

Working Paper Series No.1

Gender Equality in Kerala

A Quick Study Report



Evaluation Division

Kerala State Planning Board

Government of Kerala

October 2012

Abstract

The Kerala State Planning Board conducted a rapid study in various districts to assess the extent of demand for gender equality in the state and to better understand grassroots perceptions on gender equality. The study shows that the elected local body members have significant awareness about gender equality and that there are many efforts at the grassroots level to reduce gender discrimination in the society. The study discloses the extent of need and demand for gender equality as perceived by the respondents and lists the various schemes/projects that were implemented in the state to strengthen gender equality. The report also reviews people's participation in designing and implementing various schemes/projects and the extent of discussion of gender-related matters in various local body meetings at grassroots level. Based on the findings, some suggestions have been placed for reducing gender discrimination and strengthening gender equality in the state.

Gender Equality

The Concept of Gender Equality

Gender is a social construct that ascribes different responsibilities and rights to women and men regardless of individual competence or priorities. Gender and gender power are reflected at all levels of society. Consequently, women are often subject to a triple burden – they are responsible for domestic responsibilities, for social care provision, and also participate in the labour force. On the other hand, men do not often share domestic and care responsibilities and are able to use a greater part of their time for leisure, to pursue productive activities, or to participate in decision-making in all walks of life.

Gender equality means, “that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles; that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally considered, valued and favoured”. Gender equality is fully needed for equal representation and participation of both men and women in the economy, decision-making as well as in social, cultural and civil life.

Gender equality is not about women alone. Sustainable and effective change cannot be wrought without the active involvement of men. Gender equality is also not treating men and women equally because biological differences, sometimes require that men and women be treated differently. It is also not about equal numbers for men and women (although this may be important in some context) because the needs, priorities, and desires of men and women are often different.

Gender Equality is a part of Indian Constitutional promise and represents a constitutional right. Article 14 of Indian Constitution confers equal right and opportunities to both men and women in the political, economic and social phases. Article 15, Article 15(3), Article 16, Article 39(a), Article 39(c) etc. also directed to avoid any type of discrimination on the basis of sex or any other social back grounds. When men and women share equality of rights in social – economic and legal

dimensions, then human well being will be enhanced. Development literature is replete with evidence that by enhancing gender equality, development outcomes can be significantly enhanced for present and future generation.

The United Nations regards gender equality as a human right. Gender equality does not imply that women and men are the same but they have equal value and should be treated accordingly. The UN points out that, empowering women is an indispensable tool for achieving development and reducing poverty.

Status of Gender Equality in Kerala

The Indian experience shows that our development strategies were male centric. Analysis of various indicators of socio-economic development undoubtedly proves this lopsided economic development, which is unfavourable against women folk of the nation. The low literacy rate among women, the unfavourable sex ratio, persistent female foeticide, low female work force participation rate despite the high levels of education, high mortality rate among infant girls etc. are proven records of this gender imbalance.

Of course, the issue in Kerala is different from rest of the country. Empirical evidence is unequivocal in demonstrating that the issue of gender inequality prevails in India. But when in Kerala, the answer becomes rather difficult. The position of women in Kerala has improved dramatically according to the conventional human development indicators and can even be compared to that of advanced countries. Kerala ranks first among the major Indian States in Human Development Index with women constituting almost 52 per cent of Kerala's total population, Kerala has achieved enviable social development indicator. Literacy rates are high among women (91.98 per cent) as well as men (96.20 per cent) in Kerala and the difference between two are relatively low. Health indications are equally impressive with high levels of life expectancy for women (76.30) and for men (71.40) and indeed a strong positive tilt towards women.

Kerala, however, presents a paradox when it comes to other dimensions of gender equality - namely economic access and political participation. Despite the obvious achievement of the state in terms of social development indicators of gender development in recent times several indicators are under the scanner due to findings on decreasing sex-ratio among 0-6 age groups (959 in 2011), a work participation rate lower than the national level ratio, increasing violence among women, and low political participation. There is substantial evidence that suggests that women fall behind in the areas of access to economic opportunities, resources, assets and equal voice and participation in decision making in the state.

