

**STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY**



**MANGALAPURAM  
GRAM PANCHAYAT**



**KIZHAKKUMKARA  
MAHILA SAMAJAM (KIMS)**

**STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY**

*A brief report on the project with the same title*

*by*

**Mangalapuram Panchayat**

*Partner Organisation*

**Kizhakkumkara Mahila Samajam (KIMS)**

Kulathoor P.O, Thiruvananthapuram

Phone: 0471-2595534

Email:kimstvm@sancharnet.in

*Supported by*

**SDC  
CapDeck**

Programme on Capacity Development for  
Decentralisation in Kerala

**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC**

SBI Buildings, Pattom P.O, Thiruvananthapuram 695 004

Email: capdeck@asianetindia.com

Phone: 0471-2543392 Fax: 0471-2543391

*Compilation and documentation*

**Mrs. Ammukutty George**

President, KIMS

*First Published in*

September 2007

*Cover Design*

Shamnad Rasool

*Book design & Production*

Wordpecker  
wordpeckerkerala@gmail.com

## MANGALAPURAM GRAM PANCHAYAT

Mangalapuram Panchayat of Kazhakootam Block Panchayat of Thiruvananthapuram district is the project area. The Panchayat is a Special grade Panchayat with 19 wards. Total area of the Panchayat is 21.66 sq.km. Population of the Panchayat is 37,971, of which male population is 18,517 and female 19,454. Of the elected representatives of 19 wards 11 are males and 8 females. Mangalapuram Panchayat is divided into two villages namely Thonnaikal and Vayaloor. There are 19 ADS, 20 Mahila Samajams, 206 Kudumbashree units, 40 SHGs, 35 Agricultural organisations, 26 arts and sports clubs and 33 Anganavwadies. ICDS mothers forums, Health groups etc. working in this Panchayat. Plan fund is used in three sectors, production 30%, service 40% and infrastructure 30%. Major activities in this Panchayat are agriculture, animal husbandry and coir works.

## KIZHAKKUMKARA MAHILA SAMAJAM (KIMS)

Kizakkumkara Mahila Samajam (KIMS) was established in 1966 and registered under the Travancore Cochin Literary scientific and Charitable Societies Act (Act XII of 1955) in 1974 with a view to promoting the living conditions of poor women in Thiruvananthapuram district. Since its very inception, it has been striving towards the Soio-economic, political and cultural well-being of the women, so as to make them self-reliant and self sufficient. Our activities include Handloom Weaver's Co-operative Society, Mushroom and Spawn production Centre, Vermicompost Units, Fruits preservation Units, Dehydrated Horticulture Food Production Unit, Reproductive Child Health Programme, Panchayat Raj Empowerment Programmes, Housing Schemes etc. KIMS endeavours to uplift the womenfolk in Thiruvananthapuram has so far achieved the desired result. We organise various training and self employment programmes to the young and unemployed women through this Centre.

## PRELIMINARY PHASE

KIMS which has been in the forefront of women empowerment for the past four decades recognised the importance of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional amendments and the changes triggered by it in the society, especially among women. Apart from making home makers elected representatives to local bodies, it opened new vistas of interventions for women through participation in Gram Sabhas.

The interaction with SDC-CapDeck led KIMS to the realisation that working for women empowerment through Panchayati Raj would be meaningful. Being the maiden venture of KIMS in the Panchayat Raj sector, it decided to restrict the programme to one Panchayat and accordingly held consultations with the Mangalapuram Panchayat which fell under its area of activity. The Panchayat Committee seemed enthused by the programme prospects. The President of the Panchayat gave the consent of the Panchayat in writing. The Panchayat Committee was of the opinion that the programme should not be limited to women but should be made applicable to people's representatives and officials of transferred institutions.

The draft of the programme was presented before the Panchayat Committee, where apart from Panchayat members, the Panchayat Secretary and Assistant Engineer were present. Finally the session approved the programme and asked KIMS to collect data on the activities of women's organisations in the Panchayat.

The team for data collection comprised women from within the Mangalapuram Panchayat with experience in community work. In August 2004, a meeting was organised to discuss preparation of questionnaire for the survey. The questionnaire thus designed had its focus on participation of women in Gram Sabha, their role in planning, time spent by women in Gram Sabha, the hurdles faced by women locally, the relation between elected representatives and women voluntary organisations, etc.

