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**Gender Responsive Budgeting and Decentralized Local
Governance: Unleashing the Potential for Gender Equity
and Human Development**

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Abstract

The six decades of Independent India's experience on economic front shows many ups and downs and now it is considerably doing well at the rate of Nine percent growth and hope to achieve two digit growth rate in near future. Does it mean the impact will trickle down to the underprivileged and other disadvantaged groups particularly women? The response is mixed. Yet, there is a lot of hope and scope in the decentralized local governance- which came into existence in India with the Constitutional sanctity one decade ago- if its potential is utilized properly to achieve gender equity and Human Development ultimately. Even though many studies show that the decentralized local governance is struggling a lot to establish itself as a self governing institution few experiments from selected Indian states show that the potential can be unleashed. This article focuses on the experiments carried out by Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu on Gender Responsive Budgeting at Local Governance.

Gender Responsive Budgeting and Decentralized Local Governance: Unleashing the Potential for Gender Equity and Human Development

J. Vanishree

The Backdrop

Gender Responsive Budgeting is a means to realize the commitments of the government towards women's needs and priorities taken into account in the budget allocation. The six decades of independent India's experience on economic front shows many ups and downs and now it is considerably doing well at the rate of nine percent growth and hope to achieve two digit growth rate in near future. Does it mean the impact will trickle down to the underprivileged and other disadvantaged groups particularly women? India is one of the signatories of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which provide a shared vision of a much improved world by 2015, where extreme poverty is cut in half, child mortality is greatly reduced, gender disparities in primary and secondary education are eliminated, women are more empowered, and health and environment indicators with a global partnership for development. However, based on current rates of progress, it may be more difficult to meet many of the goals by 2015, such as achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality (The World Bank, 2003). It is worth mentioning that though improvement of economic parameters such as GDP, per capita income, etc have not been unimpressive in India, improvement of social indicators such as literacy, nutritional status of women and children, infant mortality rate, unemployment rate and incidence of poverty have been far from satisfactory (Council for Social Development, 2006). Yet, there is a lot of hope and scope in the decentralized local governance, which came into existence in India with the constitutional sanctity one and half decades ago, if its potential is utilized properly to achieve gender equity and human development ultimately.

The inducement behind this 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was to make panchayats¹ as good governance or an effective mechanism for economic development and social justice at grassroots level. This Act has brought forth a genuine spirit of democratic decentralization in the country. This Act has ushered in change by providing wide-ranging powers and functions to local level constitutional bodies and ordinary people for ensuring participation in planning and implementation for effective and efficient development. The important initiatives have been envisaged for the people's participation are as follows:

- Preparation of plans for economic development and social justice.
- Implementation of schemes for economic and social development.
- The powers and functions of Gram Sabha.²
- Regular elections to the Panchayats.
- One third reservation of seats for women and proportional seat reservation for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

In consonance with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, different state (provincial) governments have initiated new Acts on decentralization and they are called as conformity Acts. But many states are unwilling to devolve their powers to the local bodies and most of them consider local bodies as their implementing agencies without any responsibilities. Even though many studies show that the decentralized local governance is struggling a lot to establish itself as a self governing institution few experiments from selected states show that the potential can be unleashed. This paper tries to explore the potential of decentralized local governance in gender responsive budgeting from the experience of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in India to achieve gender equity and human development.

Experience from Kerala

In 1994, the Kerala Panchayati Raj³ Act came into being. Since 1996, the Kerala government initiated the decentralized planning process and 35-40% of plan funds were devolved to local governments with a mandate to identify locally specific needs, mobilize resources, plan and implement programmes suited to each area

locality. By transferring powers, responsibilities and by devolving finances to the three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Kerala has been able to transform them into real institutions of local governance.

As a part of decentralized planning which was initiated in 1996, several steps were taken to ensure gender equity (SAKHI, 2006). They are

- A participatory study of the status of women in each area was made mandatory as a step to understand local specific issues of women and subsequent planning of relevant projects.
- A working group on women was initiated to formulate projects for women.
- It was directed to ensure women's representation should be there in all sector wise working groups.
- Attempts were made to improve women's participation in the Gram Sabha and focus on issues of women in discussions.
- 50% representation of women was ensured in the sub committees formed in the Gram Sabha. Out of the two representatives in each subject group in the Gram Sabha, one had to be a woman.
- A chapter on women was mandatory in the report prepared on perspective on development for the local body and also in plan document.
- It was directed that in general projects special consideration be given for women.
- It was mandated that at least 10 percent of funds be allocated for the women's component plan (WCP)