Significant Efforts by the Government

Gender equality considerations have been consistently integrated in various projects/schemes in the state. The government has started several schemes and initiated many new policies for the welfare and development of women and children which also include initiatives for equality in various aspects of social, economic and political life. Women empowerment programmes were an important part of programmes introduced by the government to support gender equality. Empowerment of women is closely linked to the opportunities they have in education, health, economic and political participation. Government has been operationalising this approach through legislative and programmatic interventions as well as by mainstreaming gender into the development planning process.

One critical aspect of this strengthening was the passing of the Kerala Panchayati Raj Bill 2009 and Kerala Municipality Bill 2009, reserving 50 per cent seats in local bodies for women. This helped to maximize the competitiveness and development potential of women in our state. In this situation, an effort to know the opinion of elected members of grama panchayaths on the concept of gender equality is very important as the grama panchayaths are the very basic unit of developmental activities in Kerala.

Objectives of Study

The State Planning Board undertook a rapid survey to find out ‘whether gender inequality is perceived as actual issue at the grassroots in Kerala’ and to what extent gender equality considerations are mainstreamed into development interventions and dialogue at the grassroots level. The specific objectives of the survey are to understand perceptions on the following topics and to suggest measures to improve the current scenario:

- to understand the level of gender awareness among panchayat members;
- to identify the role of gender equality in social development;
- to examine the extent of gender mainstreaming practiced in the programmes/projects at panchayat level;
- to identify the areas in which gender concepts are most considered.

Methodology

A suitable method helps the researcher to explore the various aspects of the study and adequately measures them so as to satisfy the requirement. As the present study involves a process of collecting data from a specific population, the normative survey method was considered most appropriate. Such a survey is very useful in getting descriptive data about people’s perceptions based on their own experience. It is the best means through which opinions, attitudes, suggestions for improvement of instruction and such other data can be obtained.

The study is fully based on primary information. The primary data have been collected using a structured schedule (Appendix 2) purposively developed for this purpose. The responses were collected by using a structured schedule and are rated on a six point scale. The ratings are given in relation to the answer for the question as no opinion, completely disagree, disagree, partially agree, almost agree and completely agree.

Four grama panchayats each from various districts were purposively and conveniently selected and required information were collected during June 2012. The information were collected from the elected members of various local bodies through focus group discussions. In this way a total respondent of 438 elected local body representatives from various districts were interviewed and required information were collected. The list of Research Assistants who conducted the study at district level is given in appendix (Appendix 1). State Planning Board received fifteen reports on gender equality from fifteen Research Assistants. Evaluation division consolidated the fifteen quick study reports into a single working paper on gender equality in Kerala.

Fifteen Research Assistants working in various District Planning Offices as well as in the State Planning Board were deputed for collecting the required information with the help of structured schedule. To eliminate personal bias in conducting the survey, they had all been trained in concepts of gender equality and on conducting focus group discussions to ensure that they had a similar understanding of the important concepts and the process.

Survey Findings

This part presents the views of elected local body members from the selected grama panchayats on specific aspects of gender equality, particularly in relation to project design and implementation and discussion at meetings of local self governments as well as departments.

Gender Equality and Social Development: Findings

Overall, there is support for gender equality as an instrument for social development at the grassroots level. Table 1 shows the opinion of the respondents about whether gender equality is essential for social development. It is observed from the table that about 69.09 per cent completely agree with the statement that ‘gender equality is essential for social development’. Another 15.95 per cent respondents almost agree and 8.16 per cent partially agree with the statement. The study finds the highest response (86.36%) (that is, complete agreement with the concept) was from the Trivandrum

district (Trivandrum south) and the lowest agreement with the concept was from Kasaragod district. This lowest complete agreement with the concept from Kasaragod district is due to less awareness of respondents on the importance of gender equality for social development. At the state level, only 3.39 per cent and another 1.50 per cent disagree with the need of gender equality for social development. At the same time 1.92 per cent respondents had a neutral opinion on this concept.