Instead of conducting the survey mechanically, the team members were trained in mock interview sessions. As per the information provided by the VEO (Village Extension Officer) of the Panchayat, the Panchayat had 192 Kudumbashree units, 30 SHGs (Self Help Group), and 26 other groups. The survey findings revealed that the number



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Draft of the programme presented before the Panchayat Committee



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Module preparation

of Kudumbashree units came to 169 with of 2,997 members. The role of women in Gram Sabha and project planning was insignificant. Often the advantages of Panchayati Raj were attributed to Kudumbashree.

The findings of the data collection were presented before the Gram Panchayat where ADS (Area Development Society) and CDS (Community Development Society) members were also present. The ensuing discussion gave final shape to the Programme. The members demanded awareness classes for the elected representatives as well.

To conduct the women empowerment programmes in the Panchayat, 15 *Mahila Samajams* were formed in different wards. Each *Mahila Samajam* comprised of 15 to 20 members.

## Objectives

The following were set as the objectives of the programme named Empowerment of Panchayati Raj through women voluntary workers.

1. Women empowerment
2. Awareness classes on Panchayati Raj
3. Strengthening Gram Sabha
4. Employment trainings for financial progress
5. Plan projects appropriate for development by including them in the Women Component Plan (WCP)

## Activities

As part of the programme, the following activities were envisaged

1. Formation of resource team
2. Training for resource team
3. Awareness classes at the Panchayat level about Panchayati Raj
4. Sensitisation programmes at the organisational level
5. Preparation of handbooks and pamphlets
6. Awareness sessions for Panchayat members
7. Evaluation

## Co-ordination Committee

A co-ordination committee was formed for co-ordinating the Panchayati Raj Strengthening Programme with the Panchayat committee members and office bearers of KIMS. The Panchayat President was the panel head. The monthly meetings were to review the activities and prepare the action plan for future activities.

A Project team was formed for the smooth conduct of the programme as per the decision of the co-ordination committee. The team members had already participated in the data collection process. Other responsibilities were assigned to persons with sufficient experience in relevant areas. An agenda was prepared including some subjects to be discussed at the ward level classes of the Panchayati Raj strengthening programme. The agenda was prepared after consultations with the women representatives and subject experts.

Classes on subjects related through Panchayati Raj were held in the following subjects. Health and hygiene, increased income, Panchayati Raj, Water conservation and Leadership training.

Two field workers each from the ward were selected for holding classes at the ward level. The selection process was held in the presence of the Panchayat members at the Panchayat office. Most of the field workers were interested in genuine community work, with majority being office-bearers of CDS and ADS. The field workers were provided with identity cards.

Training sessions were organised for field workers based on prepared module. Instead of lectures, the sessions focused rather on training exercises, games, group discussions, and chart presentation. Each training session was followed by evaluation sessions as well.

The preliminary session started off with the basics of Panchayati Raj. The fact that Gram Sabha was fundamental to the entire Panchayati Raj system was emphasised apart from showing how it brought people as the focal point of the decentralised governance process. The role of Kudumbashree units in the empowerment of Panchayati Raj was explained at the training. It provided more avenues for women to participate in Plan formulation and implementation.

The participants were educated on the structure and responsibilities under Panchayat. The income generation possibilities of the Panchayati Raj were explained in detail. Their attention was drawn to some recent experiences as to how a bane can be converted into a boon. Voluntary organisations could take lead in utilising the resources of a Panchayat and producing and marketing the products out of it.

The session on organising sensitised the participants about



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Field workers training



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Ward-level class



Ward-level class

the virtues of organised functioning and interventions in societal processes.

## Ward-Level Classes

Ward-level classes were organised in all the wards of the Panchayat under the leadership of the Panchayat members. Functionaries of *Mahila Samajams*, and Kudumbashree units participated in the workshop.

During the initial stages of the workshop the women participants were more concerned about the possible financial assistance and other benefits arising out of the classes. The project team decided to make necessary alterations to the training schedule taking into consideration the present state of women's mental make-up.

The second stage training covered subjects like decentralisation, Mother and Child Health Care in Panchayati Raj, Women Component Plan, *Jaagratha Samithi*, and personality development.

The workshop entered its third stage which was spread over two months. Women participants who realised their responsibilities from the classes asked the Panchayat members to solve their common problems like dilapidated roads, construction of drains and drinking water scarcity. The members, in turn, asked them to participate in the Gram Sabha and present their demands there.

The fourth stage of ward-level workshops saw the emergence of field workers who could handle the classes independently. It covered classes on women and politics, HIV/AIDS, and emotional maturity.

