Tribal Development under Decentralised Governance in Kerala: Issues and Challenge

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Abstract

Tribal population is the aboriginal inhabitants of India who have been living a life based on the natural environment and have cultural patterns congenial to their physical and social environment. The Concerted efforts for the development of these groups by the Central and State Governments have had only marginal impacts on their socio-economic conditions in spite of the various welfare measures and constitutional protection. This paper attempts an analysis of the development and welfare programmes addressing poverty, land alienation, exploitation, education, health care, employment, social development and in their reach out to these target groups and discussion of policy implications and the strengthening of service delivery.

Keywords: Tribal population, local governance, *Oorukoottams*, Exposed, Interior and Remote Tribal settlements

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Introduction

The Constitution of India has provided many privileges to the scheduled tribes considering their complex problems in terms of geographical isolation, socio-economic backwardness, distinctive culture, poor infrastructure facilities, language and religion, exploitation by various groups. Tribal population is the aboriginal inhabitants of India who have been living a life based on the natural environment and have cultural patterns congenial to their physical and social environment. The term 'scheduled tribe' is primarily an administrative and constitutional concept. 'Tribal folk' is defined as people living in a particular place, who enter into marriage relationships among themselves, who have no specific skills in any work, traditionally or ethnically ruled by an *adivasi* leader[2] who speak their own special language, and have their own beliefs, customs and traditions (Article, 342, The Constitution of India). Concerted efforts were started by the Central and State Governments for the formulation of separate development strategies for the development of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes during the Fifth Five Year Plan and subsequent plans. It is now explicitly recognized that these attempts have had only marginal impacts on their socio-economic conditions in spite of various welfare measures and constitutional protection. (KDR, Planning commission, GoI, 2008) Scheduled tribes continued to be the major vulnerable group in the Indian society and many welfare policies and development programmes envisaged to reach the Millennium Development Goals still hold this community as the principal stakeholder[3].

Tribal Population in Kerala

The Western Ghats and its peripheries form the main abode of the tribal people in Kerala. The scheduled tribe population of the state is 364,189 which is 1.14% of its general population (Census, 2001). There are 36 different tribal communities in the state, of which five are primitive tribes. Highest concentration of scheduled tribes is seen in Wayanad district (37,4%), followed by Idukki and Palakkad districts. A total of 72.8%of tribal population is concentrated in six districts: Wayanad, Idukki, Palakkad, Kasaragod, Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur.

Since the formation of Kerala, the State Government has been formulating a series of development programmes addressing poverty, land alienation, education, health care, employment, social development and welfare programmes well in advance of the Millennium Development Goals. In spite of the various welfare measures initiated and the constitutional protection given, the adivasi[4] group of Kerala has been subject to various forms of deprivation, oppression and poverty. The incidence of poverty among the adivasi group of Kerala is half that of all India (see Table1) The index of deprivation based on four basic necessities for well being such as housing quality, access to drinking water, good sanitation and electricity for lighting, the district Wayanad has the highest index of deprivation (66) followed by Idukki (65.3), Kannur (61.3) and Thiruvananthapuram (60.1) registering indices greater than that of the state average (57.9) (HDR, Kerala. 2005).

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[2] A person accepted by the particular adivasi group as their leader.

[3] Individuals, families, user groups, organizations and other pressure groups that potentially affect or affected by any particular issue in question. The participation of stakeholders is necessary to understand exactly how each one is influenced or is affected by any activity or proposal because ultimately any most development emerges from a confluence of such mutual effects.

[4] The colloquial for tribes which means 'early inhabitant' as 'they are probably the descendants of the original inhabitants of India' (The Supreme Court of India Observations, The Hindu Daily, Jan-6, 2011, P-11)

Table 1. Percentage of population below poverty line: Comparison of Kerala with all India

Sl. No	NSSO Rounds	India		Kerala	
		Total	ST	Total	ST
1	38th Round (1983)	45.6	63.8	39.1	NA
2	50th Round (1992-94)	37.1	52.2	25.5	37.3
3	55th Round (1999-00)	27.1	45.8	9.4	24.2

Source: National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Govt. of India (various rounds).

Tribal Development Activities in the State

The developmental programmes for the scheduled tribes in the state are implemented through the Scheduled Tribes Development Department, Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) and *Oorukoottams*[5]. The Scheduled Tribes Development Department, which came into existence in 1980, has seven Intensive Tribal Development (ITD) project offices, Nine Tribal Development offices and 48 Tribal Extension Officers (TEO) at field level. The Scheduled Tribes Development Department is implementing various schemes (about 47 projects/schemes/ programmes/initiatives), which can be broadly categorized under five headings: educational, health care, social upliftment, cultural development and other development schemes utilizing the funds of the State as well as Central Government.

