take these perceptions as also positive. The fact that 5 of the respondents did not know about the transition in terms of the organizations or institutions concerned should not be taken seriously. It will only further strengthen the fact that the transition was so smooth that some of them failed to notice it, in terms of its details.

When we come to the fourth discussion point the majority perception that of 18 out of 25 approved the training, while 2 felt that the training given by the KILA (with the assistance of CapDecK) was not adequate. The two negative exceptions as well the majority 15 out of the 18 who only tentatively approved felt that the period of training was not enough. Two out of the 18 felt that they could have had specific training for poverty eradication of Tribal population. Three others felt that the training in planning was confined only to reinterpretation of the Government Orders with regard to different steps that were to be taken by LGs.

The fifth discussion point had 5 persons disapproving completely with a positive understanding of the functioning of the Mobile teams/Extension

Faculty/Phone-in-Service. But all 5 of them were only reflecting generally the disappointment that the mobile teams/Extension Faculty/Phone-in-Service could not handle adequately on-the-spot issues raised. The 15 who approved only tentatively also were expressing such a disappointment. Otherwise the discussion points 5 also fetched generally positive perceptions. It could also mean that the teams/Extension Faculty/Phone-in-Service were found to be a useful service by the LG personnel.

If we move on to the TABLE II.3 and the perceptions of participants and observers, we are to find that there is hardly any significant difference between these and the perceptions of the stake-holders. In TABLE II.3 there is no completely negative response expect 3 with regard to the discussion point 4. All three of them emphasized that the training in planning was not really training in planning techniques or planning processes but mere reinterpretation of GOs with regard to mechanical steps grouped under planning as an activity. The participants and observers were themselves trainers or were associated with training in close association. They were very critical or “self-critical “ of the training given. It is reflected in 12 out of 15 giving only tentative approval with regard to the discussion points 4.

Reading through the surveyed perceptions one gets the feeling that the KILA-CapDeck succeeded in not a small measure in putting into practice the several components envisaged under the three Thrust areas. The perceptions do indicate that in addition to the outcomes in terms of activities but also in terms of their impact the KILA-CapDeck’s involvement was creditable in the initial phase. One of the internal exercises that the CapDeck itself did, that of Mail Survey further strengthen this positive picture. The result of the Mail Survey of VEO Training conducted at KILA, 3 months after training is reproduced below as TABLE II.4.

TABLE II.4 Mail Survey of VEO Training Conducted at KILA, 3 months after training

Q. No	Questions	Very Bad	Bad	Adequate	Good	Very Good
1	Helpfulness of new knowledge for official activities	4	11	42	30	12
2	Actual application in official activities	15	9	43	17	15
3	Usefulness of training materials	5	14	36	27	18

[SOURCE: CapDeck, Physical and Financial Progress Report for Phase 1-June 1999 to March 2003, 24 March, 2008, Annexure 6, p.29]

What we have gained so far is an insight into early CapDeck activities in terms of outcomes and impacts. Another internal exercise conducted by the CapDeck, Interim Review of CapDeck Phase 2, was done only in April-May 2005. It nevertheless does indicate what happened early. It indicate the integrating approach carried out by the CapDeck between the KILA, GOK and the SDC. It has been claimed

in the same report that “within Kerala, the visibility of CapDecK and thus SDC with the GOK is quite good”. Further it has been pointed out that “CapDecK is engaged in a regular policy dialogue with the core decision makers, both in formal and as well as through the Steering group and the JPC [Joint Programme Committee].”

For the purpose of CapDecK implementation, a Committee known early as Joint Project Committee [JPC] and later Joint Programme Committee was created together by the GOK and the SDC. This committee was to give overall supervision and guidance. To co-ordinate, supervise and monitor the actual implementation of CapDecK, a Project (later Programme) Executive Committee [PEC] was set up at KILA under the JPC. The JPC was visualised as “an institutional platform for conceptual and administrative matters” and was to act “as last arbiter for any issues that may arise during project implementation.” Meanwhile the PEC at KILA was expected to phase-out gradually, once KILA was in a position to perform its central role in the capacity development process. The PEC was supported by a Project Executive Unit [PEU] consisting mainly of the Executive Coordinator [EC] and the Monitoring Officer [MO]. They were in place from 16th January 2000 operating fully from February 2000, from the office space given to the PEC/PEU of the CapDecK (or more accurately of the JPC) by the KSPB. Later, the office shifted to a separate building in Pattom, Thiruvananthapuram. Even when moved to a new place the South Kerala Regional Centre of KILA was opened at the project office at Thiruvananthapuram.

In other words, due to the nature of the original agreement signed by the SDC and GOK, the CapDecK was conceived to be supervised by a joint committee. In other words it operated as integral part of the implementing agencies of the GOK. The only demarcation was that the CapDecK’s role was limited to Capacity Development alone. Various Focus Group Discussion [FGD], and individual interviews including with senior bureaucrats of GOK, confirmed that this position was maintained throughout. Such a position was not easy to maintain. In Kerala’s public life where even lesser issues were subjected to serve contestation, the privileged position accorded to CapDecK was somehow or other maintained without much serious challenges. The two individuals holding the offices of EC and MO, Dr. Joy Elamon and Ms. Mariamma (Nirmala) Sanu George throughout the period were the same (with a change occurring only in 2009). This could have given the activities of the CapDecK a sense of continuity and also acceptance stemming from the sense of continuity. Many persons to whom the Report writer have talked gave special credit to them personally. They both symbolized yet another type of continuity too. They were involved in the PPCC and the CapDecK-KILA. It is not surprising that at least few people closely associated with the specific activities carried out by these agencies/institutions were not fully aware of their separate existence.

Certainly continuity must have been a major positive factor in this regard. But one wonders whether continuity alone could have helped maintain the position which could be described as privileged. There were several actors involved in the specific activities conducted during the period, like the LSGD of the GOK, KSPB, KILA, SDC various academic and training institutes etc. Their interests and approaches could have been not only different but at times even contradictory. In the meantime the

CapDecK also took the initiative to create a mechanism for co-ordination between IMG, SIRD and KILA. It also, by the account made by persons who had a ringside view, seem to have worked well. These things could not have happened but for the willingness of different persons associated with different agencies/institutions to have worked with a spirit of cooperation.

The fact of the matter is that, CapDecK was operated without much challenge as a “privileged” member of a joint official platform for training in terms of skill development and knowledge transfer. CapDecK cannot claim to have been an outside agency though it was fully financed by SDC; an international funding agency. It was fully accepted as “member of the official team” as far as the Capacity Development requirements of decentralisation in Kerala was concerned. What is interesting in this context is that both LDF and the UDF governments with their different programmes of PPC and KDP accepted this position of the CapDecK.

Having been “recognized” as an “official agency ” in Capacity development in the decentralised planning process in Kerala, the CapDecK has to be considered in that capacity rather than having been an NGO or voluntary agency. It is very significant because the whole transition that was expected out of developing a two-tiered federal system into a three-tiered system through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments³⁵ was very wide and fundamental. It has even been called the “second wave” of Indian democracy.³⁶ The initiation of decentralisation in Kerala through participatory planning having been an integral part of this intended transition, those agencies who worked in it officially and their roles require special scrutiny. Existing scholarly literature on such attempts at transition has argued that ³⁷

political rights can be translated into social rights and procedural democracy becomes substantive democracy, only to the extent lower class demands are organised and find effective representation in the state

The PPC attracted world wide attention as an innovative scheme towards realizing such a transition.

Since Kerala adopted a scheme of participatory planning as a means to build up decentralisation, the ability to plan at the local level became a major requirement. Already there are a number of “evaluative” studies on the subject. D.Narayana³⁸ has stated that while heads of elected committees were found to be comparatively better conscious of the role of panchayats as local government, they and

³⁵ Peter Ronald deSouza, “The Struggle for Local Government: Indian Democracy’s new Phase”, Publius: The Journal of Federalism, Vol.33, No.4, Fall 2003, 99-118

³⁶ Peter Ronald deSouza “Decentralisation and Local Government: The ‘Second Wave’ of Democracy in India”, India’s Living Constitution: Ideas, Practice, Controversies, (eds) Zoya Hasan, Eswaran Sridharan and R.Sudharshan & Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002, 370-404.

³⁷ Patrick Heller, “Moving the State: The Politics of Democratic Decentralisation in Kerala, South Africa and Porto Alegre”, Politics and Society, Vol.29, No.1, March, 2001, 130-170.

³⁸ D.Narayana, “Local Governance without Capacity Building, Ten Years of Panchayati Raj,” Economic and Political Weekly [EPW], Vol.XL, No.26, June 25, 2005, 2822-32.

other elected representatives did not get training to the extent necessary as to make panchayats act as LGs. Similarly in a case study of Nattika Panchayat, E.M.Thomas³⁹ has pointed out that “the very existence and perpetuation of the various institutions of decentralised planning in Kerala could not mobilize the expected levels of people’s participation”. Rashmi Sharma⁴⁰ has also pointed out that

The Kerala experience shows very clearly that decentralisation demands major professional upgradation. Even in a state such as Kerala, where literacy and government facilities are superior to those of other states, the lack of technical, administrative and financial know how of the local bodies was a major bottleneck.

One might wonder whether the indication of failure with particular regard to training and capacity development that were expressed by different studies are to be wholly attributed to the “official agencies” who were to conduct them, including the CapDeck? More than one factor inhibits us from doing so. In yet another study, Jos Chathukulam and M.S.John⁴¹ has pointed out that

Kerala’s decentralized planning amounted to a command style implementation of participatory planning...Kerala’s decentralised planning lacked a proper political perceptiveness and a poor understanding of proper dynamics. The way the whole process was organised, the content of training and the procedures initiated, reflected a concern primarily with the goals of planning than genuine decentralisation

The impact of divergence of objectives of participatory planning and decentralisation is again emphasized by the same authors in another study too⁴². There they have pointed out that the PPC having been essentially a planning campaign, its achievements could not be judged by the level of decentralisation achieved. They undertook a measurement exercise in which the ideal form of decentralisation was envisaged to be devolution. In that exercise they found that Kerala scored only 2 in a scale of 0 to 5. According to them “such a low score, despite the much publicized campaign for decentralisation was due to the focus on planning rather on decentralisation issues”.

It could very well be that a planning campaign would have achieved its objectives with respect to planning alone. Meanwhile it could not have contributed to the objectives of decentralization. But it is not a fully convincing argument by itself. What it means, is that a more specific evaluative study in terms of

³⁹ E.M.Thomas, “A Decade of People’s Participation in Decentralised Planning in Kerala-A Case Study”, Administrative Change, Vol.XXXIII, No.2 and VolXXXIV No.1, January- December, 2006, pp.35-46.

⁴⁰ Rashmi Sharma, “Kerala’s Decentralisation, Idea in Practice”, EPW, Vol.XXXVIII, No.36, September, 2003, 3832-3850.

⁴¹ Jos Chathukulam and M.S.John, “Five Years of Participatory Planning in Kerala, Rhetoric and Reality”, EPW, Vol.XXXVII, No.49, December 7, 2002, 4917-4926.

⁴² M.S.John, and Jos Chathukulam, “Measuring Decentralisation, The Case of Kerala (India),” Public Administration and Development, Vol.23, 2003, 347-360.

objectives of participatory planning could have been undertaken. It does not seem to have been carried out so far. On the other hand, the appropriateness of parameters and yardsticks used in the aforementioned exercise in measurement could very well be debated. Therefore one cannot say anything definite about the quality of gains made in terms of participatory planning by the PPC, on the basis of such an evaluative study alone.

The studies referred to in this context also refer to factors such as “fractious politics”⁴³. It was also pointed out that the PPC “was built on the principle of conflict avoidance” while “conflict would (have been) natural and also be desirable”⁴⁴. Such factors were certainly out of the direct reach of the training and capacity development schemes that were envisaged. It could be argued that these factors could also be included in an innovative training programme. But in the training programme designed seem not to have addressed or handled them. As long as such factors could have played a role in the final outcome of the PPC, and which could not have been handled by the training programmes designed and implemented by among others KILA/CapDeck, the responsibility of the outcomes and its impact cannot be placed at their doorsteps.

Such an assumption contradicts one of the fundamental assumptions made in the PPC. The PPC really expected that through the people’s planning the people of Kerala will acquire ability for themselves to undertake local level planning. It was assumed that it eventually will positively contribute to democratic decentralisation. In other words, planning at local level was considered an inevitable component of democratization and decentralisation. Then how come there was at least a different end result which does not seem to have favoured true decentralisation? One line of enquiry that we can pursue in this context can have two separate sub-paths. We can have a more clearly targeted enquiry into the training programmes, including a context analysis, to see how well they served the objectives of people’s planning. The few opinions given by stake-holders, participants and observers of the PPC, do indicate a certain inadequacy in disseminating the idea of real planning. On the other hand we can also enquire into whether the goals of democratic decentralisation were well-integrated into the training programme.

Let us first pursue the first path. The Institute of Social Sciences, [ISS] in collaboration with the UNICEF, organised a National Convention of Panchayat Representatives in New Delhi on December 22-23, 2001. The Convention passed a Declaration which contained Twenty points⁴⁵. These points included a demand that the District Development Committee [DDC] be abolished and in its place District Planning Committee [DPC], be formed with the President of the District Panchayat as the Chairperson. Kerala’s model of earmarking at least one-third of the Annual Plan of the States’ outlay as untied funds for local self-government was also put forward as the very first demand. It should be noted that these important points with regard to planning and

⁴³ Rashmi Sharma, 2003, op.cit.

⁴⁴ Jos Chathukulam and M.S.John, 2002, op.cit.

⁴⁵ “Declaration of National Convention of Panchayat Representatives”, Mainstream, January 26, 2002, 35-36.

decentralization upheld by a National Convention of Panchayats were well integrated in to the PPC.

Since the PPC was initiated by the LDF government led by Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM), many observers have raised two questions. CPI (M) is known to believe in democratic centralism as an organising principle and in such a context how can they conceptualise and implement a programme of democratic decentralisation?⁴⁶ This question needs some sort of an answer but not perhaps when we discuss objectives of planning. The second question addresses planning process involved in centralized planning with a centralized investment decision-making. Much of the criticism against centralized planning stems from its institutional weaknesses such as “informational inadequacy”. All agents at all levels of the system do not always “adopt the objectives considered appropriate by central planners”. It was also found fault with the consumption demands arising out of the development of science and technology and their impact upon tastes and lifestyles⁴⁷ which are not in conformity with preset plans. Another major weakness pointed out was the tendency of centralized planning to become bureaucratized. Taking into account some of these criticism there was a search for a “Market Socialism”. Oscar Lange argued that even if investment and production decisions are “decentralised”, it⁴⁸

would be undertaken by plant and industry level managers acting according to accounting rules specified by the central planning board, taking a list of prices put out by the board as parameters ... (and) ... acting in this manners as a ‘price setter’ and an agency that ensures the adherence to accounting principles handled down from above, the central planning board could ensure that a socialist system replicates the allocative equilibrium typical of a competitive market

Most of whom who believed in the efficacy of the Planning approach rejected the various “market socialist” versions. For them, by doing away with the plan-market dichotomy, it tend to reduce the argument for socialism purely to one for egalitarianism alone⁴⁹. It also do away with the fundamental planning principle of investment coordination. Those who are for planning seem to agree with John Gray’s⁵⁰ statement that “the central political project of the age must be that of subjecting market institutions to the authority of indigenous political institutions”.

⁴⁶ “progressive opinion has generally opposed unfettered decentralisation, that is an economic regime where individual production units have autonomy in decision-making and supposedly maximise some objective function within a market environment”, Prabhat Patnaik, “Alternative Paradigms of Economic Decentralisation”, *Social Scientist*, Vol.29, No.s 9-10, September- October 2001, 48-59. The Marxists generally term decentralised decision-making at the firm or plant level as “anarchy of commodity production”.

⁴⁷ C.P.Chandrasekhar, “Democratic Decentralisation and the Planning Principle: The Transition from Below”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 29, No.s 11-12, November-December 2001, 41-56.

⁴⁸ C.P Chandrasekhar, op.cit. 2001, op.cit

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ John Gray “Harnessing the Market”, *New Left Review*, No.210, March/April 1995, a quoted in C.P Chandrasekhar, op.cit. 2001.

It is in the specific context of rejection of market socialism that there was renewed interest in a democratically decentralised planning as it was envisaged in Kerala. The basic features of Kerala's people's plan was summarized as below,⁵¹

It starts by accepting that not everything is best done at a centralized level, and advocates undertaking everything that is best done at lower levels at those levels. This requires (i) devolving adequate resources to lower levels of decision making (ii) providing all levels of decision making with functional and financial autonomy (iii) requiring that these funds are utilized as per a democratically decided and pre-specified development plan; (iv) building capabilities to use resources devolved to each level effectively and transforming civic culture to enable democratic participation.

The assumptions herein have implications for capacity development also. It was argued that the "societal view"

could be expressed and embodied in the actual participation of people in the decision-making and implementation process. It is the latter which is strengthened by the capacity-building exercise, and participation in economic processes through means other than mediation by a disembodied market (and) strengthens the capacity to judge the programmes being espoused and implemented by those seeking to be elected to positions of power.

Obviously this has to be done by "forging a partnership between the people, the elected representatives and experts in various fields." It naturally "reduces the danger of excessive centralization of economic and financial power". The major merit of this scheme is that "unlike the market alternative, decision making... limits it substantially". Further it was pointed out that ⁵²

the "capacity to plan" begins to be acquired at different levels, different sections of the peoples begin to acquire the vision and skills to make similar decisions

as initially the elected representatives do. What it means is that⁵³

what is being built is not just the capacity to participate fruitfully in "planning" at the local level, but the vision and capacity to assess alternative trajectories of investments and consumption and the implications of alternative allocations of investments across sections.

It also means that

⁵¹ C.P Chandrasekhar, op.cit. 2001, op.cit.

⁵² Ibid. "government level" decentralization is not supposed to institutionalize a situation where the panchayats becomes mere conduits for effecting government expenditure. They would have the freedom to raise their own resources and to spend them in whatever way they choose", Prabhat Patnaik, 2001, op.cit.

⁵³ Ibid.

the people and .. elected representatives would not merely provide a check against decision makers at intermediate levels from subverting the planning exercise... but also provide the support and social sanction for imposing non-financial penalties for those engaging in such deviant expenditure (and) ... decentralisation thus becomes a prelude to reforming and strengthening the process of central planning itself.

These were the grand visions regarding PPC. It was viewed as a major critique of the market mechanism and as a “truly historic exercise”. Since the PPC was initiated in the state of Kerala under the LDF government led by the CPI (M) such visions could have had great relevance in formulating the parameters for capacity development in participatory planning. To evaluate the performance of CapDecK or CapDecK through KILA, against such lofty notions is definitely a tall task. The institutional nature of these agencies and their official character would have played as inhibition to taking up such an open course in which “a change in the balance of class force”⁵⁴ were targeted. Therefore before undertaking such an enquiry we have to ascertain whether any of these “radical” targets were contained in the documents upon which the activities of CapDecK was engineered.

The two basic documents upon which the SDC-GOK collaboration emerged and under which the CapDecK started functioning were, 1] Report of the Fact Finding Mission on Kerala Panchayat Raj Institutions⁵⁵ and 2] Planning Mission Report on CapDecK, Project on Capacity Development for Decentralisation in Kerala,⁵⁶. Neither of these ever discussed the larger issues of how “marketisation” cannot rectify the so called defect of the centralized planning system. On the other hand; first of these two documents, in its annexure 2 “Evaluation of Local Level Planning Process” makes a list of earlier inter-regional and national efforts at local level planning:

TABLE II.5. EVOLUTION OF LOCAL PLANNING PROCESS

1942	Sir.M.Vishweswariah: Four tier planning structure for Mysore
1950	First Five Year Plan Referred to planning process at national, state, district and community level
1967	The administrative reforms commission: District planning authority
	Fourth Five Year Plan: Need for regional, district and block level plans
1969	Planning Commission Guidelines: Preparation of District Plans
1977	Ashok Mehta Committee: District planning should be done by Zilla Parishath with help of technically qualified people
1978	The working group on Block level planning (Dantwala Chairman) Block as the appropriate Unit to identify the poor and their needs.

⁵⁴ Prabhat Patnaik, 2001, op.cit.

⁵⁵ M.K Prasad et.al.1998, op.cit.

⁵⁶ A.R. Velayudhan Pillai, (1999) op.cit.

1984	The working group on District level planning set up by planning commission (C.H.Hanumantha Rao, Chairperson) approved to development planning, District planning mechanism to be done by PRIs.
1985	Committees to Renew the extending administrative arrangements for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes by PC/DRD (GVR Rao, Chairman): Districts prefer unit for planning and development and the elected Zilla Parishad principal body for management.

Such a listing of inter-regional and national level efforts at local level planning indicated the context in which the GOK has undertaken to organise the PPC and in which the CapDecK's activities are to be situated in. The context is very clearly built upon newer emphasis given within the National level planning. In other words, there was no doubt that the PPC was meant to strengthen National level centralized planning, possibly the most important economic measure accepted by independent India. Implicit in that kind of acceptance was the preference shown for a planed economy over a completely market-oriented economy. This was important in the period in which the PPC was evolved, because in 1991 through his Budget Speech in Parliament, the then Finance Minister Dr.Manmohan Singh and the Government of Mr.P.V.Narasimha Rao, had shown inclination towards liberalizing the Indian economy. Even in spite of that, there was no indication that planning efforts were to be diluted outright. One can perhaps summarize the ensuiant development not merely as open conflict between the liberalized economy and decentralisation-since both were introduced by the same government in a matter of two years. As Prabhat Patnaik has put it, "an agent of economic decentralisation commands these days a broad spectrum of adherents, from Marxists to the world Bank"⁵⁷; as two poles of a highly differing "ideological" views on the subject. These two points of view were both conscious of requirements to recognize central planning as necessary for India and also rectify some of its weakness and strengthen it. The way in which the problem was faced by differing groups also differed widely. Even in spite of it, both the differing view points agreed on decentralisation as an effective measure.

Extending the possibilities inherent in differing systems of decentralisation one could reach obviously conflicting results. Nevertheless the PPC did not seem to have taken such a reading of the situation as the basic documents on which the GOK collaborated with SDC for PPC-training/capacity development do show. Instead the PPC was centered in the context of the earlier steps undertaken by National Planning Commission [NPC] and Government of India [GOI]. It claimed that it is aiming at strengthening the planning process further and even more as a pro-people process. Given the context of decentralisation as it was undertaken by the LDF government in 1996, it was clear that its aim was not "rolling back the state" but extending the reach of the government through local self-government. Naturally the documents on CapDecK's activities accepted this dictum⁵⁸. The acceptance of the centralized planning process

⁵⁷ 2001, op.cit.

⁵⁸ Quoting from Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) a later Planning Commission Document pointed out that the Local Govt. "must be an instrument of expression of the local people's will regard to local development" G.D.Patel, Role and Function of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Planning and Development, Development Administrative Unit, Committee on Plan Project, Planning Commission, May 1966

itself as the guiding principle of PPC, the SDC and CapDecK were also accepting the objectives of the broader “politics of planning” which was accepted at the National level. To extend this assumption further will not be possible, on the basis of available data.

The second of the basic documents upon which the CapDecK collaboration was made,⁵⁹ gives a detailed write up of the steps that were to be undertaken by CapDecK through the KILA. To quote extensively from that,

The dominant campaign mode has to be gradually transferred into a more institutionalized training set-up under KILA leadership. Campaign success and experiences made should become part of the new strategy in order to avoid bureaucratization-as is the case in many departmental routine training exercises. The hypothetical demand for skill development and knowledge transfer is large. The potential number of trainees and topics warrant a well structured approach and available resources have to be utilized optimally. Prioritisation will be essential in terms of topics as well as in terms of ‘clients’. It is obvious that any future training programme is directly related to the system of decentralised administration that is in the process of being developed. Over 200 government orders have been issued so far in this context, hinting at a rather complex system that is presently emerging. Discussions...have shown a common acknowledgement for a need of an analysis of administrative rules and procedures and an eventual strengthening exercise. Such an attempt at simplifying the emerging system is expected to contribute to a reduction of overall training needs...to develop a realistic strategy and programme that is need based and optimizes the use of existing resources...to assist in an assessment and streamlining exercise for the decentralised administrative system and procedures.

What is claimed here is that the CapDecK should do a fairly good job of developing a realistic strategy and programme that was need based and which optimizes the use of existing resources. The evidence contrary to this expectation arose (when the Cap Deck activities were enquired into) only in the form of statements that indicated that in certain portion it could have been better.

There are evidences to this effect emerging from the internal documentation of CapDecK itself. Writing in September 1999, the Planning Mission Report pointed out that over the last two years the PPC “training programmes, content, topics and faculty were decided upon and organised as and when need did arise.

⁵⁹ A.R.Velayudhan Pillai et.al.(1999) op.cit.

Coordination of programmes and synchronisation of curricula, etc., between different organizations that organised training venues took place only to a limited extent". Therefore, as soon as transition took place from PPCC to KILA, the training programmes undertook efforts to locate

1. skill and knowledge deficits in different fields by different groups and actors involved
2. priorities in training needs for different groups and actors involved
3. reasons for the low attendance at certain training exercises
4. impact of different training programmes
5. usefulness of training materials and handbooks
6. suitability of different training methodologies
7. background of main groups of trainees (educational. Professional etc.)
8. availability of decentralised infrastructure at District level.

These deficits and its reasons were located and rectifying measures were undertaken. The measure through which this problem was handled was through Field Studies. The Field Studies Component provided the required systematic and comprehensive information on almost all pertinent issues to serve as a crucial input into the development and finalisation of the capacity building strategy and programme. Field studies were organised to obtain a 'view from below'; that is from the perspective of participants in exposure, orientation and training exercises. The quantitative component of the field studies consisted of gathering factual background information from the KILA's own census investigation of local bodies (which preceded the advent of CapDecK).⁶⁰ The qualitative studies were initiated by a preliminary participatory appraisal to gather more in-depth information on opinions, views, processes and trends in regard to training needs, impact of past training and training methodology utilized so far. The series of such exercises culminated in Robert Chambers, the doyen of PRA Scholars himself visiting the KILA and lecturing on PRA techniques⁶¹.

The CapDecK in the year following the end of its first phase undertook an "analysis of on-going processes and trends in 'rural life' and of local self-government leading to an identification and prioritisation of the most relevant issues (problems as well as potentials or entry points) to be addressed in order to presume Panchayat empowerment"⁶². This analysis as well as other feedbacks convinced the CapDecK that ⁴²

Despite Kerala's prominence and pre-eminence in the decentralisation discourse, a substantial deficit remains. Knowledge of elected members and officials of the Gram Panchayat [GP] and the transferred line department is still limited and insufficient numbers have received sufficient training of the required quality (with the exception of the three pilot districts' training on the new accounting system). Gram

⁶⁰ Ibid.P-26

⁶¹ on 25.09.2001

⁶² Annual Report, 1 April 2003 to March 2004, CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, March, 2004

⁴² Andreas Tarnutzer, Interim Review of CapDecK Phase2, April/May,2005, (For internal use only)

Sabhas [GS] continue to have a strong beneficiary orientation while the middle class remains absent and regards the GS with a certain cynicism. ..., panchayat members and officials largely set the agenda and officials of transferred institutions do not participate etc.

The above-mentioned assessment indicates that the CapDecK was self-critical. Nevertheless, it should be said that defects in training were indicative of much that could still be done. As far as the other deficits located are concerned, they were larger problems with regard to the decentralisation and participatory planning as they were implemented in the state of Kerala. Since CapDecK was one of the leading official agencies involved in training and capacity development it cannot escape the responsibility of whatever shortcomings that occurred in terms of the wider decentralisation process. But it does not mean that these defects could be placed at the door of CapDecK alone.

To summarise the main argument in this chapter, it was found that at the earliest stage of CapDecK involvement in the PPC, it was welcomed by other official agencies such as the LSGD, KSPB, and PPCC as a leading partner in Capacity Development. The collaboration conceived Capacity Development as essentially training for different stages and for different types of personnel involved in the PPC. Though Kerala had the advantage of institutes like the SIRD, IMG and the KILA (an exclusive institution meant for training LG personnel) the capacity inherent in these institutions required thorough revamping. Therefore CapDecK had to first help in the revamping of these institutions particularly that of KILA which was to be the nodal agency. Simultaneously it had also to set up a well thought out training programme well suited to the inherent characteristics of the participatory, local level planning.

The CapDecK initially had to work along with the PPCC and eventually help the KILA take over the primary responsibility of training. This they seem to have done well, since there is no major criticism from any quarters against the transition. They certainly were helped in this process by the approach taken by the GOK, LSGD, KSPB, and the PPCC along with of the SDC-CapDecK's own role. Though not so highly visible (but largely submerged under the label of the KILA) it was appreciated generally when recognised by stake-holders, participants and observers of the programme. Besides playing their crucial role in training they also helped streamline administrative procedures so that the demand for training will be made less and less. The CapDecK's success in both helping the "institutionalization"- since we are taking the transition from PPCC to KILA/CapDecK as indicative of institutionalization-and in streamlining the administrative procedures, could be largely be attributed to the well drafted collaboration documents. The same factors also helped in the success of CapDecK-KILA in maintaining the flexibility of training programmes even after its institutionalization. In the latter factor their ability to respond to the requirements of decentralised format of training also played a part.

CHAPTER III

CHANGES IN REGIME, SOCIETY AND ECONOMY OF KERALA

This documentation does not strictly follow the chronological division that was given at the beginning. The chronological division is to be taken as an indication only. The first phase is supposed to have extended from 1999 to 2003. The Programme continued in its second phase from 2003 to 2006; and is still continuing on extension. The year 2003 by itself does not denote any fundamental change in the context in which the CapDecK had to operate. The programme continued to execute the activities envisaged and initiated earlier in the second phase too. Therefore the division made between pre-2003 and post 2003 does not indicate any contextual change. Nevertheless, there were major changes happening outside in the wider milieu in which CapDecK had to operate. The most visible change was a change in the elected political regime at the state level. Let us first look at this aspect of the change.

In 2001, elections were held for Kerala State Legislature. In this elections the UDF under the leadership of the Indian National Congress [INC] was elected to power. This electoral front was in legislative opposition between 1996-2001 when the PPC was initiated by the LDF. The UDF had differing viewpoints with regard to the conceptualisation and implementation of the PPC. They even prepared a Report critical of the PPC by an enquiry Committee. Nevertheless, the UDF and particularly the INC was also for democratic decentralisation. It was an INC government headed by P.V.Narasimha Rao which had piloted the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in the Indian Parliament and under which the PPC could be organised by the LDF in Kerala. INC activists claimed that their inspiration came from the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's abortive attempts at getting the 64th Constitutional Amendment approved by the Parliament. They were highly critical of the role played by the CPI (M) in voting out this amendment along with other opposition groups. INC could also claim direct relationship with the Gandhian slogan of Village Swaraj raised during the Movement for National freedom. In addition Sri. A.K Antony, leader of opposition between 2000- 2005 and Chief Minister in the early phase of the new UDF government was a member of the state-level steering committee of the PPC.