The fifth stage classes were held against the backdrop of the ensuing elections to the local self governments in Kerala. The co-ordination committee held a voter sensitisation session which elaborated the fundamentals of the poll process. The emphasis was on the basic tenets of democratic process like knowledge, transparency, mutual respect, responsibility, etc.

A pamphlet for voters was prepared to at make them aware of the significance of the right to vote. It explained what is voters' list, qualifications for a voter and a candidate, responsibilities of voters in the polling booths, and duties of a citizen. The pamphlets were distributed to the participants of the classes.

The final session of training witnessed sessions on the

relevance and importance of social audit, right to information and Ombudsman. Training was provided to the field workers before every stage of the ward-level classes.

Following the ward-level classes, the same themes were discussed at the organisational level. The representatives of voluntary women's organisations led the session with the support of the field workers. The meetings about which the Panchayat members were initiated in advance, were attended by representatives of CDS, ADS, apart from KIMS field workers.

The subjects on which deliberations were held were Panchayati Raj, Gram Sabha, and WCP. Many women admitted that in spite of being workers in organisations, they were rather ignorant about the Panchayati Raj system. Some participants admitted that they never realised the Gram Sabha had this much powers. Similar was the case with WCP as well.

Many women who were least interested initially in attending the Gram Sabha due to the prospects of receiving freebies, changed their attitude and started attending Gram Sabha meetings.

Majority of the women participants at the organisational level classes were homemakers who found it difficult to grasp the knowledge on Panchayati Raj and left with many doubts unanswered. Based on this feedback by the field workers, a handbook on Panchayati Raj, *Gramjyothi* was circulated among the participants. *Gramjyothi* was prepared in the question answer mode; clarifying all the queries raised at the training sessions. Later a second part of *Gramjyothi* was produced and distributed; the themes ranged from social audit to right to information and ombudsman.

Coupled with classes on Panchayati Raj, employment trainings were conducted as per the co-ordination committee decision. Two Kudumbashree members were selected from each ward under the guidance of the respective Panchayat member.

Women were provided training on umbrella making and they started production in groups. The capital for the same was made available from Kudumbashree units and the umbrellas were sold through the marketing centre of the Panchayat.

Training was given on making of washing soap, soap powder, and dish wash powder. Since the initial investment was less, each Kudumbashree unit ventured into soap making needed for own family and neighbours. Though the product was not market-savvy to compete with the branded products, it had no disadvantage quality-wise.



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Training on Umbrella making



Training on Soap and Soap powder making



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Loan mela



Women's Day celebration

## Loan Mela (Fair)

With the co-operation of the Trade and the Industries Department, a loan fair was organised under the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) with aid from a lead bank for giving loans to 100 women who were willing to start own enterprises. The participants in the fair were divided into groups based on the nature of the venture and they were given relevant advice. The fair concluded with the decision to start ventures in readymade garment for production, umbrella making, and dairying with the co-operation of the Panchayat.

The women belonging to the voluntary organisations were given training in bee keeping. The first day comprised classes and a visit to the bee keeping centre was organised on the second and concluding day.

Training in book binding was held with classes on various aspects of book making like raw materials, paper cutting, stitching and binding. They were also taught about the job opportunities in the book making sector, marketing methods, and proper maintenance of accounts.

As part of the Empowerment of Panchayati Raj programme, a job training session was organised for teenagers jointly with the State Resource Centre, Child Development Centre, and KIMS. Classes were taken on the following subjects: Teenage and health, teenage and nutrition, and personality development in adolescence. The products included in the training were syrup, squash, jam and pickles. The core concept of the session was making nutrient-rich food products from seasonal fruits available in plenty. Training was also provided to make vermi compost using waste from processing of fruits.

Women were given training in making of paper bag and paper envelopes. Various aspects of paper bags making and the environmental issues that could be settled through the wide use of paper bags were discussed.

Adolescent health awareness programme was conducted for girls aged between 12 and 18. Often girls of this age find it hard to find precise information regarding the problems confronting them. The programme covered the following themes:

1. Characteristics and significance of adolescence
2. Mental health, personality development
3. Personal hygiene
4. Necessity of nutrition in adolescence
5. Reproductive health care in adolescence
6. Legal measures to support adolescents

Classes were organised in various wards of the Mangalapuram Panchayat about family life education with the support of the Loyola Family Counselling Centre.