Women's Component Plan is given priority in the decentralized planning process in Kerala. The WCP aims to provide a mechanism for special activities to ensure gender equity in the society and within the family. At least 10% of the plan budget is mandated to be set apart to meet the specific needs of women. Short and

long term strategic needs of women can be addressed through the WCP to ensure the overall empowerment of women. It aims at promoting gender related development exclusively to the women. This was considered more effective as they yield benefits to the woman and children and to the community at large. The money earmarked for WCP is utilized by the local bodies to prepare projects that directly benefit women. It differs from what has been attempted till now on the following points.

- The basic concept underlying WCP is that women development is not just providing income and employment opportunities but also better health, education, physical environment, human dignity, freedom etc. Though broad parameters are laid down regarding the type of projects to be formulated the local bodies have the freedom to formulate location and need specific projects based on the felt needs of the women.
- Participation of women is ensured in all spheres of activities, be it in expressing opinion, formulating project proposals, monitoring or implementation. They were to be treated not as mere beneficiaries but partners in the development process.
- The local bodies were asked to set apart 10 percent of the grant-in-aid for WCP. Thus, the funds at the disposal of the local bodies for women development was uniform and it was not based on the percentage of women below the poverty line. The local bodies has the freedom to increase the percentage or integrate it with its own funds while preparing projects.

The review of the last decade of the WCP in the decentralized plan process in Kerala, reveals the basic needs for women have been recognized and met at the local government level (Bhava Kan, Oomman John, Leela Kumri, 2001). Projects to improve women's income and to enhance the status of women through adoption of non traditional projects have been carried out in some areas. Before planning through WCP gender planning, gender budgeting and gender auditing methodology was sorted out by the decentralized governance different sectors, namely production sector, services sector, health sector etc like the following.

Gender Planning	Gender Budgeting	Gender Auditing
<p><u>Production Sector</u></p> <p>1. It should be ensured that women entrepreneurs are provided training in improved methods of production, technology, information, marketing support and follow-up training. This should improve women's bargaining capacity and ensure improved capital and assets and a place in the economic structure.</p>	<p><u>Production Sector</u></p> <p>1. Resources should be allocated for the small scale sector to cover training, marketing support and financial support.</p>	<p><u>Production Sector</u></p> <p>1. Production Sector have women been supported through better technical training, marketing support, better income, bargaining capacity and better quality of products?</p> <p>2. Has it been possible to reduce work burden in traditional sector.</p>
<p><u>Service Sector</u></p> <p>1. Projects should address support activities to ensure better higher education opportunities for girls.</p> <p>2. Ensure equal participation of girls and boys in curricular and co-curricular activities. Further to ensure that girls are able to access libraries etc by adjusting school timings.</p>	<p><u>Service Sector</u></p> <p>1. Resources to be allocated for better access to opportunities for girls.</p> <p>2. Specific needs of girls should be provided for in the budget.</p>	<p><u>Service Sector</u></p> <p>1. Have girls from marginalized communities benefited?</p> <p>2. How many girls gained access to higher education opportunities?</p> <p>3. Have girls been involved in school activities?</p> <p>4. Have girls and boys had equal opportunities in sports, class responsibilities etc.</p> <p>5. Is there discrimination against girls in seating arrangements etc.</p>

Health	Health	Health
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In order to ensure safety for and protection of women, specific project should be promoted? 2. Programmes to address sexual and mental health, violence against women should be regarded as a health issue. 3. Strategic needs of marginalized women to be addressed. Occupation related diseases to be addressed. 4. Projects to ensure sexual and reproductive health care for adolescent girls. 5. Plan better health care physical and mental health for women who are aged, disabled, living with HIV/AIDS. 6. Family planning projects should ensure responsibility of men. 7. Ensure availability of gynecologists in primary health centres and child birth facilities health care for women's diseases and basic facilities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resources for women's resource centre. 2. Resources to be prioritized for marginalized women. 3. Ensure services of gynecologist at least once a week. Resources should be allocated to conduct periodic medical camps and check up. Resources should also be allocated for sex education programmes, mental health programmes including prevention of suicides and counseling support for women who have/are experiencing violence. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have there been projects to address the specific health needs of women? 2. Has there been a reduction in women's health problem? 3. Have the needs of adolescent girls been addressed? 4. Have there been efforts to mainstream women's issues? 5. Has a women's resource centre been set? Is it functioning well? 6. Has it been possible to prevent maternal and infant deaths?