SI No	Items	Response (%)										
		Trivandrum (South)	Trivandrum (Central)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	0.00	0.00	8.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.54	0.00	0.00	6.67	1.92
2	Completely disagree	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.00	0.00	0.00	2.27	5.00	4.00	11.67	3.39
3	Disagree	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	5.00	1.31	0.00	5.00	0.00	1.66	1.50
4	Partially agree	9.09	9.09	0.00	11.00	5.00	9.21	18.18	5.00	5.00	10.00	8.16
5	Almost agree	4.55	18.18	14.00	14.00	20.00	13.17	4.56	21.00	25.00	25.00	15.95
6	Completely agree	86.36	72.73	78.00	62.00	70.00	76.31	70.45	64.00	66.00	45.00	69.09
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Inequality is a Major Problem: Findings

A sizeable majority at the grassroots is of the opinion that gender inequality is a major problem in Kerala society. Table 2 presents the responses with regard to the statement ‘gender inequality is a major problem in Kerala’. Nearly 74.72 per cent (25.51 % partially agree, 21.63 % almost agree and 27.58 % completely agree) of the respondents had reported that gender inequality is a serious social issue in Kerala. On the other hand 22.97 per cent of the respondents do not share this view, and about 2.32 per cent of the respondents had no opinion on this issue. The district-wise data shows that in Kollam 50 per cent of respondents completely agree with the statement. All the respondents from Thrissur district did not completely agree with the statement gender inequality is a major problem in Kerala society, but 75 per cent agree that it is a major problem in Kerala society.

Table 2 Gender Inequality is a Major Problem in Kerala Society												
Sl No	Items	Response (%)										
		Trivandrum (South)	Trivandrum (Central)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.55	7.00	0.00	11.64	2.32
2	Completely disagree	0.00	21.21	12.00	11.00	15.00	0.00	9.09	10.00	2.00	6.67	8.70
3	Disagree	22.72	12.12	6.00	22.00	10.00	28.94	4.55	14.00	9.00	13.34	14.27
4	Partially agree	31.82	21.22	10.00	22.00	50.00	15.78	40.90	16.00	14.00	33.34	25.51
5	Almost agree	4.55	36.36	22.00	18.00	25.00	7.89	6.82	29.00	50.00	16.67	21.63
6	Completely agree	40.91	9.09	50.00	27.00	0.00	47.36	34.09	24.00	25.00	18.34	27.58
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Evaluation of Gender Equality in Development Projects/Schemes: Findings

The majority of the respondents are of the view that it is important to integrate gender into the evaluation of development projects. Table 3 notes that around 90 per cent of the respondents reported positively in this regard. Around 6 per cent did not agree with the concept of evaluating gender equality in development projects. The remaining 4 per cent of the respondent had not opined on this respect. Among the district-wise figures, Trivandrum (Trivandrum South) shows highest response, that is, 86.40 per cent completely agree to the view that gender equality concept occupies a prominent role in eliminating poverty and generating employment opportunities for both men and women at the grass root level.

SI No	Items	Response (%)										
		Trivandrum (South)	Trivandrum (Central)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	0.00	3.04	22.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	15.00	4.00
2	Completely disagree	0.00	6.06	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.09	2.00	4.00	3.33	2.65
3	Disagree	0.00	3.03	0.00	11.00	0.00	0.00	4.55	8.00	0.00	3.34	2.99
4	Partially agree	0.00	9.09	0.00	16.00	40.00	7.89	11.36	6.00	9.00	16.67	11.60
5	Almost agree	13.60	33.33	22.00	20.00	50.00	25.00	4.55	29.00	9.00	20.00	22.65
6	Completely agree	86.40	45.45	54.00	53.00	10.00	67.10	70.45	55.00	78.00	41.66	56.11
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Concepts at Panchayat Level Programmes: Findings

Elected representatives in grama panchayats strongly agree with the necessity of considering gender concept at panchayat level programmes/projects. Table 4 indicates that out of the total sample respondents, around 85 per cent agreed to the need for considering gender equality at panchayat level programmes. At the same time, 11.45 per cent did not favour the concept. Consideration of men and women equally in designing and implementing various projects/programmes is a positive sign of social progress as is encouraging community participation in various schemes/projects.

