

Towards Gender Equity: A Performance Review of the Women Component Plan at the Local level in Thiruvananthapuram District.

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ABSTRACT

The differential impact of Govt. schemes on men and women is a reality and budgets are not necessarily gender neutral in nature. To bridge this gender-gap, a gender-responsive budget with the inclusion of a Women Component Plan (WCP) was introduced in the state of Kerala as a bottom-up approach via the Local-Self Governments. The following paper studies the implementation and impact of the WCP projects on women in the local bodies of Thiruvananthapuram district over two Plan periods- the 11th and the ongoing 12th Five-Year Plans. The gaps between the Plan allocations and expenditures have been identified and analyzed while also highlighting the major challenges faced in the efficient implementation of such schemes, and possible solutions thereof. It also studies the positive impact of the integration of the WCP with other programmes such as the Kudumbasree Mission, using the method of Case-Study Analysis.

The need for a deeper understanding and evaluation of the projects under the WCP is critical in measuring the success of the state in implementing the WCP, and creating a conducive environment to pave the way for Gender Equity.

Keywords:-

Gender-Responsive Budget, Women Component Plan, Thiruvananthapuram, Local-Self Government, Kudumbasree, Gender Equity.

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(Nidhila A.)

INTRODUCTION

With high levels of education and life expectancy, Kerala is known to have performed much better in terms of the human development index than other Indian states and even in comparison with some of the developed nations. It is also the only Indian state with a sex-ratio favorable to women (1084 females per 1000 males) and has a record of having the highest no. of literate females (91.98%).

However, all these indicators haven't translated into the empowerment of women, across the social, economic and political realms. A fall in the women work participation rate (WPR) across the state, increase in the instances of violence against women and poor rate of women's representation in the political front (Eapen, Kodoth 2005) besides a declining juvenile sex-ratio have only added to the growing concern among policymakers, academicians, and the people themselves.

The need for a gender-sensitive or gender-responsive budget, with the larger objective of gender mainstreaming in mind, is a result of this growing concern. The following excerpt is from a paper by Das and Mishra 2006:

The demand for a gender budget is not a demand for a separate budget for women, rather, an attempt at dissecting the budget for its gender-specific impact since gender-based differences and discrimination are built into the entire social-economic-political fabric of almost all societies.

A Gender-neutral or gender blind national budget ignores the different, socially-determined roles and responsibilities of men and women and is bound to reach and benefit the men more than the women unless concerted efforts are made to correct gender-based discrimination.

The first step taken towards this approach was the introduction of a Gender Budget Statement (Statement 20, Expenditure Budget, Vol. I) in the annual union budget of 2005-06. It consisted of two parts:

Part A- It includes all those schemes and programmes of the govt. in which 100% of the allocation of funds is for women.

Part B- It includes all those schemes in which at least 30% of funds are allocated for women.

While the introduction of such a statement is noteworthy, it is the execution of the above approach that has come under severe criticism. The categorization of schemes like the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) under the Part A of the statement as solely benefitting women is highly misleading (Das, Mishra 2006).

With the devolution of 35-40% of funds from the state to the Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) under the 'People's Plan Campaign' (Or, the '*Janakeeya Aasoothranam*') in Kerala, the first form of Gender budgeting was seen in the state in 1996 where each Panchayat was directed to prepare a chapter on the status of women. Besides this, a need for the empowerment of the women through increased political participation at the local level was acknowledged and according to the 73rd & 74th amendments in 1993, 33% of all Panchayat seats had to be reserved for women. The Women's Component Plan (WCP) at the local self-govt. level was introduced in the 9th five year plan wherein 10% of the plan outlays for all departments had to be earmarked for women-specific projects. However, on a closer inspection of the plan funds, it is observed that despite the success of local Governments in Kerala, the challenge of lower fund utilization remains. More importantly, it is the outcomes of such women-specific projects that require closer attention. A participatory budget need not be Gender-Responsive in nature.

The aspect of low fund utilization and the larger picture of Gender-responsiveness has thus, been studied in this paper. The paper has been divided into six sections. Section I discusses the existing literature on the topic and focuses on the need to critically analyze the allocation and utilization mechanism of the funds under WCP, to measure the success of the project. Sections II, III and IV explain the objectives, methodology and limitations of the study. Section V reviews the allocation and expenditure of the WCP funds over the 11th and 12th Plan periods (till 2014-15) in the local bodies of Trivandrum district, according to the three different sectors under the WCP namely, Production sector, Services sector and the Infrastructure sector, and different sub-sectors therein. It also discusses the several projects dealt with, in this project with on-field experiences.

1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The existing literature on this topic focuses on the need for a more gender-inclusive or a gender-sensitive budget. The need for a budget that treats women as not just mere beneficiaries but as participants in the development process has been stressed upon by many a scholar. Many others, while lauding the government for having taken a step towards the inclusion of gender-sensitive programmes across different departments as per the guidelines of the Gender Budgeting Statement (GBS), have also highlighted the existing loopholes and flaws in the implementation of the statement. A review of the implementation of the GBS done by Das and Mishra (2006) brings out the numerous misleading assumptions related to the budgetary allocations of various departmental schemes which are in fact, quite patriarchal in nature. A typical example of this would be the categorization of schemes such as the distribution of free contraceptives to women under the Part A of the GBS, suggesting that contraceptive methods and Family Planning initiatives concern women alone (Mishra, Jhamb 2007).

The 'Participatory Planning' approach of the Kerala State Govt. especially at the Local level has served as an example to many other states. John and Chathukulam (2002) attempt to look at the plan process from the perspective of decentralization, as against a planning-driven approach.