Cultural	Cultural	Cultural
1. Women's participation should be ensured in socio-cultural forums and projects should address this.	1. Resources to be prioritized for girls and women to organize clubs, cultural activities etc.	1. Has the participation and membership of women in socio-cultural organisations/ activities increased?
2. Play ground for girls only. Training in non traditional sports activities.	2. Scholarships for sports training	2. How many projects formulated for women? How have women benefited through these projects?
3. Promote women's clubs/cultural activities	3. Resources to be allocated for training girls in Karate, Swimming, Cycling and Yoga	

An important component of this decentralized planning was the elaborate capacity building exercises undertaken through the training programmes. The state planning board has organised systematic training for a large number of resource persons. In the seven rounds of training, at state, district and local level, 1500 elected local body representatives, 25000 officials and around 75000 volunteers were given training. All the elected representatives have participated in the training programme at one level or the other. Each round of training focused on definite planning activities that have to be undertaken. Separate handbooks were prepared for each round. The curriculum for the training of key resource persons consisted of the following:

- key aspects of Kerala's regional economy in the national context.
- elements of planning
- the Panchayati Raj System in Kerala
- database for decentralized planning
- case studies of local level planning exercises
- women and development process in Kerala.

Achievements of WCP

Kerala's State Institute of Rural Development in report of the study of women component plan in Kerala (Bavakhan, Oomman John, Leela Kumari, 2001) has evaluated the achievements of WCP which are outlined as below:

- ❖ For the first time, through WCP, the development of women was brought on the agenda of each of the local bodies.
- ❖ For the first time, in the history of the local self government, these bodies were asked to set apart 10 percent of the grant-in-aid for projects that directly benefited women. There was no sectoral allocation under WCP and Panchayats could prepare any projects whose benefits would accrue to women. Unlike earlier programmes which were forced from above, in WCP, the local bodies formulated projects based on the felt needs of the people that were put forth in the Gram Sabha. This statutory requirement of setting apart funds for WCP helped the women to occupy space to intervene in the development process.
- ❖ The gender dimensions were brought into the planning process. During the second phase of planning, strategic gender needs addressing issues of violence, gender division of labour in terms of equal wages for equal work, etc. atrocities against women came up in various local bodies.
- ❖ With WCP, there was a quantum increase in the benefits given to women. Within the broad context, the disadvantaged like widows, separated women and families with unmarried girls were given more weightage while selecting the beneficiaries for various projects.
- ❖ The 10 percent outlay was set apart by the local bodies uniformly without taking into account the percentage of people living below the poverty line. They also had the freedom to increase the percentage or integrate it with its own funds while preparing projects. Though instructions were given to the local bodies on the use of WCP funds, the local bodies had the freedom to prepare location specific projects based on the felt needs of the people.

- ❖ Under WCP, participation of women was ensured in all spheres of activities – be it in expressing opinions, taking part in discussions, formulating project proposals, monitoring or implementation. Nearly one third of the participants in the development seminars were women and they were active in the subject group which discussed the women development reports.
- ❖ New forms of women organisations such as neighbourhood groups and self help groups were successfully promoted in Panchayats under WCP. One positive outcome of this was the increased women participation in Panchayats which have promoted self help groups.
- ❖ There has been an improvement in the conceptualization of WCP over the years. During the first year, there was no clarity regarding what all could be brought under WCP and this was reflected in the nature of projects prepared by the Panchayats. Houses, roads, sanitation etc which in the strict sense should have been part of the general projects, were prepared under WCP during the first year. But there was a marked improvement in the nature of projects prepared during the subsequent phases. There was a reallocation of resources from agriculture to industry, perceptible fall in infrastructure projects and a shift from service sector to employment and other social welfare programmes.
- ❖ There has been a qualitative change in the nature of projects in the recent years. A few Panchayats have formulated projects that have gone beyond the stereo type gender projects. Projects like autorickshaw driving, information technology etc, have been prepared that aim at breaking the monopoly of men in these field. Welfare oriented projects have been changed into empowerment oriented programmes in some Panchayats.
- ❖ Capacity building was given due importance under WCP. The elected women members and women task force members were given training in matters related to women issues and preparation of women related projects.