SI No	Items	Response (%)										
		Trivandrum (South)	Trivandrum (Central)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	0.00	0.00	6.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	2.27	9.00	7.00	10.00	3.63
2	Completely disagree	0.00	6.06	16.00	2.00	5.00	0.00	4.55	2.00	2.00	5.00	4.26
3	Disagree	4.55	3.04	0.00	16.00	0.00	26.33	0.00	10.00	2.00	10.00	7.19
4	Partially agree	18.18	6.06	4.00	18.00	25.00	23.68	40.92	14.00	14.00	20.00	18.38
5	Almost agree	31.82	45.45	20.00	20.00	45.00	22.36	11.36	29.00	43.00	20.00	28.80
6	Completely agree	45.45	39.39	54.00	42.00	25.00	27.63	40.90	36.00	32.00	35.00	37.74
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Development Programmes and Savings: Findings

The majority of the respondents are of the opinion that gender development programmes lead to greater savings at the household level. The study found that around 91 per cent agree with the statement. At the same time about 6.41 per cent did not agree with the statement. The remaining 2.97 per cent of respondents had no opinion in this regard. The findings revealed that gender equality programmes/projects would lead to greater income generation and savings activities, which would help to reduce poverty and unemployment. The details are given in table 5.

Table 5												
Gender Development Programmes and Savings of the Household												
SI No	Items	Response (%)										
		Trivandrum (South)	Trivandrum (Central)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.52	2.47	5.00	0.00	11.67	2.97
2	Completely disagree	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	6.62	2.00	4.00	4.98	1.96
3	Disagree	9.09	3.03		2.00	5.00	0.00	2.27	8.00	4.00	6.67	4.45
4	Partially agree	22.73	6.06	16.00	16.00	5.00	9.23	40.91	10.00	20.00	16.67	16.26
5	Almost agree	31.82	21.21	34.00	20.00	40.00	44.73	6.82	29.00	38.00	31.67	29.73
6	Completely agree	36.36	69.70	50.00	60.00	50.00	35.52	40.91	46.00	34.00	28.34	45.08
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Development Programmes and Earnings: Findings

Nearly 90 percent of elected representatives of grama panchayats responded that in their view gender development programmes guarantee earnings to the households. Table 6 indicates that nearly 90 per cent of respondents agreed that gender development programmes guarantee earnings to the household. From the data it is observed that gender equality programmes in the local bodies are perceived as playing a vital role in ensuring more earnings to the household.

Table 6 Gender Development Programmes and Earnings of the Households												
SI No	Items	Response (%)										
		Trivandrum (South)	Trivandrum (Central)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	0.00	3.04	0.00	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	13.34	2.54
2	Completely disagree	4.55	3.03	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	11.37	0.00	4.00	1.67	2.96
3	Disagree	4.55	6.06	0.00	7.00	15.00	0.00	2.27	0.00	2.00	8.34	4.52
4	Partially agree	31.82	12.12	10.00	13.00	0.00	10.52	22.72	13.00	30.00	10.00	15.32
5	Almost agree	27.27	42.42	34.00	27.00	45.00	22.36	9.09	25.00	48.00	28.31	30.85
6	Completely agree	31.82	33.33	56.00	49.00	35.00	67.12	54.55	57.00	16.00	38.34	43.82
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Gender Development Programmes: Findings

There is a majority perception that SHGs play an important role in the implementation of development programs. Table 7 shows the majority of respondents (87.44 %) reported that SHGs are undertaking programmes for gender development at grama panchayat level. Regarding the role of SHGs, the respondents from Pathanamthitta and Thrissur do not show a positive attitude. Only 29 and 30 per cent respectively from these districts completely agree that SHGs intensify development programmes. In other districts, SHGs assume greater role in ensuring income to all. So by strengthening SHGs the local self governments can ensure better social security and economic prosperity.