The introduction of the WCP in the local plan funds of Kerala has long since generated an interest among various academics, researchers and feminists alike. While the state has been lauded for its exceptional performance with regard to education and health, it does not really serve as an example for the other states in terms of bridging the Gender-Gap. Studies conducted by Eapen and Kodoth (2003 and 2005) highlight the existing Gender Paradox in the state of Kerala and critically examine the poor performance of the state in terms of property rights for its women, education and employment rates, unequal wages and violence rate against women. With specific regard to the local-level governance systems, an extensive gender analysis of the Gram Panchayat Plan-Budgets in Thiruvananthapuram district was carried out by Eapen in 2005. The study brought to light the non-availability of resource persons or experts to bring a gender perspective to the plan budgets at the local level and the need to

effectively integrate the local bodies' plans with the larger state plan. It also stressed on the need for gender-disaggregated data for the analysis of the allocation of the funds and the resultant benefits rendered. Another study conducted by Nair and John (2014) examines the nature of the projects implemented and the extent of participation of the women in the design of these projects. This study was carried out in 4 Gram Panchayats of Kozhikode district and highlighted the gap between the allocation and effective utilization of funds for projects under the WCP. It points out the fact that WCP projects have in effect, only been relegated to the status of one of the major sources of funds for financing the Kudumbasree projects (Nair, John 2014). The growing ineffectiveness of the WCP projects and corresponding fund utilization as compared to the general and SCP projects is a cause for concern, as examined by Nair and John. A study conducted by Vijayan and George (2010) has also identified the loopholes in the implementation of the WCP in the state. It is claimed that out of the 620 crore budget earmarked solely for women, only a sum of 88.96 crore has been spent towards schemes directly benefitting women entirely (100%). The rest of the amount spent was towards schemes like increased welfare pensions and fuel-efficient firewood stoves which only indirectly benefit women.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To advance the effort in analyzing the realities of the implementation of the WCP, the following study aims to identify the factors at play which hamper the successful implementation of the projects, at the local level in Thiruvananthapuram District.

The main objectives of the study include:

- To conduct an ex-post analysis of the sector-wise budgetary allocations and actual expenditure of WCP funds over the 11th and ongoing 12th Five-Year plans and to examine the problems, solutions and improvement, if any, in the aforementioned allocation and expenditure at the local body level of Thiruvananthapuram District.
- To study the economic impact of the income-generation schemes for women under the WCP and the challenges thereof, through a Case-Study Analysis to bring a real-life perspective to the subject.
- To examine the positive factors including linkage of schemes under WCP with those of other programmes like the Kudumbasree Mission in the larger context of Gender Mainstreaming, through a brief descriptive analysis of various projects implemented.

3. METHODOLOGY

For a gender-analysis of the Panchayat budget, an ex-post analysis of the sector-wise distribution of funds under the WCP for the last decade has been done. Out of the three sectors namely the Production sector, Services sector and the Infrastructure Development sector, the production sector is mainly focused upon to study the impact of the WCP on the income-generation activities. The analysis has been conducted mainly with the help of secondary data obtained from sources such as the 'Information Kerala Mission' (IKM), Kerala State Planning Board publications, Economic Reviews, Kudumbasree reports and the local Gram Panchayat documents. The collected data pertains mainly to the budgetary allocations for the WCP and the actual expenditure thereafter. The importance of gender-disaggregated data for a clear understanding of the impact of the WCP was kept in mind and collected, as far as possible.

In order to explore the impact of the linkage of different programmes and to measure the success of the 'Participatory Planning' approach of the state, the women involved in micro-enterprises coming jointly under the WCP and the Kudumbasree mission have also been interviewed. For the case study analysis, primary data has been collected from the local Panchayat bodies, besides conducting interviews with the women involved in the income-generating activities at the local level. A detailed questionnaire was prepared for the collection of information from the women.

The study has been conducted in Gram Panchayats, Municipal Corporation and District Panchayat of Trivandrum district, which are somewhat representative of the different socio-economic regions of the district and the state. The entire study, including the data collection, analysis and report-writing was spread over a period of 45 days.

4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the time constraint, the present study focuses primarily on Thiruvananthapuram district and is therefore not entirely reflective of the state's performance in the implementation of WCP. Moreover, only the two latest plan periods were studied which limit the process of analysis.

Due to the lack of time and resources, field visits could not be undertaken in all the local bodies of the district and hence only two Gram Panchayats namely, Ottoor and Azhoor were visited and their projects studied closely. Besides this, some of the projects undertaken by the Thiruvananthapuram Municipal Corporation and the District Panchayat were examined, and field studies were done.

5. ANALYSIS

In order to identify and analyze the gaps between the allocation and expenditure of funds under the WCP, data for the last two plan periods was collected mainly from the Information Kerala Mission (IKM). Figures for Thiruvananthapuram in comparison with the fund for the state of Kerala as a whole were stressed upon in order to examine the performance of the district. This data was again compared with that for the Total Plan fund data, for the 11th and 12th Plan (until 2014-2015) periods. Sector-wise allocation and utilization of funds were closely studied, both using the empirical data and through on-ground field visits. A further breakdown of these sectors into important sub-sectors was also done, for both the plan periods. The number of sub-sectors was found to be reasonably large (35 in total) for the 12th Plan Period (until 2014-15) and hence similar sub-sectors were clubbed together in order to carry out a more meaningful analysis. Data pertaining to the different levels of the Local Self-Governing Institutions (LSGIs) has been included to give the reader a glimpse of the proportion of expenditure as against the fund allocation, across different local bodies. Important tables and graphical representation of the data have been included in the appendix.

Besides conducting an empirical analysis to analyze the shortfalls in the expenditure as against the allocation, several field visits were undertaken so as to gain a realistic perspective on the effectiveness of introducing a WCP. Projects across different local bodies such as Gram Panchayats, District Panchayat and the Corporation were studied. This exposure coupled with the consequent development of several case-studies was vital in studying the economic and social impact of the WCP projects on the women concerned. The projects examined were the Khadi unit in CheriyaKonni village, Web-designing and Multimedia training centre, Fashion designing training centre etc. Besides these, several schools in Thiruvananthapuram were visited in order to study the implementation and execution of the Sanitary Napkin Vending Machine project. Two Gram Panchayats in the Attingal Block of Thiruvananthapuram district namely, Ottoor and Azhoor were visited and their current and upcoming projects were examined. Besides this, a number of projects undertaken by the Municipal Corporation of Thiruvananthapuram were examined for the impact they have on the women involved,

and potential the project holds for it to be replicated in other areas of the state. With a view to understand the effect of the linkage of schemes such as the Kudumbasree Mission under the aegis of the State and the WCP, projects such as the 'Amrutham Nutrimix Unit' were also studied.