- ❖ Due to the efforts of capacity building, a positive impact has been created in women empowerment such as leadership development, communication skills, group dynamics and enhancement of the decision making powers.
- ❖ There was considerable enhancement in confidence and decision making capacity of women. The women participants in Gram Sabhas, who were mere spectators in early stages, have turned to active participants in subsequent phases. This was made possible by the emphasis on group discussion.
- ❖ It is a remarkable achievement that all the Panchayats have documented in detail issues concerning women development at local level. There is a separate chapter on women welfare in the “Development Report” by every Panchayat.

To conclude it can be said that through the WCPs, development of women has been brought on the agenda of local bodies. It also helped women to occupy space to intervene in the development process. Its impact has made the stakeholders begin to think of improving the projects so that in the long run it may address the gender related issues. Where ever it made an impact, women are coming forward to take their rightful place in society by putting forth their demands forcefully.

Experience from Karnataka

Karnataka was the first state to pass the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act in conformity with 73rd Constitution Amendment Act. The experience in Karnataka embodies that the women headed Panchayati Raj Institutions have contributed to changing the nature of governance itself seen from the changes of priorities that local bodies who have take up. In Karnataka, 43% of those elected to Village Panchayats are women, though the reservation is only for 33%. Women chose to deal with the shortage of water, alcohol abuse, education, health, domestic violence, child marriage, child domestic labour, promotion of girl-child education etc (Devaki Jain, 1996).

This project, called ‘Building Budgets from Below’, is neither critiquing nor informing the Budget, from what is called a gender perspective. Per contra it attempts to build, construct budgets, such that the interest of women and other subordinated

groups are safeguarded. This project was sponsored by the United National Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) initiated in January 2002 by Karnataka Women's Information and Resource Centre, Bangalore.

The main thrust of this project is that gender budgeting is meaningful only if the budgetary support is put to duty in the hands of the institutions, which are representative in character, operate at ground level and are accessible and accountable. The argument of this exercise, is that influencing policy, especially by subordinated groups like women, requires (Ahalya Bhatt, 2003):

- A linking of economic governance to political governance,
- Building the direction for fiscal policy, and fiscal balances, from below, working backwards from ground level plans all the way to the national balance sheet.
- Reordering the larger picture, the political economy paradigm such that it ushers in a pattern of development which is rooted in promoting equity gender concerns.

The project is based on the premises that the primary interest of gender budgeting is to remove poverty, especially women's poverty thus focuses on building the space and method which would enable poor women to move themselves out of poverty. It also argues that it is possible to make such changes in the Indian context due to certain constitutionally mandated arrangements, and the capability of women. Women can design, construct fiscal policy. This exercise which is working backwards from ground level leads to national fiscal policy, suggests that a summation of the budgets prepared at local level, pyramided upwards, to determine the national budget is the only method which can really shift the development paradigm – the revenue and expenditure – such that inequalities including gender derived inequality and the needs of the poor, especially poor women are accommodated in the budget (Ahalya Bhatt, 2003). This exercise is not only about decentralization, but about enabling women to determine fiscal policy at the national and sub national levels. It is an attempt to upturn the system of budget making, rather than ask for being accommodated. The main argument of the study is the interests of

women are reflected and safeguarded only if they themselves can participate in budget preparation. This project, therefore, insists that allocations and utilizations are not the way to handle gender budgeting. Such a programme would only reduce women to beneficiaries, a need based approach and also an approach that gets trapped if not nullified in the machinery of implementation, putting women at the end of a hierarchical line. To reverse this hierarchy and also to argue that it is the direction of the whole economy that is necessary, the project would like to be called an experiment in enabling women to Direct Fiscal Policy (Ahalya Bhatt, 2003).

One of the important objectives of the project is to make the Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) to prepare an 'Ought Budget' by dismantling the existing budget prepared by the Village Panchayats. This exercise was carried out in two Village Panchayats and in one municipality⁴ in three phases. During the first phase, the project made an attempt to understand from EWRs about their awareness, perceptions and participation in the budget making process. In the second phase, EWRs were asked to prioritise their local needs as against the priorities set by the Village Panchayats. In the third phase, using this background information, the project further made an attempt by motivating EWRs for preparing an ought budget.