The electoral victory of the Congress and the UDF in 2001, could very well be interpreted as substantiating their criticism of the PPC. In the preceding elections to Local Government also the UDF had made some gains which further strengthened such a claim. They had expressed doubts about the sincerity of purpose of the CPI (M) government in introducing the PPC. They felt that it could lead to deliberate hijacking of public funds for cadre-building by the CPI (M). Similarly there were doubts expressed with regard to selection of volunteers and expert-committee members who were to play a major role in the PPC. Since the UDF was so critical of the PPC, they coming to power at the state level was viewed with apprehension by individuals and groups supporting the Campaign.

James Manor in an article 2002⁶³ had warned against the tendency of historians not to “examine changes within the state, within society, and in relations between the two in India”. In this study, he came to the following tentative conclusions.

For many politicians, the political awakening-citizen’s increased political awareness, skills and assertiveness-suggests that initiatives to draw people into participatory process are more likely to succeed and to yield positive development outcomes. Since those outcomes will confirm more closely to popular preferences once citizens acquire influence over decision-making, the quality of responsiveness will be enhanced. These leaders see that political openings to citizens and organised interests will encourage greater political competitions and (yes) conflict, but that they will also be in a position to moderate it, since it will largely be committed within a framework of democratic institutions... most politicians recognise that their party organizations are inadequate and that they need alternative instruments to cultivate support. Many of them have begun to see that open, responsive processes can provide more help here than illicit fund-raising. If elected Panchayats and ‘user committees’ in specific sectors are given real powers, then ordinary people will warm to the governments that create them because such bodies give them a greater voice. And panchayats enable parties to draw local activists into official posts at low levels, thereby renewing and extending the downward penetration of party organizations. These and other participatory processes usually cost no more than the more centralized approaches. But they inspire greater popular satisfaction, a welcome change to governments facing tight fiscal constraints.

Manor, therefore, finds a rationale for decentralisation within the political interests of ruling regimes in different states. Based upon Kerala’s recent political evolution one could reach the same rational for decentralization on different analytical premises. It was pointed out that⁶⁴

In Patrick Heller’s (2001) cross-country comparison, the PT-led popular budgeting in Port Alegre is found to be similar to the CPI-M-led PPC in Kerala; while the ANC-led decentralisation in South Africa seems to have diverged in the direction of a neo-liberal orthodox model. The CPI-M and PT, according to Heller, seem to have taken advantage of their social movement character to build participatory planning campaigns’. Meanwhile the ANC, which was always ‘more of a political organization than a social moment’ working under the fear of the danger of the democratic transition being sabotaged by apartheid hardliners, seems to have fallen into the trap of centralizing tendencies in the absence of ‘viable

⁶³ James Manor, “Changing Society in India”, South Asia, New Series, Vol.XXV, No.2, August 2002, p.231-256

⁶⁴ P.K Michael Tharakan “Historical Handles in the Course of the People’s Planning Campaign in Kerala, India”, in John Harris, Kristian Stokke, and Olle Tornquist (eds), politicizing Democracy . The New Local Politics of Democratisation Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2004, P, 107-126.

opposition'. One wonders, however whether this comparison is entirely correct. If the ANC is now operating from a hegemonic position, the undivided CPI and sub-sequently the CPI-M also has been in hegemonic position in Kerala politics. Like the ANC fearing apartheid sabotage, the CPI-M is constantly challenged by the UDF-an equally powerful rival coalition. In such circumstances, it is well within the realm of possibility that the CPI-M (like the ANC) may have wished to renegotiate its relationship with social movements and 'autonomous' associations. To begin with, the undivided CPI and subsequently the CPI-M emerged from a movement-like background. Similarly the ANC was also born from the most broad-based mass democratic movement since the Congress Party in India. The CPI-M assumed a hegemonic position by incorporating 'autonomous' association into its ideological framework. Just like the ANC, the CPI-M would therefore have found it difficult to mobilize the people further under any movement like slogans... Referring to the earlier period of struggle for land reform in Kerala, Isaac and Franke conclude that 'a historic opportunity was missed for effectively linking decentralisation and agrarian reforms'. There is much truth in this statement. The previously missed opportunity may then have led the CPI-M and the LDF to hold on to their rank and file and to attempt to expand their political influence by adopting various participatory programmes, which were then countered by the UDF. Meanwhile the PT in Brazil, which was an alliance of progressive elements of different organizations, continued instead to maintain relations with grass-roots social movements and developed decentralised internal structures. No such development can be traced in the case of the CPI-M, except for its particular relationship with the KSSP.

What this analysis indicates is that, even the LDF-initiated programme of people's planning ran the constant danger of lowering itself into a government-programme alone. It seems to have happened so under pressures emanating from deeper historical factors. There was a major debate within leftist circles whether it had also degenerated into "diverging in the direction of a neo-liberal orthodox model". Even if the latter danger is rejected one cannot deny the possibility that the PPC under the direction of LDF government itself could have come down to the level of a top-to-bottom governmental programme; even though its purpose were drastically different. In addition the LDF government itself had planned to institutionalise the PPC. Institutionalisation does not mean change in direction of the campaign. Nevertheless, the spirit, fervour and speed of the campaign objectives have to be necessarily toned down when its implementing agency shifts from a campaign- organization to an institution. It could have had its effect upon the training and capacity-development activities too; since there also was the transfer of responsibilities from the PPCC to KILA.

In fact it was under such circumstances that the regime-shift happened in Kerala in 2001. The INC and the UDF-adopted policy towards decentralisation itself was viewed with apprehension by at least some of the activists

and supporters of the PPC. One could term the interest of UDF leaders in decentralisation as something akin to the type of analysis made by James Manor ⁶⁵. Further, there was the fear that contrary to the LDF's or CPI-M's pronounced preference for decentralisation being an integral part of the broader democratisation process and not merely as a means for development⁶⁶ the Congress might have opted for the "rolling-back-the-government" type of decentralisation. The fear was not wholly without foundations. While the CPI-M held on to the viewpoint that Panchayat Raj Institutions [PRIs] are integral part of the administrative system of the country; and that development responsibilities and other responsibilities should not be separated⁶⁷ there were reasons to doubt whether the UDF leadership held on to the such a view.

Basically, there was the question of Centre-State relations, on which CPI-M and the INC had differing perspectives. While the CPI-M thought that any process of decentralisation should have devolution of power from the Centre to the States and from state further down, the INC had not taken any steps towards that in any legislation that they undertook so far, including the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. There was also on-going debate about the three-tiered system recommended by the Constitutional Amendments as against the two-tier system that Kerala had preferred. More importantly the position taken by the INC-led UDF against the Zilla Councils which were formed under the 1987 LDF government in February 1990; was one of the major points of criticism against them. The Kerala Panchayat Raj Bill 1967 was formulated as far back as 1967 by the second E.M.S Ministry in which the Muslim League held the Panchayat portfolio. Since the Ministry fell soon, no legislation could be completed on its basis. It had evolved the concept of District Administration with planning responsibilities. In 1971 the Kerala District Administration Bill was presented to the state Legislature which was passed only in 1979. there was no concrete move to implement it till 1987 when the LDF government under the Chief Ministership of E.K. Nayanar appointed a committee under V Ramachandran to revise some of its provisions. Under its recommendation in February 1990, elections were held to District Councils. In 1991 state assembly elections, one of the usual regime-changes in Kerala politics happened and the UDF came to power. By Executive order, the powers given to District Council were one by one withdrawn from them by the UDF government. District Collectors were withdrawn from the position of Secretaries of District Council and there was pronounced reluctance in transferring the plan funds envisaged to be handed over to District Councils under the 8th Plan by the KSPB. Eventually under the provisions of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments the whole District Councils experiment got officially eliminated.

The allegation that the UDF had blocked the path of implementing a comprehensive legislation for decentralisation-which contrary to the 73rd and 74th Amendments would have resulted in an integrated district administration of rural and urban areas; could not be easily shaken off. On the other hand, when the UDF undertook to change the law, there was no real forceful protest against it organised by the LDF,

⁶⁵ James Manor, 2002, op.cit.

⁶⁶ Thomas Isaac and E.M.Sridharan, "Adhikaravikendrikanam Vikasanam, E.M.S nte Kazehapadil," E.M.Sum Adhikara Vikendrikanam, Chintha pub., Trivandrum, 2002, p.88.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

either. It is pointed out that when E.M.S.Namboodiripad tried to initiate a debate over the impending District Council Act, through an article in Desabhimani the CPI(M) run newspaper, the other participants (of both political persuasions) could not even comprehend the implication of his arguments⁶⁸.

Even when the state-level conformity legislations were passed as the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act (KPRA) 1994 and Kerala Municipalities Act (KMA) 1994, under the UDF, there were several provisions in them which attracted severe opposition. There were protest actions which were led mainly by academicians and some activists well known to have been in support of decentralization. It never acquired the proportion of a state-wide popular prolist.⁶⁹ It was after taking into account the points raised by such protest actions and the viewpoints of the protestors that the Sen Committee appointed by the LDF government recommended comprehensive changes in the state legislation which were incorporated when the Acts were amended by the LDF government in 1999.

With these factors in the background, it was not surprising that many supporters feared a complete turnaround just as in the type of what happened in the context of the Zilla Council Act, when the UDF came to power. Nevertheless the detailed discussions we have had with purposively selected 40 close observers and participants of the PPC do not indicate such a drastic change of direction. The findings of these conversations can be summarised in the words of Jos C Raphel, Director, Centre for Community Organization and Development, Thrissur and a close and sympathetic observer of the PPC. He said that Kerala Development Programme [KDP] to which the PPC was turned into by the UDF government, did not result in anything as drastically negative as what happened with the Zilla Council Act in 1991.⁷⁰ It does not mean that no change occurred as a result of the regime-change. The UDF government, contrary to the earlier LDF government, allotted funds to each Member of the Legislative Assembly [MLA] which could be spent locally and as parallel to LG's Plan Funds. It also permitted the District Rural Development Agency [DRDA] another parallel institution to the LG which the LDF government had decided to merge with the District Panchayat to continue. UDF also allowed some urban area development agencies to work over and above LGs. Similarly the UDF reallocated Tribal sub-plan [TSP] funds to line departments away from the Local Government. There was also an apparent shrinking of the operating space of the Ombudsman, which's membership was reduced to one from the earlier seven.

Apart from shrinking the operating space of Ombudsman, it was alleged that under the UDF, the objective of the Ombudsman was not understood well and put into effect as they were planned by the PPC. The objective of the state level Ombudsman was to help the LGs to correct itself. The Ombudsman was not meant

⁶⁸ Ibid. p.99.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.97.

⁷⁰ Discussion on 23.10.2007

merely to bring out corruption and to mete out punishment. Referring to the Sen Committee it was pointed out that ⁷¹

the ombudsman system goes beyond the judicial process, as after redressal it can choose to monitor the behaviour of the local authority concerned and it can point out systematic deficiencies and suggest improvements.

It was also pointed out that according to the Sen Committee, the relations between the government and LGs were to be monitored by independent bodies like the Appellate Tribunal which were to oversee regulatory power, Ombudsman for administrative aspects, and an independent Audit Commission to do the audit. ⁷² The changes brought about by UDF government in important bodies like the Ombudsman were pointed out as indicative of their failure to understand such objectives.

None of these aforementioned points did result in a total or near total turnaround in the PPC during the UDF regime. Just as the UDF chose to call the programme by a new name, Kerala Development Programme [KDP] they also seem to have made some changes in areas where they felt unsure of the PPC's designs. This is the picture that emerges out of the extensive discussions with the purposively selected 40 Key Informants. The discussion points which were used commonly are given below:

1. The position that the discussant held in PPC.
2. Activities conducted under the discussant's leadership/initiative, during the PPC.
3. The discussant's perception of the present situation of the People's/popular Committees organised under the auspices of PPC.
4. The discussant's opinion about the present status of Social Auditing, Citizens Charter of Rights, and Ombudsman.
5. Is the discussant a participant of the second stage of the PPC.
6. Are the activities of the Second stage progressing at the same space and direction as in the first stage; If not why?
7. What is the discussant's opinion about people's participation in the second stage.
8. If people's participation has increased or decreased what is the opinion of the discussant of the reason for that.
9. What is the discussant's opinion about interference or involvement of political parties in the PPC, and are they different between the first and second stage.
10. In what areas were the first stage relatively more successful and in what areas they were relatively failures.
11. What are the discussant's suggestions for making the second stage of the PPC, better.

Out of the answers that were received two points emerge very clearly. Grand majority of them felt that the first stage of the PPC, under LDF direction itself had ended up in a slow-down spiral. They found that the Grama Sabha [GS] were able to attract mainly the potential beneficiaries alone. Though the Citizen's charter was

⁷¹ V Nanda Mohan and G.Jayaraj (eds), Kerala Vikasanam Janapakshethu Ninnulla Porattam (A Selection of Speeches made by Dr T M Thomas Isaac, MLA in the Kerala Legislative Assembly during 2001-2006), Public Policy Study Group, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006, p.135.

⁷² Ibid.

published in many panchayats, practically no action was taken to implement it. Social audit also did not progress much. T.M.Thomas Isaac one of the principle initiators of the PPC has himself admitted it⁷³. Even before the UDF government and the changes initiated by them were anywhere in the scene Social Audit was viewed with certain amount of distaste by the officials attached to LGs.

The aforementioned points do indicate that the LDF being replaced by the UDF did not result in any basic alteration in the PPC as one would have feared on the basis of the UDF's role in terminating the earlier District Councils. Whatever changes that the UDF brought about did not at all affect training or capacity development. Why and under what specific conditions the regime-change did not result in any such drastic changes require further explanation. One can only speculate. The UDF's tenure in government had two cabinets in power, one led by A.K.Antony and the other by Oommen Chandy. The transfer of power was to the cabinet of A.K.Antony. He seems to have played a lenient role towards the whole decentralisation programme including the PPC. He had his own criticism of the PPC. He raised a very valid question when starvation deaths were reported from Southern Kerala; that how can starvation lead to death with even the neighbours not knowing it in a Panchayat which claim to have Ayalkootam or Neighbourhood Group [NHG]. In spite of such specific criticisms he was willing to tolerate the continuation of PPC's programmes particularly the budgetary allotment of around 35% of the plan funds to LGs. This he did in the light of several criticisms from among his own party leaders against the PPC. He proved that the INC's support for decentralisation was not without basis. This certainly would have been a major factor in sustaining the decentralisation programme in Kerala, in spite of regime-change. This point is supported by more than one senior bureaucrat who was interviewed.

Another speculative point is with regard to the role played by Muslim League an important constituent of the UDF and the party which held the LSG Ministry under both the Cabinets of the UDF. The Muslim League had proven to be a major supporter of decentralisation even when they were in political opposition at the state level. In Malappuram district where they could prove their popular support in LG elections they were in the forefront of decentralisation efforts including the PPC. One should remember that in the 1967 E.M.S Ministry also the Muslim League held the Panchayat Ministry and according to EMS Namboodiripad himself the main support for the Panchayat Raj Bill that he received came from the then Panchayat Minister. The reasons for the Muslim League support for the decentralisation process is worth specific study. Speculatively one can point out that the Muslim League being a Regional Party-its main political support comes from Kerala-it might have seen the different opportunities inherent in decentralisation for eventual political consolidation and gains. One study after analysing 37 democracies around the world from 1945 to 2002 has argued that political decentralisation increases the strength of regional parties in national legislations. The explanation goes to the extend to consider the origins of regional parties as the product of regionally-based social cleavages. One should take

⁷³ Public Letter from Dr T M Thomas Isaac, Finance Minister, Government of Kerala to those activists who were involved in PPC on 7.10.07.

seriously the favourable role played particularly by the second Muslim League Minister of the UDF's cabinet, Kutty Ahmed Kutty, who even earlier had won recognition as a sincere supporter of the decentralisation programme, during the days of PPC.

The aforementioned points should lead one to believe that the change from LDF to UDF was of no major consequence to the decentralisation programme in Kerala. Nearly thirty out of forty Key Informants with whom we have had detailed discussions pointed out as a major setback in UDF government, that there was increased bureaucratisation of the programme. To summarise their opinions, one might cite the opinion of G.Kailas, a leading activist of the KSSP and a Faculty Member of the District Planning Committee in Kottayam.⁷⁴ In his opinion even local level committees like the Block Level Expert Committee [BLEC] within which non-official participation was very high earlier, participation got weakened thoroughly. In other words, it seem that under the guise of institutionalization, higher level of bureaucratization was brought about. This had very wide and adverse impact upon the process of democratic decentralisation process. There arose a situation under the UDF government, wherein instructions emanating from "official" sources at the district level were to be implemented mechanically by Block and Panchayat bodies. The earlier content of participatory decision making that gave the PPC its original momentum (which might have underwent a slow down even before the advent of the UDF government) had been considerably lost. This seems to have promoted several earlier activists to abandon completely or to lessening their involvement in the decentralised planning programme; according to our Key Informants. As a result the decentralisation programme got further weakened in terms of its participatory character.

Another set-back was with regard to the Social Audit [SA] mechanism. SA was introduced to facilitate direct assessment by the citizens of services and development projects under the auspices of LGs. The people of the locality particularly the beneficiaries can do this assessment on the basis of official records presented at the GS or on information gathered through resorting to the Right to Information or on the basis of their own experience. The SA could be undertaken by the social audit team appointed by the GS or by the initiative of a group of local people.⁷⁵ The Social Audit was meant to be a provision through which social pressure can be applied from below to curb corruption at its very inception. It was also meant to guide LG activities further in the light of the fact revealed in the Social Audit. In other words it was meant to be an additional practice of social accounting to the Departmental Audit. In the case of LG in Kerala their accounts are audited by the Local Fund Audit [LFA]. In addition there were Accountant General's Audit and Special Wing Audit. In the rules attached to the KPRA 1994 it was made clear that in every three months there should be proper assessment of any mistakes that could have crept into the implementation of developmental and social welfare responsibilities vested with the LG's. Similarly such a review was enjoined upon carrying out of financial and regulatory powers.⁷⁶ To see that such occasional review is carried out, an additional audit provision called Performance

⁷⁴ Discussion held on 22.10.2007.

⁷⁵ John M Itty (ed), Vikendrikaranum-Padaparichayam (Decentralisation Glossary of Relevant Terms), KILA, Thrissur, 2003. p.67.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.64.

Audit [PA] was also provided for. While the departmental audit was to track down financial irregularities, the performance audit was to make sure that public money is spent according to the budget provisions and within given policy prescriptions. As its name itself indicates the Performance Audit was to go beyond normal audit and assess how each rupee of the public money that is spent on public causes has resulted in terms of its result or performance.

The set back that in the early stage of the PPC itself in making effective use of SA is already mentioned; along with the admission made by one of its principal initiators, T.M.Thomas Isaac. Later, there were serious attempts made by some persons in the State bureaucracy to revive and revitalise the SA; under the Modernisation of Government Programme [MGP]. They issued a detailed document called A Social Auditing Methodology for Kerala under the Modernizing Government Programme,⁷⁷ besides holding more than one discussion on the subject. The effect of these efforts also seems to have been minimal. On the other hand, with regard to PA, there were provisions made for special training at KILA. The author of this report had checked with 7 persons associated with accounting as well as who were directly associated with PPC training. All seven of them felt that the training given in PA was not upto the mark. The reason that five of them gave was that the training was given by audit officers who were more comfortable with the usual fault-finding approach rather than with the objectives of the development oriented PA. My observations also tend to make me agree with their general statement. If the PA was implemented in its effective sense it should have resulted in innovative and imaginative expenditure pattern in most panchayats. This could not be detected in general in the performance of Grama Panchayats.

These two types of setback, one in increasing bureaucratization; and what happened to SA and PA had great impact on the credibility of the decentralisation programme. The first; the case of bureaucratization, raised serious doubts about the efficacy of decentralisation itself. It reminded of the very penetrative observation of EMS Namboodiripad that while the Constitution of India gave democracy at the national and state level it gave bureaucracy at the local level. There was widespread fear that the decentralisation process in Kerala will end up once again where it started; at bureaucratic decision-making at local level. It also reminded one of the earlier plight of Community Development Programme [CDP]. The CDP⁷⁸ was supposed to operate through the people's local organizations. It was felt that it would strengthen the foundation of democracy on which our constitution stands, by making villager (emphasis added) understand the significance of development and his own position in the process of development... It was, however found that CD Programme was implemented not through democratic institutions, but through ad hoc bodies like Vikas Mandals. The team for the study of Community Project and National Extension Service observed,

⁷⁷ GOK, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005.

⁷⁸ VR Gaikwad and DS Parmar, Rural Development Administration Under Democratic Decentralization, Expenditure Pattern and Organizational Realities, Wiley Eastern Limited, New Delhi, etc. 1980, pp.3-4.

“often we have been told that the Village Panchayat (emphasis added) for various reasons not suitable for such work. This is a confession not merely of our lack of faith in democracy but our failure to make the programme a genuine development programme”

There is the added danger of what Aurelian Fernandes⁷⁹ called “aggrandiser government”. Big government at the state level with aggrandizer instincts will push “the self-governance participatory model of the panchayat to the periphery, both at the level of discourse and praxis”. According to Fernandez,

In discussions on devolution or non-devolution of powers to the sub state level in most states, one perceives the emergence of a form which necessitates the coinage aggrandizer government. A government which may not belong to any particular political party but is defined by a political culture which is characterised by metaphysical megalomania, especially of the leadership; which believes in institution bashing for its own political ends in general and in particular, it shows reticence in acknowledging the criticality of PRIs, in rural transformation due to its own power compulsions... Aggrandiser government comprising the political class and support by state level bureaucracy, is patrimonial and patronizing and believes that it alone knows best, what is good for the state. It puts no faith in the capacities of rural communities to better understand and solve their problems, that confront or concern them. It perceives itself as indispensable and right and powers of local communities as dispensable. Even in Kerala, from the mid-1950s to the 1990s, successive governments did not reconcile the need to plan sectoral targets and or ensuring vertical coherence with the need for horizontal coordination and integration at local levels...the easier path of retaining resources at the top and fixing targets and making delivery through vertical system of organization was followed.

The author goes on to add that “fortunately, this changed post-1994 with withdrawal of the aggrandiser government there and emergence of a transformative leadership”. Even then, with reappearance of another government i.e. UDF government which was prone to increasing bureaucratisation, it could still be feared that aggrandisement instincts were once again appearing on the scene. Added to this, one should also read the finding of M.S.John and Jos Chathakulam that the PPC even under the LDF had acquired characteristics of a “command economy”. It has also been pointed out that⁸⁰

bureaucratic organization, patterned on the model of the collectorate emphasizing procedural rigidities and impersonality, is unsuited to carry out development programmes and changes calling for a responsive attitude to popular needs and aspirations

⁷⁹ Aurelian Fernandes, “Aggrandiser Government and Local Government”, *EPW*, July,5, Vol. XXXVIII, No.27, 2003, pp.2873-79.

⁸⁰ S.N.Mishra, Panchayat Raj, Bureaucracy and Rural Development, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, n.d., p.12.

The setbacks in SA and PA opened up possibilities of irregularity- both financial and administrative - if not outright corruption. Observers of decentralisation have warned also of possibilities of elite capture of local government⁸¹. In addition to the danger of elite capture there could be cases of outright increase in corruption. Rene Vernon et.al⁸² in an empirical study on the Employment Assurance Scheme in rural West Bengal have pointed out that “the strength of upward accountability (especially to political parties) is as crucial as downward accountability for communities. When these vertical accountabilities are weak, horizontal accountability structures between local civil society and officials can mutate into networks of corruption in which “community” actors become accomplices or primary agents”. Another empirical study (this time of Kerala and Karnataka) by V.Vijayalakshmi⁸³, has found that

Representatives (men or women) do not operate as individual entities in political situations. While women might score higher on integrity tests, exhibit community orientation in experimental situations and in hypothetical situations, show a lower “tendency towards corrupt behaviour”, these traits need not necessarily be reproduced in political and economic situations where multiple factors are involved.

These empirical findings indicate that Kerala’s decentralisation was also not beyond “corruption as defined as the abuse of public office for private benefit”⁸⁴. The “largeness” of accounts found to be non-verifiable in Audit reports during the PPC had already become a point of contention. If in addition to that, important measures meant to eradicate corruption at its inception (SA and PA) could not be revived during the UDF period, it certainly became a matter of deep concern. Sten Widmalm⁸⁵ had argued that “at the aggregate level social capital plays an important role for resisting corruption”. James Manor⁸⁶ in a study of small-time political fixers found rather that the need for fixers’ services could be curbed by “the creation and maintenance of a strong penetrative party organisation that is responsive to felt needs at lower levels”. He also found that only the CPI-M (in West Bengal and Kerala) and the DMK (in Tamil Nadu) appear capable of this. He also pointed out that “well-funded and substantially empowered panchayati raj institutions” can “perform the services in which fixers

⁸¹ Pranab Bardhan and Dilip Mookherjee, “Capture and Governance at Local and National Levels,” American Economic Review, Vol.90, No.2, May 2000, pp.135-139, “Decentralisation and Accountability in Infrastructure Delivery in Developing Countries,” The Economic Journal, January, Vol.116, Issue.508, 2006 and “Pro-poor targeting and accountability of local government in West Bengal”, Journal of Development Economics, Vol.79, No.2, April 2006, pp.303-327.

⁸² Rene’ V’ernon, Glyn Williams, Stuart Corbridge, Manoj Srivastava, “Decentralized Corruption or Corrupt Decentralization? Community Monitoring of Poverty-Alleviation Schemes in Eastern India”, World Development, Vol.34, Issues 11, November 2006.

⁸³ V.Vijayalakshmi, “Rent-Seeking and Gender in Local Governance,” Journal of Development Studies, Vol.44, No.9, October 2008, pp.1262-1288.

⁸⁴ Sten Widmalm, “Explaining Corruption at the Village and Individual Level in India, Findings from a study of the Panchayati Raj Reforms”, Asian Survey, Vol.XLV, No.5, September – October, 2005, pp.756-776.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ James Manor, “Small-time Political Fixers in India’s States”, Asian Survey, Vol. XL, No.5, September – October, 2000, pp.816-835.

specialize more systematically than the informal networks of middlemen can". Therefore the type of regime and functioning of PRIs are indeed major concerns for special attention in the context of corruption.

John Harriss⁸⁷ in his study on political regimes across Indian States has presented a typology in which Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal belong to "states in which lower castes/classes are more strongly represented in political regimes (and) where the Congress lost its dominance at an early stage". He has also pointed out that

In...the three states there are strong indications of higher levels of political mobilization and participation by 'lower' castes/classes than is true elsewhere. Papers in Wood [1984] substantiate this case for Kerala and West Bengal, where it is due to the activities of a left-of-centre party, the CPI (M) which has combined coherent leadership, pragmatism towards the propertied classes and ideological and organizational commitment which has successfully challenged local landed power holders. In both states there has been more significant effort made at assets redistribution through agrarian reforms than elsewhere. Kerala...has a more developed civil society and more political competition...

Such findings raises hopes that the developed civil society in Kerala will carry the PPC forward. This was the hope that the imitators of PPC also had. Yet in a study conducted in 2004⁸⁸ it has already been argued that this hope does not seem to have realised completely. In other words, in spite of the socialist roots of decentralisation having been grounded in planning and non-free enterprise ideology, in the specific context of Kerala it was not completely free of degenerating into a "command performance". On the other hand, the UDF's limited enthusiasm, can better be explained in the words of James Manor⁸⁹.

If elected Panchayat and 'user committees' in specific sectors are given powers, then ordinary people will warm to the governments that create them because such bodies give them a greater voice. And panchayats enable parties to draw local activists into official posts at low levels, thereby remaining and extending the downward penetration of party organisations

It should be remembered that Atul Kohli⁹⁰ in his comparative study has concluded "that differences between the political regimes of different states do make a significant difference, specifically to the adoption of pro-poor policies in the Indian context". Though there were counter-arguments against it, John Harriss's study

⁸⁷ John Harriss, "Comparing Political Regimes across Indian States, A Preliminary Essay", EPW Vol.34, No.48, 27 November, 1999, pp.3367-3377.

⁸⁸ P.K Michael Tharakan, "Historical Handles in the course of the People's Planning Campaign in Kerala, India", in John Harris, Kristian Stokke and Olle Tornquist (eds), Politicizing Democracy. The New Local Politics of Democratisation, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, 107-121.

⁸⁹ Op.cit.

⁹⁰ Atul Kohli, The State and Poverty in India, CUP, Cambridge, 1987, referred to in John Harriss, (1999) op.cit.

referred earlier also does such a comparative analysis and has brought out the relatively higher commitment that the CPI (M) led government had in terms of pro-poor policies in general and in decentralisation in particular. We also agree with the obvious differences in “regimes policies”; because, we have seen, at least in important sectors, UDF government and its policies having had led to serious setbacks. This conclusion is supplemented by a more recent study. Darly Jose Kjosavik and Nadarajaa Shanmugaratnam have explained this in the context of a study of⁹¹ the experiences in Decentralisation under successive political regimes in Kerala and in reference to its impact on the lives of adivasi (indigenous) communities.

The Left Coalition had been implementing a home-grown programme of decentralised planning since 1996 until it lost power to the Congress Party-led coalition in 2001. “In the context of the accelerated structural adjustment and liberalisation of the national government, the new government amended its predecessor’s programme with a reduced role for the state bureaucratic and political actors in mobilizing people for planning and implementing projects at the local level”.

The new programme has so far not been successful in enabling marginalized groups such as indigenous communities to resist exclusion and emerge out of their state of deprivation. The study also shows that the withdrawal of the state from the social and economic sectors has adversely affected these groups. There are counter-points raised in this context by another study by Patrick Heller, K.N.Harilal and Shubham Chaudhuri⁹². Heller is a close observer of the Kerala scene and particularly of decentralisation. Harilal in an important policy-maker of the CPI-M led government as he is a member of the current KSPB. Both of them are well-known to be sympathizers of the PPC. In fact in this study the authorship is shared by the two “extremes” in decentralisation as a policy-maker of the CPI-M led government has teamed up with Chaudhuri who was with the World Bank at the time of the study. In their study they have reiterated their findings thus

The...[LDF] was voted out of power in 2001...and the subsequent period under a... [UDF] Government led by the Congress Party ushered in a very different stage of reforms, marked in particular by the challenges of institutionalization and strengthening local governance. Though our data do not cover this period, it must be noted that in contrast to earlier efforts at decentralisation in Kerala the reforms introduced with the Campaign have largely been sustained. In Kerala’s highly partisan political environment, the campaign has been the subject of fierce political debate; but fiscal devolution has been preserved and no key legislative provision have been altered. A 2006 report by the State Planning Board found that “Panchayati Raj had been mainstreamed in Kerala... and that there is widespread

⁹¹ Darly Jose Kjosavik and Nadarajaa Shanmugaratnam, “Between Decentralized Planning and Neo-liberalism; Challenges for the Survival of the Indigenous People of Kerala, India”, Social Policy & Administration, Vol.40, No.6, December 2006, p.632.