5.1 ALLOCATION vs. EXPENDITURE: A Retrospective Analysis of the Discrepancies therein

Empirical data (see Appendix) showing the Allocation and Expenditure of funds highlights the existing gaps in the proper utilization of funds across the three major sectors namely, the Production, Service and the Infrastructure sector. A fourth category for the remainder of the funds was categorized as 'Miscellaneous' in the 11th plan period. From the 11th and the current 12th year plans, one significant development was the shift in the plan fund allocation towards the Service sector (From 43.22% to 70.24%) and a considerable lowering of funds under the Production sector (From 36.74% to 25.16%). The focus on infrastructure although increased to an extent (From 0.70% to 4.60%), remains limited. There has also been a further breakdown in the sub-sectors from 14 in the 11th plan period to 35 in the 12th plan period. In order to conduct an analysis of the distribution and utilization of funds according to important sub-sectors, several related sub-sectors were clubbed together to draw meaningful inferences. Below is a list of the clubbed sub-sectors, compiled as a part of this study:

11th Five-Year Plan:

Sub-Sector	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage
Agriculture, Soil and Environment	472090260	376882483	79.83
Industry and Energy	258211453	152024797	58.88
Transport and Construction	8125556	4551472	56.01
Education	22779793	12100259	53.12
Health and Social Welfare	569916630	404303350	70.94
Miscellaneous	286760435	227228547	79.24
Total	1617884127	1177090908	72.75

12th Five-Year Plan:

Sub-Sector	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage
Agriculture and non-farm activities	377325122	281300909	74.55
Industry and Energy	101500821	35113107	34.59
Govt. Order	209459338	209100838	99.82
Education	70656685	28688692	40.60
Health, Nutrition and Welfare	157275658	117271990	74.56
Transport and Construction	127545505	67973032	53.29
Housing and House Electrification	785702677	519264890	66.09
Total	1829465806	1258713458	68.80

The WCP expenditure as a percentage of the allocation remains significantly lower than that for the total plan outlay (See Appendix, Tables 5 and 6). This is a cause for concern as although the mandatory allocation of 10% of plan funds is being directed towards the WCP projects, there has been very low utilization of funds for the same. The expenditure as a percentage of allocation for Thiruvananthapuram district is found to be slightly higher than that for the whole state combined (72.75% as against 68.70%). However the infrastructure sector with sub-sectors such as Energy has been completely ignored in the district. The infrastructure sector under the WCP, especially for projects such as building toilets/feeding rooms for women in public offices or creation of counseling centres, shelter homes for victims of sexual abuse etc. is extremely vital towards creating a women-friendly environment. Under the Energy sub-sector, innovative projects involving the use of bio-gas fuels in income-generating activities need to be given a boost. It is for this reason that a sector as important as the Infrastructure sector cannot be ignored the way it has been so far.

Apart from the empirical data which highlights the shortfalls in the expenditure as a proportion of the allocation, the more important aspect of this analysis is to identify the

projects coming under the WCP and their impact on the women. The following section discusses the need to undertake projects which lead to actual development of the women, and which are not just mere actions to fulfill the mandatory 10% rule.

5.2 Impact of the WCP- Mere Rhetoric?

In order to evaluate the efficacy of the WCP, a closer look at some of the projects of the Gram Panchayats, District Panchayat and Municipal Corporation was done and subsequent field visits were made. The Ottoor and Azhoor Gram Panchayat were selected of all the Gram Panchayats in Thiruvananthapuram district to study the ongoing WCP projects. While the 10% mandatory fund allocation for WCP was adhered to, the list of projects revealed the on-ground reality that most of these projects are actually not directly beneficial to women at all. A case in point would be the categorization of Construction/Repair of Anganwadis and giving an additional honorarium to Anganwadi workers, which constitute a major share of fund allocation under the Gram Panchayat projects and the Corporation. The construction of Anganwadis and related works, which are otherwise directed to be a compulsory project under the general plan fund are being placed under the WCP category. Moreover, it was also observed that several of the projects mentioned in their list of projects were not even functioning. There were also other projects like the distribution of fodder and medicine to cows to several households. The given reason for placing this under the WCP that “If the family benefits from the extra income earned, it is of greatest value to the woman of the household”, is hardly convincing. This form of Gender stereotyping of projects comes in the way of actual efficacious development of the women, especially those who need it the most. The WCP seems to have become the mode of funding the otherwise general projects, under the garb of women empowerment.

It is due to this critical need to conduct a deeper, more meaningful analysis of the impact of the WCP on the women, that extensive fieldwork was undertaken and several case-studies were prepared and analyzed, besides making use of the quantitative data.

With information gathered from the empirical data and the field visits, some of the major limitations under the WCP implementation were found to be as follows:

- As shown by the empirical data (Appendix, Table 7), the 10% mandatory Allocation under WCP has been fulfilled (and even exceeded) in Kerala overall and Thiruvananthapuram district in particular. However, on a closer inspection of the projects introduced under the WCP, it was found that in order to fulfill this mandatory percentage requirement, several projects which would otherwise qualify as General Projects were being disguised as WCP projects, solely benefitting women. Examples of the wrongful categorization of otherwise general projects under the WCP category were brought out during on-ground field visits and interviews with the concerned officials. One such example was that of the categorization of the schemes for distributing medicine and fodder for cattle under the WCP.
- While the allocation of the funds under the WCP is satisfactory, there is still a significant gap in the expenditure of these allotted funds. It remains close to only about 70% of the allocation. Field visits showed the lack of utilization of funds in certain schemes which have the potential to actually play a role in creating a development path for the women.
- A timely distribution of funds is vital for the sustenance of these schemes. This was found lacking in several cases which affects their productivity severely.
- Several projects under the WCP were found to be introduced for very short periods of time, some even just for one year. While the introduction of new schemes as per the impact on the beneficiaries may be fruitful, on-ground studies showed that these schemes were being started with only a year's time in mind, regardless of the potential success of the project over a longer time-frame.
- One of the major limitations in the execution of these schemes is the lack of coordination and agreement between the various actors in the project, due to which several projects have still not seen the light of day. A number of projects especially in the Gram Panchayats like that of Ottoor and Azhoor are yet to be implemented as a result of this lack of coordination.
- A large number of women are still dependent upon other Govt. schemes such as the MGNREGA to a significant degree. This raises the question of the efficacy of the WCP projects in creating sufficient income opportunities for the women.