In the first phase their awareness level was understand in the following terms:

- Generally, women were not aware of the budgetary details particularly the way it has been prepared in the Village Panchayat.
- EWRs expressed their awareness of Village Panchayat getting revenue from water tax, house tax, non-motorable vehicles tax etc.
- Most of the members were not aware of the Jawahar Grama Samruddi Yojana (JGSY) which aims at development of rural infrastructure at the village level like construction of school buildings, water harvesting structure and raising of plantation under social forestry besides providing wage employment to below poverty line families.

Their perceptions were captured as:

- EWRs thought that it is the responsibility of the men and not of women to prepare the budget.
- EWRs felt that since they are uneducated they need not evince much interest about the budget.
- EWRs expressed that only the President, Secretary and a few influential male representatives are involved in preparing the budget.
- Some EWRs knew about the budget and its preparation.

According to them the Secretary reads the budget in the meeting and tells them how much money is allocated under each item.

- Men members play a decisive role in finalizing the budgetary allocations.
- Women members hardly have made any efforts in initiating developmental works because of non-cooperation of the President, the Secretary and male members.

Their participation shows that,

- Although women lack awareness, they do attend meetings regularly including the budget meetings.
- Participation of EWRs in the Panchayat activities is limited due to male domination in such activities.

Based on the views of the first phase it is clear that (Ahalya Bhatt, 2003)

- There is no system by which the women representatives are made aware of or helped to understand how the budget is prepared and how it is allocated.
- There are no written guidelines or booklets which spell out the budget details to the members and the public.
- No linkage between expenditure and the priorities listed by women.

- Both men and women members of the Panchayat mentioned, that they would like to see the allocation in the budget for drinking water supply, good drainage system, maternity home, proper roads, etc.

During the second phase, EWRs were asked to list out their priorities which they feel important according to the needs of the Village Panchayat. The below table shows priorities of Village Panchayat and six Elected Women Representatives in a Village Panchayat called Honnganhalli.

Sl. No.	Item	Priorities							
		Village Panchayat	EWRs						Average
			1	2	3	4	5	6	
1.	General Administration (Salaries, Sitting Charges, TA, DA, Stationery etc)	4	6	5	7	7	5	5	6
2.	Social security	1	1	2	1	3	1	4	1
3.	Public infrastructure	2	2	3	5	2	3	2	3
4.	Public health	7	3	4	3	1	4	6	4
5.	Civic Amenities	3	4	1	2	4	2	1	2
6.	Education	8	5	6	6	5	6	3	5
7.	Works under schedule caste and tribes welfare	6	7	7	4	6	7	7	7
8.	Contribution	9	8	8	8	9	8	8	8
9.	Debt Heads	5	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

Source: Ahalya Bhatt, 2003

Totally six EWRs were asked to priorities the activities which they felt important. It is observed that the priorities fixed by the Village Panchayat were in contest to the priorities identified by the EWRs. Public health and education were given 7th and 8th by Village Panchayat where as EWRs gave 4th and 5th place.

The third phase was the preparation of 'Ought Budget' by the EWRs. Firstly, the members were briefed in detail about the way in which Panchayat prepares budget. Secondly, they were made to prepare a ought budget by giving their priorities. Through focus group discussions, the members were socialized and sensitised about

the budgetary process, which in turn motivated them to evince interest. The women members were asked to prioritise the development works from their point of view (ought budget) and compare it with that of the existing budget (is budget). The result revealed that most of the EWRs prefer drinking water as top priority followed by the drainage as the village lack proper drainage and this would facilitate the construction of toilets which was not taken up earlier due to the absence of drainage system. Next in the priority was improvement of infrastructure like constructing roads, culverts, maintenance of school building and bus shelter.

It is noted that the priorities of the Panchayat and the EWRs vary in terms of setting them. It is significant to note here that the EWRs were in a position to priorities the development works. The priorities of the members are as follows:

1. Drinking water - provision of potable water
2. Drainage system – toilets
3. Public infrastructure
4. Bus stand
5. Social security
6. Houses for poor
7. Administration
8. Hospital
9. Self-employment for women.

This shows that given an opportunity, women are able to come forward and participate in the budget meeting and prioritize looking at the socio-economic needs of the people in particular and village in general.

Experience from Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu Panchayati Raj Institutions came into existence in 1996 even though Conformity Act was passed in 1994. The state government was reluctant to share its power with Panchayati Raj Institutions, however with the support of external agencies like Gandhigram Rural University which is devoted to rural development, supported 58 Village Panchayats in preparing Village Development Plan on their

own, which includes 17 Village Panchayats which were severely affected by Tsunami in 2004. The village development plan clearly outlines the activities to be carried out from the Human Development Perspective. The stress on the importance of women and child development is made in each development plan and the highlight of this development plan is that the resources required to carry out the plan are also identified.