SI No	Items	Response (%)										
		Trivandrum (South)	Trivandrum (Central)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	4.55	9.10	0.00	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	2.00	10.00	3.17
2	Completely disagree	13.64	6.06	0.00	9.00	0.00	0.00	4.55	0.00	0.00	6.67	3.99
3	Disagree	9.09	3.03	2.00	9.00	10.00	7.91	0.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.40
4	Partially agree	4.55	6.06	14.00	31.00	25.00	9.21	27.27	14.00	11.00	13.34	15.54
5	Almost agree	18.18	30.30	26.00	18.00	35.00	13.15	6.82	16.00	46.00	23.34	23.28
6	Completely agree	50.00	45.45	58.00	29.00	30.00	69.73	61.36	64.00	37.00	41.65	48.62
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The extent of discussion of gender issues at various grassroots meetings was surveyed. Specific findings are discussed below.

Gender Issues at Panchayat Level: Findings

Gender issues are by and large discussed at panchayat meetings. Around 74.78 per cent reported that problem on gender issues are discussed at panchayat level meetings. That is, 26.73 per cent completely agree, 28.59 per cent almost agree and 19.46 per cent partially agree to the concept. About 17.43 per cent report no discussion at panchayat level meetings on gender issues. Another 7.79 per cent were neutral in this regard. Among the districts, around 91 per cent respondents from Malappuram district had disclosed that gender issues are discussed at panchayat level meetings. District-wise details are given in following table.

Table 8 Discussion of Gender Issues at Grama Panchayat Level												
SI No	Items	Response (%)										
		Trivandrum (South)	Trivandrum (Central)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	4.56	9.10	0.00	22.00	5.00	0.00	2.27	11.00	9.00	15.00	7.79
2	Completely disagree	13.63	18.18	28.00	7.00	0.00	0.00	4.55	7.00	5.00	1.64	8.50
3	Disagree	13.63	9.09	10.00	13.00	5.00	9.23	0.00	9.00	7.00	13.34	8.93
4	Partially agree	18.18	15.15	10.00	14.00	15.00	14.47	45.45	27.00	22.00	13.34	19.46
5	Almost agree	27.27	36.36	32.00	24.00	45.00	22.36	4.55	23.00	43.00	28.34	28.59
6	Completely agree	22.73	12.12	20.00	20.00	30.00	53.94	43.18	23.00	14.00	28.34	26.73
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Concepts in Member of Parliament Local Area Development Schemes (MPLADS)

Meetings: Findings

Elected representatives from grama panchayat are less aware about the discussion of gender issues at MPLADS meetings. Around 41 per cent of respondents had neutral opinion regarding questions on whether gender concepts are discussed in the meetings of MPLADS. About 34 per cent disclosed that gender concepts are discussed in MPLADS meeting, while 25 per cent of the respondents reported that the concepts are not discussed at these meetings. Details are given in table 9.

Table 9 Discussion of Gender Concepts in MPLADS Meetings											
SI No	Items	Response (%)									
		Trivandrum (South)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	77.27	48.00	36.00	55.00	15.79	9.09	38.00	45.00	43.32	40.83
2	Completely disagree	4.55	0.00	20.00	5.00	0.00	34.09	14.00	27.00	11.67	12.92
3	Disagree	4.55	0.00	13.00	20.00	22.37	13.64	18.00	14.00	6.67	12.47
4	Partially agree	4.55	0.00	6.50	5.00	0.00	6.82	18.00	7.00	11.67	6.62
5	Almost agree	0.00	32.00	6.50	10.00	23.68	9.09	5.00	2.00	10	10.92
6	Completely agree	9.09	20.00	18.00	5.00	38.16	27.27	7.00	5.00	16.67	16.24
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Concepts in District Planning Committee (DPC) Meetings: Findings

The majority of respondents express the view that gender issues are discussed in DPC meetings. Table 10 indicates that about 52.42 per cent of respondents reported that the gender equality issues are discussed at DPC meetings. Around 26 per cent of respondents had not formed any opinion. On the other hand, only 21.15 per cent reported that the concept is not discussed in DPC meetings. Details are given in following table.