In the Punnekunnam Ward of the Panchayat, the stretch from Madathuvilakom to Madamon, the road was almost non-existent. People had to depend on private lands to reach the main road. Often taking sick persons to hospital turned out to be a herculean task. The women of the area came forward to construct a proper road. Under the initiative of the women of Kudumbashree units, money was collected from the local area. In spite of the hesitant attitude of many people towards contributing money and land, Kudumbashree women braved all stumbling blocks and finished the construction of the 750-metre road.

## Gram Sabha

### *During the early stages of programme*

KIMS workers were observers in almost all Gram Sabha sessions held in the Panchayat during the initial stages of the project. The following observations were recorded during the Gram Sabha meetings.

1. The presence of officials from the government offices of the Panchayat was meagre.
2. Even though the people were informed about the convening of Gram Sabha one week prior to the session, the participation was very poor.
3. The projects which were submitted at the Plan formulation Gram Sabhas was never read out nor were a convenor elected.
4. The co-ordinators were found to have no role in the Gram Sabha.

### *Post-sensitisation classes*

Women participation in Gram Sabha sessions registered visible improvement after post-awareness classes. The number of officials attending Gram Sabha increased as women consistently raised the issue of their absence. People started demanding written minutes of the meetings. The Panchayat President appreciated the role of field workers in Plan formulation.

## Social Audit

The social audit of the hitherto conducted programmes was organised to which representatives of Panchayat committee, officials of transferred institutions, SDC-CapDecK, CDS, ADS, and other voluntary organisations were invited.



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Nutrition and Health Education



Field workers in the Road  
constructed in Punnaikunnam  
Ward



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Social Audit



Social Audit

Charts were exhibited on Panchayat and KIMS, data collection, training for field workers, awareness classes, observation of Gram Sabha, and Panchayati Raj empowerment programmes at a glance. The narrative on the successful completion of road construction was shown in a chart.

All publications brought out during the course of the programme were displayed. Besides, reports prepared by field workers, account statements, details of questionnaires answers, and were also placed before the social audit team to ensure transparency.

The suggestions put forward by the Panchayat committee, Kudumbashree members, and other representatives are listed here.

1. The training should be sustained
2. KIMS should be converted into a training centre
3. Issues related to training and marketing should be undertaken jointly by the Panchayat, Kudumbashree, and KIMS
4. KIMS should pay attention to the literacy front
5. Sensitisation sessions should be held for men as well
6. KIMS should work for the rehabilitation of alcoholics, orphans and mentally challenged

## Evaluation

The co-ordination committee conducted an evaluation of the hitherto activities held as part of the Panchayati Raj empowerment programme. It was held among two categories, namely, women voluntary organisations and field workers of the programme, based on the preconceived questionnaire.

The questions put to the women voluntary organisations who were the primary beneficiaries of the empowerment programme related to how the common women who attended the training sessions were sensitised about the Panchayat Raj system.

Field workers were asked how their activities enhanced Panchayati Raj empowerment, and the consequent changes in their personal as well as societal lives.

## Evaluation Report

Five members from each voluntary organisation were interviewed in a survey to understand how Panchayati Raj empowerment became effective for them. From the 17 wards, 785 women from 157 voluntary organisations participated in the survey.

Seventy one percent said they were aware of Panchayati Raj system and 53 percent said they were interested in sharing the information with the other members of the organisation. Majority said they used to discuss the information received at the group meeting thus making the functioning of Kudumbashree units more meaningful.

Eighty seven percent of the surveyed opted for retaining the current subjects in the Panchayati Raj empowerment programme. Those who wanted more themes to be covered suggested the following. 1. Rules for Kudumbashree formation, 2. Employment training, 3. Counselling, 4. Vegetable cultivation, and 5. Family life education.

While 80 percent sounded positive about the greater effectiveness of KIMS training, 60 percent had read KIMS publications. As many as 80 percent of the women participants were of the opinion that women benefited from Panchayati Raj. This was in contrast to the finding during the initial stage of the programme when 67 percent of the women said they found the Panchayati Raj not much useful.

While 337 persons came to know about the convening of Gram Sabha from the Panchayat members, 330 women were intimated about it by the Kudumbashree members and for 115 women the intimation came through the field workers.

While pre-programme Gram Sabha participation came to only 21 percent, post-programme participation rose to 58 percent. It is a clear pointer to the effectiveness of the programme. Similarly, the number of participants who attended the entire Gram Sabha session was 12 percent in the initial stage, now it recorded 83 percent full time attendance. While 81 percent women confined that officials were attending the Gram Sabha only three percent said they were absent.