The introduction of Panchayats Extension Act to the scheduled areas popularly known as PESA was enacted by the Indian Parliament on Dec 24, 1996. The PESA Act has been eulogized by many social activists as the epitome of grass root level democracy, it is a revolutionary step towards tribal administration and development. The fifth schedule of the Indian Constitution provides guidelines for the administration of scheduled areas, flows of grants-in-aids out of the consolidated fund of the India to the status for the scheduled areas for promoting the welfare of the scheduled tribes, functions of the National Commissions of the scheduled tribes. The PESA Act is assumed to offer immense possibility of self rule to the tribal people to the institutions like Panchayat and Grama Sabha. The powers vested in the Grama Sabha in the scheduled area are:

a. Ownership of Minor Forest Produce (MFP)

b. Approval of development plans

c. Selection of beneficiaries under various programmes

d. Consultation on land acquisition

e. Management of minor water bodies

f. Control of minor minerals

g. Regulation prohibition on sale of intoxicants

h. Prevention of alienation of ;and restoration of unlawfully alienated land of the STs

i. Management of village markets

j. Control of money lending to the STs

k. Controlling institutions and functionaries in all social sectors

l. Giving utilization certificate for funds used for the projects and programmes of social social and economic development etc. to the village panchayats (Menon & Sinha, 2003)

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[5] Equivalent to neighbourhood groups in the three tier decentralised planning system in India. It is a colloquial term used among the adivasi groups. 'Ooru'in their slang means habitat.

*Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) and Tribal Development*

In order to cater to a closer public service delivery system spatially and institutionally to the disadvantaged community, a decisive step was taken by the Government of Kerala towards the goal of democratic decentralization in the Annual Plan 1997-98 the Government of Kerala handed over most of the development programmes to local bodies. The Special Component Plan (SCP) and the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) are the two major programmes that seek to address the problems of the scheduled communities. The SCP and TSP were introduced way back in 1975 with the objective of formulating a plan appropriate to the scheduled communities. These programmes follow a separate methodology for the preparation of plans for each family and habitat on the basis of primary survey and habitat mapping. The plans would be prepared for providing minimum needs of households like housing, sanitation, electricity, water supply, street lights and other common facilities. TSP represents funds earmarked for exclusively for tribal individuals (with contribution from state and central funds). Kerala is the only State in the country where substantial parts of the Tribal sub plan(TSP) are directly[6] implemented by local self governments (LSGs). Hence there is a good opportunity to strengthen access of Tribal groups to these funds by linking TSP performance to the proposed Performance Assessment System(PAS)[7] of the project. Out of the total outlay, Rs. 1672.4 Million/ US $37.16Million (2 % of state plan) earmarked for TSP, almost 50% of the total (Rs. 805.2Million /US $17.89Million) were set apart for the local bodies as grant–in-aid for undertaking tribal development programmes at the village Panchayath level where more than 12 critical institutions of public service have been transferred. (Economic Review, 2007)

Decentralized governance is a process, a meaningful march towards participatory democracy. Democratic decentralization envisages devolution of political power to the democratically elected local councils. Under such decentralization, functions, functionaries and finance are transferred from higher level governments to the local level governments which remain accountable to people. Hence decentralization is often advocated by many for its unique potentiality for improving the delivery of public services at the local level (Oommen, 2008; GoK, 2009). This decentralization is the empowerment of the common people through the empowerment of the local government. This empowerment process involves functional autonomy through activity mapping, fiscal devolution, administrative autonomy and institutional decentralization, and responsiveness ie; decentralization brings government closer to the people spatially and institutionally(grama sabha, ward sabha and Oorukutams in the case of scheduled tribes). In Kerala, institutions of public service like primary health centres, schools, anganwadis, veterinary institution, Krishi bhavan hostels for scheduled castes and so on have been transferred to local governments. The decisions of a local government should reflect the felt needs of the community.

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[6] In all other states these funds are generally under the control of the line departments.

[7] Project will implement an independent performance assessment system for participating LSGs. LSGs fulfilling overall performance standards (including VGDF) will be eligible to receive the performance grant.