Table 10											
Discussion of Gender Concepts in DPC Meetings											
SI No	Items	Response (%)									
		Trivandrum (South)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	59.09	12.00	24.00	45.00	0.00	4.55	21.00	54.00	18.34	26.44
2	Completely disagree	4.55	10.00	18.00	15.00	0.00	11.77	13.00	21.00	15.00	12.04
3	Disagree	4.55	0.00	16.00	15.00	0.00	6.82	17.00	11.00	11.65	9.11
4	Partially agree	13.64	28.00	15.00	10.00	13.16	47.32	17.00	5.00	25.00	19.35
5	Almost agree	9.09	36.00	11.00	10.00	32.89	9.09	23.00	5.00	21.67	17.53
6	Completely agree	9.09	14.00	16.00	5.00	53.95	20.45	9.00	4.00	8.34	15.54
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Concepts in District Development Council (DDC) Meetings: Findings

The majority of the responding elected representatives are unaware of whether gender issues are discussed at DDCs, an important body within the geographical limit of a district to address problems or to suggest solutions to identified problems. 72% per cent of the respondents in the Kollam district had no idea on whether gender concepts are discussed regularly in DDC meetings. Out of the remaining, 28 per cent and 14 per cent respectively reported that the concepts are discussed and not discussed. The information from other districts, along with the state average, is given in table 11.

Table 11											
Discussion of Gender Concepts in DDC Meetings											
Sl No	Items	Response (%)									
		Trivandrum (South)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	54.55	72.00	24.00	65.00	22.37	0.00	20.00	71.00	62.51	43.49
2	Completely disagree	9.09	0.00	16.00	20.00	0.00	6.82	20.00	13.00	5.81	10.08
3	Disagree	0.00	14.00	18.00	0.00	0.00	4.55	9.00	5.00	10.00	6.73
4	Partially agree	18.18	0.00	20.00	10.00	6.58	34.09	21.00	7.00	6.67	13.72
5	Almost agree	13.64	0.00	11.00	0.00	26.32	18.18	16.00	2.00	11.67	10.98
6	Completely agree	4.55	14.00	11.00	5.00	44.73	36.36	14.00	2.00	3.34	15.00
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Concepts in Western Ghats Development Programme (WGDP) Meetings: Findings

Only about half of the respondents noted that gender concepts are discussed at WGDP meetings. 53.23 per cent of the respondents reported that the gender concepts are discussed at WGDP meetings, while 15.87 per cent reported that the gender concepts are not discussed in these meetings. The remaining 30.90 per cent reported that they are unaware of this. The district-wise details are given in table 12.

Table 12											
Discussion of Gender Concepts at WGDP Meetings											
Sl No	Items	Response (%)									
		Trivandrum (South)	Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	18.18	32.00	33.00	65.00	0.00	4.55	22.00	55.00	48.34	30.90
2	Completely disagree	18.18	14.00	11.00	15.00	0.00	6.82	5.00	9.00	8.34	9.70
3	Disagree	9.09	16.00	9.00	0.00	0.00	6.82	9.00	4.00	1.65	6.17
4	Partially agree	27.28	0.00	16.00	20.00	13.16	36.36	16.00	11.00	15.00	17.20
5	Almost agree	18.18	22.00	9.00	0.00	31.58	6.82	25.00	5.00	20.00	15.29
6	Completely agree	9.09	16.00	22.00	0.00	55.26	38.63	23.00	16.00	6.67	20.74
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Concepts in Special Central Assistance to Special Component Plan (SCA to SCP) Meetings:

Findings

Only about half of the respondents report discussion on gender issues in the SCA to SCP meetings. Table 13 shows the information about whether gender concepts are discussed during SCA to SCP meetings. About 52.37 per cent of the respondents reported that gender concepts are discussed at such meetings. On the other side, 18.04 per cent disclosed that the gender concept is not discussed. At the same time 29.60 per cent also reported that they have no idea on whether gender concept is discussed or not at the meetings.