- While the physical allocation and utilization of funds under the WCP in Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram district seem to be relatively satisfactory in nature, the reality of a gender-gap between men and women still prevails. Although the introduction of a Gender-Responsive Budget and a WCP in particular, may be a crucial step in this regard, it has still not made any significant impact in the larger objective of Gender Mainstreaming.

5.2 THE CHERIYAKONNI EXPERIENCE- A Case Study Analysis of the Khadi Unit in the Village

Cheriyakonni is a small area in Aruvikkara village located about 15 km from Trivandrum district. It has a population of 32,616 people, of which 16,677 are women and 15,939 are men. (Census 2011)

The setting up of the Khadi unit, under the Kerala Khadi Board brought about an additional income generating opportunity for the women of the area. The unit consists of 2 instructors and 36 artisans. The instructors are required to take part in training programmes conducted by KVIE in Thrissur and Kannur districts for a period of 11 months. The artisans on the other hand, undergo a skill development workshop for a period of 6 months upon their induction in the unit. Built with the funds provided by the District Panchayat under the WCP for the initial purchasing of equipment, the unit now houses 16 weaving handlooms and 20 Charkhas with 8 spindles each (also called the NMC or the 'New Model Charkha').

A comprehensive process of spinning and weaving leads to the production of a variety of Khadi products such as Sarees, Dhotis, Shirts etc. The total demand for Khadi products in the state is worth Rs. 38 crore each year. The final goods are marketed through Govt. Khadi Emporiums operating across the city. This process enables the women to earn a meager wage of Rs. 3000 per month for their efforts. It was for this reason that the State Govt. passed an order to introduce the system of 'Minimum wages' for these artisans wherein an additional amount of Rs. 5000 was to be paid per month to each woman. While such a move is welcome and rather critical to provide an incentive for the artisans to continue working and keep the Khadi industry alive, it is the implementation of the scheme that requires special focus.

5.2.1 Constraints:-

On interviewing an official of the Khadi Board, it was brought to one's notice that these 'minimum wages' are usually doled out as a lump-sum amount on a half-yearly and Quarterly basis. The remaining funds too, are not given on a regular basis which affects the production of the unit.

Besides a delay in the distribution of funds and wages, the units also face a severe lack of basic infrastructure. A conducive environment for the production of the Khadi goods is vital for the sustenance of the industry. However, most units only have tin/tiled roofs which during the monsoons, affects production massively.

While the demand for the Khadi products is significantly higher in Kerala than other states (worth about Rs. 38 crore every year), the units are together only able to supply about 50-60% of the total demand. The rest is imported from other states like Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

Low wages and poor working conditions act as a deterrent for workers to join this field. The decline in the availability of willing artisans has led to the opening of only very few Khadi units in the state, the work-atmosphere and quality of which are dismal.

In terms of difficulty in marketing, due to the high price of the product, as against the prices of cheaper substitutes or duplicates of the original product, the demand for Khadi products is dwindling slowly.

5.2.2 Solutions:-

The effective implementation of Govt. schemes is imperative and hence a timely fund approval, allocation and efficient utilization of the allocated funds under the WCP need to be given utmost importance. Another key feature that one found lacking as a result of the interviews conducted with the concerned officials and the women, was the aspect of close monitoring and supervision of the functioning of such units.

While the State Government's move to start the 'Minimum Wage' programme has attracted more artisans towards this profession and has resulted in the opening of 3

new Khadi units in Kerala, not much has been done towards the improvement of existing infrastructure for the sustainable functioning of these units.

If all these aspects are kept in mind, the state is touted to be able to supply at least 80% of its current total demand, giving the Khadi industry a much-needed boost.

Skill development workshops for women, not just in terms of improvement in the techniques of production but also in terms of basic life skills, in order to further the cause of overall development and empowerment of women need to be conducted, which involve as little relocation for the women as possible, especially in rural areas.

5.3 A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF SOME PROJECTS

During the course of the project and the associated fieldwork, one had the opportunity to closely study various projects implemented under the WCP by the various local bodies. One such project was the introduction of Sanitary-Napkin Vending Machines and incinerators in all Govt. Schools. This project is within the purview of the District Panchayat and is in keeping with the overall objective of inculcating a sense of menstrual hygiene and incorporating proper sanitation facilities for school-going girls.

While the project is of grave importance to achieve the aforesaid objective, the lack of close monitoring of the project has rendered it ineffective. Most of the schools visited either did not have a functioning vending machine or a proper incinerator, or both. Other problems such as the lack of a steady supply of electricity were cited as a reason for the failure of the project in the schools.

Besides this, two skill development initiatives undertaken by the District Panchayat were studied. One was the Web Designing and Multimedia training imparted to girls coming from poor SC families. This project comes under the WCP and is in collaboration with C-APT, Thiruvananthapuram. Computer skills like Adobe Photoshop, Corel Draw etc. are imparted to these girls from financially backward families which help them get employed in the related fields. Another project under the WCP is that related to the Fashion designing training imparted in Polytechnic colleges for women. Funds under the WCP from the District Panchayat are directed towards the payment of fees for financially needy girls, mostly those from Scheduled Caste families, besides also

contributing in the initial costs towards the purchase of Furniture, Lab Equipment etc. Regular internship opportunities are given to these students, which results in them gaining exposure and experience in the field of study.