Figure 1. Kerala: Local Governance Structure
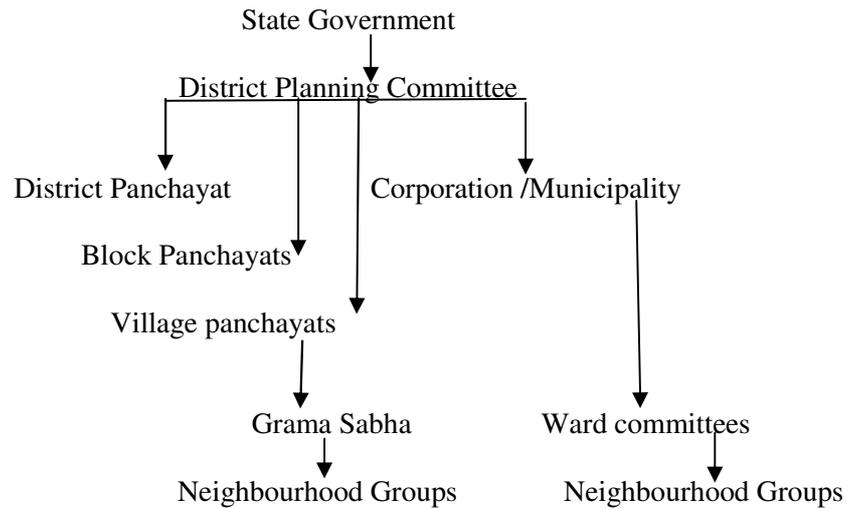
Source: KDR, Planning Commission, GOI, 2008. p-445

Kerala stands a way ahead of all other states in the process of achieving the necessary conditions for decentralized governance and needs to strengthen the conditions that will progressively promote participatory democracy at the local level (GoK Report, 2009). Decentralization smooths service delivery, and is primarily concerned with the system and process of providing a service or product from the providers to clients. As there is growing demand for governance in local governance, governance is about how power is exercised, how decisions are taken and how citizens have their say. The civil society, the citizen and non-governmental organizations, want to play a higher role in decision making and in managing the country's affairs. The decentralized planning process enabled induction of views of local tribes through the structure of oorukuttams.

'Oorukoottams' as a Democratic Niche for Tribal Communities

The local development plan would fan out to every tribal settlement and hold preliminary *Oorukoottam* meetings and meetings of the tribal neighbourhood groups through trained tribes known as tribal promoters. In these meetings, the forthcoming planning process would be explained clearly in the local dialect and the Oorukootam would be required to come out with their suggestions for development projects. Simultaneously, a situation analysis of each tribal hamlet based on the data from the survey organized by the tribal development department would be given to the tribal promoters who take it to the hamlets and provide it for internal discussions in the *Oorukoottams* and neighbourhood groups of tribal women.

The *Oorukoottams* would be held with two weeks prior notice and the meeting would be facilitated by different functionaries assigned by the government. The local government should set up a team of government functionaries consisting of two tribal promoters, Village Extension Officers (VEOs), agricultural demonstrators, health workers, anganwadi[8] workers and school teachers. Each team would be given a definite number of hamlets where they have to be present in *Oorukoottam* meetings. The quorum for the *Oorukoottam* meetings would be 50 % of the adult population and among those participating at least 50% should be women.

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[8]Anganwadis have been started by the Government of India in 1975 as part of its Integrated Child Development Services(ICDS) programme to combat child hunger and malnutrition (0-6 age group). In Kerala, these Centres work under the Social Welfare Department and provide inaddition to the care for child and mother, service as a local community resource centre.

As part of the concerted efforts to make the target groups conscious of their own rights, privileges and the Governmental support available to them the Government has decided to make an indigenous forum for development from among the tribal households themselves, known as the *Oorukoottams*. The *Oorukoottams* have been recognised as a democratic niche for tribal communities within the local government system during the Tenth Five Year Plan. It was envisaged to institutionalize the system so as to empower the *Oorukoottams* to function as the vital agency for formulation and implementation of all programmes meant for them. Not only the TSP projects of the LSGIs but also the schemes of the state, central governments and external agencies. Thus *Oorukoottams* have been the convergence point for effectively integrating the programme of various agencies (Economic Review, 2007)

The Context of the Study

Ever since the Fifth Five Year Plan India has been initiating and operationalising a series of tribal development strategies and programmes/schemes. In most parts of India, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes continue to be victims of social inequality and economic deprivation (GoK, 2009). Therefore, more rigorous measures are required for them to realize equality with the rest of the population. It is observed that most of the projects launched during and after the Fifth Five Year Plan have deviated either from their original objectives or have simply met with catastrophic results (HDR, 2008). This report pinpoints the critical gaps, issues and challenges involved in the implementation of the projects and schemes at cutting edge level or towards the delivery system effectiveness. Even for Kerala, the Planning Commission of India emphasized that: 'any attempt to launch further development programmes among adivasis should take into account the outcomes of the large number of projects already implemented in the state, particularly those that are launched during and after the Fifth Plan Period' (KDR, 2008 p-365) This again underlines the emphasis and need for a well defined domain of public service delivery system. In other words, a process of governance having direct effect on the distribution of services, ensuring life chances, the government's performance, and political legitimacy.