This plan document contains a brief history of the Panchayats, basic data about agriculture, source of irrigation, veterinary facilities, land utilization, land ownership, landless families with social background, facilities available in schools, admission in schools, dropouts in schools, status of women and children, energy utilization, non-conventional energy sources, environmental conditions, skills available in the village, housing facilities etc.

Responsibilities were fixed on individuals and groups to take steps to meet the needs indicated in the plan document. Achievable indicators were fixed to monitor the activities of the Panchayats. It was stated unequivocally that the Panchayat would concentrate on 100 percent school admission, ensure the normal weight of new born babies, institutional delivery, attention to pre-natal and post-natal care, reduce malnutrition, concentrate on family welfare etc. Thus this plan document became a vision document. Responsibility was not fixed on the government alone. Activities were classified and accordingly responsibilities were fixed for administering development and social justice.

The village development plan has the following objectives for the wholistic development of the Panchayat.

What is going to be done in the Gram Panchayat through this plan?

- Enrolling all the children who have completed five years of age in school.
- Ensuring that the enrolled children continue their studies without dropping out.
- Conducting school annual day celebration to enable the students to display their creative potential.
- Providing basic amenities like drinking water, toilet, playing ground and vegetable garden in the school.

- Creating a sanitation and toilet culture among the students.
- Establishing reading rooms to encourage the desire to learn among the villagers and putting to use the Library.
- Providing toilet facility and playthings for children in the anganwadi and trimming their nails to ensure hygiene.
- Enrolling all the children who have completed two and a half years of age in the anganwadi and helping them to learn the habit of attending to their personal cleanliness.
- Ensuring the age-specific weight and the general health of children by providing them with appropriate balanced nutritious meal and ensuring the proper conduct of activities such as providing nutritious flour and noon meal under the integrated child welfare scheme.
- Preventing female infanticide by creating awareness among the villagers.
- Ensuring that all the children receive fully and properly the benefits of the immunization programme.
- Creating an environment free of child labour.
- Adopting measures to prevent child mortality.
- Creating awareness among the people about gender equality.
- Ensuring that all deliveries take place only in hospitals.
- Creating awareness among women about prenatal and postnatal care.
- Helping women to fully receive the benefits of the activities under the postnatal child welfare schemes.
- Helping pregnant women to properly receive benefits such as prenatal care, medical examination, immunization vaccines, nutritious flour and pregnancy assistance money.
- Providing the required minimum basic facilities in the sub-health centre.
- Helping the village health nurse to discharge her welfare functions well.
- Taking steps to ensure optimum utilization of the women's sanitary complexes.
- Ensuring that all the people get safe drinking water.

- Completely eradicating open air defecation.
- Arranging for common public toilets and their proper use.
- Removing waste in order to create a sanitary village.
- Creating awareness among the people about the dangers to the village from non-degradable substances like plastics and polythene and taking steps for their prohibition.
- Augmenting finances by converting public wastes into fertilizer.
- Planting, rearing and protecting saplings in public places to transform the village into a green village.
- Ensuring minimum basic amenities to all the habitations in the village.
- Installing solar lights on streets.
- Ensuring that all eligible families get ration cards.
- Arranging to issue pattas to those who own no house sites.
- Ensuring that essential commodities are properly available under the public distribution system.
- Building houses for houseless people.
- Eradicating untouchability and creating social harmony.
- Ensuring that the Adi Dravidar community gets all the benefits it is eligible for.
- Organizing poor women into self help groups and helping them to achieve social and economic upliftment.
- Making all the arrangements required to enable the self help groups to produce articles and to market them.
- Bringing together the village artisans into a federation, enhancing their manual skills and arranging for employment opportunities for them.
- Creating awareness to ensure that girls are married only after they complete twenty-one years of age.
- Observing the families of weak, destitute, elderly people, poor widows, poverty-stricken artisans and guaranteeing their livelihood.