Apart from the above projects, a Nursery unit under the purview of the Municipal Corporation of Thiruvananthapuram district was also studied. Started in 2009 and located in the busy Nanthancode area, this nursery is run by a total of five women selling a variety of plants and flowers including Orchids, Roses etc. The unit makes a profit of about Rs. 2 Lakh every year and the women earn over Rs. 3000 per month. The corporation placed this project under the WCP and was responsible in providing the land and other initial resources such as subsidy and certain seeds and manure.

Another aspect that was studied was the potential positive effect of the linkage between the local bodies for their WCP projects, and other schemes of the Govt. like the Kudumbasree Mission (State Poverty Eradication Mission). For this purpose, the case of the 'Amruttam Nutrimix Unit' in Thiruvananthapuram district was studied. The following section evaluates the case in further detail.

5.3.1 Amruttam Nutrimix Unit

The 'Amruttam Nutrimix' food supplement, which is a nutritional mix of wheat, groundnut, pulses, soya and sugar made especially for babies, was first developed in the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasargode. The production and distribution of this nutritional mix was then brought under the Kudumbasree mission and the first unit producing this mix was started in Kasargode district in the year 2004. Subsequently, 400 such units have been started and one such unit was the 'Amruttam Nutrimix' unit in Kattakkada village started in 2007 with 8 members.

Kudumbasree aims at starting 500 such units, covering the entire state and employing 2500 women. The initial investment for these 500 units would amount to Rs. 12 crore and the annual targeted turnover is Rs. 200 crore. The unit produces 8340 kg of the powder on a monthly basis.

The unit was started with an initial fund of 50,000 rupees from Kudumbasree, 10,000 rupees generated from the women themselves and the remaining amount of Rs.

1,40,000 as loans from banks such as Canara Bank, Indian Overseas Bank etc. Besides this, an additional amount of Rs. 3,50,000 was spent in the purchase of machinery. Funds were also generated from private donations and from the Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs).

The following table shows the constituents of the nutritional mix per 1 kg-

Constituent	Amount (in grams)	Cost per Kg (in Rs.)
Wheat	450	5.7
Groundnut	100	80
Pulses	150	56
Soya	100	60
Sugar	200	28

The selling cost of the mix is fixed at Rs. 50 per kg.

The various production costs besides that of the components of Nutrimix are as mentioned below-

Costs	Amount per month (in Rs.)
Rent of the operational unit	5000
Electricity	2500
Packaging	4000 + (1.60x Amount produced per month)
Transport	5000
Fuel expenses (Firewood etc.)	6000

Some amount of their monthly profits also goes towards their revolving fund and fund towards repayment of loans etc, which they had to take to pay for their initial set-up costs.

The women today earn anywhere between Rs. 6000 and Rs 8000 on a monthly basis, which has resulted in only their financial independence but has also created a sense of social empowerment, both within their families and outside. A major factor in the success of these Nutrimix units across the state is that through the Kudumbasree

Mission it is directed that this food supplement be sold in all the Anganwadis, thereby securing a market for these women.

However, for these units to be able to sustain and function efficiently for a long period of time, certain steps need to be undertaken. Some of these are:

- Skill development programmes should be conducted keeping in mind the proximity of the village to the workshop venue. Besides training the women in skills related to the production process as such, development of basic life skills, grooming, English-speaking workshops etc. must be conducted in order to make these women more employable.
- Lack of basic infrastructure (such as that of lack of a steady supply of Electricity) is a problem that hampers much of the potential development process, not just in Kerala but in the entire country. For such micro-businesses to be functioning at their optimal level, it is imperative that such roadblocks are removed from the path of development, in an efficient manner.
- Considering the scale of operations and membership under Kudumbasree, one way to protect themselves from market shocks would be to form a cluster of small micro-enterprises to form a bigger, more profitable entity which can help them scale up their operations and orders, while making use of the benefits of economies of scale, thereby earning them a higher profit and also to be able to market their produce to their own members as well.

The actors in this business venture, apart from the women themselves can be classified into the following categories:

- The State Govt. or Kudumbasree officials
- The local self-govt. institutions (LSGIs)
- Banks providing subsidized loans
- Research institutes such as CPCRI, Kasargod
- Other micro-units producing similar goods

State Govt. or Kudumbasree officials:

It is the initiatives undertaken by the mission itself that have led to the overall development of the state and the resultant empowerment of its women. Right from ensuring tie-ups of different players, to enabling the women to obtain cheap, formal credit, Kudumbasree has had a major role to play in the development of these micro enterprises. Kudumbasree also lays down certain guidelines according to which the enterprise is supposed to function. Apart from this, it ensures the formation of a linkage between the banks and the micro-unit members, allowing for an easier transaction of subsidized loans to start their projects.

The Local Self-Govt. Institutions:

By allocating at least 10% of their plan budgets towards women-centric schemes and such organizations run by women, under the Women's component Plan (WCP), the local govt. gives the women the initial monetary and infrastructural support towards forming their micro-unit.

Banks:

By forming a linkage with Kudumbasree, banks including NABARD etc. provide subsidized loans to these women, working in both the agricultural and the non-farm sector.

R&D Institutes:

It was the extensive research and development of the nutritious mix for babies at the CPCRI, Kasargode that led to the formation of several micro-enterprises specializing in the production of this mix. This only reiterates the importance of the R&D sector in the overall development of a region.

Other such Micro-enterprises:-

In the wake of stiff competition from other firms producing similar products, it would be profitable for these units to merge together and form a larger unit which can rise up to the challenges of higher competition and rising production costs, with the added advantage of higher economies of scale.

Therefore, a likely positive factor for the effective implementation of WCP projects lies in the efficient integration of the projects under the Local bodies, banks, the micro-units themselves and Kudumbasree towards the removal of the existing roadblocks and creation of a sustainable economic environment for these enterprises to function smoothly and contribute significantly to the development of the state and its women.