In this backdrop, it is pertinent to look into the socio-economic and cultural advancement of the scheduled tribes in Kerala with special reference to Thiruvananthapuram district. Futher it is necessary to discuss critical gaps, issues and challenges involved in the project formulation, implementation and the delivery system. This is to be followed with a view to stress the need for innovative strategies in improving quality and quantity of public service delivery for the development of this disadvantaged community having unique socio-cultural and economic characteristics. Therefore, the study has the following objectives:

1. to assess the awareness level of the tribal communities on tribal specific projects, schemes and programmes and the involvement of the functionaries and stakeholders in the process,

2. to uncover the critical gaps, issues and challenges involved in the policy formulations and implementation and that between functionaries' and stakeholders' priorities,

3. to identify the factors influencing the functionaries and the beneficiary households in scheme implementation, and

4. to highlight innovative strategies for ensuring better service delivery mechanism.

Methodology

The study is mainly based on a baseline survey conducted in the tribal settlements of Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala. A stratified random sampling method is used in the

selection of sample households from exposed, interior and remote settlements9. The survey data is strengthened by focus group discussion and unstructured interviews with the stakeholders. Tribal settlements are stratified into three strata on the basis of the distance by which the settlements are geographically situated and isolation from the mainstream society in terms of access to road, schools, hospitals, public gathering places and other infrastructural connectivity. The main focus of the survey has been to find out the critical gaps if any and its incidence prevalent in the system of service delivery and to suggest areas for urgent intervention in strengthening the service delivery system among tribal households.

Table 2. Details of Sample Selected for the Study

Sl. No.	Stratum	No. of Settlements	Percentage (%)	No. of Settlements Selected	No. of Households	Percentage (%)
1	Exposed	114	30	34	298	49.67
2	Interior	120	30	36	283	47.17
3	Remote	17	30	5	19	3.16
	TOTAL	251	30	75	600	100.00

Population and Sample

In the total of 78 Panchayaths of Thiruvnanthapuram district, the tribal settlements are located only in 25 Panchayaths. There are 4500 tribal households scattered over 251 tribal settlements of this district. Seventy five out of 251 settlements were selected from the three strata comprising 600 households (30% of households of each stratum ie; exposed, interior and remote) for the study.

A questionnaire was the tool used to survey the tribal settlements to analyse the critical gaps if any in the service delivery system. The survey was done on selected aspects, which included: awareness about welfare schemes, information providers, eligibility, availability and accessibility of the service, reasons if any for not availing the benefit, the rating of the quality of service by stakeholders and lags and bottlenecks in the delivery system.

Outreach of Service Delivery in Tribal Settlements: Thiruvananthapuram District

The problems of the marginalized communities are well known and quite often assume rhetorical overtones. The main concerns are synonymous to the well defined MDGs - poverty, hunger, gender inequality, health care issues and environmental sustainability. The present study also reaffirms that the concerted efforts put forth by successive governments at the central and state levels did not achieve upliftment of the living conditions of the ST groups in the study area as expected. The analysis of the data collected helped to find out the need for effective planning and redesigning the existing tribal development programmes. In the study area, the incidence of deprivation among tribal households in five basic necessities of well being (45.14%) is much higher than that of the deprivation index of Thiruvananthapuram district (36.67%) and the state (24.24%). The majority of the tribal house holds in interior (51.11%) and remote settlements (82%) are heavily deprived of the basic necessities of well

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[9] Classified on the basis of the distance by which the settlements are geographically situated and isolated from the mainstream society in terms of access to road, schools, hospitals, public gathering places and other infrastructural connectivity. Exposed settlements are those households who are living along with the main stream of population of the state where there are normal infrastructural provisions. Interior settlements are those situated at least five kilometers inside the forest. In the case of remote settlements, 5-15 kilometer journey by foot is required to reach the settlements. These are geographically isolated in the reserve forest.

being (Baiju, 2009). Hence a close look at the living conditions of the ST groups leaves the doubt if there is any substantial upliftment brought about by the concerted effort by the successive Central and State Governments and whether the benefits are filtered down so as to reach the down trodden among the settlements.