Unlike in the initial stage when only 8 percent participated in the Plan formulation, 53 percent participated later. Seventy seven percent said they discussed public issues in the women voluntary organisations and presented them in the Gram Sabha. Eighty-six percent said they gave priority to common issues rather than individual needs at the Gram Sabha sessions.

## Field Workers

The field workers were provided training in the following subjects: Panchayati Raj, Gram Sabha, WCP, ombudsman, women empowerment, social audit, and other subjects like voter sensitisation, right to information, family life education,



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Flot presentation by Field worker's  
in Ashan's National Cultural  
Festival



Shield presented to  
Field worker's Flot



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Organisational level class

### ***Field workers speak***

***Gained confidence;  
acquired savings habit;  
found time more time for  
social work – Suma***

***Got inspiration to write  
poetry; the method of  
raising children  
underwent change;  
started intervening in  
social issues; now able to  
share information with  
others –Sheila P***

adolescent training, AIDS, mother and child health care, *Jaagratha Samithi*, and communication capability.

The following section narrates the feedback from the field workers. Unlike the old times, Kudumbashree meetings witnessed more intensive debates about the issues of the ward and WCP. Employment units were started at the Kudumbashree level. Kudumbashree unit members displayed initiative in taking part in activities related to cleaning of the school, drinking water scarcity, installation of street lights and extension of electric lines.

Apart from routine themes, the organisations discussed atrocities against women, epidemics, education-related issues, improving the backwardness of people, preparations for Gram Sabha, and issues related to Panchayat.

It was revealed that people of some wards whose names were not in the voters' list took the initiative to register their names in the voter's list following the circulation of the pamphlet on voters' sensitisation.

Many field workers came to know of Gram Sabha and started attending the Gram Sabha once they had undergone training by KIMS. They started demanding minutes of earlier Gram Sabha meetings. They questioned the practice of non-implementation of Gram Sabha decisions. Many verified whether the beneficiaries were genuine or not and whether the proceedings of Gram Sabha were as per rules.

Field workers could utilise the information gained for the development of the ward while taking active part in resolving the developmental issues of the ward. Most of them felt that the officials were exhibiting certain attitudinal changes in the behaviour towards them. In the Gram Sabha meetings, the views of field workers were given due weightage.

Field workers found the training provided by KIMS distinctly different from other training sessions as it was more interactive and included of games. They reported that the tendency to raise individual needs came down as the awareness about the rights and responsibilities of Panchayats increased. The attitude of the officials towards the people also changed for the better.

The field workers suggested changes in the ongoing Panchayat empowerment programme. The office-bearers of each organisation should be given training. Besides awareness classes, development activities should find place on the agenda. Apart from women, men and children should be made to attend the trainings. They demanded KIMS representatives to be present at the field-level classes.

Of the 14 field workers, four expressed their desire to contest Panchayat polls as they were inspired by the encouragement from the Panchayat members and citizens. One field worker was elected to the Gram Panchayat.



Organisational level class



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Project presentation before  
Panchayat Committee  
-Second Phase



Resource map

## II

### PROGRAMME ENTERING THE EXTENDED PERIOD

The new Panchayat committee, which came to power in the Mangalapuram Panchayat subsequent to the elections to the local self governments, requested KIMS to continue with its services. The demand was raised by women voluntary organisations as well. The requests were discussed in the meeting of the executive and KIMS decided to continue Panchayati Raj empowerment programmes in the Mangalapuram Panchayat.

A combined session of the new Panchayat committee and KIMS was held to ponder over the formulation of the new programme. Each Panchayat member presented her/his viewpoint of Panchayat Empowerment Programme. A draft of the projects to be implemented in the Panchayat was prepared. The meeting decided to conduct social mapping to understand the physical conditions, statistics, health and employment of the people, of the Panchayat. The session decided to organise training programmes, employment enterprises, and health activities according to the findings of the social mapping.

Based on the draft, the programme was finalised. The main activities proposed are given below.