⁹² Patrick Heller, KN Harilal and Shubham Chaudhuri, “Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India”, World Development, Vol.35, No.4, 2007, 626-648.

consensus across the political spectrum in Kerala that Panchayati Raj must be strengthened and supported in Kerala.

What these studies do indicate is that there was no fundamental alteration in the course of decentralisation irrespective of a regime-shift. If one was expecting a change like what could happen if the whole government-system had shifted, or even a major policy-alteration like what happened in the case of District Administration Act in Kerala in 1991, (which was caused by regime-change) it never happened. More than that the CapDecK's activities along with that of KILA, could remain fairly intact since the training and capacity development sector of the PPC was not at all touched by the UDF government. This factor comes out very clearly in interviews with personnel of the CapDecK. The CapDecK's position as an "official partner" in the concerned areas, continued unaltered. The same personnel (they could have been "persuaded" to be removed by the new regime) continued in positions of decision making. There is a major question as to what prompted such a situation? Was it due to the ability of the CapDecK along with others supporting their activities who remained in the new regime or is it due to "magnanimity" of the new leaders? Basing on insights gathered by interviews of main stake-holders, (which can be biased and coloured by recall-lapses etc) a conclusion can be that it was due to the both. The CapDecK "behaved" in such a manner as not to disturb or provoke the new leaders of the UDF government and renegotiated their position with the new regime rather brilliantly. On the other hand, as already mentioned, the leaders of the new regime and particularly the Chief Minister was particularly tolerant towards the decentralisation programme in spite of their obvious differences of opinion with regard to its details. The CapDecK was extremely fortunate in one respect. The top bureaucratic leadership concerned with the decentralisation programme remained unchanged. Among them there was the added presence of V.Ramachandran, Vice-Chairman of the KSPB a veteran in policy making in the area of decentralization. Among important bureaucrats there were S.M. Vijayanand, Secretary KSPB and Secretary to Govt-Planning and N. Kamalkutty, Secretary to Govt. LSGD. Their presence in the higher echelons of decision-making offered the programme certain amount of continuity. They could be trusted to maintain the spirit of the original programme because of their commitment to the idea of decentralisation in general, if not to the PPC and its details in particular. The CapDecK must have benefited by their "patronage". On the other hand these important policy-makers obviously found the CapDecK team as basically efficient, sincere and committed to the programme under their trust. For them, therefore retaining the CapDecK team and its programmes of activities was found to be a much required necessity.

In spite of such favourable circumstances, it cannot be denied that the decentralisation programme suffered due to the inevitable slowing down involved in the process of institutionalization as compared to the earlier campaign-mode. It must have suffered in terms of general public belief that the UDF government cannot be as committed to decentralisation as the LDF; because some of the bitter critics of the PPC came from the UDF. In addition our own analysis particularly brings out setbacks in two sectors. One was with regard to increasing bureaucratization raising uncomfortable reminders of earlier "failures" of decentralisation efforts due to similar tendencies. The other was due to the failure to kick-start SA and PA, which led to leaving the underbelly

of the PPC open. We should also take into account the setback in terms of “enabling marginalized groups to resist exclusion” pointed out by Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam [2006]. This setback was also related to bureaucratism which was already pointed out. These set-backs were not minor at all; and the CapDeck-KILA team had to traverse the adverse effect of such set-backs.

It is in such a situation that there erupted an internal debate within the LDF circles and particularly with in the CPI-M regarding the PPC. upto 2001 one was under general impression that in spite of difference in points of emphasis the Left political opinion or at least CPI-M was behind the campaign. On the positive side there was the presence of leading CPI-M ideologue and literally the “patriarch” of Kerala politics, EMS Namboodiripad, a well-known ally of decentralisation and who has given his support to PPC. As long as he was around, one could not expect such a debate being unleashed. He himself has pointed out the lack of support that his governments’ efforts at decentralisation received from within the party and had openly criticized the failures of the LDF government to speed up the implementation of certain recommendations of the Sen Committee⁹³. In other words, his presence was a balancing act within the LDF and sometimes across the political divide, in directing the PPC towards its self-pronounced goals. But soon after the change in government, EMS passed away. In his absence the floodgates were opened for differing perspectives within the LDF and particularly the CPI-M to clash. And clash they did.

Starting from around the end of 2000, a very bitter debate which gradually seems to have assumed proportion of different factions within CPI-M erupted⁹⁴. Tornquist and Tharakan⁹⁵ had indicated years ago that there were two definite and differing trends of thought towards development within the broad left in Kerala. Yet the latest “factions” were very different from the tendencies observed earlier. One of the “factions” took a position of a frontal attack on PPC. This was quite surprising because upto then it was commonly believed that the political Left-in spite of some differences of opinion with regards to details-were solidly behind the PPC. The attack could not easily be dismissed as another indication of the various strategies played by anti-decentralization forces. The critics also claimed to follow EMS Namboodiripad’s sayings on decentralisation and argued that the PPC had far deviated from them. Such a criticism became much more strident after the demise of EMS. But even before his demise the critical comments had already been raised. The main reason behind it was the failure of the CPI-M, and the LDF to win the kind of majorities that they could earlier, in LG elections. It became much stronger with the practical ‘rout’ of

⁹³ The author was present on the occasion when EMS Namboodiripad made such statement at the meeting of the steering committee of PPC, of which he was the Chairman and the author a member.

⁹⁴ This ended up in 2007 in the Central Committee of the CPI [M] issuing additional directives for the Party Conferences in Kerala State. There was admission enough by the highest levels of the Party that factionalism has become a major threat to be faced by the Party in Kerala. See, Communist Party of India [Marxists] Central Committee, “Kerala Samsthantha Sannelanangkayi Kooduthal Marga Nirdeshangal”, 7, August, 2007 along with Sannelanangal Nadathunnathu Sambadhicha Marganireshabgal, Communist Party of India [Marxists], State Committee Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 16.08.2007.

⁹⁵ Olle Tornquist, The Next Last? Democratisation and Attempt to Renew the Radical Political Development Project? The case of Kerala, (With P.K Michael Tharakan) Uppsala: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies NIAS Report Series, N: 24.

CPI-M and the LDF in State Assembly elections in 2001. Many people raised the question why a programme which was meant among other things make the Party and Front popular ended up in defeat for them both. Though Isaac and Heller have pointed out that the reasons for the defeat were other than the PPC⁹⁶, the defeat's depth in electoral terms was so high that a common observer was likely to link up the defeat and the PPC. Unlike Brazil and Porto Allegre's popular budgeting (with which Heller had compared the PPC) the Kerala campaign did not bring home any dividends to the political formation which gave shape to it. Therefore a number of Left sympathizers themselves could have genuinely felt suspicious of the actual political or electoral role played by the PPC which was upheld as a major project under the LDF government.

The second reason was more fundamental. We have already mentioned how Marxists and Leftists in general were suspicious of Market Socialism and decentralised planning. Many who adopted such a line of thinking were prepared to accept the Kerala model of participatory planning only on the basis of some definite outcomes which were expected from it. When they were not immediately forthcoming, the PPC became suspect and became target of criticism.

Another point that caused suspicion of decentralisation among the political left was that the GOI had accepted the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments within two years of accepting liberalisation of the economy. The support given to decentralisation by the World Bank and IMF was a matter of great concern to them. Those among them who supported decentralization (including the West Bengal government which from 1977 onwards was implementing a decentralised administration) had found it tough to explain that "their" decentralisation was differed from what was recommended by World Bank and IMF. Neil Webster ⁹⁷ has looked at the question whether the West Bengal decentralisation is any way different from, not the 1992-93 GOI Reforms but the earlier set of programmes put forward by Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957. he finds that the West Bengal experiment "is not radically different". According to him

...it is the ideological platform from which the programme was launched in 1977 and which though modified, continues to provide the momentum behind the programme in West Bengal today. The Panchayati Raj programme in West Bengal is central element in the CPI-M's strategy to entrench its political position within the state of West Bengal so that, even if, it should lose state power, it will retain both its organization and the mass support of substantial sections of the rural population who have benefited from the programme, enabling it to organise and respond in the subsequent period. The CPI-M does not deny having these political aims in its implementation of Panchayati Raj, but at the same time it argues that these aims are also serving the

⁹⁶ In the midst of the rout TM Thomas Isaac well known as the leading initiator of the PPC won comfortably from a constituency where five years earlier the leader of the CPI [M] legislature party and state Secretary and Polit Bureau member himself got defeated.

⁹⁷ Neil Webster, Panchayati Raj and the Decentralisation of Development Planning in West Bengal (A Case Study), KP Bagchi & Company, Calcutta and New Delhi, 1992, p.109-110.

interests of the poor and the weak and thereby the majority of the rural population

The CPI-M in Kerala as a political party could have had such objectives too. But the failure in Assembly elections coupled with the relative failure in LG elections resulted in these objectives having had a major setback. This became another point of contention in the debate on the PPC, Amal Mandal has said that ⁹⁸

In West Bengal, Left Front, with relatively predominant rural base, has rejuvenated PRIs and through them agrarian reforms in favour of weaker sections for the ostensible purpose of consolidating power base which has paid rich dividends in election politics for so long

In a highly polarized political situation as in Kerala the electoral gains of any programme is very important. The failure in spearheading such gains must have turned out to be a major problem of the PPC among the rank and file and even leaders of the CPI-M. It was also pointed out that ⁹⁹

The fundamental change-chains initiated by the Narasimha Rao Government, as reflected most vividly in the two Central budgets prepared by Manmohan Singh in 1990-91 and 1991-92, are, however, likely to result in dismantling of the “planning process” itself with larger and larger responsibilities for investment and employment being handed over to the Private Sector dominated by the organised Corporate Sector operating in terms of market-determined prices and stock-market-determined profits.

Such fears led to fairly widespread suspicion among Left-leaning people that the PPC was a Trojan horse planted purposely to sabotage the LDF and CPI-M even under as some of them claimed, part of an international strategy of imperialist penetration spear headed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States Government. Colin Leys¹⁰⁰ has explained that “the political dimension of the shift of power from voters to Capital that results from trans-border capital mobility” has only resulted “in that it is not just that governments can no longer ‘manage’ their national economies”; but also in the situation that “to survive in office they must increasingly ‘manage’ national politics in such a way as to adopt them to the pressures of transnational market forces”. Taking such possibilities into consideration, it was not surprising that the critics of PPC assumed a position that the Campaign was a sure path of sell-out to the globalizing and liberalizing policies of the GOI with the support of World Bank and IMF. To illustrate the “rightist” influences inherent in the PPC, the active presence of NGOs including and perhaps particularly of the KSSP in the campaign was particularly targeted. There were even earlier Leftist arguments that the NGOs are supporters of the WB/IMF agenda. Another specific line of criticism was that the NGOs represent depoliticizing influences in public life which was to be considered an anti-leftist tendency.

⁹⁸ Amal Mandal, “Self-Government Nomenclature for Panchayats ,” The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol.XLV, No.2, April 1999, p.225-230.

⁹⁹ P.C Mathur, “The Functional Agenda for Panchayati Raj in the Emergent Context of Market-determined Planning Regime in India”, ISDA Journal, Vol.II, No.2, April-June 1992, pp.77-80.

¹⁰⁰ Colin Leys, Market-driven Politics, Neoliberal Democracy and the Public Interest, Verso, London and New York, 2001, 1-2.

The NGOs were particularly targeted along with foreign funding. As a result civil society participation and support to the PPC got into serious trouble. Even well meaning civil society participants and even committed political cadres found it difficult to meaningfully involve in various projects of decentralisation and participatory development. M.P.Parameswaran the leading 'ideologue' of the KSSP was dismissed from the CPI-M for allegedly propogating a non-Marxist idea of a "fourth world"¹⁰¹. In the ensuing melee, several NGOs and many independent supporters of the PPC had to strike a defensive posture. It also resulted in a virtual "break" in the earlier existing relationship between the KSSP and CPI-M. These developments could have had an adverse impact upon the decentralization campaign since a significant number of civil society activists in support of the campaign came from CPI-M leaning KSSP members. Their "relative withdrawal " resulted in the weakening of the much needed synergy that could have developed out of partnership between popular action, official initiatives and leadership of elected representatives at the LSG level.

The debate eventually descended to the level of a proxy war in a power-struggle within the CPI-M in the context of the Party's State Conference where elections to the Party's State Committee and Secretariat was to take place. In the internal party elections the group which was openly critical of the PPC could not win. It did not result in a total silencing of the faction-fight but it subsided a lot particularly with regard to the specific targeting of the PPC. The power-struggle is still continuing but fought on other matters and issues as well. In the meantime in 2006, in the next State Assembly elections, the LDF came back to power with the leading supporters of the PPC being elected to important political positions. But in between, entangled within personal and group ambitions and factionalism this "debate" resulted in loss of vital momentum and loss of the most-important credibility of the PPC. If one go through old issues of Malayalam newspapers, and journals (and also recording of TV Channels) one may wonder how the idea of decentralisation itself survived leave alone PPC and the CapDecK. The shift of position of a group within the CPI-M and other Leftist organizations were the much greater "threat" to the whole idea of decentralisation than the much talked about regime-shift. The Left critics could easily provide enough ammunition to the critics of PPC within the UDF. Even with the circumstances being so much in favour of dismantling the whole PPC, as Hindu¹⁰² has acknowledged the role of the Chief Minister and Minister of LSG Mr. Kutty Ahmed Kutty of the UDF government who "were careful about keeping the decentralisation bandwagon on track had played their bit in ensuring that the initiatives launched in 1996 did not fail". Hindu explains further the role played by bureaucrats of the LSG department, who had been working throughout the previous decade in plugging "the loopholes in the system".

If in the political front the decentralisation had to face such acute problems, there were equally important problems arising from the pattern of economic growth experienced by the state. As it has been pointed out¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ To understand MP Parameswaran's thoughts one may read his two publications, one in English and the other in Malayalam. 1] Democracy By the People, The Exclusive Kerala Experience, Alternatives Asia, Bhopal, 2008, and 2] Keralam: Bhranthalayamo Vazhikattiyo?, DC Books, Kottayam, 2007.

¹⁰² Hindu, "Pact with Centre a boost to decentralization process in Kerala", Friday, September 22, 2006.

¹⁰³ PK Michael Tharakan, When the Kerala Model of development is Historicised: A Chronological Perspective", WP No.19, CSES, Kochi, July 2008.

Till very recently some observers of Kerala's development experience used to feel that the state was sacrificing economic growth for social development. Such skepticism is no more valid... According to one observer the poor has become a minority; constituting around 15 percent of Kerala's population, or even closer to 10 than 15,... Achin Chakraborty, on the basis of data which was presented in the Human Development Report, Kerala 2005... has pointed out the strong possibility that "economic growth [was] seemingly helped by early achievements on the human development front". Whatever barriers that were preventing speedy economic growth seem to be broken and the path to comprehensive and long-term development of the region seem to be apparently open...

Obviously this growth has already helped and is likely to help sections of even middle and lower middle classes to gain higher quality of life. In the meantime as also pointed out by the same author,

...aggregate data tends to hide pockets of deprivation. Relative concentration of poverty indicators among Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Traditional marine fisher folk and regions where relatively more of them live, have been noted. While Kerala has managed to reduce the level of poverty among its ST population from 37 per cent to 24 percent between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 the rural poverty among STs is more than two-and-a-half times that of Kerala as a whole. These groups have not been able to convert the gains made; for instance in literacy, into economic opportunities like other groups could. The inability of SC and ST population to diversify their occupations leads to poverty, in terms of consumption, assets holding and housing. In terms of the state level gender development index, Kerala is well ahead of other states. If we look beyond the state level gender development index, on several specific aspects, dimensions of well being (on the basis of gender performance) are found questionable ... In other words, there are several groups of people in Kerala who may not have benefited so much from the region's general development experience.

At least one empirical study found¹⁰⁴ "that the higher growth of 1990s is based on remittance induced literacy-led growth" and that "there is no convincing evidence for the argument that policy reforms accelerated the productive sector of the regional economy". Further, the employment elasticity of growth in Kerala between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 was 0.013 which was the lowest among 15 major states in India.¹⁰⁵ The low employment elasticity of growth is likely to have continued. What it indicates is a growing social (and also economic) cleavage among the people of Kerala. As it has already been pointed out¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Pushpangadan K and Parameswaran M, "Service-led Growth of Kerala: Its Nature and Implications", in Sunil Mani, Anjini Kochar and Arun M Kumar (eds) Kerala's Economy, Crouching Tiger, Sacred Cows, D.C.Books, Kottayam, 2006, p.81.

¹⁰⁵ KK George and PK Michael Tharakan, "Sustainable Human Development in Kerala: Some Issues", Advances in Arts and Ideas, Vol.I, 2005.

¹⁰⁶ PK Michael Tharakan, 2008, op.cit.

In the enfolding scenario, the public institutions that provide services are themselves differently organised. The accesses to those which are considered “better” among them are growingly determined by higher assets and relative income (in the growing commercialized and liberalized economy) ... the poor in Kerala society are likely to be trapped into a situation of lesser assets and relative incomes even in the future.

This is the context in which it was expected that further development initiatives will be driven by social movement and civil society organizations in the wake of the PPC¹⁰⁷. It did not seem to have been able to realize the expectations. Neither did it succeed in fully integrating marginalized sections and their demands. It was also found not to be as mobilizing a programme as the land reforms or unification of Kerala, the two earlier peak points of the socio-political movements in earlier historical epochs of the development of modern Kerala. As Ramkumar has pointed out ¹⁰⁸

Kerala’s society is marked by the presence of democratic political regimes that work towards the welfare of the poor. It is also marked by the presence of an alert citizenry; mass organizations; mainly from the Left that represent people of different backgrounds consistently strive to project institutions of public welfare from degenerating.

But it is proposed here that the development experience of Kerala itself resulted in weakening the material basis of the public action as suggested by Ramkumar. In its two momentous phases; one of commercialization of agriculture and the other of politicization of people’s demands which crystallized in land reforms; it provided many options for social and economic advancement of the middle level castes and communities and/or middle classes alone. The argument is not that there is a one-to-one relationship between the material basis and the tradition of public action which was maintained on its basis. On the other hand, there is a growing physical and social separation between even the lower middle class/castes and the poor groups. It need not necessarily result in the total unmaking of the democratic and progressive tradition of Kerala’s public sphere, but preserving those traditions is likely to face great pressure. This is very much reflected in the setbacks; including non-participation by the middle classes in Grama Sabha, that the PPC had to face.

The PPC had to survive these major setbacks. On the one hand there was a slowing down emanating from institutionalization itself during the time of the LDF government. On the other, there was at least two or three sectoral setbacks which can be attributed to UDF government’s period and its policies. In addition there was the loss of enthusiasm and credibility due to having been caught in a bitter faction-fight within the political left. To add to all of these it had to face the implications of the growing socio-economic cleavages in Kerala society. This was the context in which in 2003, the CapDeck had to revise its strategy and adopt a new line of activities.

¹⁰⁷ PK Michael Tharakan, 2004, op.cit.

¹⁰⁸ R. Ramkumar, “Public Action, Agrarian Change and the Standard of Living in Kerala”, Journal of Agrarian Change, Vol.6, No.3, July 2006, 306-345, 339.

CHAPTER IV

NEW APPROACH

In the completely changed and apparently adverse circumstances the CapDecK had to struggle for a while to find its way ahead. In 2003, the initial phase of the CapDecK was to end. Among other things, since the CapDecK had succeeded in maintaining the “privileged” position of an apparent “official” agency it got an extension from the SDC and was accepted in the same manner as it was accepted earlier, by the GOK. Seeing the possibilities inherent in the end of phase I and the beginning of phase II, the CapDecK underwent a through change in strategy, tactics and approach. It may not be able to fully document the change step by step. Years have passed since 2003 and some of the intense and controversial experiences through which the CapDecK had to go through in the period of the transformation. Formally and informally we had several round of discussions with CapDecK personnel regarding the fundamental changes that were brought about in their programme. None of these discussions led me to any firm conclusion. The aim was to find out whether the comprehensive changes were deliberately planned out *exe-ante*. Obviously it was not done either deliberately or comprehensively. Major portions of the changes were thought out and hence possibly deliberately planned. Though parts of the transformation was not planned; on the whole the new strategy seemed to have worked well. The credit for that should go to the CapDecK personnel, and all those who worked along with them at the crucial period including the SDC officials and consultants, bureaucrats of GOK, elected representatives and staff of LG and volunteers from various social organizations, particularly activists of NGOs who choose to work as Partner Organizations [POs] with the CapDecK.

Dr.Joy Elamon, attributed the shift in strategy to an informal discussion in Delhi that some who were involved in implementing the CapDecK programme had as early as 2001. Since it was decided that the first phase was to be extended and since the government in Kerala had undergone a regime change; the discussion turned into the need and appropriateness of a shift in strategy. The general consensus of that discussion was that in addition to the general involvement in supporting training and revision of administrative rules and procedures at the state level, the CapDecK should also concentrate on working in a select number of Village Panchayats intensively to upgrade them. The latter strategy can very well be named the strategy of Panchayat Empowerment. The administrative decision was to channel all independent SDC-assisted projects into one programme. Subsequently the name of the CapDecK itself changed from Project to Programme. These provided ample flexibility, space and maneuverability to the CapDecK to implement a changed strategy. What followed was a two-prong approach. First it was decided to continue with the earlier State-wide support for training. In the earlier plan had itself decentralised forms of training at three regional centres and even at more local level. The second line of the new phase was to work more intensively with particular panchayat committees in select village panchayats.

After a period of discussions and deliberations in 2004, the CapDecK came out with a document called Operational Strategy and Guidelines, Panchayat Empowerment.¹⁰⁹ On page 10 of this document the then draft of the Panchayat Empowerment Programme [PEP] was presented diagrammatically.

The PEP set about to strengthen the process of democratic decentralisation. To achieve this objective the CapDecK wanted to support local initiatives. It aimed at developing Panchayats for empowerment, alleviating poverty and fighting discrimination. It also aimed at gender mainstreaming in the decentralisation process. CapDecK wanted to focus on activities in panchayats as to develop replicable and adaptable models. A platform for advocacy and exchange of ideas and experiences was to be created, and proper documentation and dissemination were to be facilitated. The idea in a nutshell was to “provide need based and demand driven expertise in experimenting new initiatives”, which is to be facilitated by “establishing PRI link with NGOs/CBOs/voluntary Agencies/SHGs-CDS/Library/Youth Clubs/Panchayat Development Society/extension and research institutions/Universities/Private Sector/Non Resident Keralites”.¹¹⁰ The document also stressed that “the livelihood issues and issues related to human rights, social justice, environment, quality of service delivery etc. at the local level are most often not taken up by the PRIs or are not sufficiently addressed”. The document expressed the opinion that “the scope of decentralisation has been narrowly conceived as to development particularly economic development”. The PEP instead suggested that through strengthening of partnership and participation of community based organization [CBOs], mainstreaming gender and undertaking gender status studies, and by “addressing the problems of the weaker sections”, the increased relevance and ownership of Gram Sabha as central body of self-governance” must be established. To implement the PEP, the CapDecK suggested three different approaches. They were (1) Panchayats and civil society organizations (CSO) be brought together, (2) untapped potential of Panchayat Association be effectively used and (3) involvement of Kudumbashree units (SHGI) be brought in through their federation known as Community Development Societies (CDS).

By reformulating their strategy like this, the CapDecK was transforming itself into a decisive shift into a much wider space of operations; through at a more intensive local level. In a way the CapDecK was still following their earlier publically stated objectives and strategies without much alteration. One could only read some subtle variations in terms of emphasis. Nevertheless, the objectives and approach of the PEP had altered the CapDecK into an entirely new format.

The CapDecK was still insisting that they will “provide need based and demand driven expertise in experimenting new initiatives”, thereby swearing themselves into an empirically determined plan of action. The inadequacy of an entirely empirically determined intervention in decentralisation was pointed out by other observers of the general scene. There were ways through which the PEP could

¹⁰⁹ CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p.4

have overcome such restrictions. First of all, the expertise that they were to provide was for experimenting in new initiatives. One could argue that these new initiatives, could lead a local community under the leadership of the Panchayat into wider and far more deep-rooted issues and positions. Secondly the decision to work through or with Panchayat Associations meant that their action plan could be heavily influenced by a group of persons holding clear-cut and strong ideological positions with regard to self-governance. The latter will happen due to the fact that the Panchayat Association is formed by representatives elected by people on clearly political labels. Similarly the partnership or participation of CBOs, could also extend wider and deeper the perspectives under which the PEP was to be implemented.

The PEP document also pointed out that “the livelihoods issues and the issues related to human rights, social justice, environment, quality of service delivery etc. at the local level are not often taken up or are not sufficiently addressed”. This statement very clearly was in favour of making the PRI concerned with “new” political or social movement issues of rights, justice and environment. Conceptually, politically conscious movements of Trade Unions had been categorized into political trade unions or Leninist trade unions. On the other hand social-movement oriented trade unions were grouped as Gramscian movements. There was also a strong perception that decentralisation in Kerala was being reduced to pure economic development alone. The Gramscian framework was suggested as a means to get out of such restrictiveness. Implied in this framework was a suggestion for a more open “political” stance to be taken by all who were involved in decentralisation. What is to be remembered is that this call came at a period when there was much more distancing between political movements/parties, elected LGs, and voluntary activists involved in decentralisation. Therefore the possible synergies that could have been mobilized if all these groups had worked together; was on the wane. It should be also recalled that organizations like the Centre for Rural Management (CRM) Kottayam closely working with the CapDecK in the PEP, found in their own self-reflection that what was required in the area of decentralisation in Kerala was greater and not lesser politicisation. Further, 38 out of 40 of our key informants with whom we had detailed discussions pointed out that 1] local level political parties are not so much in the picture as far as PRI functioning was concerned and 2] still no political party had mentioned PRIs and decentralisation in their manifesto and that this is a clear indication of lack of political interest. It could be safely interpreted that the CapDecK without openly calling for “partisan positions” in favour of factional/party politics was making its position in favour of “genuine” politicisation of local issues; through the PEP document. Without any deliberate reasoning on their part, the CapDecK was coincidentally taking a position which conformed to the idea that decentralisation should facilitate people’s struggles at the local level.

One possible contentious issue that remained in the PEP document was that it talked only in the language of empowerment and not that of emancipation. Through grand majority of decentralisation literature talks only of empowerment; among the “radical” activists there has been the argument that empowerment is a deliberate strategy that will block the path to real emancipation. The debate is still continuing. One may make a studied guess as to why the CapDecK

decided to restrict itself to the terminology of empowerment. Though they managed to maintain their privileged position viz-a-viz the GOK in spite of a Regime-shift, it will not have been advisable to upset the balance by starting to talk in the radical terminology of emancipation. It is not as if the choice of terminology was purely tactical. Our discussion with the CapDecK personnel and with the POs convinced us that they strongly believed in a path to emancipation through empowerment. There are other evidences which will be presented eventually, that confirms the view that the CapDecK followed an approach which was expected to reach emancipation purely through empowerment.

The PEP document also spoke about its operational strategy [OS]. It was claimed that “it was through a long process that present OS took shape”. It was claimed that lessons were drawn from the experiences during PPC, best practices, experiences of individuals and the result of two studies conducted by the PCU” (of the CapDecK). The PEP was to be executed through projects which were to be put up by POs, or NGOs with complete concurrence and approval of local Panchayats. The fact that the POs have to work within the over-all guidance, supervision and leadership of Panchayats were stressed not only in one document but in almost all CapDecK documents. Parallel structures of local planning, administration and development were rejected by CapDecK. These parallel structures included even official bodies and programmes¹¹¹. CapDecK upheld the role of elected local government and disapproved of any other decision-making bodies at the local level, including customary, pre-panchayat institutions. The POs were the conduit through which assistance-including finance-reached the Panchayat from the SDC under the supervision of the JPC-controlled CapDecK. The specific operational Guidelines [OG] to be followed in selection of Panchayats/organizations/projects were given in the PEP document.¹¹² It very clearly illustrate an elaborate two-way process of mutual as well as wide consultation. Practically no decision was to be taken without through a dialogical process.

This raises an important question with regard to the concept of capacity development [CD] followed by the CapDecK. We have to discuss specifically whether the PEP has altered the earlier developed concept and if it did, then in what way. Originally, as indicated by the early documents that we have referred to in great detail, the CapDecK conceived their role in CD almost purely as facilitating training. This is not to deny that there was an alternate way of looking at CD; primarily developed by Robert Chambers and others who advocated participatory development.

The participatory development approach to Capacity Development [CD] is visualized in the context of unequal power relationship, and the emerging crisis of governance. Capacity means at the basic level, the ability to perform tasks. Added to it is the ability to influence decisions and to get desired results. On the other hand there is a managerial approach which perceives CD as a process of creating enabling conditions. Capacity cannot be built up by an individual institution or community unless the need for change is felt from within. The

¹¹¹ CSES, CRM and SDC-CapDecK, Emerging Issues in Panchayati Raj in Kerala, A study Report, 2003, p.47.

¹¹² op.cit, p.11-15

strategies for development of capacity CD need to be evolved according to the felt needs of the learners' institution or community rather than based on any universal design. Efficiency which is generally considered as a hallmark of CD is a function of internal managerial ability. Nevertheless CD should be able to strengthen local leadership and people's participation. It should also result in socially responsible institutions and a transparent and accountable state.

A similar strategy is suggested by OXFAM, the UK and Ireland based development-funding agency for capacity-building.¹¹³ They have argued that ¹¹⁴

Women and men become empowered by their own efforts, not by what others do for them. When development and relief programmes are not firmly based on people's own efforts to work for change, their impact may be disempowering... Effective participation means people's right to shape decisions which affect their lives. Women and men are disempowered when they cannot exercise this right....