Awareness of Development and Welfare Schemes among the Tribals

Awareness is a necessary condition for the access to the development programmes. The living conditions of the tribal groups can be enhanced only by making awareness and access of development schemes. Of the three tribal settlements, exposed, interior and remote, the awareness generation efforts of development machinery and agencies have succeeded in taking the message of beneficiary oriented development schemes to the exposed and interior settlements (93%). But only 56% households in the remote are aware of the development schemes. In respect of other schemes like education, social security, health and housing the awareness of households in remote settlements is comparatively less (see Table-6). This hints at the fact that there is a need for efficient planning and redesigning of the existing awareness generation efforts as regards the various tribal development and welfare programmes. For instance, in the interior and remote settlements Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) and development departments can do little in spreading the awareness on development schemes whereas the *oorukoottams* and the tribal leaders can take the initiative through the local dialect, indigenous cultural shows, dissemination of success stories in respect of schemes/ projects like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA), Indira Awaz Yojana (IAY), Integrated Child Development Service(ICDS), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Rajeev Gandhi National drinking water and the total sanitation campaign, Janani Sureksha, retention of girls in primary education etc.

Details of Information Providers Working with the Tribals

As is evident from Table-3 & 6, the role of oorukuttams is vital in providing information, not only among the exposed and interior tribal settlements but among the remote settlements as well. The government officials experience difficulty in reaching out to the tribal areas and making them aware of the various schemes. Only 14% of the households believed that government officials provided information to them.

Table 3. Details of Information Providers Working with the Tribals

Information Source	Percentage Of households			
	Exposed	Interior	Remote	Total
Oorukootam	46.23	40.22	33.33	42.99
Fellow members	11.73	23.06	11.11	17.06
Government Officials	16.99	11.07	2.79	13.75
Tribal Promoters	7.01	8.30	8.33	7.68
NGOs	4.73	5.17	0.00	4.79
Government Campaign	4.38	4.61	0.00	4. 35

Need to create an indigenous information net work system of development departments, LSGIs and *oorukoottams* and its systematic flow is an underlying premise that arises. In the provision of the flow of information/communication from the providers to the beneficiaries, in this particular social group, is to be streamlined through *oorukoottams*. There are instances of distorted information passing to these ignorant secluded social classes from middlemen and

the service providers, which leads to the denial of their entitled benefits. This is to be corrected by streamlining and strengthening the network of indigenous information systems among the tribal stakeholders. The variability across settlements mandates dedicated goals and targets tailored to settlement wise baseline rates for specific social class/regions/settlements/groups.

Eligibility, Availability and Accessibility of the Schemes

Most of the tribal house holds are aware of the various development and social security schemes but are indifferent to use the same (see Tables 4 & 5). Nearly 73% of families are currently eligible for assistance under various schemes for tribal development. In interior areas this eligibility is 78%. Even though data shows the ineligible as 27%, all tribes are fully eligible for development assistance. Data given in the accessibility status of tribal development programmes and schemes is a clear indication of the success of public delivery mechanism that development schemes are accessible to nearly 62% of tribal households in Thiruvananthapuram district. Whereas the accessibility to other welfare schemes are relatively low in respect education (41%) social security (32%) health (38%) and housing (63%). Hence government agencies should take steps to redesign tribal development and welfare programmes further to make it accessible to all tribal households in these settlements.

Accessibility to development schemes is a serious concern in the process of project implementation and the development of tribal community. In the study area 62% tribal households are accessible to the government and LSGI initiated developmental schemes. This is the area where the government agencies can take steps to redesign and reformulate the tribal development and welfare programmes for its furtherance, particularly in remote settlements. It is estimated that 72 % families are eligible for assistance under various tribal development schemes. Families not benefited by any were found high (36%). About 48% tribal families have not availed any benefit of tribal programme and assistance (see Table 4). This is the area where the public service delivery system can activate and improve its programme content and procedures. At the same time the indifference of the households in tribal settlements towards the development scheme should be brought under serious study.