Table 13										
Discussion of Gender Concepts in SCA to SCP Meetings										
Sl No	Items	Response (%)								
		Trivandrum (South)	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	27.27	27.00	60.00	22.37	6.82	16.00	54.00	23.34	29.60
2	Completely disagree	18.18	11.00	15.00	0.00	31.82	7.00	12.00	0.00	11.88
3	Disagree	4.55	9.00	0.00	0.00	11.36	7.00	4.00	13.34	6.16
4	Partially agree	31.82	13.00	10.00	6.58	43.18	21.00	12.00	30.00	20.95
5	Almost agree	9.09	11.00	0.00	23.68	4.55	21.00	9.00	19.98	12.29
6	Completely agree	9.09	29.00	15.00	47.37	2.27	28.00	9.00	13.34	19.13
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Gender Concepts in Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub Plan (SCA to TSP) Meetings:

Findings

Table 14 indicates that 51.33 per cent of the respondents reported that the gender issues are discussed at the meetings of SCA to TSP; another 15.75 per cent reported that such issues are not discussed; and the remaining 32.93 per cent had no idea about this question.

Table 14 Discussion of Gender Concepts in SCA to TSP Meetings										
SI No	Items	Response (%)								
		Trivandrum (South)	Pathanamthitta	Thrissur	Malappuram	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Kannur	Kasaragod	State Average
1	No opinion	36.36	36.00	60.00	21.05	0.00	16.00	64.00	30.00	32.93
2	Completely disagree	22.73	15.00	15.00	0.00	4.55	7.00	11.00	6.67	10.24
3	Disagree	9.09	6.00	0.00	0.00	13.64	5.00	7.00	3.34	5.51
4	Partially agree	9.09	16.00	10.00	6.58	52.27	23.00	7.00	26.67	18.83
5	Almost agree	9.09	7.00	0.00	26.32	13.64	21.00	2.00	21.67	12.59
6	Completely agree	13.64	20.00	15.00	46.05	15.9	28.00	9.00	11.65	19.91
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Schemes Implemented by Grama Panchayat for Reducing Gender Discrimination

Respondents from all sample grama panchayats report the implementation various schemes to reduce gender disparity. Focus group discussions indicate that these schemes help the grama panchayats to a great extent in reducing gender discrimination and also reduce poverty and unemployment through effective income generating activities. The various programmes implemented by grama panchayats are listed below:

1. Various works under Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
2. Various schemes under Kudumbashree project
3. Group farming projects
4. Schemes for nutrient food to lactating mothers and babies through anganwadis
5. Backyard poultry farming schemes for women
6. Schemes promoting Self Help Groups for women, which helps them to improve the marginal propensity to save
7. Thira maithri units for providing self employment schemes to women, especially in coastal region

8. Integrated Child Development Scheme support children up to the age 6 years, pregnant women and nursing tribal areas
9. Counselling centres for those families facing family problems out of dowry and alcoholism
10. Self employment programmes for rural women by setting up of micro enterprise units such as pickle making units, mushroom cultivation, umbrella making units, paper bag making units, lotion making units, garment making units, book making unit, candle making unit, etc.
11. Seminars and awareness programmes for creating the necessity of gender awareness
12. Training programmes for entrepreneurial skill development programmes, performance improvement programmes, group dynamics, etc for women members in micro enterprise units
13. Jagratha samithi prevents exploitation among women and children at grama panchayat level
14. The software and hardware training programmes through akshya centres

Summary Findings

Key findings of the study are summarised below:

- Gender equality is essential for social and economic development of the state, and a large majority of the respondents believe it is important to assess the gender equality results of development interventions.
- Gender equality programmes and projects are perceived as leading to increase in income and savings of the rural households and as helping to improve the standard of living of the rural households. Gender development projects, according to the respondents, help to strengthen the social security of the households.
- SHGs play a significant role in gender development programmes.
- Even though gender inequality is a major problem in Kerala society, gender issues and concepts are not much discussed at the grass root level, although they are considered at the panchayat level, but gender issues/problems are not much discussed at the grass root level. For

example, gender concepts are not discussed much in the meetings of MPLADS, SCA to SCP, SCA to TSP, DPC, DDC and WGDP.

- Majority of the elected representatives in local self government institutions are less aware of the concept of gender equality.