- Identifying the disabled and reaching to them benefits that ought to reach them.
- Showing the way for male as well as female self help groups to function robustly.
- Motivating and guiding self help groups participating fully in public welfare activities and in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Repairing and maintaining water sources such as ponds, tanks, ooranis and kanmois, collecting rainwater in them and using them properly.
- Creating the right perspective among the people regarding the importance of water, water management and utilization of water.
- Developing natural resources and protecting them from damage and degradation.
- Creating awareness among the people to cultivate medicinal plants in public places in the village and in habitations and to use them.
- Creating awareness among the people to effect changes in agriculture to suit circumstances.
- Reclaiming common property resources from encroachment.
- Regulating common property resources and taking steps to augment the Panchayat income through them.
- Reorienting the Panchayat activities to a people-centered mode and carrying them out with people's participation.
- Transforming the Panchayat into an arena for people's action.
- Transforming the people into social citizens and making them participate in all Panchayat activities.
- Transforming the Gram Sabha into a forum for social upliftment instead of a forum for collecting grievances.
- Involving women and Dalits in a big way in all the activities of the village.
- Synergising the different organizations functioning in the village for development activities.

Apart from these objectives to be fulfilled, there is also a list of activities to be performed with the help of people's participation. They are:

Village Development Plan – Activities for People's Participation

Sl. No.	Activity	Responsibility	Methodology
1.	Scholl enrollment	Youth Associations, Self Help Groups (SHGs), Ward Members	Wardwise verification and identification of school age children; contact the parents and ensure 100% enrollment.
2.	Conducting School Annual Day Celebration	Parent Teachers Association, Youth and SHGs, Village Panchayat	Plan to identify the hidden talents among school children, arrange for necessary orientation to improve their skills and talents; assist in conducting the Annual Day celebration, prize distribution
3.	Establishing of garden at school; tree planting	Parent Teachers Association (PTA), Youth Associations	Join hands with school students, assist in establishing a garden and tree planting in school campus. Assist in availing of subsidy/free of cost tree saplings from the government.
4.	Implementing adult literacy / Neo literacy programme	Youth Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	In association with staff of literacy programme, identify the individuals who need literacy; assist in the implementation of the literacy programme.
5.	Bringing the reading centre into utility	Youth, SHGs	In consultation with the Village Panchayat, the volunteers can look after the reading centre; can collect books from donors.
6.	Enrollment of dropouts	Youth, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Through Village Education Committee (VEC) the youths and SHG volunteers can assist in counseling the parents of concerned school dropouts and help the dropouts to join the formal school or special school. The Village Panchayat can give special consideration to those families who are very poor. Whose dropout wards have been enrolled by extending socio-economic welfare programmes.

7.	Immunization Programme – Implementation	Youth Associations, SHGs, Ward Members	Through the VHN and anganwadi workers, children can be listed for immunization; the concerned parents can be contacted for timely attendance to receive immunization due to their ward. Any left out children can be further identified by proper follow up. In this way 100% immunization can be achieved.
8.	Enrollment of children in anganwadi	Youth Association, SHG, Ward Members	Those children who have completed two and a half years can be identified and their parents contacted. The significance of childcare through anganwadi can be shared with them and the eligible children enrolled in the anganwadi. In habitants at a distance can be persuaded to engage volunteers to look after children in the village itself
9.	In anganwadi – maintaining the cleanliness of children - periodical trimming of nails of children	Youth Associations, SHGs	Nail cutter can be purchased by the volunteers, periodically they can visit and trim the nails of children.
10.	Establishment of garden at anganwadi	Youth Associations, SHGs	Garden can be formed; papaya, drumstick saplings, greens, creepers can be planted. The vegetables and fruits produced can enrich the nutritional status of children.
11.	Supervision of distribution of free noon meal, nutritional powder	Youths Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Ensure the distribution to all eligible children, cleanliness in the kitchen and proper intake of the food, and porridge powder by the beneficiaries. Prevention of misuse and wastage.
12.	Proper delivery of RCH services	Youth Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Assist in the prompt and timely registration of all pregnancies, ensure proper checkup and follow-up of referral services; assist in availing cash incentive to eligible pregnant women Counseling on small family norm.