Table 4. Eligibility, Availability and Accessibility of the Development Schemes

Status	Percentage of Households			
	Exposed	Interior	Remote	Total
Eligible	68.65	77.68	63.89	72.76
Not eligible	31.35	22.32	36.11	27.24
Availed	49.56	52.21	58.33	51.09
Not availed	19.09	25.46	5.56	21.67
Accessible	58.67	65.31	58.33	61.79
Not accessible	9.98	12.36	5.56	10.97

The analysis of the survey data traced some critical gaps to in between the awareness of the schemes and the implementation of the schemes where public delivery system has a space to operate. Unstructured interviews with the tribal households revealed that the cumbersome office procedures, delay in processing, official red-tape, exploitation by tribal leaders and others (middlemen) have created the indifference. This indifference of the tribal households is created not because of the deliberate attitude of the stakeholders but because of their ignorance about opportunities/prvisions, social and cultural inhibitions/barriers. Most of the healthcare schemes/educational schemes/development schemes that have a strong bearing

upon their living conditions fail in their efforts to reach the tribal people to which they are entitled.

Reasons if any for not taking up the Benefit

Pending with officials, negligence of officials and pending with Panchayaths were the three major reasons reported for not availing the benefits by the households in the interior (57%) and exposed (51%) settlements. Whereas the remote households reported only other reasons (100%) (see Table 5). Coordination failure of the functionaries and the *Oorukoottam* appeared to be the major problems. In the Kerala context the outreach of multiple schemes addressing the different traits of the development domain of the tribal people is mainly hindered by procedural delays at the hands of the officials/LSGIs/*oorukoottams*. Along with the strengthening of *oorukoottams*, the respective LSGIs can remain as the nodal agent of the government and service delivery departments in the implementation, monitoring and the follow up.

Table 5. Reasons for not taking up the benefits

Reasons for not taking up the benefit	Percentage Of households			
	Exposed	Interior	Remote	Total
Pending with officials	22.94	23.19	0.00	22.89
Negligence of Officials	11.93	6.52	0.00	22.89
Pending with panchayath	22.02	21.01	0.00	21.29
Pending in *oorukoottam*	0.92	6.52	0.00	4.02
Other reasons	42.20	42.75	100	42.97

Rating of the Quality of Service by Stakeholders

It is quite encouraging that about 69% of tribal families have a good appreciation for the tribal development schemes implemented in their settlements. Data on rating of schemes by tribal households revealed that only 19% households rated the quality of the schemes as poor or did not want to respond. It is clear that the participatory approach in design and implementation of development schemes with the participation of *oorukoottams* could make the schemes highly acceptable and fully beneficial.

Further, the unstructured interview substantiates that even though the state has housing and basic amenity schemes under various tribal development projects, only half of the households have got basic amenity assistance mainly for housing, latrines and open wells (Table 6). Families in exposed settlements have comparatively better housing conditions with 57% of the houses having are pucca/semi-pucca houses. It should be a concern of the development machinery, especially those engaged in the housing sector. With the schemes prevailing, 43% in the exposed, 57% in the interior and 83% in the remote settlements still live in kutcha houses. It was also found that 48% of the households did not benefited by obtaining house, toilet, well, education, or health facilities.

Table 6. Key Indicators of Educational, Social Security, Health and Housing Schemes

Key Indicators	Percentage of Households			
	Exposed	**Interior**	**Remote**	**Total**
1. Educational Scheme				
Awareness	88.79	90.77	66.67	89.03
Eligibility	47.11	48.89	38.89	47.69
Accessibility	41.86	40.04	36.11	40.82
Availing	35.90	33.21	30.56	34.46
Major reason for not availing	Delay	Delay	Delay	Delay
2. Social Security Schemes				
Awareness	96.32	95.94	55.56	94.87
Eligibility	39.93	48.89	33.33	43.95
Accessibility	29.77	34.32	27.78	31.85
Availing	14.36	20.11	5.56	16.80
Major reason for not availing	Delay	Delay	Delay	Delay
3. Health Care Schemes				
Awareness	92.47	93.54	61.11	91.99
Eligibility	48.86	50.00	8.33	48.13
Accessibility	38.35	40.22	8.33	38.29
Availing	22.77	26.20	2.78	27.76
Major reason for not availing	Negligence of officials	Negligence of officials	Negligence of officials	Negligence of officials
4. Housing Schemes				
Awareness	92.47	97.23	88.89	94.60
Eligibility	72.65	85.24	88.89	79.20
Accessibility	59.54	67.34	66.67	63.45
Availing	43.61	48.34	30.56	45.43
Major reason for not availing	Other reasons	Other reasons	Other reasons	Other reasons

Note: Major source of information (for all schemes): *Oorukoottams.*   Service delivery rating of all schemes: Good

It is promising to see that the health status of inhabitants of remote settlements is fairly good when compared to the households of interior and exposed settlements. However, only 24% of households are getting health care schemes. This infers that there is the need for new initiatives for bringing the neglected into the development programmes. Accessibility to health facilities is rare in remote settlements requiring better provision and facilities from the public service delivery system (see Table 6).