It goes on to say that¹¹⁵

Today's thinking about 'capacity building' is influenced by earlier ideas concerning participation, empowerment, civil society and social movements... and these in turn have been significantly shaped by the work of Paulo Freire, and the impact of Liberation Theology ... [in this perspective] learner and their own experience and knowledge are of crucial importance,... that awareness, learning, self-esteem, and the capacity for political action are mutually reinforcing... that poor and marginalized people have the right and the capacity to organise and challenge authority in order to create a society that is not based on exploitation and oppression... it is dangerous to base capacity-building strategies on the assumption that the state and 'civil society' are monolithic and dichotomously opposed, with the former seen as intrinsically 'bad' or oppressive and the latter as inherently 'good' or consensual. 'Civil society' may be an area for conflict and the abuse of power, while the state may provide a regulatory framework for mediating conflict and penalizing abuse... More bluntly, in the words of Susan George, 'who will make sure the good guys win, in so far as business interests, gun-lovers and the Ku Klux Klan also figure in civil society.... An active and an enabling state is seen by many as a precondition for a vibrant civil society...Capacity building is often used simply to mean enabling institutions be more effective in implementing development projects. Institutions are thus the instrument by which certain goals can be reached ... [on the other hand] the focus is likely to be on improving the links between the structure, process and activities of the organizations that is receiving support and the quality and quantity of its outputs and outcomes. Criteria for effectiveness will therefore concentrate on impact [s] at the local level ... If capacity building is a process of adaptation to change 'and of internal reaffirmation, that gives an organization both the resource to deal with challenges as they arise and the will to continue acting' it is questionable whether this is truly compatible with a conventional

¹¹³ Deborah Eade, Capacity-Building, An Approach to People-centered Development, Oxfam [UK and India] Oxford, 1997 [Rep]2005, p.1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p.4

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p.10-11, 20,34,35.

project-funding approach. The focus is likely to be on assisting the counterpart to become a more self-reliant and autonomus actor within a long-term alliance or 'critical accompaniment' with the donor and other relevant agencies. Criteria for effectiveness will therefore be developed jointly and will evolve over time. They will concentrate on the quality of the alliance and on mutual learning as well as on the appropriateness of specific inputs.

If we use the criteria expressed by CD through participatory Development argument as well as Oxfam argument of participatory capacity building; and compare them with the new approach adopted by the CapDecK in PEP document, it is reasonable to assume that the CapDecK had transformed itself into a participatory and social action oriented organization. This is reflected very much in the expansion of the scope of issues that they were willing to strive for. The basic aims stated in the PEP itself was more oriented towards social movement type of activities. In addition the organizations with which it was prepared to act with, also indicated a sea-change in favour of a more open approach. Important was also the approach suggested for project-funding. It was based upon a dialogical process. It left enough room for the POs to put up their own area of specialization to work in if their projects are approved by the concerned Panchayats. By upgrading the decision-making process of Panchayat Committees, and subjugating everything else, including their own role to it, the CapDecK assumed a clearly pro-local government approach to CD. Secondly by promoting POs or NGO partnerships CapDecK succeeded in opening up the process from its narrow officially restrained style. By offering to work with state-level associations like the CDS and Panchayat Associations and not anymore fighting shy of being placed in favour of rights, justice and environment, it confirmed its position in a "politicizing" environment. Finally, by adopting an innovative approach to project-funding they created a new tradition in the generally one-sided aid giving approach that many other 'funders' had adopted.

In fact at the international level, several Funding Agencies [FA] had assumed such an innovative style much before the CapDecK adopted it in Kerala. But the point is that working out such a style of partnership based decision making and concomitant style of funding in Kerala was an entirely new experience. In this context one should remember that the CapDecK was not a mere FA working with NGOs but was still an 'official partner' of GOK and was now working with LGs. It is in that sphere that such a style was found to be novel. Even in spite of taking up such a changed approach in CD activities the CapDecK did not sever its relationship with the earlier training tasks with and through the KILA. Since it has been described in Ch.II to some extent it may not be repeated here. On the other hand the various activities undertaken by the CapDecK through the PEP are to be described here.

What was presented so far with regard to the PEP was to describe what the CapDecK was aiming to do under the PEP. One has to now illustrate how far they succeeded in doing what they were aiming to do. To discuss the so-called 'evidence' a data collection method which was relatively dynamic had to be adopted. We depend mainly upon three FGDs we had with, elected Panchayat Representatives and officials and activists who were instrumental in implementing the PEP; in various

Panchayats and representatives of POs. There were extensive interviews with persons who held crucial positions in the processes involved at various levels. Once again we depend upon the 40 detailed discussions with the Key Informants. In addition, visiting 21 of 72 Panchayats where the PEP was implemented, we could get feedback mainly from ordinary citizens at the local level. The insights collected thus were supplemented by data from published documents. We should admit that in this case there was plenty of data available so that only one third of insights and illustrations that could have been used from them were actually used.

Before entering into a discussion of the so-called “evidence” another point has to be reasserted. Certainly there had occurred in state-level ruling dispensation a major change. Internal debates within the Left political spectrum had also occurred. There were major changes that occurred in Kerala society and economy since 1989 onwards. But the casual links between these developments and adoption of the altered approach by the CapDecK in 2003-04 is only a matter of logical speculation. It was not as if anyone and particularly the CapDecK personnel had admitted to the casual link or even suggested it. But without fail everyone of them who we interviewed or with whom we have discussed these developments used some aspect of the larger changes that occurred in Kerala polity, society and economy as a background for the shift in CapDecK strategy. The association was so strong to me as a social scientist who is supposed to be sensitive to such large scale societal changes, that I jumped at the obvious analytical conclusion and established a casual link. I am convinced that I am not far off the mark in this respect.

The PEP was implemented through activities in five [5] sectors. They were empowering panchayats as self-governing institutions, strengthening Grama Sabha, Empowering the marginalized, Gender Mainstreaming and working with CBOs. The CapDecK the Panchayats and the POs “rediscovered” the relevance of the Panchayats to Panchayat programme [P to PP] practically at the fag-end of their current involvement. They all found that it greatly helped in other activities they undertook. Therefore I intend to discuss the issues under these six sub-sectors. We will also discuss the continuation of training programmes through the KILA in another section. Therefore we will have seven [7] sub-sections.

1. Empowering Panchayats as Self-governing Institutions.

Fourteen elected representatives from different Gram Panchayats-four of them Presidents, one Block Panchayat Member, one, a CDS representative sent by a Panchayat, one Vice President-and other seven ward Members attended the FGD on 14th October 2008 held at Thiruvananthapuram. They all agreed that they felt the need to have advice and help from some quarters in pursuing their responsibilities. They all also agreed that they received assistance from the POs or NGOs as well as from the CapDecK, during their period of collaboration. Special mention was made of the Responsive Administration, A Management Development Mechanism [RAMDeM] which was introduced in Karakulam and Nellanad Gram Panchayats in Thiruvananthapuram District with the active initiative of the Grameena Patana Kendram [GPK], Karakulam one of the POs of the CapDecK. The RAMDeM project evolved through a series of activities carried out by the Karakulam Gram Panchayat with the support of the GPK. The project aimed at the reorganization of Panchayat

administration. It also envisaged management and planning system of the Panchayat so as to ensure the quality of service rendered. It also aimed to ensure sustainable economic growth. It also envisaged empowering local citizenery. The local people were to be made aware of the importance of the Grama Sabha. The Project introduced an internal and external monitoring system. A people friendly service delivery mechanism was also introduced. This included service boards, attendance board, office bearers task board indicating tasks to be undertaken by office bearers, notice board, information counter and receipt systems.

In the feedback from local citizenery, the above mentioned boards were widely appreciated as greatly useful. The Panchayat Committee Members also welcomed these innovations. The Project published a comprehensive citizen charter and organised efforts to impart knowledge to the people regarding the citizen's charter. The Panchayat Committee accepted it and encouraged the dissemination of its clauses. The Citizen's charter was accepted generally by the Panchayat Committees as a means to ensure transparency, quality of services, a tool for social auditing and also as a measure to ensure Right to Information. The most important innovation made by the Project was bringing out Local Government Orders [LGO] by Karakulam and Nellanad GPs. They were issued just as Government Orders. They were¹¹⁶

suggested by the elected representatives and were accepted by the officials of the Panchayat. This could be interpreted as initiatives to establish a functional Secretariat mechanism in the LSGIs. This was also for the first time that in India a Gram Panchayat issued an LSGO. The LSGOs issued by Karakulam and Nellanad Panchayats were intended to act as models to be adopted by other LSGs and to prompt them to act as "governments" rather than as a development agency

We discussed in some detail the RAMDeM and GPK because it has now become well known in the contemporary history of decentralisation in Kerala. Their contribution was welcomed by almost all who participated in the FGD. One member went so far as to suggest that the GPK may be the "organization with the most intimate knowledge of issues of local administration in Kerala". Another NGO which did a similar project was the Shreyas Social Service Centre [SSSC], Sultan Bathery. They partnered with the CapDecK and worked with the Chungathara, Mullankolly and Kodenchery Panchayats in Malappuram, Kozhikode and Wayanad districts. The SSSC had as its general objective to create a model GP for promoting good governance. This project also was implemented in a participatory manner. They managed to prepare a development guide for Panchayats. They also conducted a study on water scarcity which tried to find out the basic reasons behind water scarcity, climate change and crop failures. They were able to hold a meeting of different stake holders including PRI members, government officials, core team members, self help-group leaders and NGO representatives as a first step in social audit. Through these measures they could ensure

¹¹⁶ For details see, Karakulam and Nellanad Gram Panchayat /Partner Organisation Grameena Patana Kendram [supported by SDC-CapDecK], Responsive administration. A Management Development Mechanism [RAMDeM], Trivandrum, 2007

transparency in different activities to a significant extent and which made the citizens to own up these different programmes¹¹⁷.

Interestingly enough these and similar activities took place in the height of an intense debate on participation of NGOs in developmental activities and the allegation that they are conduits for foreign funding in decentralization which a section of public opinion opposed strongly. While sections of the LDF opposed the NGOs on both these grounds on the basis of their ideological interpretations, the UDF generally asked for details of funding and its sources, since they suspected corruption as well as anti-national activities. At the same time it were Panchayat Presidents and Members belonging to both UDF and LDF who worked with even foreign funded NGOs which partnered a fully foreign funded agency like the CapDecK. The partnership established between the GP and the NGO gave the NGO-activities "official" status and increased their credibility, considerably. But to establish such a partnership and sustain it in such hostile conditions were indeed a major task. One Panchayat member from Wayanad quite explicitly stated that he was deeply suspicious of such collaboration initially, particularly in the wake of the media coverage which was generally adverse to the NGOs. According to him, he had to finally accept assistance from the NGOs since there was no other agency to help in executing the different tasks that the decentralized administration demanded. Ultimately, he and his colleagues found that the contribution of the NGOs was so useful, committed, sincere, and pro-people, that he was prepared to accept their involvement in Panchayat activities without any hesitation. The GP representatives also greatly appreciated the specific role played by the immediate funding agency which was the CapDecK. Both GP representatives and PO [NGO] officials had only positive opinions to say about the non-interfering and facilitating role played by CapDecK.

We have already mentioned that Kerala society is generally considered to be highly politicized. Yet most of our Key Informants pointed out that no political party has so far included PRI functioning and its related issues in their manifestoes. One is reminded once again of the perspective statement of EMS Namboodiripad that our constitution has provided for democracy at the National and state level but had only bureaucracy for local level. Evidently this administrative arrangement was accepted so thoroughly by all concerned, including political parties. This is the understanding that prevailed in the FGD among most of GP representatives. Most of them felt they practically received no help from local party machinery. Since the PR has not yet become a part of the main political agenda of parties political perception of local issues are also not sharply focused. Even the parliamentary parties in GPs do not meet, regularly. There is very little coordination between the GP Members and local party committees. Even when the GS attendance dwindled there was no step taken by any political party to rectify the situation. According to GP representatives who attended the FGD, even very important suggestions made in The Sixth Report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission on Local Governance,

¹¹⁷ For details see, Chungathara, Mullankolly and Kodanchery Gram Panchayats, Integrated Development of Panchayats through People's Participation, A Brief Report of the Project, (Partner organization), Shreyas Social Service Centre, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Sultan Bathery, 2007

An Inspiring Journey into the Future¹¹⁸, was not discussed seriously by any political party in Kerala. In such circumstances it is not surprising that the GP members turned to NGOs for much needed technical expertise and general assistance. Only at the time of the CPI-M State Congress in 2007 did at least they among political parties of Kerala issued guidelines suggesting that the activities of elected members of LG should be monitored by the local party. Similarly the INC in its leadership meeting held in November 2008, passed a resolution calling for greater coordination between the Party structures and elected LGs.

Apart from the two examples of direct empowerment by POs [supported by the CapDecK] at the LG level one has to mention the dissemination efforts that were undertaken by the PEP. Most of the earlier literature including handbooks on different sectoral undertakings and government orders etc. were published under the auspices of the PPCC. A similar role of centralized publications of dissemination-literature needed for LGs as well as local activities continued under the joint auspices of KILA and CapDecK. In addition the CapDecK set out to support publication of dissemination-literature through a highly decentralised system. CapDecK supported such publication if it was put forward as a necessity in Projects proposed by POs. One classic example is that of the Handbook published by the Rural Agency for Social and Technology Advancement [RASTA], Kambalakkad, Wayanad¹¹⁹. This publication is based on Panchayat level experience in Wayanad district in active collaboration with the GP in strengthening the locality's planning activities. On the other hand it was also based on two earlier publications one by CapDecK and the other by KILA¹²⁰. What it meant was that publication of dissemination-literature was not any more to be centralized in all - Kerala agencies alone. The publications from central agencies were further disseminated through more local based adaptations. Similarly the Shreyas Social Service Centre [SSSC], Chalakudy, Thrissur district also brought out a general handbook on local self-governance very much in the style of earlier central publications¹²¹. Mention should also be made in this context of the women's voluntary organization called Kizhakkumkara Mahila Samajam [KIMS] bringing out in two parts a pamphlet on organizational inputs for people's welfare oriented panchayat rule under the title of Grama Jyothi¹²². What is specially noteworthy of this publication is that it concentrated mainly upon disseminating knowledge and consciousness about social audit, Right to Information and Ombudsman, three very important areas in connection with decentralisation. Another such publication that has also to be mentioned in this context, was by the Kannur Association for Integrated Rural Organisations [KAIROS] a Burnacherry [Kannur district] based NGO, of a handbook¹²³.

¹¹⁸ set up on 31 August 2005 with Sri Veerappa Moiley as Chairperson

¹¹⁹ RASTA, Adhikaram Janagalikk, Pradesika Sarkarinte Sakhikaranathinu Oru Kaipusthakam, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Wayanad, n.d.

¹²⁰ K.B.Madan Mohan, Grama Sabha, Thiruvananthapuram and Panchayat Pothu Bharanam, KILA, Thrissur

¹²¹ Thadesha Swayambharanavun Janangalum, AVARD supported by SDC-CapDecK, Chalakudy, n.d.

¹²² Grama Jyothi, Janashema Thalparamaya Panchayat Bharanathinulla Samvithanagal, (Randam Bhagam), Kizhakkumkara Mahila Samajam, supported SDC-CapDecK, Kulathur, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005.

¹²³ Susthira Vikasanam-Panchayat Rajiloode, Vikasana Pravarthakarkullu Oru Kaipusthakam, Panchayat Saktheekarana Paripadi, Aralam Grama Panchayat, KAIROS, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Burnacherry, 2005.

This handbook was an outcome of KAIROS's own involvement in PEP in Aralam Panchayat. It focused on bringing out information on Panchayat Raj system, list of development projects and basic details regarding social service institutions and agencies. It had a separate chapter on how to do a Participatory Rural Appraisal [PRA].

Somewhat in-between the State level publications and more localized publications were the publications from GPK and publications with their technical assistance by the Karakulam GP, in Trivandrum District. Though GPK was a locally based organization, it had by then acquired not only state-level but even national-level visibility, recognition and credibility. They being an action-oriented research centre which was given shape to by a GP accorded it a unique position. The kind of expertise that they were able to harness were not likely to be available for any local organization. Since it is not our current subject, we are not going into it in any great detail. It will only be said that the distinguished leadership of the GPK, including that of R.Sivarajan, its Director and former President of the Karakulam GP, (from trade union background and General Secretary of Kerala Panchayat Association) is a major factor in the particularly able performance by the GPK. The Karakulam GP, under the RAMDeM and with technical support of the GPK brought out in Six publications, Guidelines for managing various functions of the GP in 2005. They covered Agricultural Office, Educational Institutions, Veterinary Hospital, Engineering Wing, Ayurveda Hospital and Primary Health Centre. They were well brought out and were very comprehensive. Travelling around Kerala one could hear these guidelines being referred to in clearly positive terms in different GPs. They also, (once again under RAMDeM) brought out another comprehensive guideline stressing service-delivery and internal management.¹²⁴ This document was developed under the decision of Karakulam GP to increase quality of service of each staff member. They also wanted to increase quality of Panchayat level institutions as well as to better infrastructural facilities. The GPK also brought out a handbook on General Administration under another programme called the People's Democratic Initiative on LSG-Kerala [PDIL-K].¹²⁵ It was based upon the experiences of the RAMDeM which was introduced in Karakulam and Nellanad GPs during 2003-05. But this handbook was definitely meant for wider usage. Under a decision of the LSGD, various state level institutes like KILA, DSP, SDC and CapDeck together was involved in PDIL-K. It aimed at institutionalising LGs through a "popular democratic effort". The handbook identified two major deficits in decentralisation efforts. One was that even after a decade there was no comprehensively developed generic relationship between the transferred institutions and the LGs. Along with that, LGs had to address questions of upgrading public service, including its quality and with regard to legitimisation of profit and loss in their activities through people's intervention through social audit.¹²⁶ The second deficit was that ¹²⁷ "though participatory planning was selected as the primary activity of administrative decentralisation, the sustainability of decentralisation (still)

¹²⁴ Karakulam Grama Panchayat, Pravarthana Marga Rega, Panchayat-1, RAMDeM with technical support of GPK and supported by CapDeck, Karakulam, 2005.

¹²⁵ Kerala Thadhesa Bharana Vyavasathapanam-Janakeeya Janadhipathya Udyamam, Kaipusthakam, Pothu Bharanum, GPK, Karakulam, 2006-07.

¹²⁶ Ibid, R.Sivarajan, Chairman, A.Suhruth Kumar, Convenor, "Amukham".

¹²⁷ Ibid, SM.Vijayanand, Principal Secretary, LSGD, "Message".

depend(ed) upon the standard of administration provided by local government institutions". Obviously the level of administration required for sustaining participatory planning was not achieved widely enough among GPs. The PDIL-K was aiming to overcome such deficits through an experimental effort at institutionalisation in 63 select GPs. The handbook was prepared for this purpose. The current Minister for LSGD, Paloli Muhammed Kutty suggested¹²⁸ that this handbook should be updated by including information and insights emerging from different training sessions. As a follow-up of the aforementioned handbook the GPK also brought out yet another publication¹²⁹; addressing how through various committees, PR activities can be subjected to area level integration and execution of responsibilities. Once again; self-critically two questions are posed here. One, whether the LGs have been successfully institutionalised as the basic institution for public administration or not and another whether responsible efficient and committed administrative-development-welfare implementation was ensured or not?¹³⁰

The points made in the preceding paragraph do indicate the special significance of these publications. Through them the LSGD and the other related organizations and institutions including the GPK and through it the CapDecK was entering into the most important function of institutionalisation of the gains of the PPC and KDP. The guidelines for that effort, along with primary conceptualisation and management approach were visualised by a local "NGO"- the GPK- should be acknowledged. The fact that they did it on the basis of their own direct involvement and insights gained from experiments at institutionalisation at two local GPs is very significant. What we see in this process is an inevitable continuity with the early stage of decentralisation in the PPC and its later consolidation. The positive role played by the SDC-CapDecK in ensuring this continuity through a period of particularly adverse "public" opinion is quite remarkable. In this particular achievement, much more than the earlier approach of state-level training based CD, the latter, open, dialogical and decentralised CD approach seems to have stood the CapDecK in good stead. It should also be noted that the first stage of CapDecK involvement in CD and its conceptualisation itself let it assume an altered version of CD, later; according to the need rising from the field.

It has been observed that while conflict was inevitable in a programme of decentralisation which envisioned alteration of power relations, the PPC tried an approach which was supposed to ignore basic conflicts. The latter approach on the part of the initiators of PPC was understandable since they took their major inspiration from a consensus on developmental issues and identified LG as the appropriate forum for trying out such consensus. This does not mean that this was tantamount to the Gandhian prescription of non-political selection of decision makers at the LG level. Further, in such a visualization, decentralisation will open up possibilities for greater spread of people's action even at the local level. Such actions could have led to conflicts. Even otherwise there is no reason to believe that the

¹²⁸ Ibid, 'Message'

¹²⁹ Grameena Padana Kendram, Panchayat Raj, Pravarthana Mekhala Ekoponavum Utharavadiha Nirvahanavum, Vividha Kammattikalilude, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Karakulam, 2007

¹³⁰ R. Sivarajan, Chairman, "Amukham", Ibid

initiators of the PPC did not expect any conflict at all. Even if they had dreams such as that the campaign could be carried out without any conflicts they should have been shattered by the targeted criticism, including personalised attacks against the PPC and its active supporters even from among their own comrades and earlier coworkers. By the time the decentralisation programme reached the stage of institutionalisation the inherent potential for conflicts came out into the open. The GPK had prepared among others a book on Panchayat Raj for children and gave it the subtitle “Padapusthakam” or text book instead of the usual “Kaipusthakam” or “handbook”. They also had brought out a manual regarding the administrative legal and management issues with regard to the “transferred” educational institutions. Some sections of private school managers, found these introductions thoroughly objectionable. They feared that a committee appointed by the new LDF government under the chairpersonship of a former Chief Secretary to recommend changes in Kerala Education Rules (KER) would harm their ownership and control over the schools under their management. They zeroed in on the so-called “text book” bought out in Karakulam. Soon it became a major controversy in the public media leading the LDF government to tone down any wishes they had-if they had- to effect real transfer of administrative and management responsibilities of primary schools to the LGs (even though it is stipulated by the Constitutional Amendments). In other words the final arbitrator in these issues, the State Government was caught between two Constitutionally guaranteed rights; one to the LGs to assume responsibility with regard to primary schools and the other to minority communities-managed institutions for “minority rights”. It opened up the need for much greater negotiation skills, to institutionalize decentralisation in the field level in Kerala, than one had earlier thought of.

2. Strengthening Grama Sabha.

Another important area that the CapDecK chose to work was that of strengthening the GS. In this regard there were many defects seen and acknowledged widely by not only stakeholders but by external observers too. One common observation was that the GS has been reduced to a gathering of individual beneficiaries of welfare measures. Declining attendance, non-fulfillment of quorum, being held only to get projects approved; are all common and fairly widespread observations. The RASTA did produce a study report on issues and possibilities of GS on the basis of a study in Panamaram GP in Wayanad district ¹³¹. Out of around 20 pages of its total text, 10 pages; or a significant portion consisted of findings and suggestions. It revealed a number of defects that were seen commonly in the working of GS. The Constitutional Amendment had visualised a very positive role for GS. GS has been described as the “Village Parliament”. Even much before the 73rd and 74th Amendment the GS was conceptualized and implemented in LG system in different parts of India. But their functioning in most regions was found tardy. It was inevitable that such a crucial institution which provides a means for direct participation by citizens in local decision-making should go uncared for. In discussions with the key informants, at least one of them had pointed out the possibility of the GS itself being a

¹³¹ Grama Sabha, Prasanangalum Sadhyathakalum (Padana Report), RASTA supported by SDC-CapDecK Kambalakkad, Wayanad, n.d.

forum for effective Social Audit¹³². In other words, the GS meetings were expected to have more attendance and greater quality of decision-making.

The KPRA visualizes a ward in a GP as a constituency and all voters of that constituency as members of the GS. In the specific case of Kerala where the GP population is comparatively high, the GS operates effectively as the ward Sabha. Only a mere 10% is the quorum. GS has 19 rights and duties and 8 responsibilities¹³³. Studies and observations, one after the other have pointed out that these rights, duties and responsibilities are more conspicuous by their non-implementation. Similarly among the support system which can contribute to the successful holding of the GS, the following local level organizations or institutions have been listed; Kudumbashree and SHGs, Ayalkootam or NHGs, Ward development Committees, Rural Libraries, Beneficiary Committees and Cooperatives. Of these different organizations or institutions, not even the beneficiary Committees-which¹³⁴ were likely to have vested interest in GS-do not seem to have been regular supporters of the GS. The only group that can be identified as regular participants at GS meetings are the potential individual beneficiaries. Their predominant presence might have been triggered off by the early practice of the PPC where it was stipulated as an important duty of GS to identify beneficiaries of various welfare projects. Even while they are present at the GS they feel as if they are dependent upon some “others” who are the actual decision makers. In other words, their position vis-a-viz the public elected decision makers has not changed at all from their earlier dependent position viz-a-viz the bureaucrats of LSGD or other line departments.

Another observation that can be made with regard to GS meetings is that the predominant participants by themselves are not in a position to take decisions affecting the whole ward. Their status viz-a-vis the others who are absent at the GS are so low that they do not have the leverage in decision making or in its implementation. In other words, they belong largely to those groups who are on the wrong side of the “social cleavages” that we have mentioned earlier. In a highly “divided” society which is driven by consumerism and a great level of commercialisation (dictated by liberalisation of the economy), these groups generally have not much choices. They have to depend upon the public system-in this particular case the LG-to get even the basic requirements. Meanwhile their “neighbours” who belongs to the mainstream or middle or even lower-middle class are capable of buying “better” commodities and services from the market. Therefore the latter group can ignore the “public distribution” of facilities involved in GS decision making. This means that the poorer classes in rural Kerala are doomed to be trapped in a defective decision-making where they will keep on being dependent upon a combination of elected Panchayat representatives and local level bureaucrats. In other words, it is difficult to rejuvenate GS through any of the support groups mentioned earlier.

Below the GS, non-statutorily an experimental formation has taken shape in many villages during the PPC, called Ayalkootams or Neighbourhood

¹³² Interview with Joy Elamon.

¹³³ Grama Sabha Saktheekaranavum Ariyanulla Avakasaum, Charchakkulla Karadu, KILA CapDecK Programme, KILA, Thrissur, n.d. p.12-13

¹³⁴ Ibid. p.28-30.

Groups [NHGs]. A group of neighbouring families used to get together to discuss their common problems and issues and also used to take up some problem-sharing activities. Some of the Ayalkootam activities mentioned in Ponpulari a publication of PPC were supplementary teaching arranged for students to prepare for public examinations and taking initiatives for solving family and personal problems. Many observers soon realised the potential of Ayalkootams. The Sen Committee itself recommended that the Ayalkootams should be strengthened and used to mobilise local citizenary to strengthen GS. As a result the PPC took up various steps to strengthen Ayalkootams; like their decisions being presented to GS and being approved as GS decisions and using their enthusiasm to promote GS meeting and to increase their attendance. At a more conceptual level it had even been identified with regard to the inherent potential of NHGs at the basic level to generate and sustain democratic decentralisation. Unfortunately, the Ayalkootams slowed down after the Regime-shift. There were suspicions and allegations that the Ayalkootams were dominated by CPI-M supporters. It could very well be true because the CPI [M] looked to be the only party with significant rural and local level cadre penetration which could have had impact upon local level organization within decentralized systems. It should not have led to the denial of the Ayalkootams playing a positive role in local level decision-making. By the time the PEP was set up the NHGs were also on the wane. The CapDecK concentrated on reviving it.

One organisation which worked through the NHG to strengthen GS was RASTA in Kaniyambetta GP. They brought out a rule book for Ayalkootam¹³⁵ and tried to spread them among the people of that GP. According to the Rules, maximum of 50 families could form an Ayalkootam and form its general body. They can have a seven-member elected executive. A ward-level coordination body of all NHGs in the ward is to be formed with representatives from each NHG with the GP Member as the Chairperson. At the GP level a sub-committee may be appointed for coordination with the President of the GP as the Chairperson. In effect what the Rule book visualised was an extension “downward” to the level of NHGs, the same organizational system applicable to LGs. The Rule book envisaged around 14 activities and programmes for the Ayalkootams. It included, identification of issues to be raised at GS, playing a crucial role not only in planning but also in implementation of planning decisions, collect data/information regarding the area of operation of NHG and save it for use in planning operations, collect information to help SA process, discuss not only issues arising out of participatory planning but all other issues regarding local development, become forum to combat social evils like alcoholism, take action to ensure facilitating home atmosphere for students to learn at home and organise regulated bazaars for local produce.

This kind of intervention cannot be assessed immediately on the basis of its out comes. Nevertheless, the enquiries made in Kaniyambetta GP area gives the impression that the NHG experiment resulted in better working of the Ayalkootams

¹³⁵ Kaniyambetta Grama Panchayat, Ayalkootam Niyamavali, RASTA supported by SDC-CapDecK, Kaniyambetta, n.d.

and contributed to strengthening of the GS. Yet, one important issue remains. The people at the locality are skeptical about the renewed spirit being sustained over time if RASTA withdraws from the scene. There is also the problems of its “scaling up” to other panchayats. In other words, sustainability (without the help of POs) and scaling up remains unsolved. These are issues to be discussed with regard to almost all other issues. So we will reserve the discussion for the time being.

In the neighbouring Panamaram GP, RASTA took up a project entitled “Strengthening Decentralised Governance through Capacity Building of People’s Organisations”. Its objectives included¹³⁶ “increase the participation of people in GS, encourage effective participation of women and tribals in GS and to increase the involvement of women in decision-making bodies”. The Project tried

enhancing people’s participation. It also attempted improving services. Another attempt was for formulation of appropriate need based projects etc. by conducting a systematic appraisal and detailed study of the existing issues and problems. They tried to find out solutions and strategies to improve the services of the Panchayat. The problem identified were addressed through the trainings and related activities. Participatory sessions with ward members were conducted to analyse the problems related to the GS. A sample survey aimed at understanding people’s awareness about the PR system was conducted. The Project team attended 16 GS and 13 Oorukoottams¹³⁷ during the period from September to October 2004. The Capability building was attempted through training for CBOs. The process at the Panchayat level becomes more transparent and need based, leading to a better governance system in the Panchayat. In order to strengthen the GS, the awareness level and responsibilities of the different stakeholders are to be improved.

The Loyola Extension Service [LES] the out-reach centre of the Loyola College of Social Sciences, Thiruvananthapuram was involved in PEP in Sreekariyam Panchayat¹³⁸. Their first attempt was to strengthen the GS. This they did with specific objectives like sensitising CBOs about their role in PRI and ensuring greater/participation in GS. Ward Samithies were formed in some of the wards under the leadership of the respective Panchayat members. They were expected to work as a sustainable pressure group that would support the smooth conduct of GS. Suggestions emerging out of each Samithies focusing on thematic areas were collected. They were collected and discussed in the respective GSs. Presentation of these themes at the GS and at the Development Seminar facilitated the prioritisation of projects in the Panchayat development plan. Volunteer trainers worked to create awareness and it improved participation in the GS. In few cases Resident Associations also facilitated the conduct of GS. The increase in participation in the GS was in proportion to the importance given to GS by the Panchayat Committee.