FUTURE IMPERATIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to create a more meaningful process of empowerment for the women in the state, the following hurdles in the form of gender stereotyping, poor execution and coordination failures need to be addressed:

- Better utilization of funds is vital, both in terms of expenditure as a proportion of Allocation as well as the projects being initiated under the WCP in order to create an actual development path.
- Sector-wise and Sub Sector-wise allocation of funds and introduction of projects need to be given considerable thought beforehand, so as to ensure a judicious use of the Plan fund. Sectors such as Infrastructure cannot be given such low importance in the plan fund, especially if creating a women-friendly environment is one of the major objectives of the state.
- A thorough analysis and evaluation of projects under the WCP, especially through on-field exposure is extremely critical to measure the real success of these projects.
- With a view to make a stronger economic and social impact, a deeper integration of projects of the local bodies and Kudumbasree needs to be looked into especially taking into account the wide network of participants that the Kudumbasree holds.

The Women Component Plan can be highly influential in creating a productive path of development. The existing gaps between the allocation and expenditure of projects need to be plugged and a deeper understanding of the pertinent issues needs to be made while introducing new projects.

CONCLUSION

Gender budgeting and planning in Kerala has come a long way since its inception and proves to be a worthy example for other states in the country to replicate in terms of fund allocation. Most of the districts have been successful in crossing over the mandatory 10% mark for fund allocation under WCP.

However, the impact of several existing WCP projects is almost imperceptible, and as is usually the case in many aspects of governance, the devil lies in the details of implementation at the grassroots level. The 10% WCP funds while allotted have not been expended satisfactorily. Moreover, the economic and social impact on these women, as a result of the WCP, has been limited. This is due to the fact that a large number of projects under the WCP are in fact, just general projects and do not specifically benefit women.

There is a long way to go for overcoming these shortcomings. Notwithstanding this, proper monitoring, implementation, and execution of the existing projects is sure to result in a more contributive form of governance and hence, development. With a higher degree of innovation in terms of catering to the specific needs of different existing sections, regions and classes of women, the goal of overall women empowerment across the social, economic and political realms is within reach with the available resources.

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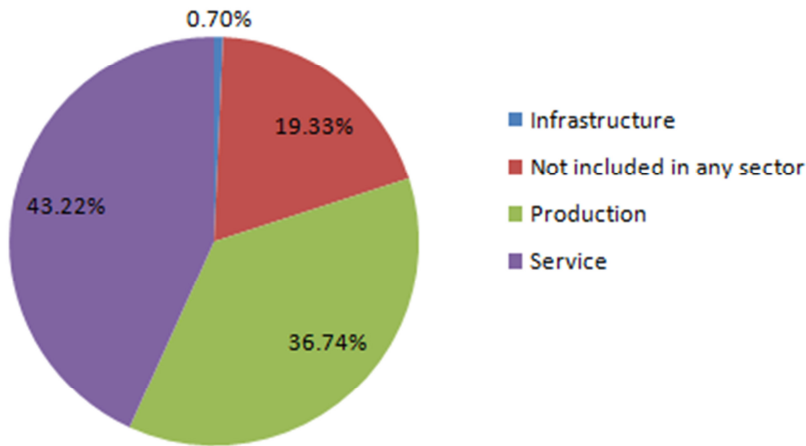
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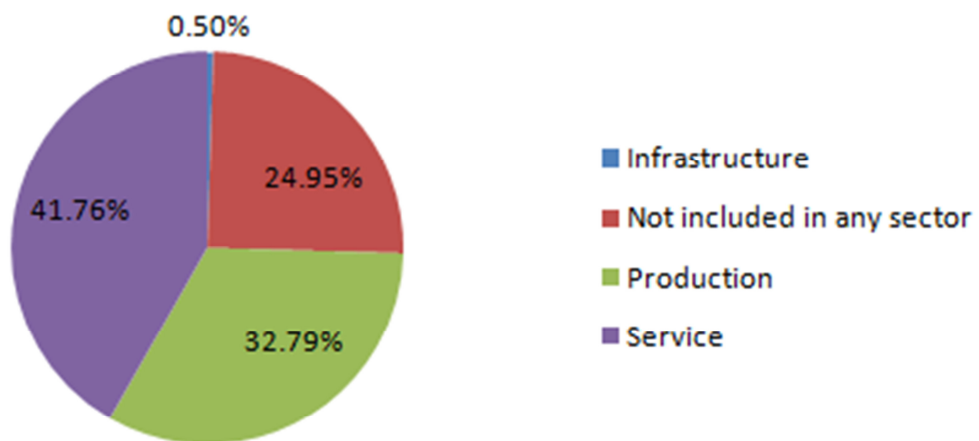
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APPENDIX

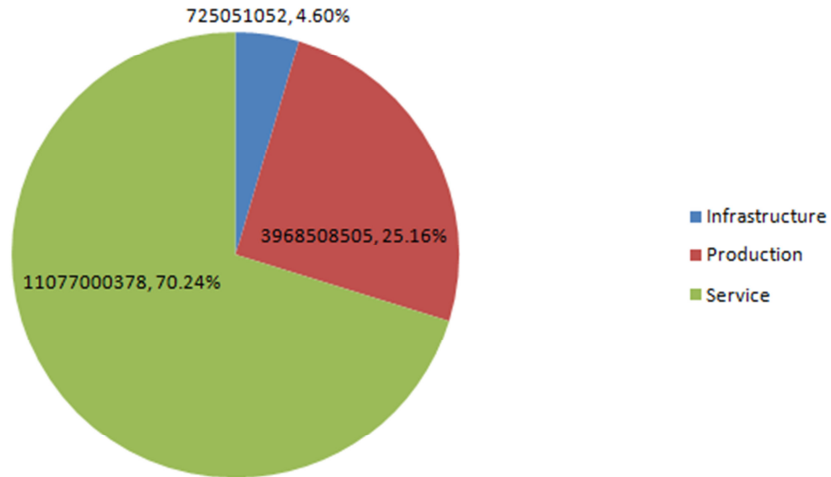
Sector-wise allocation of Funds under WCP in Kerala (11th Plan)