In the area of education, tribal households are getting reasonably good educational provisions under the state, LSGIs and development department initiatives. However, the profile of tribal students in higher education and technical education is abysmally low despite the different initiatives and schemes available in the state.

Reasons for Lags and Bottlenecks in the Delivery System

Specific areas pertaining to the strength and weakness of the delivery system are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Reasons for Lags and Bottlenecks in the Delivery System

Reasons	Percentage of Households			
	Exterior	**Interior**	**Remote**	**Total**
Settlements not visited by any Government Officials during last 365 days	42.03	41.51	61.11	42.38
Govt. officials felt difficult to visit the settlements during last 365 days	6.48	8.12	47.22	8.53
Govt. official did not pass adequate information regarding schemes.	53.77	51.29	80.56	53.44
Households who could not gather any eligible benefits	35.20	55.35	58.33	45.43
Tribal volunteer / TEO not helped to obtain any benefits.	39.75	42.80	66.67	42.04
Negative attitude of Officials	39.75	21.96	8.33	30.37
Prevalence of corruption / bribery	24.87	24.54	2.78	24.02
Oorukutam is not successful in taking decision	40.28	31.18	77.78	37.16
Training to the oorukootam members suggested	74.78	83.39	38.89	77.72
Training to the govt. functionaries suggested	77.58	81.37	30.56	77.89

It is worthwhile to note that 42.4% responded that no government officials visited their settlement during previous 365 days prior to the survey and 8.5% responded that the officials failed in providing adequate information regarding the schemes for the tribe. Of those surveyed 45.4% of the households reported that they could not gather the benefits even though they are eligible. A further 42% of the households suggested that tribal volunteers/tribal extension officers have not extended their service in full for getting the optimum amount of help from the government. Disturbingly, 30% of the households reported that the attitude towards the tribes is not cordial. Corruption/ bribery was evident with 24% reporting the prevalence of corruption/bribery. Over a third of the individuals surveyed (37%) believed that the oorukootom was not successful in taking decision. Finally, 77% households believed that training may be imparted to Government functionaries as well as Oorukootom members.

The foregoing observations underline the Planning Commission's comment: "Most of the Tribal Development Projects in the State have been deviated from their original objectives" (KDR,2008 p-365). The survey identified the critical gaps that prevail in the service delivery at the cutting edge. The Tribal Sub Plan should be made a lively part of the decentralized planning. More innovative and viable projects have to be designed to each stratum: exposed, interior and remote settlements. The issue of land and livelihood of all tribal settlements should be periodically monitored. The vicious circle of poverty and backwardness has to be broken. Isolated settlements, lack of viable projects non-cooperation from departments, lack of enthusiasm or indifference of elected members or the oorukuttams are some of the reasons for their perpetual backwardness. The officials, president, members, and the *oorukoottam* leaders should do field visits to the settlements of the marginalized. Elected representatives and officials should attend the meetings of *oorukoottams*. All tribal welfare schemes should be handed over to GSPs and executed through *oorukoottams*.

Strengthening of Public Service Delivery system

As the tribal development of Kerala is being discussed with particular reference to Thiruvananthapuran district, one could find certain critical gaps at the service delivery points. Presently, the pressure is on the different systems of public service delivery to ensure that it is efficient in conceiving, formulating, facilitating and delivering services at cutting edge level in accordance with the target specific requirements of the schemes and programmes. Most of the ambitious targets of MDGs can find positive results in the region Kerala economy, thanks to its unique development experience in social sector. However, this has not been replicated in the development scenario of tribal communities. That means, in the development and governance process of the region, the tribal community has been marginalized. Good governance is an effect multiplier and will have much greater impact on the country's MDGs than just increase in finance, infrastructure and health personnel (Jacob, 2010). The foremost thing required in strengthening the services delivery mechanism in tribal settlements is a harmony between local development planning and the functioning of oorukoottoms. Each panchayath should go for Geographical Information System (GIS) procedure to help the functionaries to identify the location of each site for project formulation and implementation. The services related to welfare measures for the scheduled tribes are ridden with lack of transparency. Many of those who deserve assistance are sidelined in the process. Elected ward members and *oorukoottam* leaders are often subjected to pressures to yield to individual requests. It is reported that many local governments and grama sabhas are now attended mainly by the beneficiaries of various schemes (Ommen, 2009). Inrespect to the functioning of *oorukoottam*, the involvement of gramasabha and tribal extension leaders, tribal promoters should be made to ensure their participation in the discussion on project formulation and implementation. More participation of tribal households in designing of projects/ schemes catching up with the felt needs of the different tribal settlements should also be assured.