¹³⁶ Panamaram and Kaniyambetta Gram Panchayat, Experiments in Strengthening Grama Sabha, Lessons from Wayanad, RASTA supported by SDC-CapDecK, Kambalakkad, Kalpetta, 2007, p.7.

¹³⁷ Referring to local level organizations based on Tribal hamlets.

¹³⁸ Sreekariyam Gram Panchayat, Accelerating the Dynamics of Panchayati Raj. A Brief Report on the project, Loyola Extension Service [LES], supported by SDC-CapDecK, Trivandrum, 2007.

Active participation by people lent the Gram Sabha a special qualitative dimension. The effective working of Ward Samithies motivated many Panchayat members to work through CBOs with the intention of increasing effectiveness of GS.

All these interventions seem to have had impressive impact upon the wards and GPs where the POs worked. It is not yet time to measure the full impact of such interventions as the process is still going on. The impression that we got from Citizens as well as GP representatives and staff members is that most of these interventions were in the right track. The CapDecK systematically and consistently facilitated these programmes without any interference from their side. They had also brought out two “master publications” one in Malayalam and the other in English on GS which some of the POs depended upon in drafting their further dissemination efforts¹³⁹. The popularity of this document and the wide usage of it by activists and people everywhere in Kerala is proved by the number of editions that it already had.

3. Empowering the Marginalised

In the important sector of empowering the marginalized, the CapDecK intervened through the projects undertaken by Socio-Economic Development Service-Kerala [SEDS], an organisation with its headquarters in Pakkil, Kottayam District. SEDS undertook a survey covering 833 Dalit families of Alappuzha district, 634 Dalit families of Pathanamthitta district and 925 Dalit families of Kottayam district. A Report¹⁴⁰ was brought out along with a document called Dalit Development Document.¹⁴¹ The survey Report is based upon data from Chennithala-Thrippierunthuthara, Thiruvandur, and Ala GPs from Alappuzha, Madapally, Meenadom, Nattakom, Pampady, Vijayapuram GPs from Kottayam and Puramattom, Nedumpram and Eraviperoor GPs and Pathanamthitta Municipality from Pathanamthitta district. T.J.Peter, Director, SEDS has stated in his Foreword to the survey Report that

As Ambedkar had predicted Dalits who were untouchables are not able to derive any noticeable benefits from PR Acts and system... Even today Dalit people are unaware of the details of PR Acts and its aims and objectives. There is no activity undertaken to make them known to the ordinary people. Such a situation makes the objectives and aims of PR Acts irrelevant... The space and meaning of the popular power that is to evolve through the PR are still unknown to the Dalit community of Kerala. Some projects by themselves will be sufficient to ensure Dalit empowerment? What is needed for administrative regimes and Dalit activists is an understanding of the real livelihood conditions of Dalit communities. Plan shares made really available for Dalits are far less than from what is reported... Different communities in Kerala developed and found their own space in the power structure. But Dalit people remain

¹³⁹ K.B.Madan Mohan: Grama Sabha (Malayalam), SDC-CapDecK, Trivandrum, 2005 (First Ed) 2006(Second Ed) and 2007 (Third Ed), and 2006 (English Ed)

¹⁴⁰ Socio Economic Development Service (SEDS), Dalit Samoohya Nilavara Padanam, Survey Report, Pakkil, Kottayam, 2005.

¹⁴¹ T.J.Peter, Dalit Vikasana Regha, Pravarthakarakulla Kaipusthakam, SEDS and SDC-CapDecK, Pakkil, 2007.

backward in the social hierarchy even now. Various reasons can be pointed out for this backwardness. Unless an answer to the question where Dalit community stands now is found no serious interventions will not be possible.

This was the justification for undertaking a survey of Dalit situation. Basing themselves on the data collected George K Alex and Thomson K Alex wrote so in their analysis,

Development should not be measures on the basis of Per Capita Income...the following factors are also to be taken into account 1) A healthy atmosphere for living 2] educational advancement 3] Diversity of employment opportunities 4] Freedom to independently make social interventions 5] Respect from public sphere/community and self respect and 6] Community or social participation... land is a symbol of power. (Ownership of) Agricultural land is a reflection of freedom of expression in the productive sector...it is a symbol of self-determination. Those who do not own land will be excluded from social opportunities.. In Alappuzha district 14.68% of Dalit families do not have land, in Pathanamthitta district 7.72% and in Kottayam district 9.72% are also in the same category. Even those who have land, have only the hutment right or Kudikidappu land they acquired through Governments' land reforms. For most of them, there is only the land where their houses stand. In the total land of Kerala Dalits have only 1%... Among the 2392 families who were surveyed only 20 got help from District panchayat. 188 families got assistance from Block Panchayats.. Yet there are more number of projects than this. It shows that the Dalits fails to get their rights... Only if projects creating steady incomes and ensuring resource mobilization and investments, will Dalits be able to advance in the path of development... Right over, productive resources are not available for Dalits... If there is to be Dalit empowerment, Dalits should be able to intervene in society creatively. But what the statistics showed is that Dalits are weakly represented socially, culturally and politically. Dalits have only less than 1% membership in mass organizations. Same is the situation with regard to political movements. Dalit women represented in women organizations are around 2%. Even they are mainly members of Ayalkootams and Kudumbashree. Membership in different Civil Society Organisations [CSO] are indications of participation in society. They are symbols of public respect and self-respect. Non-membership in political or other movements means they are rejected from possible positions of power. What it shows is that the Dalits are helpless in deciding their own future... In the transformation from a dependent community to an independent community, self-employment facilities are inevitable. Many from the Dalit community are interested in being involved in self-employment enterprises. But no effort to provide such employment was found in the surveyed regims.

On the basis of the survey findings 10 suggestions were made in the Report.

They were,

1. Youth Seminars to be arranged at the Panchayat level for Socio-political analysis.
2. Start cooperatives for and of unemployed youth.
3. Integrate the labour of wage-workers.

4. Start a regular publication giving local news, details of projects, and programmes.
5. Start a guidance centre for Dalit students
6. Arrange legal literacy programmes and Employment Information Centre.
7. Start a Dalit study centre at the level of Panchayat
8. Plan home library schemes
9. Arrange Career Guidance Programmes
10. Arrange for scholarships at local level to help Dalit students

Most of these suggestions are to be implemented at the LG level. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the issues and their analysis which led to these suggestions cannot be solved by local interventions alone. The issues are of all-Kerala and at times of all-India dimensions. Therefore if they are to be implemented effectively plan of action which has at least all Kerala dimensions is to be devised. Further if the factors obstructing their implementation are to be tackled decisively also, an all-India or all-State strategy has to be devised. They can of course be supplemented by intense local interventions too. In other words, the survey data and its analysis do indicate that a centralized and along with it a local programme is what is required for Dalit empowerment. This dimension come out further when we look at the Dalit Development document mentioned earlier¹⁴². After the discussion of almost all the basic issues faced by the Dalit community, the document suggest FGD of Dalit groups at ward level and Panchayat level and suggests that the survey findings could be discussed there. This at one level indicates the need for local level 'conscientization'. More revealing is the list of programmes that are given in Annexure. They are of Assistance available from SC/ST Development Corporation and the projects run by the National Safai Karmacharis Financing And Development Corporation. Such a listing suggest that much of what the Dalit community can claim is at the State level or National level or with para-statal agencies and not merely at the local level.

Yet in another document¹⁴³ of the SEDS they emphasise the need for local action. There as the important aim of the SEDS, it is said that among other things, work should be undertaken to

1. Strengthen Panchayat Raj system according to what has been envisaged in the Panchayat Raj Act.
2. Intervene in all levels in the Panchayat Raj system as allowed by the Panchayat Raj Act and make Dalits equipped to work as members of related bodies and for that disseminate knowledge about Panchayat Raj Act, among them.
3. Prepare people to take part in GS and thus strengthen GS by creating awareness of what is GS and what are its rights and powers.
4. Instil civic consciousness among Dalits so that they will work along with others for the development and growth of their locality than ask for individual welfare measures, (or assistance).

¹⁴² T.J.Peter, 2007, Ibid.

¹⁴³ Socio-Economic Development Service Kerala, Dalit Empowerment through Panchayati Raj, SEDS-CapDecK Joint Awareness programme, Pakkil, Kottayam, 2004-05.

The SEDS and the Awareness programme in collaboration with the SDC-CapDeck was certainly conscious of the need for intense local level action. This programme as it is conducted in various GPs of Kerala is likely to eventually result in a Regional programme of empowerment. Yet the question remains as to whether that alone will be enough to alter Dalit status. Will not state and national level concomitant actions necessary for really Dalit empowerment? We could not see any effort to conduct a coordinated state or national level action under the PEP for Dalit empowerment. In visits to Nattakam, Pampady and Vijayapuram GPs all in Kottayam District and in discussions with Dalit citizens, the feedback received with regard to the GP-level projects in support of Dalit development was favourable. On the other hand, the moment questions about a coordinated action at the national or state level were raised feedbacks were received suggesting that a political party like the BSP and its leader Mayavati may be a way out.

SHREYAS which took up the Project on “Integrated Development of Panchayats through People’s Participation” in Chungathara, Kodenchery and Mullankolly Panchayats had stated in its specific objectives “to capacitate the weaker sections of the society for active involvement in the decentralisation process especially through the Gram Sabha”. Yet when they reported their major achievements there was no mention of empowerment of the “weaker sections”. On the other hand, RASTA reported that building capacity of Tribal Promoters is necessary for Tribal empowerment as they are to play decisive roles in

[tribal hamlet assembly]. They organized various training programmes in skill development after identifying the training needs of Tribal promoters. The problems and needs of Oorukoottams were identified by using participatory methods, like PRA.

The approach to empowerment through training of key personnel-in this case tribal promoters-were a worth while idea. It should be remembered that Tribal development was an item in which the UDF government acted decisively to alter the LDF policy of devolution of funds to the LGs. They withdrew the TSP funds devolved to LGs and made its distribution through line department officials. The change do not seem to have made any favourable change. Yet it should be remembered that the Gotra Maha Sabha - a prominent organization of Tribal people and its leader Janu were highly critical of the devolved funding system. This means that there is not only divided opinion about it but there are equally strong arguments on both sides. Therefore, any innovation in Tribal empowerment has to be carefully scrutinized. All that one can say is that the approach through innovative training at the level of tribal promoters was certainly a useful idea but how far it had a favourable impact at the GP or Oorukoottam level is yet to be seen.

The SEDS¹⁴⁴ approach which consisted of surveys, status documents, and awareness creation among the Dalits seem to have had some favourable impact. Their report claimed that among other things

¹⁴⁴ Socio Economic Development Service, Empowering the Marginalised Explorations in Panchayati Raj. A brief Report on the project Dalit Empowerment through Panchayati Raj, supported by SDC-CapDeck, Pakkil, Kottayam, 2007.

Apart from distributing money for various projects, the programme established that the Panchayat had the moral and constitutional responsibility to take initiatives for the activities aimed at the development of socially backward sections. ...The development Report based on the Dalit Status study and FGDs, became a document which could not be ignored by the elected representatives. People's representatives were willing to admit that issues would be solved only through change of attitude. The programme triggered a new concept about development in the civil society as a whole... Instead of beneficiaries and donors, the Dalits developed an attitude that made them feel as members of a team involved in the development of the society. The frequent meetings, seminars and FGDs which were organised under the leadership of Dalits at the ward and Panchayat level, brought improvement in the functioning of the GS and in its attendance...

The potential of awareness created through a systematic survey and its results being discussed at FGD at different levels to make changes at the local level cannot be denied. Those who are aware of the earlier functioning of SEDS do certify that they are capable of doing such creditable work. The interesting thing to note in this context is the innovative approach adopted by SEDS and supported by SDC-CapDecK. As a process it was commendable but its full outcome is yet not ready to be assessed.

4. Gender Mainstreaming

The Women's Commission [KSWC] which came into being in 1996 March in Kerala State, found the number petitions filed regarding crimes against women were definitely on the increase. Therefore it took initiative to establish District level Jaagratha Samithies [DJS]. To initiate action on issues faced by women there was no effective practical devise at the local level. For ordinary rural women accessibility to the Women's Commission [WC] and even to the DJS is difficult. Therefore the need for having a representative body of the KSWC at the local level was felt. Such a representative body was expected to help KSWC to see the problems of women at grass roots¹⁴⁵. This is how LG level JS came to be organised. In the LG level JS the following were to be members:

1. Panchayat President [Chairperson]
2. Circle/Sub Inspector of Police [Member]
3. One woman Panchayat Member/Municipal Councilor [Member]
4. One Woman Advocate [Member]
5. A social worker from SC/ST communities or a Panchayat Member from the same group [Member]

The JS was to receive petitions and act upon them. But those alone were not to be its responsibilities. It should also closely observe Women's Participation in developmental activities at the GP level and note whether there is any sort of denial of justice in the course of such activities. The JS can have an advisory Committee at the ward level too. The KSWC itself has brought out a pamphlet explaining the scope and structure of the LG level JS; in collaboration with the SDC-CapDecK¹⁴⁶. In addition, LDF government

¹⁴⁵ Madavoor Grama Panchayat Jaagratha Samithi, Samoohya neethikku Jaagratha Samithikal, Santhigram, Chappath, Thiruvananthapuram, n.d.

¹⁴⁶ Kerala Vanitha Commission, Kerala Vanitha Commissionum Jaagratha Samithikalum, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Trivandrum, Also see,

has issued a GO stipulating that all GPs should within a stipulated time organise JS and the Minister for LSG himself wrote personally to all Panchayat Presidents regarding this¹⁴⁷. The responsibility of making the activities of JS efficient and effective was given to KILA. KILA organised District level and GP/Municipal Council [MC] level training. Its efforts have resulted in 864 GPs and majority of MCs establishing JS. With the help of experts KILA prepared a Model Rules for the working of the JS. A Guideline was also published and it was made sure that it reached all JS Members. A Core Faculty Team of 60 persons were organised at the state level to help JS, Members everywhere. A special training for them was organized. GP/MC level JS. Members were given training at the District level. At the GP/MC level, training was provided for activists of VO, Ayalkootams and Kudumbashree; and other organisations by KILA. It also produced a pamphlet¹⁴⁸ and a handbook meant to provide popular education material which will be of help to JS activists. KILA also provided Help Group System for clearing doubts emerging from among them.

In other words, it was not local involvement alone which made the PEP effective in the area of JS; but also state level intervention by KWC and KILA. But it should be noted that KILA gathered the necessary insights for such involvement from their early intervention in KILA's own homeground of Mulamkunnathukavu Panchayat¹⁴⁹. Further insights were gained from organised activities in Panachery GP used Thrissur Dist. and Peerumedu GP in Idukki Dist. The approach used in these GPs was to prepare the ground before the actual organisation of JS, through a campaign at the local level through which the idea of JS was familiarized among the people of the locality. It was followed up by a study of women's status which produced ample material for presentation of structures and situations which exist within society which obstruct women's interests. It was followed by several workshops, special conscientization programmes for men and youth, public meetings and meetings of both men and women at the ward level. More importantly a coordination committee was formed with people's representatives, members of political parties, representatives of different organisations, Kudumbashree members and retired persons, to sustain such programmes.

In addition to the JS, there were other areas of intervention by POs in favour of women's welfare and empowerment. Kizhakkumkara Mahila

¹⁴⁷ Kerala Samsthana Vanitha Commission, Jaagratha Samithi Anubhava Kurippukal, Panachery Grgama Panchayat, KWC, KIC with the Cooperation of SDC-CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, n.d. Also see, Kerala Sarkar, Sangraham, Samoohya Kshema Vakuppus Kerala Vanitha Commission-Jaagratha Samithikalum Zilla Jaagratha Samithikalum Punasangatippichu Utharavu Paunappedilikkunnu Samoohyakshema (B) Vakuppu, S.U.(M.S) No.31/07/sa..Ksha.Va Thiruvananthapuram, 2007 June 23. Wherein it was said that "Under the leadership of the Kerala Women's Commission and with the assistance of SDC-CapDecK in 6 GPs the respective Panchayat Committees have organized model JS activities. In the light of such experiences there were at various levels, discussions on reorganizations of JS. Atrocities against and denial of justice to women and girls are increasing day by day. In the context of administrative decentralization these issues can be taken up, solved and prevent its recurrence by JS under the LGs which is the closest to people."

¹⁴⁸ PP Balan (ed), Jaagratha Samithi, Entnu, Entinu? (Pamphlet), Social Welfare Dept., Local Governance Department, KILA in cooperation with y SDC-CapDecK, Trivandrum, n.d.

¹⁴⁹ Kerala Samasthana Vanitha Commission, n.d, op.cit.

Samajam [KMS] working in the Mangalapuram GP in Thiruvananthapuram, brought out a publication called "Grama Jyothi"¹⁵⁰. In that they highlighted the question of constitution of Working Group. WGs are committees organised to plan development activities and to monitor them. They are appointed by the GP and normally there are 10 subject groups; one of them being the women's WG. KMS argued that women's issues are to be seen as social issues and should be approached as such. They argued that the women WG should have not only women but also men who can see issues from women's perspective. Similarly they also raised the issues of Women's Component Plan [WCP]. Ten per cent of the total plan funds are to be invested in projects meant for women's development. KMS suggested ways and means to avoid misuse of such funds; and suggested that WC Projects should be implemented through Ayalkootams (since the Ayalkootams are formed by Panchayat Act for this definite purpose).

Several other POs also collaborated in programmes meant to strengthen JS activities in different GPs. A PO called Legal, Industrial & Socio-Educational Society India [LISS] associated itself with a women's status survey in Varappetty GP, Ernakulam District as part of five GPs where KSWC initiated JS which were in, Payyoli, Madavoor, Varappetty, Mukkom and Meenangadi¹⁵¹. Similarly another PO called Centre for Youth Development [CYD] Wayanad collaborated with Meenangadi GP and SDC-CapDecK for similar type of intervention¹⁵². Another PO which did work in this area was the Centre for Rural Management [CRM], Kottayam. They intervened in Azhutha Block Panchayat in Idukki District. The six GPs in this Block, those of Elappara, Kumily, Kokkayar, Peerumedu, Peruvanthanam and Vandiperiyar could not form JS in spite of receiving instructions from the Government. Finally it was realized after thorough discussions at the family-get-together or Kudumba Sangamam organised under the PEP¹⁵³. In addition to several levels of dissemination and mobilisation meetings, these Panchayats got concrete help from the MSW department of the local college-Kuttikanam Marian College. In addition, they could exchange experiences across Panchayats too. The idea of organizing the JS faced resistance too; from an advocate, from some vested interests and from some political interests. An attempt was made to block a sitting of the JS. These problems were overcome by the cooperation of all who were interested in the 'institution' of the JS. The ICDS supervisor's role is normally taken for granted in the JS organized in many GPs. By making her the convenor of JS, her status went up considerably. She not only carry out the JS correspondence but she is the custodian of confidential matters as she keeps the minutes of JS meetings. The participation of ICDS Supervisor who has generally

¹⁵⁰ Ammukutty George (ed): Grama Jyothi, Panchayat Raj Sakthikaranam Vanitha Sannatha Pravarthakariloode, Onnam Bhagam, Kizhakkukare Mahila Samajam, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Kulathur, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004.

¹⁵¹ LISS India Jana Jaagratha Samithi Varappetty Grama Panchayat, Kaipusthakam, (A Pilot Project of Kerala Women's Commission) Varappetty Grama Panchayat Jana Jaagratha Samithi, LISS India, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Kothamangalam, n.d

¹⁵² Meenangadi GP, Wayanad, Women's Commission, Thiruvananthapuram, CYD, Wayanad Kalpetta, Jaagratha Samithi, Meenangadi Grama Panchayat, Meenangadi, Wayanad District, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Wayanad, 2005

¹⁵³ Peruvanthanam, Kumily, Kokkayar, Peerumedu, Elappara and Vandiperiyar Grama Panchayathukal, Centre for Rural Management Functionaries, Jaagratha Samithi Anubhava Kuruppukal, Azhutha Blockil Grama Panchayathuk, KWC with the Cooperation of KILA and SDC-CapDecK, Trivandrum, n.d

high level of perception of Mother and Child care was an added boost to the working of the JS. Similarly the role of the Police in local and sensitive disputes underwent a sea-change. The fact that such cases as those which are normally brought to the JS have to be handled differently was driven into the minds of local police officers by the JS. The particular police officer who was involved in Azhutha for a considerable period himself became a "role-model". The gains made at the local level were attempted to be scaled up to wider levels by the KILA.

Just as the GPK played a pivotal role in the specific area of administration of LGs (both at the local and state level) the organisation which played a similar role in women's issues was SAKHI, Women's Resource Centre in Thiruvananthapuram. They conducted a comprehensive survey in three GPs, Vilayur, Olavanna and Kollayil¹⁵⁴. The Report of the survey says that

The study of status of women was suggested by the Government of Kerala when the decentralised planning was initiated in 1996. This was a prelude to gender-based planning to be undertaken by the local governments. But such studies were undertaken only by a few local governments due to lack of expertise and needed resources like trained personal, finances etc. Hence the study of status of women in the four local bodies was undertaken with a view to evolve a comprehensive methodology to conduct such studies, simple enough to be followed by the local governments themselves. It was seen not as an academic exercise but as a process of gender sensitisation of all sections of population in the Panchayat and as a basis for gender based planning by the local government. The process was aimed at the inclusion of women in all the forums of the local government and facilitate a proactive role for in decision-making forums. Women's active participation and building women-centered perspective is inevitable for equitable planning and budgeting. This necessitates a sharp gender analysis and study of status of women to arrive at an understanding of the inequitable and discriminatory structure, system and institutions and differential allocation of resources. It was expected that study of status of women would help to understand the position of women, the problem they experience, identify practical and strategic gender education at all levels, beginning from CBOs to the Panchayat committees and institutions.

In continuation of the study the SAKHI in collaboration with GPs took up several activities.

To discuss the draft findings of the study, special Grama Sabha were organized in two Panchayats. Issues like that of unequal wages, compulsory registration of marriages in the Panchayat, formation of Jaagratha Samithi discrimination of information on the services available in the Panchayat etc. were raised, there. These issues were discussed by representatives from each subject group and attempts were made to incorporate them into planning. Status study themes was made to be the basic premise for gender planning. It assisted in realizing

¹⁵⁴ Sakhi Women's Resource Centre, Gender and Panchayati Raj, Status of Women in Kerala, Report of the study on status of women in 3 selected panchayats in Kerala, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Trivandrum, 2007

the position of women and in listing practical and strategic needs of women. This could be converted into projects to be included in general planning and in WCP.

The GPK developed a document for scaling up their own experiences in LGs. They suggested ways of institutionalising procedural and administrative changes within local government administration with the cooperation of other state level organisation and institutions. SAKHI also did a similar task in the area of Women's Issues. They brought out a Manual on Gender Planning, Budgeting and Auditing for the DSP Mission of LSDG¹⁵⁵. In its foreword, SM Vijayanand, Principal Secretary, LSGD said

Initially, LGs struggled to identify suitable schemes most of which can be classified as belonging to Women-In-Development approach. But now with universalisation of Kudumbashree and the prospect of Employment Guarantee Scheme being expanded to cover all the districts in the state, it is time to move ahead to a better conceptualization of gender sensitive schemes. The DSP partnered the well known NGO SAKHI and launched an action research programme in mainstreaming gender in local level planning and development. This Manual... is one of the important output of this fruitful research. It has evolved from the expertise of almost everyone interested in gender and local development in the state and has imbibed the most relevant concepts from literature on the subject.

The Sakhi team went on to say that

This manual is intended to help local government to uphold the human rights of women, by involving them in identifying their needs and with their participation, to find possible solutions and move towards action. This manual details the process of gender planning, budgeting and auditing in the general projects and in the WCP. A handbook and training manual will be published along with this Manual which will give more information on local level planning from the gender perspective. Prior to preparing this manual and handbook a review of ten years of decentralisation in Kerala and a review of the WCP were undertaken...

In this review they found the following limitations in the last 10 years of decentralisation,

Although women's participation in the GS increased substantially, the quality of participation still leaves room for improvement. Women are regarded as beneficiaries and subsequently women's agency was not exercised in project planning and implementation. There were only a few projects for women under the general category. Women got only limited opportunities to increase their assets or to participate in decision making. Women were seen as only housewives and not as workers or producers or farmers. The women's component plan focuses mainly on addressing practical needs of women (basic facilities, employment, poverty eradication...) As a result their condition has improved. But there were hardly any attempt to improve their status. For

¹⁵⁵ Sakhi Women's Resource Centre, Gender Mainstreaming in Local Level Planning and Implementation. Gender Planning, Budgeting and Auditing, Manual (draft) 2006, Trivandrum, 2006

example, very few projects were started to address issues like violence against women, sexual abuse, occupational illness, reproductive health issues etc. Although the government had asked local bodies to conduct studies on the status of women at Panchayat level and devise appropriate projects, this was not done in many places due to lack of expertise, clear methodologies etc. Hence a clear idea of the actual needs of women and their priorities could not be achieved. A comprehensive policy for women could therefore not be formulated, based on the needs identified, their causes and solutions.

The enormity of set backs of the earlier process in decentralisation are brought out vividly in such a listing. These failures reflect upon the training given centrally for the PPC in which CapDecK was deeply involved. Such a listing of earlier defects was meant to conscientize all those who are concerned with such issues while they formulate future programme. This study in that sense became a basic document for more meaningful involvement in issues related to women. In addition to dealing with some basic problems, the Manual disseminated understanding of “Indicators to Measure women’s Position and Condition for Gender Auditing” (Annexure 9) and “Gender Planning, Budgeting and Auditing-Sector vice Indicators”, (Annexure 10). In 2006, the KILA with the support from SDC-CapDecK and in collaboration with SAKHI, decided to conduct the study in more Panchayats. Such an effort was undertaken as a tool for wider gender sensitization and also as a preparation of the 11th Five Year plan. KILA wrote to all LGs and the first 60 GPs were selected for the study. A core team of state level experts formed as faculty and they were available to the Panchayats for support. This group continues as state level expert group. The following 37 GPs completed women’s status studies¹⁵⁶,

1. Paivalike
2. Kinanoor - Karinthalam
3. Karivellur-Peralam
4. Padiyur
5. Ulickal
6. Pattiam
7. Malur
8. Panamaram
9. Cherode
10. Kakkodi
11. Kuruva kundu
12. Keezhuparambu
13. Puzhakkattiri
14. Thirurangadi
15. Nirammaruthur
16. Paruthur
17. Mankara
18. Peringottukurussi

¹⁵⁶ Their summarized versions are available in, Panchayat Thala Sthree Padavai Padanam, Samshiptha Samaharanam (Karadu), KILA, SAKHI, SDC-CapDecK, Trivandrum, 2007

19. Kannadi
20. Muthalamada
21. Akathethara
22. Kadappuram
23. Mulamkunnathukavu
24. Elavally
25. Poomangalam
26. Velukkara
27. Sree Narayanapuram
28. Paipra
29. Thalayolaparambu
30. Perumbalam
31. Kodamthuruthu
32. Kodumannu
33. Kunnathur
34. Pathanapuram
35. Poothakkulam
36. Vilavoorkal
37. Kizhuvilam

In addition Self Employed Women's Association [SEWA] did a similar study in Vilappil GP¹⁵⁷. This study not only suggested a specific policy for women's development, but also worked out a practical approach towards implementing such a policy. The SAKHI published in Malayalam and English handbooks on Panchayati Raj System and Women¹⁵⁸. They also brought out a handbook, for women elected representatives¹⁵⁹ and also an independent adoption of Uma Prachai's "Strengthening the Core" for women representatives, in English¹⁶⁰. Further the SDC-CapDecK itself published a book on JS¹⁶¹, thus adding to the several steps already taken towards scaling up lessons learnt from LG level experiments.

5. Promoting Social Watch by CBOs.

This was a programme for which the CapDecK or the POs or even the LGs did not have had any model to follow. At various levels officials and non-officials at the regional level welcomed support from different organizations, which can be called CBOs. Yet there was no efforts to perceive these organizations as a "defined"

¹⁵⁷ SEWA, Vilappil Grama Panchayat Sthree Padavi padanaum Vanitha Vikasana Nayavum, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006

¹⁵⁸ SAKHI Women's Resource Centre, Panchayati Raj Samvithanum Sthreekalum, Sthreepadavi padanathinnu Kaipusthakam, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006 Women in Panchayati Raj, a handbook on panchayat level Women Status Study, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006.

¹⁵⁹ Saktharakoo, Sajjarokoo, Vanitha Janaprathinikalkku oru Kaipusthakam, Sakhi Resource Centre for Women, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006.

¹⁶⁰ Be Empowered Be Equipped, A Handbook for Elected Women Representatives, Sakhi Resource Centre for Women, supported by SDC-CapDecK, Trivandrum, 2006.

¹⁶¹ Mariamma Sanu George [Nirmala] (ed), Jaagratha Samithi, The Panchayat Vigilance Committee for Women's Rights, (compiled by Liby T.Johnson and K.B.Madan Mohan, SDC-CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, 2007

group or to devise a methodology of how could such support be lend to the LGs. Therefore in this sector whatever was achieved is almost totally to the credit of POs, LGs, CapDecK and most of all the CBOS. The initiators of this programme had to make mid-term revisions; for which they could not fall back upon any pre-tested model. It is creditable that the CapDecK decided to facilitate it and the concerned LGs agreed to cooperate with them. This was probably the most innovative programme carried out under the PEP. Such a perception need not completely clear the CBOs who initiated social watch programme of any defects.

The Centre for Rural Management [CRM] with the support of SDC-CapDecK initiated such a programme in Thycattussery Block Panchayat in Alappuzha District¹⁶². As Joy Elamon, Chief Programme Co-ordinator, CapDecK in the message to the Report¹⁶³ of this project said

The citizen's or public Forum will have three main areas of activities [1] Prepare the Civil Society to contribute to strengthening PR and make participation real [2] Develop efficiency to improve different activities of Panchayats, and to [3] Study critically activities and respond to them positively. The social watch gives priority to the third. In many instances the kind of criticism which come up from different quarters are based on ignorance of the opposing factors, limitations and helplessness faced by Panchayats. Some studies which are critical of the Panchayat System are of the sort which are meant to destroy the whole system, forgetting the possibilities of Panchayats.

The citizens forum in Thycattussery was formed on the belief that the development activities undertaken by the Panchayat should be sustainable and its benefits should be available to everyone equitably. To make sure that it happens, there should be meaningful discussions which are capable to set direction and guidance for equitable and sustainable growth. In an earlier era such exchange of ideas and opinions were carried out through morning discussions in local teashops. In the present context the social Watch Report is to play the same role.