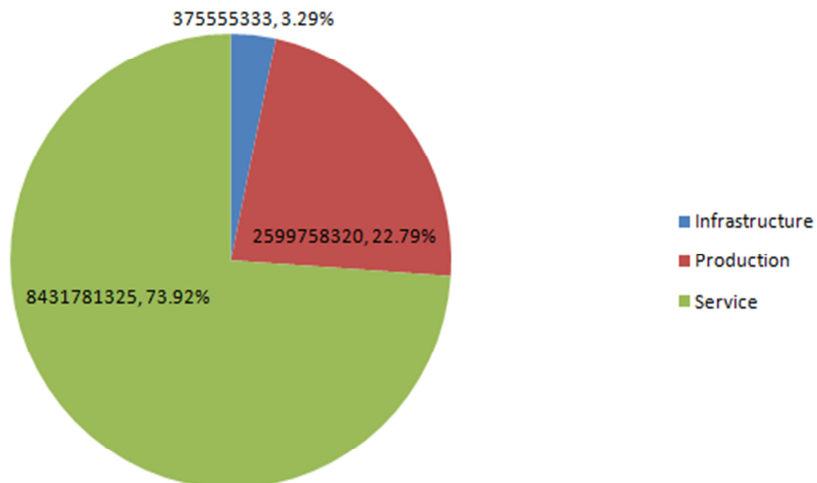
Sector-wise Expenditure of Funds under WCP in Kerala (11th Plan)



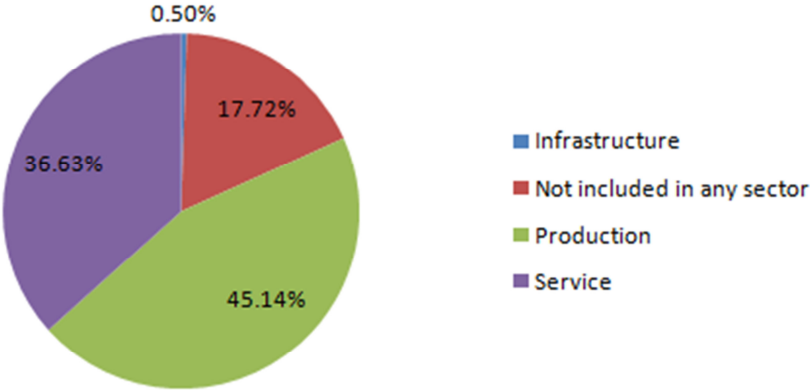
Sector-wise Allocation of funds under WCP in Kerala (12th Plan)



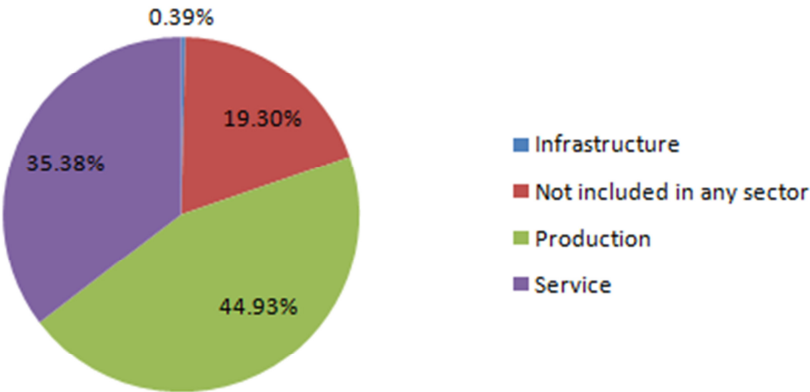
Sector-wise Expenditure of funds under WCP in Kerala (12th Plan)



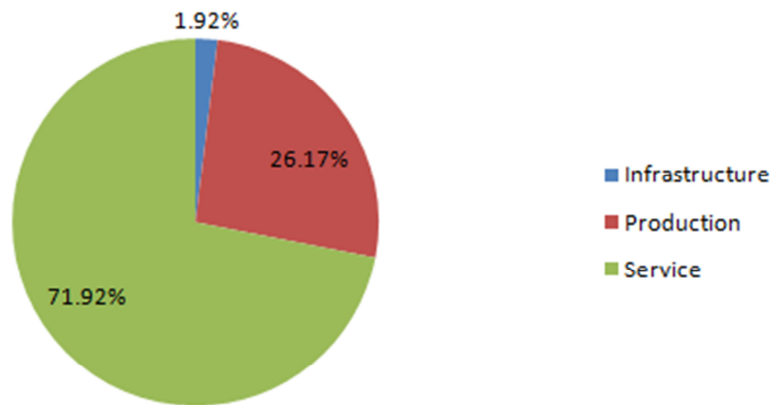
Sector-wise allocation of funds under WCP in Thiruvananthapuram (11th Plan)



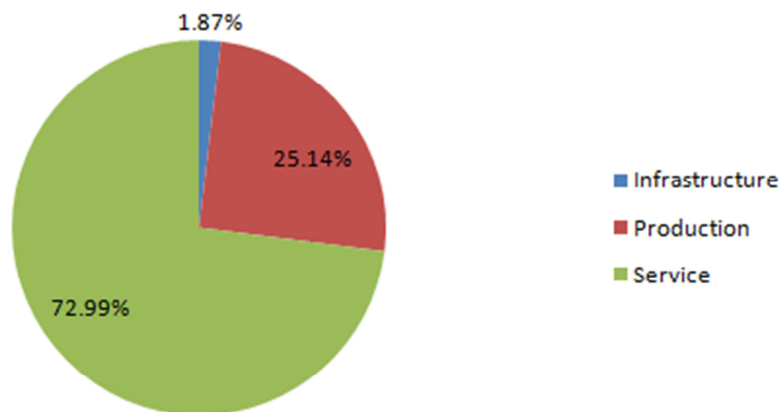
Sector-wise Expenditure of funds under WCP in Thiruvananthapuram (11th Plan)