1. Organise a seminar for people's representatives
2. Select field workers and give training
3. Social mapping
  - a. Resource mapping
  - b. Body mapping
  - c. Dream mapping
  - d. Job and job opportunities mapping
4. Compilation of mapping
5. Presentation of the compiled report at the organisational level and making of necessary changes
6. Discussing the revised report with subject experts and inclusion of technical details necessary for follow up actions
7. Presentation of the final report before the Panchayat committee
8. Follow up actions to the social mapping in consultation with the Panchayat
9. Employment trainings based on the resource availability of the Panchayat and starting of employment units.
10. Monitoring system for employment units
11. Evaluation

## Project Team

The team which implemented the Panchayati Raj empowerment programme earlier was entrusted with the follow up activities. To make the programme execution more effective, field workers were chosen in those wards where they were non-existent, under the guidance of the Panchayat member.

## Training for Field Workers

The field workers were provided training in various stages. The newly selected ones were initiated into the nuances of the Panchayati Raj and Gram Sabha through various interactive sessions and games.

The first stage classes focused on Panchayati Raj, Gram Sabha, and WCP. They were given classes on mental health and personality development. A unique Trust Walk was organised in at that stage to emphasise the significance of nurturing trust and confidence in the trainers.

Four groups and two trainers were selected for conducting the Trust Walk. Other trainers were asked to be observers. The eyes of one of the group members were tied and the other was asked to lead her based on the indicators prepared by the project team to help her find the “treasure”.

Following the Trust Walk the participants were asked to analyse various aspects of trust and mistrust between individuals and groups. It touched many issues like leadership qualities and the road to success. The observers also enriched the discussions.

Training was given on field work and survey. The prospective practical difficulties were explained to the participants. The field workers who did the work earlier narrated their experiences. They were made to do a training exercise which comprised model interviews.

## Resource Mapping

Prior to the resource mapping, the field workers were provided training in it. They were introduced to the procedures of resource mapping. A trial resource mapping was carried out in the three wards of the Karimkulam Gram Panchayat. The exercise helped them grasp the various practical aspects of the exercise.

Resource mapping was carried out to identify the natural and manmade resources of a given area. The inhabitants of



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Resource map



Resource map



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Resource mapping

each area were asked to draw their locality and mark the resources.

The resource maps were prepared for all the 19 wards of the Mangalapuram Gram Panchayat by voluntary organisation members under the leadership of Panchayat members. *Anganawadi*, public place, and households were selected for carrying out resource mapping. More than one map was prepared for each ward and these maps were presented at the gatherings and finalised through discussions and suggestions by Panchayat members. Then maps of each group was collated to prepare the ward map. The highlight of the entire process was that the women homemakers themselves prepared the resource map of the area they reside. They were able to grasp the borders, and resources of their wards. All the 19 ward maps were crafted in this manner.

The ward maps were circulated among the volunteer organisations in the Panchayat. They were made aware of the resources of their own ward and other wards. The maps were subjected to intense grassroots level scrutiny in all the wards of the Panchayat and necessary changes were effected. Subsequently, the maps of 19 wards were combined together to create the Mangalapuram Panchayat map.

The map which underwent changes at the organisational level was presented before the Panchayat committee. All the members checked the map for credibility. The information identified by the field workers through the mapping was compiled into four sectors. They are listed here:

1. Development sector
2. Infrastructure sector
3. Production sector
4. Service sector.

## Panchayati Raj Seminar

A seminar for elected representatives of Mangalapuram Gram Panchayat and officials of transferred institutions was organised. The Panchayat President, who inaugurated the session, appreciated the Panchayati Raj empowerment activities. Input sessions were given on implementation of good governance, WCP and on the transferred institutions.

## Dream Mapping

The field workers were trained in dream mapping. Dream mapping is aimed at realising the development of the Panchayat making use of the existing institutions and natural resource of the Panchayat. The dream mapping was executed

by women volunteer workers in the entire Panchayat under the leadership of Panchayat members.

Prior to dream mapping, each group was asked to list out the development needs of its ward. The list was prepared in the order of priority order. The lists prepared thus were later collated in the presence of the Panchayat member. The issues which were of urgent nature for the development of the ward and which could be addressed by the Gram Sabha were identified through this exercise.

As in the case of resource maps, dream maps were handed over to the community organisations for deliberations. The field workers then combined the 19 ward maps and prepared the Panchayat Dream Map. The field workers presented it before the Panchayat committee and it was decided to implement projects appropriate for the resources identified through dream mapping.

The following are the needs/tasks identified through the dream mapping aimed at the comprehensive socio-economic advancement of the Mangalapuram Panchayat.