In other words, the Citizen's Forum through its Social Watch Report was trying to develop healthy rural transactions on one hand. On the other it also was trying to restrict the adverse impact of growing "social cleavages". Earlier rural societies had its own mechanisms for public discussion, be it tea shop gatherings or gatherings under the temple banyan tree or get-togethers in rural gentlemen's house verandhas. Though earlier gatherings were not inclusive enough they had the advantage of the ability to gather opinions of a fairly wide variety of rural people. The attempts made by the Social Watch Report was to fill up the gap created by the disappearance of such forum. Interestingly enough the observations that the Social Watch Report came to were both critical and incisive. The report pointed out that

¹⁶² The author was in a greatly beneficial position with regard to observing the evolution of this particular project. I belonged to the same LG area and only in 2003 my wife Professor Sophie Jose-Tharakan and myself built a house and moved to the neighbouring Ezhupunna Panchayat (into an island) which is only 10 minutes by country boat (Vallam)

¹⁶³ Panchayathi Rajinam Adikara Vikendrikaranathinnuam Vendiyulla Pothuvedi, Adhya Social Watch Report, Pothuvedi Thycattussery Block, Poochackel, 2007.

Panchayat is facing several limitations in rising to the level of LG... People's representatives and officials have not internalized the Panchayat as a LG. Political parties do not show enough concern in nominating appropriate candidates in LG elections or giving responsibilities to those who are able to consider Panchayat as a serious governing institution, and are capable of leading them. Traditional impressions and concepts with regard to the Panchayats are still seen. Many are not able to grasp the changed circumstances. Political parties do not show enough interest in teaching the people's representatives of their responsibilities or for extending necessary assistance to them. The responsibilities of political parties get reduced to giving directions as to what is to be done in terms of development activities or policy matters. Only those who have individual ability are able to do something meaningful in Panchayat administration. The party officials who criticise and find fault with people's representatives do not, subject themselves to self criticism so that they could get a better understanding as to how these defects happened. The transferred institutions and their officials do not recognize and respect the Panchayats. As department heads the heads of transferred institutions do not work as part of the Panchayat. The people's representatives are sincerely found to lack the ability to make the officials of the transferred institutions to work under the general supervision of the Panchayats. On the one hand financial expenditure and financial responsibilities of the Panchayat are increasing day by day. There are Panchayats having to deal with an amount of over one crore Rupees annually. There are rules, regulations and procedure to be followed in this regard. They are generally followed only ritualistically. In many Panchayats by now a parallel system has been evolved to do these things according to the rules and instructions. One or two officials and one or two senior people's representatives decide among themselves how to carry out the financial cum administrative responsibilities. There is great interest in implementing construction works everywhere. Engineering Section, Contractors one or two officials, a few people's representatives form a syndicate. People of the Panchayats believe generally that this coterie divide significant portion of money spent among themselves. On the other hand there is hardly any interest in implementing in projects which are likely to benefit larger number of local people. There are also some permanent beneficiaries who corner most of the benefits distributed by the Panchayat. In other words there is hardly a Project of social relevance which can improve quality of life of people. Only a minority of people's representatives and officials who work with the full realization of the importance of Panchayat. There are no efforts to develop a Panchayat level development perspective and to formulate projects of wide and meaningful benefits. The common belief is that the Panchayat is the lowest tier of our administrative hierarchy. It is widely believed that Panchayats were not formed as a social necessity but they were designed as an administrative necessity. Because of that belief people will view it only as another department. Departments are not usually subject to change due to popular pressure. As a result there is not sufficient pressure from the side of the people. Majority of officials try to do the tasks assigned to them mechanically without interest or

ability since they have to give answer to people's representatives, senior officials and the people. The people's representatives tend to lose their creativity working under such a system. Definitely if citizens with high level of civic consciousness are willing to work together, much can be done to correct these deficits. For doing that conscious of the possibilities of decentralisation. The Citizen Forum can be viewed as a gathering of all those who are willing to work to correct and these defects and are willing to contribute to this process without monetary remuneration. The Report suggested how the forum can work.

1. As a resource centre; plan formulation and Execution forum.
2. As training centre.
3. Work actively as members of the WC-the Planning Committee of the Panchayat.
4. Extend help to the Panchayat in improving administration by extending of expert support.
5. Provide training for Public Forum members as well as continuing Training for Working Group members.
6. Learn the Computer package prepared by the Information Kerala Mission to help in improving administration.
7. Help the Panchayat to develop different models of Local Governance.
8. Work as a group for Advocacy.
9. Help GS
10. Organise Public functions to honour and encourage people's representatives and officials who work well.
11. Work as an Agency to conduct studies for the Panchayat and if needed undertake implementation, monitoring etc of certain projects.
12. The work of the citizen's Forum for PR and Administrative decentralisation is in a certain way political action. The efforts at strengthening democracy and to sustain democratic institutions and good governance through them has to be politics in the sense of organized action for social change. But it should be above divisive party political interests. Citizens Forum should not be seen as an alternative to political parties or other social organisations. The Citizens Forum should be seen as complementary to them.

The positive role of Citizens' Forum was seen when the CRM organised a meeting of women candidates' who got defeated in LG election¹⁶⁴. This meeting went a long way in rallying these women who were still committed to PR to work in an organized manner in spite of having lost the election.

The absence of an earlier model has already been noted. In Decentralisation Community of UNDP, Jos Chathukulam and K. Girisen of the CRM

¹⁶⁴ SDC-CapDecK Newsletter, Issues 7, April 2006, p. 5

raised a question “whether some report in the nature of a social watch Report on Local Governance has been published any where in India” and got a negative answer. (September 17, 2007). The Hindu on 12 November, 2007, reported [N.J. Nair, “Civic body members active in addressing local issues: study”) that

Amidst discussions over the impact of decentralised planning and governance, the finding that a Panchayat member spends approximately five to seven hours a day on bettering the lot of his electorate is proof of the new development culture and public awareness created by the People’s Plan Campaign in the state. The social welfare report on local governance brought out by the “platform for Panchayati Raj and Decentralisation... shows how exacting the job of a Panchayat member has become since decentralisation of powers were experimented in the state...(though) cannot be considered a model of the PR system in the state, it points to a shift in the approach of the elected members in addressing local issues.

6. Panchayat to Panchayat Programme

A programme of sharing experiences between Panchayats in Kerala have been in practice from the early stages of the PPC. There was an awareness that the strengthening of the Panchayat Associations will lead to further strengthening of Panchayati Raj. CapDecK was ready to help the Panchayat Association to present a qualitatively better working pattern. This consciousness led eventually to strengthen the office of the Panchayat Association in such a way as to be in a position to help strengthen the Panchayats. Their central office were to be set out as a centre of dissemination of information. A library and a computer were provided for the office of the Panchayat Association. An effort to collect GOs, central and state schemes and their details was initiated¹⁶⁵. Shreyas, the PO working in Mullenkolly Panchayat had reported the chance that elected representatives from that Panchayat had in a personal visit to directly from the novel and efficient development projects carried on in Karakulam “one of the best Panchayat in Kerala”¹⁶⁶. Similarly a 45 member group from Arpookara Panchayat in Kottayam district including the president and four elected members visited Elappara Gram Panchayat to learn at first hand the working of Jana Jaagratha Samithi there, under the auspices of CRM¹⁶⁷. It was also reported that visits were undertaken outside Kerala, into Grama Panchayats of Kuthambakkam and Odanthurai in Tamilnadu which are known as model Panchayats in Tamilnadu. The visits were the cause of great inspiration for those who went from Kerala for the visits¹⁶⁸.

Such experiences and the favourable impact that they had, led the CapDecK to devise a wider and more systematic project of “an inter-state

¹⁶⁵ “Chila Kootayma Pravarthanangal”, SDC-CapDecK Newsletter, Issues 8, March 2006, p. 12

¹⁶⁶ “Mullenkolly Grama Panchayat, Gram Darshan 2006-07”, SDC-CapDecK Newsletter, Issues 9, March 2007, p2

¹⁶⁷ “Jaagratha Samithi Pravarthanangal Padickan Panchayathuthala Padamayathra”, SDC-CapDecK Newsletter, Issues 9, March 2007, p.6-7

¹⁶⁸ “Anubhavam Pankital Yathra”, SDC-CapDecK Newsletter, Issues 9, March 2007, p.16

Panchayat to Panchayat knowledge management programme". This one year long programme, was described as follows¹⁶⁹.

(This was) intended to have CapDecK-partner Panchayats tying up with ten Panchayats drawn from five states. The states chosen for this initiative are Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Sikkim and Tamilnadu. While the former four states are chosen based on the level of decentralisation and the roles they have played in the decentralisation process, the state of Tamilnadu is chosen as it has the additional advantage of being the neighbouring states and also has many Panchayats which have fared well. Ten SDC- CapDecK partner Panchayats are selected from Kerala and two Panchayats each from other states. Objectives (are) mutual sharing of Panchayati Raj experiences and developing comparative Panchayati Raj systems. Developing a new model of knowledge management in Panchayati Raj. Each of the ten Kerala Panchayats will have one partner Panchayat from outside the state. Thus there would be ten sets of Panchayat to Panchayat clusters. There needs to be facilitating organisations for each of the Panchayats. In the case of Kerala Panchayats, the corresponding CapDecK partner organisations will take up this responsibility. In other states, each Panchayat will have a support organisation. They will visit each other and share their experiences. This will be followed by adaptation of some of the learnings as well as provision of support by each other. During this year, there will be at least three visits by each Panchayat. There will be formal exchange of letters between these Panchayats. These will be a symbolic gesture which will build up more enthusiasm and responsibility. The SDC-CapDecK programme coordination unit [PCU] will take the initiative to bring together the Panchayats and organisations in and outside the state. The PCU will explain to them the details of the P to P initiatives. This will be followed by circulating the draft letter of Exchange for approval... By the end of June 2008, an introductory workshop of all the stakeholders will be conducted in Kerala, preferably at KILA. During this workshop the letter of Exchange will be formally signed. This will also mark the first set of visits. From each Panchayat, a maximum of three elected representatives (one should be a woman member) and one person from the facilitating organisation will be part of the team for each visit. A minimum of three visits to be made between the Panchayats during the year. During each visit, the host Panchayats will organize visits to other Panchayats, offices and institutions of relevance to local governance, which would be useful for the visitor. Each visit will have specific objectives and themes, which will help in the knowledge sharing and follow up activities. Basic literature on the status of PR in each state, special and innovative programmes, and CapDecK experiences will be prepared and shared-Documentation of the whole process has to be

¹⁶⁹ SDC-CapDecK, "Panchayat to Panchayat", Concept Note, PCU, SDC-CapDecK, Trivandrum

jointly by the Panchayat and the facilitating organisations. The organisations will also facilitate the translation during the visits. Apart from translation and documentation, the facilitating organisations will help the Panchayats in planning and organising the visits both as guest Panchayat and as host Panchayat. It is designed to be a low cost initiative with partnering Panchayats also sharing some of the expenses. The SDC-CapDecK Programme will provide second sleeper class train fare, local travel expenses, accommodation, food expenses and reading materials. It is expected that the host Panchayats mobilise certain resources like local hospitality, meeting expenses and local travel, which will also add to better ownership as well as develop relationship with the concerned Panchayats. The expenses for these visits will be met from the SDC-CapDecK concluding Phase budget. This will be disbursed to the concerned facilitating organisation based on separate budgets through consultancy contracts. There will be provisions for administrative expenses as well as for a resource person for each visit. This process will be concluded after one year at a national conference.

Such a systematic scheme for Panchayat-to- Panchayat sharing of experiences was prepared as late as July 2008. An overall spirit of support to the scheme was clear even in the FGD held with Stake Holders on 14th October 2008 at Thiruvananthapuram. Among the stake-holders who participated in the FGD there was a significant group of elected representatives who had gone on visits to other states. Some of their experiences and insights are recounted here. The group that went to Sikkim found that there was only a two-tier government system, a demand of Kerala which was not granted in the light of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. It was also found that the funds available to the LGs are limited there. In spite of it, the Panchayats visited seem to work well. In Sikkim there is 40 per cent reservation for women; different from many other states. Meanwhile a particular feature noted in Madhya Pradesh was that there is an elected Secretary for each GP. There was a good library in the GP and the office set up was kept very neat. There is a Visitor's Book and for GP decisions have to get approved by the Block Development Officer [BDO]. Apart from that all decisions are to have the signatures of every member of the GP committee. The office had 4 officers including an Auditor and a Computer Specialist. The GP Members are expected to attend office on Tuesday and Friday and they get an honorarium. In MP it was found that NGOs play a role in integrating the work of the Panchayat. In one Panchayat Broiler chicken and chemical fertilizers are banned by the GP. In MP and Gujarat there seem to be considerable women empowerment. In one Panchayat which did not even have a separate office, there were around 7 women members. In Karnataka the one Panchayat that was visited gets great support from the Government. In West Bengal at the District level the implementation of NREG was found to be carried out well¹⁷⁰. The Gujarat and MP Panchayats who visited Kerala seem to have returned with a good impression of the Kudumbashree. Similarly those who visited from Bengal payed special attention to JS. In Tamilnadu a GP which was known for its caste disputes have now a leader from

¹⁷⁰ Vernon et.al Study on NREG implementation contradicts this finding.

the Dalits who is an Engineer. He is able to produce cooking gas and electricity from Mangoes. Industrial units have been started with the intension of giving at least one person from each family with employment. As a result it seems that the influence of caste has declined in that village. The seven Panchayats that were visited in Andhra Pradesh were better than Kerala villages in the case of Public Hygiene. All the houses in there village have independent latrines. The strategy used by GPs was to move into a new region only after completing the work in the earlier region. One thing specially noted in Bengal was that local bureaucracy mainly BDOs and Doctors etc. are very committed. Special focus was given to primary education and public hygiene. There is a special scheme for piscie culture in local ponds. The peoples' representative are well-studied and they are supported by local political workers. Nevertheless, two negative points were also noted. Some of their projects are finalized without proper discussion of local possibilities. Similarly women and children in Bengal village were found to be neglected. Though such insights were gathered from P to P visits, they could not be taken up for discussions at the state level policy formulation bodies by any of the organizations involved in these visits.

7. Continuation of Regional-level Training Programmes

In addition to the PEP involvement in the six different areas mentioned in the immediately preceding section, the SDC-CapDecK continued its support to the regional or state level training programmes. The original agreement with the GOK had acknowledged the importance of such support, as already seen. The important change in SDC-CapDecK involvement into more decentralised action through GPs and POs (through PEP approach) did not mean a total rejection of the earlier commitment to regional and state level training. The new approach was to continue with the earlier one. The earlier support to training was through the KILA and it continued.

In 2007, KILA with the assistance of SDC-CapDecK brought out a publication entitled Modules for Training Local Government Functionaries.¹⁷¹ In this it is stated that the "KILA- SDC-CapDecK Phase 2 programme focuses on establishing a decentralized training system for meeting the massive capacity development demand of the different functionaries of local governments...(which) the CapDecK...was...to support...through KILA" [p.9]. The publication goes on to describe approach and strategy adopted for this, thus: [p. 9 & 10]

Establishing and operationalizing an effective decentralized training system to produce desired changes in the process and quality of governance at the local level. Establishing platforms at the state and District levels and make use of them as participatory fora for policy advocacy and sharing experiences for all the stakeholders groups in decentralization.

Facilitate the democratic organizations of local governments, such as Panchayat Associations and Municipal Chamber to exercise creative role in exercising ownership role in the democratic decentralization process.

¹⁷¹ N. Ramakantan (ed), Modules for Training Local Government Functionaries, KILA, Thrissur with the assistance of CapDecK, 2007.

Impart need-based and effective training for different stakeholders of local governance by utilizing the available training resources in the state within the stipulated time.

Further insights can be gathered from the same sources. The earlier adopted strategy for training was mainly one of cascading. This strategy was fairly well executed by the PPC. During the institutionalization phase of decentralization, KILA developed a decentralized training system for importing training for working group members and technical experts of local governments. In the process a pool of potential trainers were identified in different districts They were to work as a change agents and facilitators to transform the organizations of local governments. As part of institutionalizing the decentralization process and developing the capacity [p.11] of LGs, KILA had to take on several added responsibilities. They included

- Designing and implementation of an effective programme for capacity development.
- Developing an organization for training delivery and management.
- Development of training skills of extension faculty members and district level trainers.
- Development of user-friendly training materials
- Conducting of impact assessment and evaluation studies to provide feedback which can be utilized for reinforcement of future training programmes.

In this context KILA with the help of SDC-CapDecK undertook seven different types of training programmes. They were,

1. Training of Trainees
2. Orientation Programme for Elected Representatives.
3. Orientation Level Training for Elected Representatives.
4. Training Programme for Panchayat Employees.
5. Reinforcement Training in New Panchayat Accounting System.
6. Training Programme for Working Group members
7. Training programme for Redeployed Engineers.

Of these the trainers' training programme was meant "for the extension faculty members, newly identified trainers of the district level training team and the subject matter specialists of different development sectors". [p.11]

The Orientation Programme for Elected Representatives was designed with the belief that "training plays an important role in raising the standard of the functioning of LSGIs and in ensuring better service to the people". [p.37].

The operational Level Training for Elected Representatives was meant to give orientation to development initiatives of undertaken by elected representatives. [p.65]

The elections conducted every five years have given opportunities for new batches of elected representatives to occupy positions of power... It was found that more than 80 per cent of the representatives elected in the 2005 election were first timers. Building up the capacity of such persons was quite necessary.

In the meantime a need-assessment identified certain gaps too. Among them were the following.[P.66]

1. Lack of knowledge of procedures of Panchayat meetings.
2. The Standing committees are not effectively functioning.
3. The committees formed as part of decentralization are not functional.
4. The elected representatives have not acquired the capacity to effectively monitor and evaluate the functioning of transferred institutions.
5. The trust and cooperation between the elected representatives and the officials are not up to the desired level.
6. It has not been possible to ensure mass participation in the planning of local development projects.
7. Lack of capacity for making local governance people-friendly and transparent.

In the light of these findings the course meant to “build up knowledge and skill in the area of governance and local development”. [p.66]

In addition to these, the SDC-CapDecK brought out a Workshop Report on Formulating the 11th Five Year Plan An Action Programme for Panchayats.¹⁷² This document has stated that,

The local self-government institutions in Kerala are in the process of preparing of their 11th Five Year Plan. The quality of this exercise has to be impressed considerably to facilitate the formulation of good proposals. With this aim, a workshop was organized at Trivandrum on 21st and 22nd November, 2006. The workshop discusses the ways and means of using the guidelines issues by the state government for formulating a five year plan in a transparent and effective manner. This report contains the Action Programme prepared by 45 elected representatives from 24 Gram Panchayats, 20 personnel from 10 organisations and 8 resource persons. The understanding is that this Action Programme can be modified in accordance with the changes in the guidelines made by the state government from time to time.

Typical of the style of functioning of the PEP, the preparation of the Action Programme was also by a representative group participating in its whole preparation. The attendance at the Workshop itself would have contributed to CD of the particular participants. In addition there was a document created which could be further utilized in other CD and training programmes.

It has been said elsewhere that¹⁷³

Institutions of LSGs and the process of LS Governance can become very important means of effective grassroots and community level democratization, participation and accountability. Decentralization of Governments, devolution of power, administration, and financial resources help to strengthen the delivery, effectiveness and accountability of common goods and services. Innovative practices like Participatory Planning (eg. Kerala in India) and

¹⁷² Formulating the 11th Five Year Plan An Action Programme for Panchayats, (Report on Workshop), SDC-CapDecK Thiruvananthapuram, 2007, ‘Foreword’

¹⁷³ John Samuel, Reclaiming Governance. Towards a Just and Democratic World, Vichara Book No.14, Mavelikkara, (n.d) p.64-5.

Participatory Budgeting (eg. Porto Alegre in Brazil) help to make governance work at the grassroots level through substantive participation of citizens and public accountability at community level. While many of the governments across the world tend to move towards decentralization and LGs, there is indeed a space and opportunity for citizens to expand spaces for participation, accountability responsive governance. However, in the absence of effective devolution of power or finances, local self governments and decentralization become empty rhetoric to serve the interest of central governments and powerful bureaucracies.

The regional training programmes continued by KILA with the active assistance of SDC-CapDecK were meant to help such a process. It was acknowledged in another publication of KILA¹⁷⁴

...the success of democratic decentralisation largely depends on the thrust given to proper capacity building. In Kerala, funds, functions and functionaries were devolved to the local bodies first, and then the capacity building exercise was started. This 'big bang' approach of devolution in the state led to massive capacity building activities at various levels. The performance problems were partly caused by lack of proper capacity building...Kerala... witnessed massive capacity building activities throughout the length and breadth of the state. The campaign cell, exclusively constituted for this purpose by the SPB, provided leadership to a wide range of capacity building programmes. In the institutional phase, the capacity building activities were entrusted with KILA. Drawing lessons from the campaign period, KILA offered a variety of programmes. The foremost in this regard is the establishment of decentralised training system. With the support of CapDecK Project, Training Centres were established in all the districts. KILA also started long-term and short-term courses. Simultaneously, special training programmes for SC, ST and women were also organised. The ambit of training extended to cover also the legislators. The political party leaders, National Service Scheme Programme Officers and the Media also came under the purview of KILA's training activities. As per the request of other states and neighbouring countries, national and international courses were started.

SDC supports the CapDecK project for establishing a decentralised training system with the involvement of the Panchayat Association. The CapDecK's second phase was primarily centered around establishment of decentralised training system.

On October 2, 2005 the newly elected members to new LGs assumed office. There were 20554 elected representatives in all the SLGIs. There were about about 10000 ministerial staff and another transferred officials around 75000 to be trained. There were another one lakh volunteers and experts associated with local planning. It was not possible to train such a big number of people in two or three state level training

¹⁷⁴ PP Balan, 'Preface', in PP Balan, Capacity Building for Strengthening Local Governance. The Kerala Experience, KILA, Thrissur, 2006.

institutions alone. Training could not be restricted to a one time affair alone. In order to ensure comprehensive coverage and develop the requisite capacities within the stipulated time frame, decentralised capacity building efforts are inevitable. Without decentralized training facilities the very objective of need-based, time-bound, concurrent and quality training of the entire functionaries of local governments could not be achieved. The decentralised training was aimed at bridging the gap between the desired and actual level of performance of different functionaries of local governments. The roles and responsibilities of these institutions were redefined. Efforts were taken to avoid duplication and contradiction. LGs were consulted in preparing the training programme and in the identifying trainers, in the decentralised training programmes. The decentralised training system increased the accessibility of the training participants. The greater accessibility reduced both the inconvenience and the cost and facilitated increased participation. Different functionaries could participate in the district level training without affecting normal work schedule of LGs. The success of the decentralised training system depends mostly on the quality of the district level training team. This selection was based upon communication skill, command over the subject, rapport with the different categories of the training population, method and style of presentation, ability to use participatory learning methods, quality of interaction with learners etc. District Implementing Institutions [DIIs] were identified with infrastructural facilities. There was also a mechanism for evaluation and validation. This evaluation mechanism assesses the feedback of the training participants on the effectiveness of the learning activities in training. There is collaborative responsibility for Nodal institution and DIIS in training evaluation.

TABLE: IV:1. Decentralised Training During October 2005 to March 2006

Sl.No	District	Name of the DII
1.	Thiruvananthapuram	KESNIK
2.	Kollam	BBF
3.	Pathanamthitta	BODHANA
4.	Alappuzha	SEUF
5.	Kottayam	AMOS Centre
6.	Idukki	Periyar Foundation
7.	Ernakulam	YMCA
8.	Thrissur	KILA
9.	Palakkad	PSSP
10.	Malappuram	MIED
11.	Kozhikode	COD
12.	Wayanad	SHREYAS
13.	Kannur	ETC. Thalipparambu
14.	Kasaragode	RARS

Apart from decentralised training systems, new institutional innovations was also formed necessary. 'Platforms for Local Governance' were formed as a result of this specific need. This was done with the active participation of all local

governments. It brought together the Associations of Panchayats, representatives of employees organisations, and community organizations. They served as overall coordinating and steering bodies. The platforms could provide opportunities for sharing experiences between different stakeholders, Feedback was provided to the policy making group for taking decisions for improvement in local governance.

Another facility which was introduced was the Helpline System. Helpline were established in district headquarters. Each Helpline consisted of 5-7 voluntary experts, who were to help solve the difficulties faced by PR functionaries over the phone.¹⁷⁵

Questions can be put to the Helpline experts either in writing or over the telephone Answers were to be given on the spot or as early as possible after consultation with the relevant decision makers. Information available with the Helpline experts is updated occasionally through workshops at the nodal institution. Frequently asked questions and answers given were recorded and they were published in the form of bulletins.

The aforementioned services were added on the belief that capacity building cannot be limited to a few episodes of training alone. Capacity building is envisaged as a multi-faceted exercises which should result in overall effective functioning of local government institutions. Training is only one of the factors, in the comprehensive scheme. This also needs to be periodically repeated. It should be a process in which trainers and trainees are involved in a common inter-learning situation. The new comprehensive scheme is based on the experience of the past ten years. This is designed also in support of the policy of the Kerala government to institutionalise a decentralised training system. KILA, has already established a training networking system with the partner institutions. Panchayat Association with its impressive base in Kerala Society had also developed its own capacity building programmes. Another body which also participated in capacity development was Training Advisory Council, formed at the district level and headed by the Chairperson of the DPC. Considerable number of local governments already developed many good practices in various fields like health, primary education, community-based water supply, sanitation, micro-enterprises of self help groups, housing, education, biodiversity, microhydel project, agriculture, tourism and poverty reduction. There are many other success stories in community management, resource mobilisation, people's participation, transparency and accountability. These good practices and successful models are to be documented and offer for reengineering current strategies and approaches. This is also the need to institutionalize them by sealing them up among LGs. The 'Panchayat to

¹⁷⁵ Ibid p.25

Panchayat' programme mentioned earlier has already helped to disseminate information of projects of excellence. Once the adoptable models are identified, then on its basis case studies can be prepared and documented for replication, considering cost-effectiveness and quality of projects ¹⁷⁶. The insights gained from them can then be disseminated information through organising seminars and workshops at the state level.

Feedback of citizens are collected and reflected upon effectively it can help considerably in improving the performance of LSGs. Therefore KILA introduced a new service called Citizen Satisfaction Survey on Service Delivery¹⁷⁷. Such information is gathered from the Grama Sabha meetings held once in every three months. In the plenary session every Grama Sabha. The participants can put forth their views on the functioning of LSG and make suggestions for its improvement. They can also express opinion on the improvement of quality and adequacy of the services provided by the local governments. The information collected thus was limited in the sense that the opinions we collected only as personal views of some of the participants. Even though the concept of social audit is discussed widely, a methodology has not yet been evolved. The elected members who are always in contact with the people should be knowing their views of the services provided to them by LGs. But depending upon the opinion of the elected members may also reflect their personal views, which cannot be discussed authentically in open forums. It is in this context that KILA initiated the use of Citizen Report Cards for registering public opinion on services received as a pilot programme. Surveys were carried out in Cochin Corporation, Thalassery and Kottayam Municipalities, Kolazhy, Avoly, Keezhuparambu, Kadaplamattom, Mangattidam, Pandalam and Agali Grama Panchayats. Technical support was provided by the Public Affairs Foundation, Bangalore. The Citizen Report Card (CRC) is and effective tool to provide feedback from users of public services. They provide feedback through sample surveys on service quality that users know best. CRCs also provide an empirical "bottom-up" assessment of the reach and benefit of specific reforms measures. It helps to identify the key constraint that the poor face in acquiring public services. A random sample survey of the users of different public services can also be had from it. It can be used to develop rating service on the basis of aggregation of user's experience. CRC can also provide a bench mark on quality of public services. Hence they can place each issues in the perspective of other elements of service design and delivery. The feedback provided by the CRC is simple in terms by indicating their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Information provided by CRC are not merely a means of collecting feedback.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid p.124

¹⁷⁷ Ibid p,164

They can be used as a means for testing out different options that citizens wish to exercise.

As part of the changes brought about along with the PPC or coinciding with them, several measures were introduced to ensure transparency and accountability. Among them were the Right to Information Act, Citizen Charter, Ombudsman, Appellate Tribunals, and Social Auditing.¹⁷⁸ The CD programmes took these varied measures also into account. The District level platforms provided for by the KILA along with the Panchayat Associations also helped to¹⁷⁹ “increase ownership PRI functionaries and made them useful and effective to meet demands of LGs.”

In the early stage of Training the campaign cell of the SPB got involved in all aspects right from designing the training policy to assessment of the training. The training need was assessed on the basis of the learning experience of the local level planning exercise. This was done on the basis of experiments organised by the KSSP in some LSGIs. The master trainers were identified by SPB in consultation with DPC. SPB put down the condition that the master trainers should have proven capability for facilitating training programmes and adult learning process. Retired officers and those in service were identified by the DPCs with the assistance of DP Officers and Line Department Officers. The massive CD Programme was not in fact carried out by ‘professionals’ and ‘full timers’...

A document brought out by the SDC-CapDeck gives us insights into a different type of CD programme.

“[the PEP], from 2004 to 2006... supported 71 Grama Panchayats... through 15 POs. At present, the extended stage of the programme has 10 such POs supporting 31 GPs. During these three years, each partnership has generated a lot of experiences and developed models. If properly documented, these might be of use to other panchayats in the state and country as a whole. In fact, the programme had envisaged documentation as an important activity. Though the reports are being generated all through these years, the Review and Monitoring workshop of the [PE] Programme had identified the need for improving the skills of POs for better documentation and report writing. It is in this context that the PCU of SDC-CapDeck took up the task of facilitating this Training cum workshop on report writing and documentation... individual documentation personnel were nominated by each of the Partner Agencies...” They were trained in such a way as to be able to produce quality documents. They were to

¹⁷⁸ N. Ramakanthan, “Panchayat Raj System and Democratic Decentralization in Kerala”, in M. Retna Raj (ed) [PP Balan, Chief Editor], Decentralised Governance and Poverty Reduction, Lessons from Kerala, KILA Thrissur, 2006, 70-71.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid p. 75

have “table of contents. There is a clear flow discernible in the document; Having, Attractive or Memorable, Ensuring that the attractive or marketable points of the programme are presented in a memorable fashion. Uses a variety of visual devices such as text boxes, pictures, tables, graphic... The single most effective method of ensuring Believability or Realism in a document prepared by an NGO is to use cases to illustrate specific points”¹⁸⁰.

