

Panchayat Raj: Some Facts/Good Practices in Kerala

Link to the website of [Local Self Government Department, Govt. of Kerala](#)

Link to [PRIs of Kerala](#)

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Panchayati Raj System

- Panchayati Raj System in Kerala began with enactment of Panchayati Raj Act in 1994.
- The status of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Kerala (2010-2015) is as follows:

Sl. No.	PRIs	No. of PRIs	No. of Wards	Strength (Number of Wards)	
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit
1	Gram Panchayat	978	16680	13	23
2	Block Panchayat	152	2095	13	23
3	District Panchayat	14	332	16	32
Total		1144	19107		

Elections

- The Chairpersons of all the three tiers are elected through indirect elections.
- The SEC also conducts elections to the District Planning Committees.

Powers, Functions and Functionaries

- The elected Head of the Local Government has been declared as the executive authority.
- The senior most officials of various departments brought under the control of the Local Governments. They are working as ex-officio Secretaries for those subjects.

Decentralization and devolution of function

- **Health:** All institutions other than medical colleges and regional speciality hospitals have been placed under the control of the local governments.
- **Education:** In rural areas the high schools and upper primary schools have been transferred to the District Panchayats and the primary schools have been transferred to Gram Panchayats;
- **Poverty Alleviation:** The entire responsibility of poverty alleviation has gone to the local governments; all the centrally sponsored anti-poverty programmes are planned and implemented through them.
- **Social Welfare:** Barring statutory functions relating to juvenile justice, the entire functions have been devolved to local governments. The ICDS is fully implemented by GPs and Urban Local Bodies. Care of the disabled, to a substantial degree has become a local government responsibility.
- **Agriculture and Allied sectors:** The de facto and de jure local government functions are agricultural extension including farmer oriented support for increasing production and productivity, watershed management and minor irrigation, dairy development, animal husbandry including veterinary care & Inland fisheries.
- Barring highways and major district roads, **road connectivity** has become local government responsibility.
- **Sanitation and rural water supply** are being handled by local governments.
- Promotion of **tiny, cottage and small industries** is mostly with the local governments.
- All the **welfare pensions** are administered by the local governments.

Functionaries

- The Local Governments have full administrative control including powers of disciplinary action over their own staff as well as staff transferred to it.
- The staff pattern varies according to the Local Government.

A Gram Panchayat would have permanent staff in the range of 15-22 depending on size (*secretary, assistant secretary, junior superintendent/head clerk, accountant, 4 Senior Clerks and 4 LD clerks, peons and sweepers*)

- The officials of other Line Departments transferred to the Local Governments include agricultural officers, veterinary doctors, medical officers, village extension officers, etc.

Funds

- Fiscal transfers to Local Governments from Government are done in a systematic manner. Kerala is having a separate Budget Window for Local Governments.
- Appendix IV of the State Budget deals with devolution of funds to Local Governments.
- A fairly substantial own tax domain also exists in Gram Panchayats.

Panchayats receive funds from:

- The State Governments more than 20% of the State's annual budget
- Funds for operations and maintenance of the transferred institutions (*out of the budget of the line departments*)
- Own Revenue of Gram Panchayat raised through levy of professional tax, property tax, Building Permit Fees, Entertainment Tax, Service Tax and user fee, etc.
- On an average each GP has a budget of about rupees four crores

Infrastructure

- All GPs have their own buildings with front office for dealing with the public.
- Almost all Gram Panchayats have their own vehicles.
- IT kiosks have been opened in all the hospitals (*government as well as private about 900*) for uploading information on births and deaths authenticated by doctors/hospitals through written documents and submitted to Panchayat offices for online generation of certificates by the public within a specified time.

- Birth records from 1970 onwards have been uploaded on the website at <http://www.cr.lsgkerala.gov.in/>
- India's first Hi-Speed Rural Broadband Network under National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project commissioned in Idukki District, Kerala on 12th January, 2015.

Innovations

There are innovative interventions both on developmental and governance aspects.

- **Green Army:** A few Panchayats in Thrissur district have formed Green Army - Labour Bank of Farmers for sustainable agriculture, food security and stable employment for farmers
- **ISO Certified:** About 50 GPs have availed ISO 9001:2008 through TQM.
- Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) has designed and conducted a capacity building programme on **people-friendly Panchayats** and trained over ERs and PFs of about 200 GPs.
- **Kudumbashree** (www.kudumbashree.org) was conceived as a joint programme of the GOK and NABARD implemented through Community Development Societies (CDSs) of Poor Women, serving as the community wing of Local Governments. Kudumbashree is today one of the largest women-empowering projects in the country. The programme has 41 lakh members and covers more than 50% of the households in Kerala. Literal meaning of Kudumbashree is prosperity (shree) of family (Kudumbam).
- Palakkad District Panchayat is the first local body in the country to own a **mini hydel power project**. The 'Meenvallom mini hydel project', the first of its kind in terms of implementation and resource mobilisation, became operational on 18th June 2014 with an initial generation of 3 Mega Watts.

Capacity Building and Training (CB & T)

- Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) is playing significant role in CB&T on local governance (*with focus on the Elected Representatives, Officials, Gram Sabha members, and other stakeholders' viz. MLAs, media, political leaders, NGOs/CBOs, students, etc.*) www.kilaonline.org

- Within one month of election of Panchayats, all the ERs would be provided induction training followed by refresher training on functional aspects.
- The officials of various cadres are also provided continuous trainings. Some of the action oriented trainings by KILA are TQM-ISO, Child Friendly Local Governance, Good Governance, MLA- PRI interface for Local Development, River Protection etc.
- KILA has recently designed a course on Diploma in Local Governance (DLG) for supervisory cadre officials of the GPs. The six months duration of DLG is intended to enhance the professional skills of officials.
- Concurrent Decentralized Training System (CDTS) is another innovative training by KILA to make GPs as Learning Organizations (LOs).

Information Technology

For e-Governance for local bodies, Information Kerala Mission (IKM) has already launched twelve Applications for providing e-services to citizens and streamlining the Panchayat processes and working which include Sulekha for planning and monitoring, *Saankya* for double entry accounting, *Soochika* for office management, and *Sevana* for e-services to citizens. (www.infokerala.org)