1. Establish a public Crematorium
2. Old age home
3. Orphanage
4. Drainage system in all wards
5. Un-tarred roads to be tarred
6. Street lights in all roads
7. Lay pipes to solve drinking water scarcity
8. A government hospital with in patient facility
9. PHC sub centre in all the wards
10. Each ward to have more than one *Anganawadi*
11. The Panchayat should be made hut-less
12. Electricity connection to all the households
13. Reading rooms in all wards
14. Establishing markets wherever appropriate
15. Maveli stores in all the wards
16. Cleaning of unused ponds.
17. An employment training centre for women
18. A driving school exclusively for women
19. A tailoring training centre
20. A counselling centre
21. Assistance for education of poor children
22. Public wells where scarcity of drinking water is prevalent
23. A women's library
24. Hostel for the Sports school
25. Milk collection centres in all wards
26. Revival of the radio park of the Panchayat
27. A market



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Dream mapping



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Haritha Gram Project



Haritha Gram Project

28. Backwater tourism in the Murukkumpuzha ward
29. Facilities for the production and distribution of coconut products

## Projects implemented based on Dream Mapping

The following projects were implemented based on the information gathered through dream mapping.

### 1. *KIMS Sree Bhavan*

KIMS constructed 50 houses in the Mangalapuram Panchayat under the KIMS Sree Bhavan project. Most of the beneficiaries were widows, women deserted by husbands, and physically challenged. They were selected from the list made available by the Gram Sabha.

### 2. *Hartiha Gram project*

Hundred farmers were chosen from Mangalapuram Panchayat for the project, Hartiha Gram, for scientific cultivation of banana. The project was implemented with the technical support of Province Agro System. The farmers were given with training and advice on scientific farming.

### 3. *Comprehensive Coconut Development Project*

A comprehensive Coconut Development Project was being implemented jointly with the Central Coconut Development Board in the wards of Kozhimada and Valikonam in Mangalapuram Gram Panchayat. The project objective is to select 25 acres of coconut farm land and bring manures and plant protection chemicals to the farmers at concessional rates, for promoting coconut cultivation through scientific methods. Further, training is given to produce value added projects from coconut.

### 4. *Women Driving School*

A driving school was established exclusively for women under the supervision of the Gram Panchayat. 70 percent of the beneficiaries belonged to Scheduled Caste/Tribe sections.

## Job and Job Opportunities Mapping

Members of women voluntary organisations carried out mapping of job and job opportunities in the Panchayat based on the resources and market prospects. The team members were divided into groups for the exercise. Each group classified the available jobs into three sectors – farming,

small scale industry, and other employment avenues.

The 19 ward-wise maps were merged to form the Panchayat Map following discussions at the organisational level. Later, the Panchayat committee examined the map and decided to prepare appropriate projects for starting ventures.

The following ventures were accordingly suggested:

<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>Small scale industry</b>	<b>Other</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mushroom</li><li>• Poultry farming</li><li>• Cow rearing</li><li>• Bee keeping</li><li>• Vegetable cultivation</li><li>• Flower cultivation</li><li>• Vermin compost</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pickle making</li><li>• Sandal stick making</li><li>• Tailoring</li><li>• Candle making</li><li>• Chappal, leather bag production</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Computer</li><li>• Driving</li><li>• Embroidery</li><li>• Bamboo-related works</li><li>• Products from banana fibre</li><li>• Soft toys</li></ul>

The following employment trainings were started as a follow up to the jobs and job opportunities mapping.

Umbrella making, soap powder making, bee keeping, book binding, fruits processing, goat rearing and distribution, training in vanilla farming, training in mushroom cultivation, vermin compost production, snacks making, rabbit rearing, toys production, fruits processing, book making, poultry farming, flower cultivation training, pickle making, candle making, sari printing, beautician course, and computer literacy.

The presence of officials concerned from government departments was ensured. Those who completed training were given government approved certificates.

## Body Mapping

The Panchayat President had said that the Panchayat was willing to submit a health-related project if the details

Body Mapping



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Training- Vanilla cultivation



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY



Body Mapping

regarding women's health were provided. To understand health-related issues of women, body mapping was conducted. Classes were held by nursing students of the Medical College in the presence of their teachers, for effectively doing body mapping and identifying the symptoms of ailments.

The classes covered the following subjects: personal hygiene, eye care, hair care, and menstrual hygiene, smoking-related diseases, blood pressure, and diabetes. Body Mapping aims at locating the common health issues of a society. While drawing the map, the information is marked according to the targets. Training was provided to the trainers on conducting body mapping. They were formed into groups and were asked to discuss the health problems of women in the Panchayat. A trial body mapping was done in order to familiarise them with the actual process.