In a discussion on Capacity Development for Local Government, Satyajit Singh has pointed out that,¹⁸¹

...the issue of capacity support should not be restricted to only technical approach of strengthening capacity of local governments. A capacity programme should also be aware of the political economy in which it functions and identify key interventions specific to local conditions to sustain the process of devolution. Decentralization constitutes an institutional change that is conducive to expanding the representations of those who gain from reforms. These emerging beneficiaries need to form political alliances to counter the centralizing forces in the society. At the same time, instead of treating the erstwhile beneficiaries as foes they need to find mechanisms by which they could have fruitful political and economic relationships with the losers of the reform process as well”. This would mean that decentralization efforts should find ways to build effective organs for participation and accountability at the local level. There must be expectations of higher levels of public participation, transparency and accountability. It should also present local elite capture. This inevitably leads to a dilemma. Elites are required for the success of local government because they are capable of bringing resources and knowledge networks which are necessary for the success of local government... The rich may have better internal and external networks and they may use these networks to reproduce unequal systems of domination as Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1990 and 1998) have said. The poor on the other hand have less powerful networks which help them to cope with the vicissitudes of life. The rich should not be allowed to exclude the masses from local institutions. Otherwise there will be serious problems of equality responsiveness and corruption.

Therefore institutions that enhance participation, accountability and transparency at the local level have to be created. Putnam has argued that trust, norms and networks alone can bring about such results. Obviously he does not give so great an importance to power relations Bourdieu on the other hand makes a direct relationship between power and social relationships, in analyzing social relationships and resource use.

¹⁸⁰ Documentation Workshop, 19th to 21st December, 2006, Kovalam, Thiruvananthapuram, SDC-CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, n.d.

¹⁸¹ Satyajit Singh, “Introduction”, in Satyajit Singh and Pradeep K Sharma [eds], Decentralization, Institutions and Politics in Rural India, OUP, New Delhi, 2007, p.23

It is important decentralization produce mechanisms to mediate relationships between the national, state and local level governance. From several quarters opinions are raised as to the failure of local governance but it needs to be pointed out that there is a need for capacity building at the national and state level too. For this the primary requirement is a clear redefinition of national, state and local functions. Decentralization has to develop "interlocal organizational synergies at the community level". Such networks facilitate local governance by, [a] helping mobilization of additional resources [b] enhancing the accountability and [c] developing synergies as disconnected structures are pooled into a common framework. There fore the concept of capacity development is not to be confined to development of human resources and their management. It should also contain strategic design of institutions at different levels. It should facilitate management of relationships with professional groups and individuals who can assist local governments. By reorganizing the CD programme; especially at refined level training KILA-SDC-CapDecK were attempting these additional factors. The time is yet not ripe to see whether such changes will result from such efforts.

Since institutionalization of decentralization was meant to be one of the major targets, the implication of institutionalism has also to be looked at closely. Chandra.B.P. Singh has said that ,¹⁸²

An organisation is relevant for a period of time during which target has to be achieved through a set of relevant relationships and resources. When the target is achieved, all these relationships and resources and even the organisation itself do not matter for the society. Institutionalisation, on the other hand, means infusion with values beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand. Once established, an institution embodies, fosters, and protects normative relationship and action patterns and performs functions and services which are valued in the environment... It is still a debatable matter whether PR in India has received the status of an institutions... The birth of an institution is not a crystallization of needs of people of an area. It is more often an outcome of a fit between needs of the people and political expediency of leaders.

There are obviously other alternatives to CD than training alone. The Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency [SIDA] used the distinctive methods of 'Twinning' to promote institutional capacity building in development cooperation.¹⁸³

Twinning was used as an alternative for the conventional form of development co-operation known as technical assistance. In technical assistance the provision of physical infrastructure is accompanied by formal education and training. Technical assistance was 'delivered' by specialists. Learning of new knowledge and skills were provided at the individual level, on the hop that that this would lead to enhanced performance both the individual and organizational levels. There was little evidence of this happening. Twinning tried to shift the

¹⁸² Chandra B.P.Singh, "Institutionalising Panchayat System in India", Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol.44, no.4, 1998, p.825.

¹⁸³ Merrick L. Jones and Peter Blunt, "'Twinning' as a method of sustainable institutional capacity building", Public Administration and Development, 19, 1999, 384.

emphasis from development of individuals to strengthening of organizations and institutions. SIDA created partnership between organizations of similar objectives in developing countries and Sweden. Further a new conceptual framework has also emerged in which the notion of organizational learning is incorporated. It holds on to the perception that only organizations that are capable of learning will be able to survive in a world of accelerating change. Two institutions with the same or similar tasks in their respective countries are expected to create a more dynamic atmosphere' and they can learn from each other through sharing experiences. The importance of mutual learning between the organizations is established at the beginning of projects itself. Agencies are in this context in a better position to produce persuasive arguments about project or programme targets. The restructured Regional training programme and P to P learning programme could be the basis for a Twining like intervention in CD in Kerala, in the long run.

Further we learn from other national level experiences too. For instance it is said in the context of Colombia that¹⁸⁴

competition for political office opened the possibilities for responsible and innovative leadership. It became the driving force for capacity building efforts. The resultant community participation expanded the range of possibilities open to local governments, and became the premises to sustain capacity over time. It has also been found in Colombia that small LGs experience capacity limits; particularly in terms of hiring a cadre of professionals, due to insufficient scale. Lack of dissemination of information on best practices and alternatives, forces them into the position of "reinventing the wheel". There could remain doubts and uncertainties regarding a rapidly expanding legal and regulatory framework. In other words problems faced by LGs in Kerala and far away Colombia do not look very different. The potential of the methods adopted in Kerala becomes amply clear in the context of such inter-national comparison. What it shows is that Capacity is to be understood as an enabling factor: At the local level, tools that make possible for local level government to perform successfully should be provided.

Such insights, including that of possibilities inherent in competition for political office has been found by an organization in Kerala too; the CRM, Kottayam, one of the POs of the SDC-CapDecK in PEP. When the staff of the CRM was asked to mention two important findings of the PE activities over the past one and a half years, they answered that there is the need for "politicisation of Panchayati Raj". What they found was that,¹⁸⁵

Local units of political parties must become more active and effective to promote the strength of Panchayat Raj institutions. Finding suitable candidates for contesting the election, preparing them for the contest, granting of the party symbol, issue of a manifesto highlighting local development issues, meeting of

¹⁸⁴ Ariel Fiszbein, "The Emergence of Local Capacity: Lessons from Colombia", World Development, Vol.25, No.7, 1997.

¹⁸⁵ CRM, Kottayam, "Politicisation of Panchayati Raj", SDC-CapDecK Newsletter, Issue 7, April, 2006, p.7.

the parliamentary party after the election, strategy to be adopted in the election of President/Vice-President, election of Chairman of Standing Committee, on all these matters and the active presence of political parties is absolutely essential.

The KILA with the assistance of SDC-CapDecK also brought out learning materials for the various training programmes. One set was Panchayat Administration Hand Book Series of 5 Volumes. It was pointed out therein,¹⁸⁶ stressing the need for Civic consciousness for local level leadership that

The development funds of all local governments put together almost equal to that the state government. The ones of local economic development ensuring social justice and welfare now lies with the LGs. The civic role of LGs has given way to administrative and development role... In order to perform their functions mandated by the Constitution the Elected Representatives must develop their knowledge, skill, attitude and commitment. Professional administrative skill has become inevitable in the local governance of Kerala, as it is model for other states in India that is gradually ensuring as a developed country...

Such perceptions are accompanied by specific skills and strategies disseminated through regional level training. For instance basic points to be taken into account in adult learning were presented through a handbook on Training of Trainers.¹⁸⁷ It explained learning methods helpful in adult learning as well as on a participatory approach. This was widely used by Training Faculty who were to train others. A study Report on Emerging Issues in Panchayati Raj in Kerala was brought out as early as 2003.¹⁸⁸ This study brought out 6 issues. They were the following

1. Panchayati Raj - Understanding, ownership and Participation of the People
2. Changing Roles, Powers and Responsibilities of Elected Representatives
3. Issues Related to Transparency Accountability and Quality of Delivery of Public Services
4. Gender in Decentralization
5. Issues related to weaker Sections and
6. Non-Governmental support system.

The study became the starting point for PEP. The PEP followed more or less these issues. Within these issues there was local level involvement as well as regional and state level training. For the training as well as for assisting local governance in various fields different handbooks, Manuals and other collections were prepared. The Sakhi Women's Resource Centre prepared a Manual [Draft] on Gender Planning, Budgeting

¹⁸⁶ N.Ramakanthan, 'Preface', in Panchayat General Administration, Vol.1, of the Handbook Series on Panchayat Administration, KILA, Thrissur, with the assistance of SDC-CapDecK, 2007, Other Volumes in this Series are Decentralised Local Planning [vol.2], Finance Management [Vol.3] Public Works [Vol.4] and Welfare and Development Programmes [Vol.5].

¹⁸⁷ KILA-CapDecK Programme, Pariseelakarude Pariseelanam Kaipusthakam, KILA, Thrissur, 2005 [ed. By N.Ramakanthan and P.Ahamed]

¹⁸⁸ Emerging Issues in Panchayati Raj in Kerala. A Study Report, CSES, CRM, SDC-CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram, [2003] Reprint, 2007

and Auditing¹⁸⁹ for the DSP of the Department of LSG., which was widely used in this programme. Similarly the GPK, Karakulam brought out a handbook on General Administration which was also widely used.¹⁹⁰ The same group also brought out another useful learning material on PR Regional Integration of Activities.¹⁹¹ Further more than one collection of GOs regarding decentralisation was also brought out.¹⁹²

Obviously, the conformity legislation at the state level to the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution demanded a major restructuring of the administrative system. A number of amendments to various Acts and Rules pertaining to PR institutions were made. In spite of them, a lot more is yet to be done for genuine transformation of PRIs into LSGIs. Such a transformation cannot be achieved by training alone. There should also be constant monitoring of the decentralised administrative system. For the analysis of it, a core team consisting of S.M.Vijayanand [then Member Secretary, KSPB], P.Kamalakutty [then Secretary Department of LSG] and Sarada Muraleedharan [then Director Collegiate Education] as Convenor, and with representation from KILA, IMG, SIRD, KSPB and Director of Panchayats was formed. Under their auspices,¹⁹³

Workshops were organised in 29 selected GPs, 13 Blocks and 1 DP... Elected representatives, implementing officers, personnel of panchayat offices, activities and volunteers participated in these workshops. Training for organising the workshops at the panchayat level was held at IMG...pilot workshops were organised in four GPs... Extension faculty members of KILA as facilitators took the lead in discussions in the workshops at the panchayat level... Personnel from transferred departments and other departments/agencies related to decentralised system of administration participated in these workshops... These workshops were conducted under the guidance of KILA, IMG and SIRD. All those workshops were conducted using a semi structured questionnaire consisting of 92 topics related to decentralised administrative system... In these discussions, problems that exist in each topic were to be pointed out by the participants followed by reasons for the same. The groups had to suggest appropriate remedial measures too. More than 5000 participants from 43 PRIs, 18 departments and other participated in these workshops.

¹⁸⁹ Sakhi Women's Resource Centre, Gender Planning, Budgeting and Auditing [Manual [Draft], Gender Mainstreaming in Local Level Planning and Implementation, DSP Mission, Dept. of LSG, Govt. of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram. 2006.

¹⁹⁰ GPK, Karakulam, Kerala Thadhesa Bharana Vyavasthanam-Janakeeya Janadhipathys Udyamam [PDIL-K], Kaipusthakam, Pothu Bharanam, Trivandrum, 2006-07.

¹⁹¹ GPK, Karakulam, Panchayat Raj, Pravarthana Meghala Akopanalum Utharavadhithe Nirvahanavum, Vividha Kamittikaliude, [with assistance of SDC-CapDecK], Trivandrum, 2007.

¹⁹² KILA, Vikendreekathroosanumayi Bendhappetta Circar Utharumkalum Cicularukalum, KILA-CapDecK Programme, Thrissur, 2005. KILA, Adhikara Vikendreekaranam Circar Utharumkalum Cicularukalum, Part I, II and III, published with the assistance of SDC- CapDecK, Thrissur, 2007

¹⁹³ Decentralised Administrative system. An Analysis, CapDecK-KILA, Thiruvananthapuram [First Malayalam Ed, 2002] Reprint in English in 2007, p.7.

The consolidated report of suggestions from these workshops served as a very useful learning material. It went a long way in strengthening the process of democratic decentralisation in Kerala. Similarly, in 2004 September, a workshop from sharing of experiences on PR system was held at Kovalam. This workshop which was attended by 42 participants from various organisations and their insights shared was consolidated in a report ¹⁹⁴ which also helped greatly in training/CD as learning material.

In spite of different types of training provided for LG personnel problems still remain. D.Narayana a close observer of the Kerala LG scene has pointed out that ¹⁹⁵

“In Kerala, the panchayat presidents are very clear about their role in providing services and developing panchayat plans and implementing them. They actively look into the maintenance of buildings, housings these institutions, regular attendance of the staff and other infrastructure needs. However, the president do not make efforts to set right the functioning of the high schools or primary health [PHC] as these institutions do not come under the administrative control of gram panchayat. Even when they do, as with PHCs in Kerala, the Panchayat Presidents are not able to do much to improve their functioning showing that the lower bureaucracy is easier to deal with but not middle or higher bureaucracy”.

7. Other Programmes.

Besides the seven broad areas in which the SDC-CapDecK actively intervened during its PEP phase, there are several other involvements which also deserves special mention.

In Vilappil Panchayat of Thiruvananthapuram city is one of the remaining green belts near the urbanizing settlements. The corporation managed to establish a waste dumping ground in the Panchayat. This has become a serious threat to the drinking water available and public health of the people in the area. The contamination of water in wells around the waste management plant is severe. Since 2000, three of the wards experienced drought conditions. This has caused problems to the farming community including those dependent on animal husbandry. SEWA-Kerala is a women’s organisation initiated in 1983 in Trivandrum. SEWA grew was formed out of a need of women who were loosing work in traditional occupations like agriculture, basket making and fish rending. SEWA, has been questioning the ongoing development paradigm The concept of a sustainable settlement was found inevitable to development where life and livelihood are central concerns. The programme ‘Towards Establishing Norms for Sustainable Settlements’, which was evolved in this context, focused only in a few wards in the beginning. The objective of this programme consisted of, “1. Develop a process of evolving norms fro sustainable settlements in the Panchayat through the creation of a citizen’s Forum... 2. Develop in a participatory manner a

¹⁹⁴ Panchayati Raj Samvidhanam, Anubhavan Pankital Silpasala, [2004, September, 9, 10, 11, Animation Centre, Kovalam], SDC-CapDecK, Pathanamthitta, 2004.

¹⁹⁵ D.Narayana, “Local Governance without Capacity Building, Ten Years of Panchayati Raj”, Economic and Political Weekly, June 25, Vol.XL, No.24, 2005, p.28-31

Women's Development Report... 3. Create individual and collective models of biomass-based livelihoods and local markets... 4. Provide skill upgradation for plumbers and tailors and assist the Panchayat to develop a technical service agency that will provide local employment and also meet urban requirements (including) project aimed at encouraging greater participation in local level planning and decision-making and bringing transparency to Panchayat programmes...

Eventually the citizen's forum prepared rules and regulations to have a sustainable settlement pattern through extensive discussions.¹⁹⁶ The rules and regulations covered agriculture, water, energy, mining, labour and human resources, health, animal husbandry, waste disposal, hygiene, social security, housing and security of women.

A similar effort was attempted in Palakkad under the leadership of MAITHRI. On 4-5, March, 2006 a workshop was held with the assistance of SDC-CapDecK on Rural settlement system [Grameena Avasa Vyavastha].¹⁹⁷ Elected representatives, President of Block and Grama Panchayat, officers from different departments and activists of voluntary organisations attended the same. At this workshop Joy Elamon said that rural settlement system means the circumstances [Sahacharyam] of people's living. The basis of this concept is the activities of GPs according to 243GII schedule of the 74th [or 73rd] Constitutional Amendment. The concept includes, housing, drinking water, health, livelihood methods, hygiene, social security and social status. It goes beyond a mere concept of a house. The Palakkad District Planning officer Mr. Gregory argued that the inter-relationships between these factors are to be understood and the possibilities in this area should be integrated. The plights of Adivasi's living conditions including houses designed for them are good examples of the failure of internalising such a concept even in back welfare measures. If self-sufficiency can be achieved in the use of products made in the locality and if that objective also becomes target of planning, it is to be the first step towards development. What the Adivasis deserve is the maintenance of a culture which is in harmony with their environment.

One interesting aspect of this workshop was that it employed P-to-P methodology of learning. Mr. Elango President of the Kothambakkam GP from TN shared his experiences with the workshop participants. Though he was dismissed from GP President's position by the District Collector in 1998, he adopted Sathyagraha and M. Karunannidhi, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu himself enquired into the matter and reinstated him. Using new technology under his leadership, houses, lavatories and enterprises were built up. Using sandblocks 315 houses have been built. Street lamps, water pumps and lavatories were also built by using technologies which are cost reducing. This was of great interest and inspiration to all those who participated in the workshop.

¹⁹⁶ Thadheseeyaral Nirdeshikkapetta Susthira Adhivasa Vigavasthayude Niyamangalum Chattangalum, [Susthira Vilappil Paripadiyude Bhagamayi Vilappil Panchayathum Sewayum Samyukthamayi Prasadheekarikumathi] (supported by CapDecK), Thiruvananthapuram, 2007.

¹⁹⁷ "Grameena Avasa Vyavastha", [Report], SDC-CapDecK Newsletter, Issue 7, April, 2006, p.9-13.

There are many other such innovative programmes which are worth reporting. In addition new and innovative involvements leading to additional insights have also been undertaken by POs with the cooperation of GPs and assistance of SDC-CapDecK. The CRM reports the following,¹⁹⁸

A memorandum of understanding [MOU] was signed between the Vadavannur GP and the Faculties of Botany and Environment and water Management of SN College, Alathur, for carrying out a panchayat-level micro study on quantitative and qualitative assessment of solid waste at Vadavannur GP...

[<http://www.thehindu.com/2007/03/04/stories/2007030411781500.html>] ... A MOU was signed between the Kollengode GP and the Water Education Centre of NSS college, Nenmara to study the presence and impact of fluoride in drinking water sources at select wards of GP and the BP...
[<http://www.thehindu.com/2007/02/15/stories/20070215111503000.html>]

While transfer of Tribal Sub Plan [TSP] funds to Panchayats has resulted in reasonably good development of STS, the fund utilisation in Kottayam was found quite low. A field survey carried out by 'Genealogy' method revealed that there were actually 137 tribal households against officially recorded 36. The rest could not take advantage in the absence of proper caste certificates. This finding after validation by Panchayat is under consideration of Government. ["Decentralisation Community", se-decn@solutionexchange-un.net.in]

¹⁹⁸ Strengthening Panchayat Raj Institutions, Search for Allies [SPRISA], CRM, supported by SDC-CapDecK, 2007

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Capacity Development for Decentralization in Kerala, (CapDecK) was a joint programme of the Human and Institutional Development Sphere of Swiss Agency for Development and Corporation (SDC) with the Kerala State Planning Board (KSPB) and the Local Self Government Department (LSGD) of the Government of Kerala. The first phase of this programme under the supervision of a Joint Project Committee was in operation from January 2000 to 2003. The Programme got extended and continued till 2009. It was due to the end of 2007, that this project on Documenting Experiences of the CapDecK was initiated. The Documentation work itself got delayed, purely due to preoccupations of the author and it got completed only in 2009.

The first phase of CapDecK was essentially concentrated upon Capacity Development of all stake holders in a state wide Campaign for People's Planning initiated by the Government of Kerala to promote participatory planning and through it democratic decentralization. It was in the context of the enormity of the requirements of capacity development which was faced by the People's Planning Campaign (PPC) initiated in 1996, that the SDC was approached by the KSPB. In the first phase of the CapDecK; from 2000 to 2003, it concentrated mainly upon capacity development through training. Various training approaches and methodologies were used during the period. Institutionally it was the aim of the CapDecK to strengthen the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) and help it to develop as a nodal agency for such training. In that process it was also aimed to institutionalize training and through it capacity development programme. Once again, institutionalization of training meant transfer of responsibilities from the People's Planning Campaign Cell (PPCC) constituted in the KSPB to immediately oversee training requirements of the People's Planning Campaign (PPC), to the KILA in association with other institutions and organizations. The transfer of training responsibilities also meant that they be streamlined according to need-based requirements arising from the field level. Therefore, while the transfer aimed at establishing a more organized and systematic training programme and approach, it also was designed to be flexible and manoeurable.

The second chapter of this Report briefly concentrates upon this early phase of the CapDecK. In the context of the transition from the PPCC of the KSPB to KILA supported by CapDecK, the training programme undertook to locate the following factors. They were, skill and knowledge deficits among different groups, priorities in training needs, reasons for low attendance in certain training exercises, impact of different training programmes, usefulness of training materials including handbooks, suitability of different training methodologies, background of main groups of trainees and availability of decentralized infrastructure at the District level. Using internal documents produced by the CapDecK and related organizations, and through in depth conversations held with 25 stake-holders of the PPC and 15 observers and participants, the question whether the aforementioned general and specific objectives were realized or not, was checked. The present Report is meant to be only a comprehensive documentation of experiences and not any kind of evaluation. Therefore these sources of

information were tapped as late as 2008 on what happened well before 2003, purely in order to recollect and recreate at least the important aspects of what occurred.

Even after taking into consideration several inbuilt deficiencies in an attempt to recollect past events mainly upon present perceptions, it nevertheless indicated some interesting points. Considering the sheer enormity of the training requirements, transition from the PPCC supervision to the responsibility of CapDecK assisted by KILA and other institutes, seem to have happened smoothly and without any major hitches. The transfer itself had to be speeded up due to external happenings, such as a Regime-change in state politics. Since the KSPB got reorganized under new personnel, it was perceived to have limited the freedom of operation within the Board that the CapDecK had. In any case the CapDecK had to move into new premises outside the KSPB. Yet in terms of the important transition of supervisory responsibilities, these aspects do not seem to have had much impact.

As it was mentioned already, one can only speculate upon the possible reasons. One of the main reasons seems to be a type of personality based explanation based upon the Chief Programme Coordinator of the CapDecK. His style of operations, which were necessarily low-keyed, and behind-the-scene and which coincided almost perfectly with the apparent requirements of the SDC seems to have played a major role in such a smooth transfer. His ability to renegotiate an equally significant position within the new political and administrative dispensation at the state level, for the CapDecK, as it had earlier, was certainly important. This kind of ability to negotiate was based upon the level of efficiency and usefulness of the CapDecK team operating at the state level which seem to have impressed upon the new managers of the official decentralization programme. The continuity of the programme involvement that could be established through the continuation of the same personnel, who carried on from the early days of the PPC, the PPCC days, to the post-PPCC days and to almost the very end of the CapDecK programme, was significant. The CapDecK was singularly fortunate in the selection of personnel to manage it. The fact that the same persons who held responsible positions in the PPC, before and after the CapDecK entered the scene and that they continued even after the change in political leadership is certainly important.

The performance of the CapDecK personnel alone could not have resulted in such a story of successful continuity. The new political and administrative leadership that came to make decisions within Kerala also played a conducive role. Their attitude and resultant approach to the CapDecK were indeed greatly helpful for maintaining continuity and smooth functioning. Along with it, there seem to have been a high level of cooperation between agencies involved in executing Capacity Development in Decentralization. Since, all these developments were in favour of the CapDecK functioning smoothly and efficiently. Its position along with other official governmental agencies like the KSPB, LSGD, KILA and other institutions was never in doubt. It was certainly over and above that of an associate as indicated by the agreement on the basis of which the joint programme between KSPB and the SDC-CapDecK was working.

On the negative side of such a work arrangement is several defects that were located in the training aspect, which were located both by other observers and by this

reports too. The responsibilities of both general as well as specific defects found in training have to be accepted by CapDecK along with other official agencies. More than narrating these defects, what looked more important was that whether the CapDecK as an agency involved in training was self reflexive or not. Obviously there were various evaluative measures built into its working, through which such deficits could be located and worked upon. There are indications that those measures were resolved to. As a result there were specific actions to avoid knowledge defects among main functionaries seem to have taken. Nevertheless the idea of Performance Budgeting to a lesser extent and Social Audit to a greater extent seems not to have been conveyed as effectively as wished for. They still remain as major areas to be fully realized in decentralization. Similarly one is left with the feeling that in spite of very serious efforts taken in that direction, the targets of development and empowerment of Tribal people as an end-result could not be realized to any substantial extent.

Counting specific achievements and defects is not an important function of this report. On the whole, the CapDecK seem to have negotiated through a period of major political and administrative transition well enough to carry out its assigned functions. Among other factors which have already been mentioned, the way in which the collaborative agreement between KSPB and SDC was designed and executed should also be counted as a major supportive factor. Behind all these the idea of decentralized planning was obviously timely when it was adopted in Kerala; and it received substantial support across political divides- which was also considerable. Nevertheless, there was not an impressive success in decentralization measured in terms of devolution in Kerala, in spite of such a major campaign for people's planning. The natural question to be raised in this context is whether decentralized planning alone could have brought about administrative decentralization or not. One could only say that in spite of some defects still remaining that the sheer enormity and boldness of the scheme for decentralization through planning and the way in which they were attempted in Kerala was creditworthy. CapDecK among other agencies can certainly claim a significant share of the credit.

This report is meant mainly to document the post 2003 experiences of CapDecK. We, nevertheless, went into the earlier phase because it had major impact upon what happened later on. Firstly it set the background for later activities. Secondly they were to have left quite legible marks upon later planning as well as execution of programmes; since they were not following any systematically prepared plot or plan. In such circumstances the experiences of the same agency before and after 2003 cannot be strictly divided and analysed separately. After all, 2003 is an year to be reckoned with in such a stocktaking only because it was in that year that CapDecK got extension and it reoriented itself. Even such an administrative decision of the CapDecK could not be neatly separated into two distinctive phases. There was a dynamic and integrated relationship between the two phases. It was found better to trace whatever changes which occurred to or adopted by CapDecK in 2003 from shift in emphasis.

In the second phase the CapDecK obviously shifted into a local based approach. It enclose to work at the Grama Panchayat Level through Partner Organisations under the over all supervision of the Panchayat Committees. Even when it decided to do so, it

never disowned its role in regional level training programmes which it continued to execute through the KILA. Only change that occurred at that level was a shift of emphasis into a more decentralized (at different locales) pattern of training. One can reduce or simplify the change in approach that was adopted by CapDecK in 2003, to these. Preceding these changes there was a regime-change in Kerala which occurred in 2001 and which resulted in the UDF coming to power. The fears and apprehensions about the UDF coming to power were very widespread among activists and supporters of the People's Planning Campaign. The apprehensions arose from the fact that the UDF had earlier taken a position critical of the PPC. It also has a record of letting an earlier legislation with regard to setting up of District Councils to lapse. Since the CapDecK decided to change its approach soon after the regime-change in 2001, one has to look at the issue whether the two developments had any relation to each other. Therefore the third chapter of this Report goes in some detail into the changes that occurred in the polity and economy of Kerala.

Our search for the reasons for a shift in emphasis in the CapDecK approach reached only up to a level where it was found that an informal meeting of some persons involved in CapDecK activities met and at that meeting the idea of a shift in emphasis was agreed upon for the first time. Obviously this explanation could be having many other layers in terms of the evolution of the idea into its current form. It is quite possible that when such a meeting took place (and it took place after the State Elections led to a regime-change) its deliberations could have been influenced by the larger changes in political as well as administrative system. Therefore it is quite natural to look into two other related questions, one what was anticipated by activists of the PPC and personnel related to CapDecK activities from the so called regime change? And, two, whether the anticipated outcomes were justified or not?

One obvious fear of activists of the PPC was that the regime change could result in abandonment of the decentralization plan. It obviously did not happen. Though the UDF government changed the name of the programme from PPC to KDP and added some of their preferences to it, it never resulted in a total rejection of the idea of decentralization. It is proved by later developments as well as testimonials given by activists of the PPC. Therefore such an anticipated outcome if it was associated with the decision of the CapDecK for shifting its emphasis (for which there is no apparent proof), it was unwarranted.

Nevertheless, the changes that occurred as a result of the policies pursued by the UDF government were significant. It resulted in greater level of bureaucratization where nascent democratic functioning were in place earlier. There were centralization of fund deployment in sensitive areas like that of Tribal Sub Plan. Such a shift do not seem to have resulted in any major benefit to the people concerned. There were also similar developments such as the MLA fund, Urban Area Development Agencies and the continuation of DDRA. Together these developments seem to have resulted in a "slow down" compared to the spirit in which the People's Planning Campaign was originally envisaged and executed. The third chapter points out that the beginning of the "slow down" might have occurred in the earlier political dispensation under the LDF rule. The initial attempts that occurred as a result of institutionalization of the campaign itself

could have resulted in the slow down. Therefore it is not fair to attribute reasons for slow-down wholly to regime change. Yet, it was a fact and the CapDeCK as an agency active in the field of decentralization should have been aware of it. What the Report tried to argue later on is that the shift in CapDeCK's approach contained measures to check such adverse developments. Further arguments are presented to show that there were sensitive issues such as the existence of "aggrandizing elements" within the administrative set up which could have taken the decentralization scheme into such a negative set-up.

The third chapter indicates that an internal debate originated within the broad left of centre political opinion and soon spread to the whole political/public sphere. This seems to have created more problems to the PPC in general and to NGOs and among them those who received international funding, in particular. On the one hand it put the responsibility on even organisations which were to take part in the campaign to prove their veracity and "genuineness" publically. On the other, since the debate got apparently entangled with factions within the CPI-M it could intimidate a significant number of volunteers and others who otherwise would have made contributions towards the smooth running of PPC, from doing so. It also inhibited elected Panchayat Committees from openly associating with such persons and their organizations in the area of decentralized planning. In other words the debate prevented the possible synergies that could have been there if elected representatives and voluntary groups have worked together more openly and widely.

It is significant to note that it was right in the middle of such an intense debate that the CapDeCK decided to shift its focus. We have not got any piece of "evidence" to show that the CapDeCK took into account the implications of such a public debate when it decided to shift its approach. Nevertheless there are enough indications from the results of CapDeCK's shift of emphasis with regard to how it helped the CapDeCK and the decentralized planning programme survive a major crisis period. When such severe allegations and accusations appear publicly, (as it happened in this case) an organisation fully funded by an international agency and working within the official milieu of Kerala State might have been forced to withdraw or delimit their activities. There is another instance in recent Kerala history when a bigger organization like the KSSP, tended to limit its involvement when similar allegations were raised with regard to its participation in the Total Literacy Campaign. What are seen in the case of the CapDeCK is an entirely different approach.