Sector-wise Allocation of funds under WCP in Thiruvananthapuram (12th Plan)



Sector-wise Expenditure of funds under WCP in Thiruvananthapuram (12th Plan)



TABLES

1. Expenditure as a percentage of Total Allocation for Kerala, according to the various Sectors for the 11th Plan Period

Sector	11th Five Year Plan					
	Total Plan			WCP		
	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage
Infrastructure	22419272792	15751605167	70.25921542	116371047	57213106	49.16438193
Miscellaneous	32486017407	27943409051	86.01672745	3196760200	2834635413	88.67213165
Production	21817155647	14857212998	68.09876245	6076462521	3725262205	61.3064294
Service	48342445289	33442425091	69.17818263	7148542149	4744692017	66.37286202
Total	125064891135	91994652307	73.55753599	16538135917	11361802741	68.70062502

2. Expenditure as a percentage of Total Allocation for Kerala, according to the various Sectors for the 12th Plan Period (till 2014-15)

Sector	12th Five Year Plan					
	Total Plan			WCP		
	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage
Infrastructure	53329243626	35239927259	66.08	725051052	375555333	51.80
Production	13255015930	9187706127	69.31	3968508505	2599758320	65.51
Service	81838754117	62196341368	76.00	11077000378	8431781325	76.12
Total	148423013673	106623974754	71.84	15770559935	11407094978	72.33

3. Expenditure as a percentage of the Total Allocation for Thiruvananthapuram district, according to the various Sectors for the 11th Plan Period

Sector	11th Five Year Plan					
	Total Plan			WCP		
	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage
Infrastructure	2391703395	1575342332	65.87	8125556	4551472	56.01
Miscellaneous	3313041009	2921185148	88.17	286760435	227228547	79.24
Production	1814769501	1352527843	74.53	730301712.5	528907280	72.42
Service	5082025556	4088312561	80.45	592696423	416403609	70.26
Total	12601539460	9937367884	78.86	1617884127	1177090908	72.75

4. Expenditure as a percentage of the Total Allocation for Thiruvananthapuram district, according to the various Sectors for the 12th Plan Period (Until 2014-15)

Sector	12th Five Year Plan					
	Total Plan			WCP		
	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage
Infrastructure	6273105432	4165985205	66.41	35038221	23579228	67.30
Production	1122095976	719555058	64.13	478725943	316414016	66.10
Service	9067510991	6756230139	74.51	1315701642	918720214	69.83
Total	16462712399	11641770402	70.72	1829465806	1258713458	68.80

5. Expenditure as a percentage of Allocation according to various Sub-sectors (11th Plan)

Sub-Sector	Kerala		Thiruvananthapuram	
	Total Plan	WCP	Total Plan	WCP
Agriculture and Allied Sectors	75.89	70.88	78.85	79.92
Education, Arts, Culture and Sports	77.45	51.22	84.45	53.12
Employment and Employee Welfare	65.39	60.13	82.39	75.77
Energy	83.33	59.59	73.91	0.00
Environmental Protection	50.99	17.14	68.62	99.98
General Economic Service	73.35	56.96	83.15	92.62
Health	66.07	61.19	80.80	73.99
Industries	54.03	49.20	60.64	58.88
Mother and Baby Care	64.56	74.04	77.23	79.38
Not included in any sector	86.02	88.67	88.17	79.24
Public Buildings	60.19	48.40	66.19	61.30
Social Welfare	68.93	66.63	79.79	69.83
Soil and water Conservation	53.83	58.93	63.13	33.58
Transport	70.41	52.29	65.26	27.39
GRAND TOTAL	73.56	68.70	78.86	72.75

6. Sector-wise comparison of the expenditure as a percentage of the total allocation, between Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram district

6.1 11th Five Year Plan

Sector	Kerala			Thiruvananthapuram		
	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage
Infrastructure	116371047	57213106	49.16	8125556	4551472	56.01
Miscellaneous	3196760200	2834635413	88.67	286760435	227228547	79.24
Production	6076462521	3725262205	61.31	730301712.5	528907280	72.42
Service	7148542149	4744692017	66.37	592696423	416403609	70.26
TOTAL	16538135917	11361802741	68.70	1617884127	1177090908	72.75

6.2 12th Five Year Plan (Till 2014-15)

Sector	Kerala			Thiruvananthapuram		
	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage	Allocation	Expenditure	Percentage
Infrastructure	53329243626	35239927259	66.08	6273105432	4165985205	66.41
Production	13255015930	9187706127	69.31	1122095976	719555058	64.13
Service	81838754117	62196341368	76.00	9067510991	6756230139	74.51
TOTAL	1.48423E+11	1.06624E+11	71.84	16462712399	11641770402	70.72

7. Allocation of funds under WCP as a Percentage of the Total Plan Fund

Year	Kerala			Thiruvananthapuram		
	Total Plan Fund	WCP	Percentage	Total Plan Fund	WCP	Percentage
2007-2008	17138114704	2209111697	12.89	1724416006	218602194	12.68
2008-2009	20081537090	2979770548	14.84	1954035860	305337935	15.63
2009-2010	23682703742	3101976544	13.10	2310097510	316118243.5	13.68
2010-2011	28856029126	3868557901	13.41	2726988468	373461147	13.70
2011-2012	35306506473	4378719227	12.40	3886001616	404364607	10.41
Total	125064891135	16538135917	13.22	12601539460	1617884127	12.84
2012-2013	38699705611	4308754651	11.13	4138148181	435080534	10.51
2013-2014	50573477459	5303584626	10.49	5471637507	715371904	13.07
2014-2015	59149830603	6158220658	10.41	6852926711	679013368	9.91
Total	1.48423E+11	15770559935	10.63	16462712399	1829465806	11.11