Body mapping was implemented by women volunteers in all the wards. Only women participated in the programme. For this, one of the members lay on a large chart paper sheet and the body outline was marked. Then the generally found diseases from head to toe were marked on the outline. The health problems identified were grouped into three – diseases related to head and allied parts, ailments related to legs and arms, illnesses related to body and allied parts.

According to the standard practice, ward-wise maps were entrusted with the community organisations for discussions. The maps were joined together to create the Panchayat map which illustrated the diseases encountered by women in the Mangalapuram Gram Panchayat. The Panchayat committee which looked into the map, offered to organise follow up activities to address these issues.

## Medical Camp

Allopathic and Ayurveda medical camps were organised to address the ailments identified through body mapping, in collaboration with the Thiruvananthapuram Medical College and the Pothencode Santhigiri Ashram. Medicines were distributed free of cost to around 5000 camp participants. The allopathic medical camp was organised under the supervision of doctors belonging to Gynaecology, Ortho, General, Skin, and Cancer specialities. Besides, the services of nursing students and pharmacists were also made available.

## Awareness classes

### *Family Life Education*

Classes were conducted for the members of Kudumbashree units on family life education as part of the Panchayati Raj empowerment programme.

### *Nutrition and Health Education*

A training programme on nutrition and health education was held with the help of Community Food and Nutrition Extension Unit of the Food and Nutrition Board. The participants were the women voluntary workers of Mangalapuram Panchayat. Various issues related to post natal care together with the different dimensions of nutritious food were dealt with in the sessions.

### *Adolescence Health and Lifestyle*

Classes on adolescence health and lifestyle were held in various wards of Panchayat for the girls aged between 12 and 18.

## Conclusion

Panchayati Raj Act came into being to ensure greater participation of women in development planning and decentralised governance. KIMS ventured into Panchayati Raj Empowerment Programme together with the Mangalapuram Gram Panchayat for enhancing the people's capability to make effective use of the role assigned to them in the governance process of Panchayati Raj.

The KIMS programmes had its primary focus on the marginalised and women. As a result, KIMS programmes were biased towards women empowerment as well. The sensitisation efforts delivered rich results in the form of increased attendance in the Gram Sabha sessions. The job trainings initiated under the programme led to sustainable results.

It was jointly conducted by the Mangalapuram Panchayat and KIMS, and supported by SDC-CapDeck. Gram Sabhas provide opportunities for people to become partners and participants in power. By ensuring certain people's especially, women's active participation in the Gram Sabha, Panchayati Raj empowerment could be achieved together with women empowerment.



STRENGTHENING PANCHAYATI RAJ:  
WOMEN SHOW THE WAY

## SDC CapDeCK

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is Switzerland's international cooperation agency, under the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs. SDC supports sustainable development and seeks to improve the living conditions and quality of life of disadvantaged people in the South and East.

In India, starting with technical collaboration in livestock improvement in Kerala in 1963, SDC progressively expanded its activities to other geographical areas and to other fields such as natural resource management, rural finance and employment, rural energy and housing, decentralisation and local governance, empowerment and social justice, human and institutional strengthening and humanitarian aid.

SDC has been cooperating in these fields with a variety of partners, notably community based and non-governmental organisations, research and education institutions, central, state and local governments.

The Programme on Capacity Development for Decentralisation in Kerala (CapDeCK) of SDC was conceptualised to support capacity building for the democratic decentralisation process in Kerala.

As part of this, SDC collaborates mainly with the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA). Starting with support for the transition from a campaign mode of capacity building to an institutionalised form, the KILA-CapDeCK project developed a decentralised training system under the leadership of KILA and platforms for sharing of experiences on decentralisation and for co-ordination of activities.

The CapDeCK Programme also supports people-driven and people-centred decentralised democratic governance by empowering the citizens and their democratic bodies to play a more pro-active role in local development. Strengthening Gram Sabhas, developing Panchayats as real institutions of local governance, motivating Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and other institutions for strengthening Panchayati Raj, mainstreaming gender in decentralisation and empowering the marginalised through Panchayati Raj, form the broad framework on which the local initiatives under the CapDeCK's Panchayati Raj Empowerment component are designed and implemented. These interventions are carried out through Panchayats, NGOs, academic institutions, local government associations, Kudumbashree, State Women's Commission and other civil society organisations.