The CapDeCK, though maintaining their involvement in state wide training (as well as district and sub-district level training) through KILA and other agencies, entered into a more localized level of involvement meant to strengthen capacity development. Through public advertisements they chose a set of "committed" Partner Organisations. They were asked to negotiate with elected Panchayat Committees and get approval for their separate projects. These projects were to be under the supervision of elected panchayat committees. Such programmes were funded and supported by the CapDeCK. The results emerging from such local level engagements were attempted to be scaled up through panchayat to panchayat learning exercises, KILA's training programmes, and eventually through the cooperation of Panchayat Association. In other words, the

CapDecK seems to have faced the “crisis” positively if not aggressively. They made their operations completely transparent locally, or played their cards openly. What we find is that it ended up with remarkably favourable results for capacity development in decentralization programme.

By associating with elected Panchayat committee and playing a deliberately chosen subsidiary role behind them, the Partner Organisations and CapDecK proved to the local public that their intentions to strengthen the Grama Sabha and the Local Panchayat as Local Government are to be taken seriously. Such a move was accepted widely by the public as well as specific Panchayat committees because of a major lacunae in the PPC as well as KDP. At the local level neither political parties nor other public agencies have not taken the responsibility of helping the LSGs in the execution of their new found responsibilities. Obviously the state level training programmes in which also the CapDecK was involved through KILA and other agencies, had not yet penetrated down effectively to the local level. In other words, when CapDecK added on the emphasis upon local level involvement it was exactly what was wanted by Panchayat Committees too. As a popular Malayalam saying goes “what the patient wanted was what was ordered by the Doctor too.”

The third chapter also discuss the changes occurring in the economic field. With, increased growth rates the Kerala economy was accentuating certain unequal tendencies within the distribution of development benefits. As a result the local population is getting dividing into two in areas and among social groups who were even otherwise vulnerable. This is argued to be equally or more dangerous development facing decentralization compared to the political squabbles that were mentioned earlier. The CapDecK seems to have taken into account these factors as well. Their PEP or the new scheme had empowerment of marginalised communities and gender mainstreaming in pride of place. The fourth chapter discusses these two along with other engagements, and brings out certain unevenness amongst such involvement or its potential impact.

The fourth chapter is essentially a detailed description of the five areas in which the PEP got deeply involved. It also describes Panchayat to Panchayat programme and some other innovative programmes like sustainable settlements. It also discusses continued regional level training. Some of them have been described only since they have not reached a stage where it could be in anyway evaluated in terms of its impact. Among them two programmes, one for Empowerment of the Marginalised and the other for Gender Mainstreaming have to discussed separately; because both of them addresses some of the basic issues raised by faster economic growth.

As far as the Gender Mainstreaming is considered, the programme got off to a good beginning. It is running well in terms of strengthening Jaagratha Samithies. Sealing up the insights gained form local level involvement through training programmes conducted by KILA and also by the SAKHI’s support to create locally trained teams to carry on the initial gains in specific Panchayats. Though these specific programmes are all limited within the parameter of women empowerment, they have contained within it awareness that such activities should not obstruct women’s emancipation. Here the relative success could be attributed to several factors. On the one hand there was the

Kerala Women's Commission and the coincidence of their interest in strengthening Jaagratha Samithies and that of the Panchayat level programme. This coincidence of interests did give it a great boost. Secondly there was the Kudumbashree programme which had gone quite a bit towards empowerment of women in local areas. Thirdly there was the support given to these programmes by two partner organisations the SAKHI and the CRM who are known among regionally if not nationally well-known study, research and activist organizations. Fourthly the KILA through its own involvement in the Panchayat where the institution is situated, developed a state wide training programme which was also well-designed. All these seem to have helped the Gender Mainstreaming well.

On the other hand, the programme for Empowering the Marginalised seems not have evolved as strongly as the Gender Mainstreaming. It was not because of absence of analysis. The SEDS- Kerala did a detailed empirical analysis and systematically analysed the data to come up with necessary policy prescriptions. The policy prescriptions had among them several regional and even national level actions to be taken. At the regional and national level there are no organisations or institutional arrangements which can handle such issues. Therefore what may be required is both national (and regional) and local level intervention. Such an institutional arrangement is yet to be seen anywhere. The activities so far taken by CapDecK and its Partner Organisation with the cooperation of Panchayat Committees are not in a position to lead to the formation of such arrangements. This is not to deny the success of local level engagement that they had in this respect. The State level training that the KILA was organizing seem not to have cared for the requirements in this subject as it had in the case of Gender Mainstreaming. Though KILA had commissioned an internal study supported by CapDecK on Tribal Empowerment/ Emancipation and it is reported to have thrown up a potentially useful Praxis-based methodology it is seen to have not been used widely by KILA itself in its training programmes.

Obviously, there are deficits within the purely training programmes if they are observed from various specific requirements for decentralization. This is not to deny that the training programmes are not successful. Considering the enormity of what has already been achieved in terms of training, it had to be appreciated. Yet it had to be admitted that training by itself do not constitute capacity development in its wholeness. A more detailed content and process analysis of the KILA- run training programme may be required. At this point one can only say that the state and sub-state level training programme alone should not be depended upon for scaling up insights gained from engagements at the local level.

The cooperation that the CapDecK has built up with the Panchayat Association becomes very important in this context. Panchayat Association with its wide range regionally as well as deep local involvements is likely to be an effective agency for scaling up. We are not in a position to speak more about it at the time being because such potential cooperation is still in the making only. With such a cooperation set up, even if the CapDecK withdraws from the scene, the scaling up of insights gained from local engagements conducted at the PEP stage is likely to be carried out well. One of the major points raised by many of the stake holders with whom we had detailed

discussions was a deep rooted fear that if the CapDeck withdraws from the scene the better aspects of capacity development in decentralization also will collapse. With the possible involvement of Panchayat Association and with innovative programmes like social watch by CBOs and Panchayat to Panchayat learning programme the process initiated by the CapDeck in both the phases of its involvement in decentralization in Kerala; and particularly in its post 2003 phase is likely to continue well.

APPENDIX I

EXCERPTS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- I. “ A comprehensive document called Vision 25 or Vision 2025 was formulated within the Panchayat within the Panchayat with the help of the Partner Organisation. This is an action document based on the long term aspirations of different sections of the people from Panchayat. The methodology used for its creation was extensive democratic discussions at the grass root level. All political parties and other organized groups in the locality participated in discussions. Possibilities inherent in programmes like NREG and Watershed Planning etc. were brought into the discussion. For instance, programmes of digging of canals removing blocks to water-flow in channels etc. are confined to scheduled Tribe land alone; under NREG. The document visualized extending such activities over the whole Panchayat. If it is done systematically, not only irrigational requirements of the whole Panchayat will be met; but also the possibility of an effective waste-disposal system be realized. Within the Vision 25 there is a clearly-spelt out sub-plan to make the Panchayat totally waste-free. In other words, our Panchayat now have a well formulated vision document to be followed in comprehensive development for the next 20 to 25 years. The methodology followed and the content of the vision document were discussed with the Extension Faculty of KILA, through which such a specific achievement may be sealed up and other Panchayats may adopt it. More important is that within the Panchayat there be enough public pressure to implement Vision 25”.

- II. “The most impressive achievement of CapDecK was that it set a model of transparent and accountable action... At the lowest level of Panchayat activities, the CapDecK was able to strengthen strong partnership between NGOs and Panchayat Committees... The NGO experience was fed into training by KILA, thereby strengthening such training. The CapDecK involvement also generated valuable experience in integration between Village, Block and District level Panchayats. Now whatever projects that the NGOs partnering with the CapDecK and Panchayats undertake, they are likely to be organized within the limits of the Panchayat”.

- III. “It is through decentralization that gender was made into a major point of discussion in society. The CapDecK involvement at the Panchayat level in partnership with NGOs and Panchayat Committees played a significant role in this. On the one hand, the insights gained from the Panchayat level involvement in gender mainstreaming were integrated into a wider scale through KILA training. On the other, at the end of formal Panchayat level involvement, a select team of well trained personnel were left in the Panchayats to continue with local level involvement... In spite of all these, the Women Component Plan is still a major problem”.

- IV. “As a result of CapDecK partnering with the NGOs and Panchayat Committees, a significant level of local expertise has been generated. From this there should be effective sealing up. In spite of the local expertise created, institutional functioning at the Panchayat level is not up to the mark. Therefore through the CapDecK project

work should be extended for another three years and through KILA training should also be extended”.

V. “How can upscaling be done? Can KILA alone be trusted to do this important task? An alternative like Panchayat Association may also be associated with scaling up efforts”.

VI. “One of the major findings of the Panchayath to Panchayath visit to West Bengal was that there the local level political party structure was quite aware of local development issues and were deeply involved in solving them; unlike in Kerala where local developmental issues are found to be of least concern of political formations”.

VII. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN FGD.

SL NO.	NAME	PANCHAYATH	DESIGNATION	ORGANISATION
1	Abdul Gafoor	Kaniyambetta	Member	
2	Johney Varghese	Ettumanoor	Member	
3	M.R Satheesan	Kumily	Member	
4	Rema Ponraj	Kumily	Member	
5	C. Moidu	Ajanur	Vice President	
6	Saraswathy Teacher	Sreekariyam	Member	
7	Mary Bindu G	Kollayil	CDS	
8	Suraja Devi I	Kollayil	President	
9	Alphonsa	Eruthenpathy	Ward Member	
10	T.M Santhakumary	Vadakarapathy	Block Panchayath Member	
11	E.N Muraleedharan Nair	Arpookkara	President	
12	Sandhya Banerji	Neendoor	President	
13	K.K Shaji Mon	Aymanam	President	
14	V.P Prathapan	Aymanam	Member	
15	M.V Ramakrishnan	Ajanur		Santhigram
16	S. Sudha	Alappad		SAKHI
17	Bindhu T	Alappad		SAKHI

18	M. Rajeena	Kozhikode/Olavanna		SAKHI
19	Bindu V.N	Kozhikode/Olavanna		SAKHI
20	S. Jayasree			SAKHI
21	Padmavathy			CDS
22	A. Kunjamma			SEDS
23	Ammini Daniel			SEDS
24	Santha Kumari E.K			CDS
25	Raji K.T			SAKHI
26	Jayasree T.P			SAKHI
27	N.P.M Haneef			Kerala Police
28	P.V Mohandas			SHG
29	Suresh S.L			Loyola Extension
30	S.A Nayakar			MAITHRI
31	Aleyamma Vijayan			SAKHI
32	Danesh Kumar			RASTA
33	Pankajakshan L			SANTHIGRAM
34	T.M Somadas			MAITHRI
35	Sreekantan V			GPK
36	Satheesh R.V			GPK
37	Vinod Kumar P			MAITHRI
38	Jos Chathukulam			CRM
39	T.J Peter			SEDS
40	Suresh S.L			LES
41	Swapna			LES
42	A Suhrath Kumar			GPK

PROJECT CONTRACT

Between

SDC-CapDeck Programme Co-ordination Unit

Sona Buildings, Pattom, Thiruvananthapuram

Tel: 0471-2543392 Fax: 2543391

Email: capdeck@asianetindia.com

Represented by

The Chief Programme Co-ordinator

And

Institute for Social and Economic Change

Nagarbhavi.P.O, Bangalore-560072

Tel: 080 23215468, Fax: 080 23217008

E-mail: adm@isec.ac.in

Represented by

The Director

(Hereafter referred to as the Project Holder)

Regarding: the documentation of the experiences of SDC-CapDeck Programme

Conditions for Consultancy Contract

1. Scope of the Mandate

The scope of the mandate is described in the Background Note and Terms of Reference attached vide Annex 1, which forms an integral part of this contract.

2. Contract Time Frame

The mandate shall be executed before 30 April 2008.

3. Reporting

The Director ISEC will depute Professor P.K. Michael Tharakan, Shri Ramakrishna Hegde Chair Professor in Decentralization and Governance as Project Co-ordinator to carry out the tasks mentioned as part of the Annexure 1. He will represent the ISEC in all operational matters regarding this project contract and SDC-CapDeck will be represented by the Chief Programme Co-ordinator or Planning and Monitoring Co-ordinator.

4. Subcontracting

The mandate does not allow for any subcontracting.

5. Budgets and costs

The budget and costs are as per the Annexure 2 which is an integral part of this contract. No hardware such as furniture, computers, telephones, fax etc. can be provided or directly financed by SDC-CapDeck. It is assumed that these basic tools are already available with the Project Holder, as and when needed for the execution of the mandate.

6. Payment Schedule

25% of the total amount will be paid as and when this contract is signed. 30% will be paid before 31 January 2008 provided the data collection is completed and the status report of the same is submitted to the SDC-CapDeck. 35% will be paid before 15 March 2008 provided the draft report is presented before a select group of experts. This meeting of the experts will be organised by SDC-CapDeck at their cost. The final amount will be paid as and when the final report is submitted to the SDC-CapDeck.

7. Amendments

Amendments to this contract can be made by mutual consent of the two parties in writing.

8. Entry into force

This contract will come into force upon signatures by both parties and shall remain in force until all the stipulated obligations are met.

9. Termination of the contract

In case this assignment cannot be completed at any stage because of reasons independent of the will of the contracting parties (act of God, riots etc.) both the parties may terminate the contract with immediate effect. In such an event, the payment will be as per the expenditure up to the date of termination provided that all the material/ information/ reports up to the stage that have been made/ collected are handed over to SDC-CapDeck PCU.

In case of non-satisfactory performance or any other default of the Project Holder, despite reminders or written notices, SDC-CapDeck is entitled to terminate the contract on 10 days written notice.

10. Law applicable to the contract and legal domicile

Controversies and claims arising out of or related to this contract or the breach thereof shall be settled by the Courts of Trivandrum under Indian Law. However, before undertaking any legal steps, the parties hereby agree to mobilize all efforts and to enter into discussions in order to find an acceptable settlement of such dispute by direct negotiation.

11. Miscellaneous

Any liabilities towards taxes are the responsibility of the Project Holder. Since the project holder will be applying for the privilege of Tax exemption and the Certificate to that effect will be produced in due course, no taxes shall be deducted at source.

Agreed on 29 November 2007.

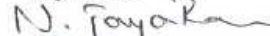
Signature



For SDC CapDeck
Joy Elamon

Chief Programme Coordinator

Signature



Director

Institute for Social and Economic Change

Dr. N. JAYARAM

Director

Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC)

Nagamangalay P.O., Bangalore-560 072

DOCUMENTING THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SDC-CapDecK PROGRAMME

Background Note and Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The SDC-CapDecK is a programme of SDC and operating mainly in the area of capacity development for decentralization in Kerala. The SDC support to the decentralization process initiated in the State started in 1999.

In the first phase 1999-2003, the CapDecK project provided support directly to the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) in training the resource persons of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI) and Nagarapalika-functionaries at various levels. This was supplemented by various measures to strengthen KILA as a training institution.

The first phase synchronized with the launching of the People's Plan Campaign (PPC), a noteworthy undertaking initiated by the Government of Kerala (GOK) and the State Planning Board (SPB). The PPC visualized participatory planning from below to supplement and strengthen representative democracy and transparent governance expected to be brought about by political and administrative decentralization. This was a very ambitious scheme, which required careful planning and execution at various stages, particularly at the stage of institutionalizing the achievements of the PPC.

The first phase of the CapDecK Programme which started in 1999, came to a close in 2003. The Programme was extended through its second phase from 2003. In this phase, the SDC-CapDecK undertook two types of activities. The first was to continue helping the KILA, the premier center for training for local government, and its programmes. The second, and the newly introduced task, was to support local initiatives in strengthening PRI and through them the whole movement for Panchayati Raj through the component known as Panchayati Raj Empowerment.

The Panchayati Raj Empowerment component of SDC-CapDecK aims at strengthening the process of democratic decentralisation in Kerala by:

- Supporting and assisting local initiatives in improving the functioning of the PRIs as vibrant bodies of self-governance.

- Facilitating the process whereby the Panchayats are developed into platforms for empowerment, poverty reduction and fighting discrimination.
- Promoting mainstreaming of gender in the decentralisation process leading to a qualitative strengthening of the status of women in society.

The SDC-CapDeck was able to involve 19 organisations, consisting of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Non-Government Research Organisations (NGROs), Voluntary Organisations (VOs) and Social Service Organisations (SSOs) from 14 districts of the state, to work under the leadership and guidance of 71 elected Panchayats.

The second phase activities have come to an end in September 2007. At this stage, it was felt that the experiences of the SDC-CapDeck Programme be documented in detail. The documentation is expected to be mainly of the second phase of the programme. The specific activities of the second phase covered all districts of Kerala. The organisations which collaborated were of different traditions and initiatives. The distinguishing feature of their participation was that it was undertaken under the leadership of elected local governments. Such collaboration is capable of generating positive lessons in local government/third sector relations and the synergies that it creates. It was felt that such experience in working in collaboration with NGOs, NGROs, VOs, SSOs etc. under the leadership of elected panchayats and meant to strengthen the over-all decentralization process will provide rich and unique insights which will help other organisations and individuals who undertake such efforts.

In this context it was decided that the SDC-CapDeck Programme will approach a well-known academic institution to undertake the documentation of its experiences between 2003 and 2007.

2. Scope and Objectives

The proposed documentation is expected to be as comprehensive as possible. This means that each of the learning points and different insights that emerged from the experience of SDC-CapDeck, and which is found to be valuable, should be recorded.

What is to be recorded and not recorded should be decided on the basis of an analytical framework. Though the analytical framework is quite important in such documentation; it

is difficult to decide upon an acceptable framework. What is suggested therefore, is an analytical framework through which the experiences of SDC-CapDecK when presented to the wider interested readers; they will find the insights useful in their own area of involvement in relation to decentralization. In other, words this documentation should not only effectively disseminate the successes and failures of SDC-CapDecK; but also should serve as a roadmap for further action in decentralization in India and abroad.

It has been mentioned already that what is mainly going to be documented is the second phase of the SDC-CapDecK. That does not mean that the study should completely ignore the first phase. The organic link between the first and second phases of the Programme may also be looked into.

The SDC-CapDecK undertook several field studies looking closely at various experiences in strengthening decentralization. Among them, special mention should be made of a study report entitled Emerging Issues in Panchayati Raj in Kerala, brought out jointly with Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies (CSES), Kochi and the Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam. In the light of the findings of such studies the SDC-CapDecK identified five thematic areas where there was need and potential for intervention. They were:

1. Strengthening of Gram Sabhas
2. Helping Village Panchayats to evolve as rural institutions of local self-governance.
3. Empowering of marginalized sections of society through PRIs.
4. Mainstreaming Gender issues in Panchayati Raj.
5. Enhancing the support base of PRIs by drawing in the Community-based Organisations (CBOs).

Whether these thematic areas were the best and most suitable for intervention in the over-all context of decentralization already set for the nation; and more specifically in terms of the objectives set for the state of Kerala; should certainly be looked at. Apart from that, the limits that were set to the activities promoted through the assistance of SDC-CapDecK should also be critically looked at. Nevertheless; since these five thematic areas were accepted and within which the activities were undertaken; it is reasonable to expect that the proposed documentation should also follow the same thematic areas. Within these areas, under the clearest possible indicators of good

practices, specifically decided upon for each of them, the experiences and learning points are to be documented.

The SDC-CapDecK adopted an approach that Panchayats and potential partner organisations who were interested to develop and implement initiatives in the aforementioned thematic areas were welcome to do so. Assistance in deciding an operational framework and in undertaking the activities was offered by the SDC-CapDecK through its Co-ordination Unit for this specific component entitled Panchayati Raj Empowerment. As a result they came across different type of situations. Some Panchayats approached directly and they chose their own partner organisations. In some other cases partner organisations who showed their interest in the Programme, approached Panchayats and ensured their involvement. There were partner organisations with prior experience of collaboration with Panchayats and others who did not have any such experience. There were organisations run by and focused specially on women, with specific experience in natural resource management, and others focused on tribal development. The Panchayats which partnered in this collaborative effort also have different geographical origins and very different socio-economic and political profiles. How they all worked together under the common purpose of strengthening decentralization is worth studying by itself. The proposed documentation is expected to record in sufficient detail various phases of such collaboration. This collaboration work also has had its impact upon the overall decentralization efforts undertaken at the state level. More specifically various practices listed at the field level were taken in by both the KILA and the State Women's Commission. They also have to be looked at.

The last but not the least aspect of this Programme to be documented is its impact upon the people of the Panchayats. Their perception of the Programme and their understanding of its outcome are also to be investigated and recorded.

3. Expected outcomes

The proposed study is expected to have two outcomes:

1. An analytical and evaluative documentation in the form of a study report. This report will be presented at meetings of representatives of various stakeholders, experts in the field, government officials and elected representatives.

2. In the light of their responses the report will be edited and reworked to form a volume for printing and publishing. The expected volume will be disseminated as widely as possible among persons who are committed to decentralization process in India and abroad. The responsibility of dissemination will be with the SDC-CapDeck and the cost, including production cost of the final volume will be borne by the SDC-CapDeck

4. Data Requirements

The proposed documentation can draw upon the publications of SDC-CapDeck, and other organisations on various aspects of the activities undertaken within the programme. In addition fresh data may also be collected through limited surveys, focused group discussions, case studies and interviews of several stakeholders, including people of the Panchayats, activists of CBOs, elected Panchayat representatives, local and other officials, political party members, members of partner organisations, officials of the SDC-CapDeck etc. in order to systematically reconstruct several stages of the activities undertaken. They are going to be the bulk of the sources of information for the proposed study. In addition, unpublished documentary records available with SDC-CapDeck, Panchayats concerned, NGOs, CBOs, may also be looked at. Along with this, newspaper archives may also be scrutinized. Together these sources are to be tapped meticulously in Kerala itself.

5. Responsibilities

1. The SDC-CapDeck wishes to have Professor P.K. Michael Tharakan, Shri Ramakrishna Hegde Chair Professor in Decentralisation and Governance in the premier social science research institute in South India, Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore, to undertake the study. He is well known for his published works in the area of decentralization as well as development of Kerala. He had personal involvement and experience of the decentralization process in Kerala, both as a faculty member of the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum and as the Director of the KILA, Thrissur. He has also associated with several programmes organized by the SDC-CapDeck. Therefore, the SDC-CapDeck wishes to have Professor P.K. Michael Tharakan as the main researcher and Project Co-ordinator for the proposed study. The Director, Institute for Social and Economic Change will provide the services of Professor Tharakan for this task.

6. Period of Study

The SDC-CapDeck wishes to have the initial documentation completed and the preliminary study report ready for presentation and discussion within four months. The first two months may be used to collect the necessary data and the next two months for drafting the report. Within the next two additional months a final version for printing and publishing is expected to be ready. In other words the study project has to be completed within 6 months in total.

7. Division of Work

- a. Project Co-ordinator will have to collect data on his own by employing research assistants.
- b. The drafting of the preliminary study report and the final volume will be the responsibility of Project Co-ordinator/Holder
- c. Project Co-ordinator is requested to report to SDC-CapDeck at least once every two months about the progress of the work in general and in particular if there is any problem with regard to the data.
- d. The SDC-CapDeck will also help in generation of data and supplement the data collected by the Project Co-ordinator whenever it is necessary and possible.
- e. The SDC-CapDeck shall undertake to get the preliminary report duplicated and made available for discussion within fifteen days of its submission.
- f. The Project Co-ordinator will have to submit to the SDC-CapDeck one hard copy and one soft copy of the preliminary report.
- g. The discussion of the preliminary report at stakeholders' and experts' meeting/meetings is to be organized by SDC-CapDeck at their cost.
- h. The responsibility of preparing the final book/volume is to be with the Project Co-ordinator/Holder with due acknowledgements to SDC-CapDeck and partners in the study, if any.
- i. In addition, the dissemination of the book and its contents will remain as the responsibility of SDC-CapDeck.

BUDGET

The Budget is as follows. The items, Serial Numbers 3 to 7 can be reappropriated among budgeted heads within the ceiling limit of the total budget.

	Items		Rs.
1	Faculty fee for Project Co-ordinator	45 days x Rs.3000 per day (to be paid to the Rama Krishna Hegde Chair)	1,35,000
2	Salary for Research assistance	Rs.8000 x 1 x 4 months	32,000
3	TA/DA for project staff and air-fare for Project Co-ordinator		1,00,000
4	Stationery, postage, word processing, secretarial assistance and communication		10,000
5	Purchase of reference materials including books, reports etc. and photo copying of study materials		25,000
6	Logistics for consultations discussions etc.		15,000
7	Contingency		15,850
8	Overhead		49,927
	Grand Total		3,82,777
	Rounded off to		3,82,800

APPENDIX III

List of Key Informants

1. Ajith Kumar, Member, State Resource Group.
2. Aravindan K.P Dr., HOD of Pathology, Calicut Medical College.
3. Balakrishnan N.R, State Secretary of KSSP in 1986-87, District Coordinator, Literacy Campaign, Assistant Executive Engineer, KSEB.
4. Chandramohan K.R Prof., Block Panchayat Member, Professor, NSS College, Commerce Department.
5. Damodaran G.C, Panchayat President, Kumarakom
6. Gangadharan T., Head Master, Morazha L.P School, and KSSP Activist.
7. Gopalakrishnan T., Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP), District Secretary.
8. Gopinath K.P, Selection Grade Assistant, Mahatma Gandhi University.
9. Gopinathan V.G, Former Secretary, K.S.S.P, Registrar, IRTC.
10. Iqbal B.Dr., Former Vice Chancellor, Kerala University and Former Member, KSPB.
11. Jagajeevan N., Programme Officer, Kudumbashree.
12. Jamal S., Member, State Resource Group.
13. John M.S Dr., Mahatma Gandhi University, Faculty Member, Gandhian Studies Department.
14. Jos C Raphel Dr., Director, Center for Community Organisation and Development
15. Joy Elamon Dr., Chief Programme Coordinator, SDC-CapDecK.
16. Kailas G., Activist of K.S.S.P, Kottayam.
17. Kalidasan K., (Retd.) Soil Conservation Officer. Block/District Technical Advisory Committee Member.
18. Kalyana Krishnan, IKM District Coordinator, DPC Member.
19. Kamalkutty P., IAS, Chief Election Commission, Kerala, and former Secretary to Government, LSG Department.
20. Kochappan Master, P.K (Retd.) Head Master, Service Pensioner's Association, District President, Public Welfare Association.
21. Kunhikanan T.P, Head of Economics Dept, Perambra Govt. College and KSSP Activist.
22. Madanmohan K.B, Programme Associate, SDC-CapDecK.
23. Manohar M., Electricity Board Divisional Accountant.
24. Manoharan R., CPI Local Secretary, (Retd.) KSRTC Staff, KANFED District Secretary, Project Officer of Total Literacy Campaign.
25. Maria Leonard, Village Officer, Chittur.
26. Mariamma (Nirmala) Sanu George, Planning and Monitoring Coordinating, SDC-CapDecK.
27. Mathew K. Prof., Head of the Department of Physics, Baselius College, Kottayam.
28. Mohandas U.V, Divisional Accountant, Water Authority, Wayanad.
29. Oommen M.A Prof., Chairman, Decentralisation Evaluation Committee
30. Palaniappan.S, (Retd.) Joint Commissioner, Educational Department.
31. Parameswaran M.P Dr.
32. Pathrose A., Senior Superintendent; Assistant Education Officer.
33. Pillai P.P Prof., Former Professor of Economics, Calicut University.

34. Prasad M.K Prof., Executive Chairman, Information Kerala Mission and former Pro-Vice Chancellor, Calicut University.
35. Rajasekharan K., Librarian, KILA.
36. Ramakanthan N Prof., Director, KILA.
37. Ravindran P.K. Prof., Private Secretary to the Minister of LSG.
38. Sasikumar C, CDS, LSG (RU), Project Fellow.
39. Shaji George, BDO, Uzhavoor Block Panchayat
40. Sreedharan T.P, CDS, Programme Officer Regional Unit on LSG.
41. Sunny George Dr., Professor, KILA.
42. Thomas E.M, Reader, Economics Department, Christ College, Irinjalakuda.
43. Vasu M.K, Member, State Resource Group.
44. Vasukuttan P.K, Retd. Teacher, N.N Smaraka U.P School, Alacode.
45. Vikraman Nair T.V, Teacher, U.P School, Former Local Secretary CPI(M), President, Service Co operative Bank.

Abbreviations

ARC	Administrative Reforms Committee
BDO	Block Development Officer
CapDeck	Capacity Development for Decentralisation in Kerala
CBO	Community based Organisation
CD	Capacity development
C-DIT	Centre for Development of Imaging Technology
CDP	Community Development Programme
CDS	Community Development Societies
COI	Constitution of India
COSTFORD	Centre of Science and Technology For Rural Development
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CRC	Citizen Report Card
CRM	Centre for Rural Management
CSES	Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CT	Cascading Training
DDC	District Development Committee
DEC	District Expert Committees
DJS	District level Jaagratha Samithies
DMK	Dravida Munnettra Kazhagam,
DPC	District Planning Committees
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency
EC	Executive Coordinator
FA	Funding Agencies
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GO	Government Order
GOI	Government of India
GOK	Government of Kerala
GPK	Grameena Patana Kendram
GS	Grama Sabha
IIM-K	Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode
IMG	Institute for Management in Government
IRTC	Integrated Rural Technology Centre
ISEC	Institute for Social and Economic Change
ISS	Institute of Social Sciences

JPC	Joint Programme Committee / Joint Project Committee
KAIROS	Kannur Association for Integrated Rural Organisations
KDP	Kerala Development Programme
KER	Kerala Education Rules
KILA	Kerala Institute of Local Administration
KIMS	Kizhakkumkara Mahila Samajam
KMA	Kerala Municipal Act
KPRA	Kerala Panchayat Raj Act
KRP	Key Resource Person
KSPB	Kerala State Planning Board
KSSP	Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad
KSWC	Kerala State Women's Commission
LDF	Left Democratic Front
LES	Loyola Extension Service
LFA	Local Fund Audit
LG	Local Government
LGO	Local Government Orders
LSGD	Local Self Government Department
MC	Municipal Council
MGP	Modernisation of Government Programme
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MO	Monitoring Officer
NEP	National Extension Project
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
NHG	Neighbourhood Groups
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPI	Nagarapalika Institution
NREG	National Rural Employment Guarantee
OD	Organisational Development
OG	Operational Guidelines
PA	Performance Audit
PCU	Programme Co-ordination Unit
PDIL-K	People's Democratic Initiative on LSG-Kerala
PEC	Project Executive Committee
PEP	Panchayat Empowerment Programme
PEU	Project Executive Unit

PO	Partner Organization
PPC	People's Planning Campaign
PPCC	People's Planning Campaign Cell
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRI	Panchayat Raj Institution
RAMDeM	Responsive Administration, A Management Development Mechanism
SAP	State Annual Plan
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEDS	Socio-Economic Development Service-Kerala
SFC	State Finance Commission
SG	Steering group
SHG	Shelf Help Group
SIRD	State Institute for Rural Development
SSSC	Shreyas Social Service Centre
TF	Task Force
TOT	Training of Trainers
TSP	Tribal sub-pan
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VEO	Village Extension Officer
WCP	Women's Component Plan