13.	Utility and maintenance of women sanitary complex	SHG, women Ward Members	Counselling of nearby families – forming of users’ group – collecting of maintenance fee – maintenance of the complex - awareness building on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation, development of garden in the yard of the complex.
14.	Prevention of water wastage, misuse, and proper water supply management system and its delivery	Youth Associations, SHGs, VWSC	Monitoring of pipeline burst, leakage and promptly reporting to the Village Panchayat, assisting in the repair work; monitoring the supply of water – wastage, misuse during the time of scarcity, assist in the regularization of supply equally to all – assisting in simple maintenance by encouraging voluntary contribution construction of Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) structures near the hand pumps.
15.	Maintenance of streets	VWSC, Youths and SHGs	Awareness generation in sorting of bio-degradable and non-bio-degradable wastes by the householders and traders and vendors; with the guidance of NGOs; maintaining the manure yard, installation of soak pits; cleaning campaign at public places periodically through shramdhan.
16.	Greening of the village	Youth Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Availing of the subsidized tree saplings from the government; encourage householders to plant tree saplings at public places; undertake planting of avenue trees, fruit bearing trees; assisting in social control of felling trees in common lands.
17.	Proper delivery of PDS services	Youth Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Assist in ensuring of family cards to all eligible householders; monitoring of distribution of essential commodities quality and quantity; prevention of pilferage and theft; if necessary, come forward to independently manage the Public Distribution System (PDS) by an SHG.

18.	Welfare service for the marginalized sector	Youth Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Listing poor widows, old age persons, and assisting to avail of welfare; identification of poor who do not possess house site, patta and bring housing scheme to them; identification of physically/mentally disabled and assist to avail of medical checkup for the measurement of the percentage of the disability; assist in availing of eligible rehabilitation services from government and donor agencies; identification of poor women who are not enrolled in SHGs and help them to become SHG members
19.	Eradication of untouchability	Youth Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Mass awareness programme, procession, cultural programmes; in case untouchability exists, undertaking counseling and peace making initiatives; if necessary, initiate legal action against the culprits; organizing social programmes to enable all sections of the community to mingle and understand one another.
20.	Promotion of SHG activities	Youth Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Establishing good rapport with the concerned NGOs; assisting SHGs to get proper link with various departments and avail of welfare services from the same; assisting to get adequate skills development; assist in the maintenance of SHG building; encourage them to participate in the Gram Sabha; providing opportunity to be members in Standing Committees. Involving the SHG members in common activities related to provision of drinking water supply, environmental protection and other social development activities.
21.	Upliftment of poor traditional artisans	Youth Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Assisting to an SHG; to update their skills and technology; to protect the Common Property Resources (CPR) from which they get raw materials; assist to avail of welfare schemes pertaining to them; to improve their market by buying their products; to

			enable them to understand the market system and trend.
22.	Welfare of Adolescent Girls	SHGs, Village Panchayat	Assist in awareness programme on personal hygiene anemia, AIDS awareness, prevention of child labour, availing of vocational training, counseling them to cautious against exploitation in their workspot.
23.	Management of common property resources	Youth Associations, SHGs, Village Panchayat	Identification of village commons and verification of its status; removal of encroachment through persuasion and, if necessary, through legal action; protection by natural fencing; protection of water sources from pollution through social control; undertake social forestry; plan for fuel, raw materials for village artisans, and fodder and medicinal plants.
24.	Augmentation of resources of Village Panchayat and improving of people's participation in Gram Sabha	Youth Associations, SHGs, Formers Committee, other Community Based Organisations (CBOs)	Mass awareness on the income and expenditure of Village Panchayats; details of fixation of various taxes; dues in the demand; necessary revision; promotion of remunerative social forestry; village based management system for the distribution of water supply and providing opportunity to discuss the above issues in the Gram Sabha; efforts to activate the Standing Committees; the significance of self-sufficiency and self-governance.

Summary

These kind of exercises at the grassroots for administering development, gender equity and social justice have long range implications in the paradigm of development. The grassroots institutions through decentralization have tried to unleash the potential for gender equity and human development. But all these are happening sporadically at the centre and state governments benevolence and the momentum is yet to pick up (Sundaram, 1997). Most of the state governments which are reluctant to share its power with the local governance are learning new things in the process of development from the experience of these practices. The scope of

decentralized local governance is slowly being recognized and when it reaches its high potentiality with full powers and finance gender equity and human development will not be a distant dream in the Indian context.

Notes and References

1. After 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act Panchayats refer to the three tier structure of rural local governance established at village level, block level and district level.
2. Gram Sabha is the village assembly where all eligible voters at the Village Panchayat level are members. Here, they discuss all matters regarding the development and social audit will be carried out.
3. The decentralized rural local governance is called as Panchayati Raj and the three tier structures are generally referred as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
4. Municipality is one of the urban local bodies.

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