Suggestions

- More training should be given to ward members and panchayat level officers on gender concepts and on mainstreaming gender considerations into the design and implementation of development interventions.
- Special gender packages should be granted to panchayats. That is, special funds should be allotted by government for preparing and implementing projects, which support gender equality.
- Ensure participation of unemployed women and men in SHGs.
- Gender workshops should be conducted at panchayath level.
- Schemes are needed to disseminate the awareness about the gender equality concepts through medias.
- Proper gender-aware monitoring and evaluation of development projects must be integrated at each level of implementation.
- Ensure the participation and voice of both men and women in preparation and implementation of gender projects.
- Include gender-related concepts in school curriculum onwards.
- Support women organizations and NGOs to promote gender equality.

Conclusion

The findings of the study have shown that gender equality is essential for social and economic development of Kerala. Almost all members of grama panchayaths under study are of the opinion that the problem of gender inequality must be addressed in an effective manner for the rapid and

sustainable development of our society. Policy makers of various developmental programmes must take into consideration the opinions of representative of people at the grassroots level. Sustainable change in attitudes to gender equality must be initiated from the bottom.

Considering the importance of gender equality in the socioeconomic development of Kerala, a comprehensive approach towards integrating gender considerations in to the design and implementation of development interventions. The District Planning Offices can assist the local bodies particularly in the case of backward panchayats or those who have more SC/ST population in framing projects related to gender development. But it is currently not happening at any stage. A detailed study in this perspective is essential to analyse the changes in the attitude of the society, bureaucrats and obviously the government in reducing gender inequality during all these years especially in the Kerala context.

Lack of reliable dataset showing the exact status of many gender and sex-disaggregated indicators is an important problem. More structured and indirect questions are necessary to know the attitudes of different categories of people in this regard.

Gender equality is a constitutional promise and represents a constitutional right. Since there is gender disparity and discrimination based on unequal power relations between men and women in our society, development programmes and policies often ignore women. So what is needed is to recognise that men and women are equal citizens and have equal rights and entitlements.

References

1. Global Gender Gap Report 2011, World Economic Forum (2011).
2. Human Development Report 2005, State Planning Board (2006).
3. Gender Equality in Sector wide Approaches, Development Assistance Committee, OECD (2002).

List of Officers who Prepared Draft Report of Various Districts

Sl. No.	Officer	Designation and Address
1	Praveen P	Research Assistant, Evaluation Division, State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram
2	Arun Shyamnath	Research Assistant, Industries and Infrastructure Division, State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram
3	Anil Kumar B M	Research Assistant, Social Services Division, State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram
4	Swapna. P	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Kollam
5	Ullas. G	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Pathanamthitta
6	Mini Chandran	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Alappuzha
7	Amanath. P.A	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Kottayam
8	Sreekumar. T.L	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Painavu, Idukki
9	Renjini. S	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Ernakulam
10	Praveen.P.Pallath	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Thrissur
11	Mohammed Ansal Babu. N.K	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Malappuram
12	Suresh Babu. P A	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Kozhikode
13	Sudeesh. C.P	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Kalpetta, Wayanad
14	Pradeesh. A	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Kannur
15	Riju Mathew	Research Assistant, District Planning Office, Civil Station, Kasaragode

Questionnaire

Appendix 2

(Please '√' in appropriate box)

1. Gender equality is essential for social development.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

2. Gender inequality is a major problem in Kerala society.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

3. It is good to evaluate gender equality concepts in development projects/programmes.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

4. Gender concept are considering in the programmes/projects at the Panchayat level.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

5. Gender development programmes lead to greater savings for the household.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

6. Gender development programmes lead to income for the households.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

7. SHGs can play a significant role in Gender Development programmes.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

8. Gender Issues/Problems are discussing at various level/tiers at the Panchayat.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

9. Gender concepts are discussing at
 - a. MPLADS meetings.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

 - b. DPC meetings.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

 - c. DDC meetings.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

 - d. WGDP meetings.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

 - e. SCA to SCP meetings.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

 - f. SCA to TSP meetings.

0	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

10. Summarise the programmes/activities that implemented by the grama panchayat for reducing gender discrimination.

(0 - No opinion, 1- Completely disagree, 2- disagree, 3 - Partially agree, 4 – Almost agree, 5 - Completely agree)

Place:

Date:

Research Assistant