Databank and Smart card system

A databank of each tribal household with educational level, income levels, health status, housing status etc. needs to be recorded and reviewed by the *oorukoottams* with the full involvement of the devolved institutions and functionaries of local self governments. This may have as its ultimate aim the preparation of a 'household biometric card/smart card system'.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Another area where decentralized planning process can integrate the developmental activities of the tribe is the introduction of a mechanism or a system to follow up the beneficiaries of different schemes and enquire whether the assistance has really helped them or improved their lives. This will avoid the practice of selecting the same beneficiary every year. The *oorukoottam* leaders and the members should be made accountable for this sort of practice.

Identifying thrust areas of Service Delivery

Strengthening of the public service system of the LSGIs, *oorukoottams* and the development departments is to be streamlined mainly in two areas of services:

> 1. Permission/registration/licence services : includes permission for land development, building construction, approval of owner ship changed in landed property, birth and death registration and issue of certificates, registration of marriages and issue of Certificates

> 2. Social service schemes: It includes welfare oriented schemes and settlement level services like:

- payment of various pensions and monetary assistances

- preparation of below poverty line (BPL) list and identification of beneficiaries for the various schemes

- maintenance of roads and drains

- providing and maintaining street lights

- solid waste management and sewage disposal

- maintenance of health and sanitation

- ensuring potable water to the people

- maintenance of up-keep of public assets like parks, play grounds, open spaces, and water bodies, public markets and other LSGI properties

Information, publicity and awareness building

Every service delivery by the Grama Panchyaths, *oorukoottams* and development departments should be made known to the people. It would be desirable to make the tribal households know of not only the type of service but also on how to apply for the particular service, what documents should be produced, when one can expect the service, who are the officers who would scrutinize and approve the application and what each officer would look for etc. This information can be printed in small hand outs and made available at different centres of tribal gathering, *oorukoottam* centres, information counters ie; preparation of Citizen's Charter by the Grama Panchayath in consultation with the *oorukoottams*.

Systematization of the procedures

The survey results and the unstructured interviews revealed that most of the tribal households are being left out of the beneficiary schemes due to procedural delays on the part of officials, or LSGIs/*oorukoottams*. Hence it may be advisable for LSGIs and *oorukoottams* to prescribe procedures stating how to process an application, provision of service, who are the responsible officers handling the subject what are their individual responsibility and how long every officers should take to decide on the file. There should be regular monitoring of the system at Gramapanchayath/ *oorukoottam* or jointly by both. *Oorukoottam* leaders and functionaries should be trained to conduct social audit on their own areas of function.

Front Offices

Gramapanchayath/ *oorukoottam* Centres should have front offices with information and copies of the citizen's charter in the tribal dialect.

Human Resource Development

The functionaries of Gramapanchayath/Development departments and *oorukoottams* need to be trained regularly on system rules and procedures. It is recognized that an increase in output and productivity may be possible when one knows what to do and how to do it by providing adequate training and by making available good working environment with required equipment and logistic needs.

Learning by exposure

The functionaries should be exposed to best practices with regard to delivery of services that had happened in local governments and *oorukoottam* (Tribal Hamlets) within the state and in

other states. Visit to the tribal settlements at least once in every three months should be made mandatory to the functionaries of LSGIs and *oorukoottams*.

Conclusion

The disadvantaged groups, scheduled tribes, are expected to get the benefits of advancement in ICT and service delivery management in improving their living conditions. The participatory development process through LSGIs and *oorukoottams* can improve the efficiency with which they can deliver services to this outlier community. The effectiveness of decentralization and empowerment of LSGIs and *oorukoottams* largely depend on their capability to deliver services to the people in time at the standard quality and with prudence, at the same time in a people friendly manner. A new paradigm for the tribal development can be envisaged where formulation of programmes/schemes, implementation, monitoring and evaluation be made in consonance with the felt needs and involvement of tribal people in support of responsive, transparent, accountable public service delivery system. A combined and honest initiative of Grama Panchayath and respective *oorukootams* can bring forth a system of public delivery system ensuring a reasonable and quality service to the disadvantaged tribal community in overcoming the present issues and challenges involved in the implementation of tribal specific schemes and projects. This process of devolution of functions, functionaries, finance and service delivery would help to include the excluded in its larger perspective of a nation's development and its outreach. This would become another set model of Kerala in the realm of development experience.

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