

**TOWARDS PEOPLE CENTRIC SERVICE DELIVERY**  
**Land Revenue, Survey & Land Records,**  
**Registration, Food & Civil Supplies and Police.**

**March 2020**

**Fourth Administrative Reforms Commission**  
**Government of Kerala**

**In Partnership with**  
Centre for Socio-economic & Environmental Studies (CSES, Kochi)



## **Foreword**

I am very happy to present this Report of the Administrative Reforms Commission on People Centric Service Delivery in selected departments of the Government of Kerala. This Report provides a set of recommendations and strategies for making the government departments more responsive to the needs of the people with respect to delivering the services.

Services are provided to the people by the Government through government departments, public sector entities, autonomous organisations, other agencies of government and through local self-governments. These include regulatory, developmental, administrative, social and economic services. A Government committed to protect rights and welfare of the people and socio-economic development of the State take steps to provide quality services to its people in an equitable and fair manner. In spite of efforts of the state government, introduction of the Service Delivery Policy, passing of the Right to Service Delivery Act, and introduction of Citizen Charter for government institutions, the Commission observed that the delivery of services of the State Government requires considerable improvement across departments and institutions. The Commission has come to the conclusion that rather than considering what the government can provide, the government needs to reorient its systems and functions to provide what the people need.

During the course of this study, the Commission noticed several issues in the functioning of the grassroot level offices of the state government, the village offices, taluk offices, sub-registrar offices, police stations, taluk supply offices and ration shops. Lack of convergence of activities of different departments is seen to adversely affect service delivery. These issues result in delay in getting services, increases hardships of the people who seek services and multiplies the cost of availing government services. The cost of delivering services also increases. As services of government can be accessed/availed only from government, people are constrained to be content with poor services. Deliberations of the Commission indicated that dissatisfaction with service delivery is reported rarely by people, who seek government services, indicating the need for strengthening the grievance redress mechanism. There is no system in government for getting feedback

from citizens periodically, and for effective monitoring of petitions received to discern the pattern of grievances and identify areas of deficiency in delivery of services. While the state has been able to provide technological solutions to address some of the problems in service delivery, access to these solutions remains limited and the potential for using technology remains high. Given the low access to technology and digital solutions among the poor and the marginalised communities, government has to ensure that alternative modes of service delivery are available to these people. Introduction of an integrated and effective system for monitoring service delivery is essential for improving its efficiency.

I am confident that implementation of recommendations in this report will help address most of the challenges faced by the government in delivering quality services to the people of Kerala according to their need and evolve systems of administration with people at the centre of service delivery instead of processes.



**V. S. Achuthanandan MLA**

**Chairman**

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#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

*Administrative Reforms Commission sincerely acknowledge*

*The contribution of Shri. **A Hemachandran I.P.S** for his valuable suggestions on Police and Shri. **Santhosh Mathew I.A.S (Rtd)** for his innovative ideas on service delivery in government.*

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### 1.1. People-Centered Service Delivery: Context of the Study

Governments provide a large number of services to the people. From time immemorial, provision of these services has been focussing on the supply side i.e. the system has been more oriented towards officials and processes involved in service delivery. A basket of services is provided by the government for a broad group of people, without accounting for differences in circumstances and needs of different subgroups and individuals. No platforms are available to the people to voice their needs and concerns, and the voices of the people are seldom heard.

Over the past two decades, there is an increasing shift in orientation of public service delivery from processes towards people<sup>1</sup>. However, the transition to people centric service delivery is not easy as major overhauling of government systems and processes is required. Government needs to better understand the needs of the people and translate those needs into effective service delivery improvements. There is increased awareness and expectations among people about service standards as they are exposed to better service standards in other sectors and in other places. People expect good quality services, increasingly tailored to suit their individual needs that could be accessed from anywhere, anytime. People want the process to be simple, fast and easy and will be dissatisfied if the processes are complex, slow and difficult.

Government needs to strive to deliver on these expectations and to gauge the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the people with various services provided. For this, it is imperative for governments to understand the service journey of the people, identify problems in the same, and work towards mitigating problems and improve service delivery. Government also needs to keep interacting with people and be proactive towards sharing information with them. Coupled with technological advancements, there are abundant opportunities for innovations to improve service delivery for people.

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1. "Batho Pele" or "People First" was introduced in South Africa by the Nelson Mandela Administration in 1997.

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Kerala government has from time to time embarked on various projects and initiatives to improve public service delivery. The Third Administrative Reforms Commission recommended mandatory Citizen's Charters in all institutions of public service delivery. "Service Delivery Policy"<sup>2</sup> of 2004 was a step forward in delivery of services with people at the centre. Key principles of service delivery in the policy are: people centredness, clear standards of service delivery, equity, transparency, accountability, integrity, fairness, good behaviour from the service providers, rationality, efficiency, convergence through linkages, right to service delivery, grievance redressal, continuous improvement of methods and standards, changing attitude and improving skills, sustainability, inclusion, holistic approach, monitoring, concurrent evaluation and social audit. In continuation of the Service Delivery Policy, enactment of Kerala State Right to Service Act, 2012<sup>3</sup> provided legal framework for people to claim services of the state government as a right and made government employees responsible for failure to deliver services as per norms. The Act also provides for appellate authorities to redress grievances of people related to service delivery. Despite the existence of the Service Delivery Policy and legal framework of the Right to Services Act to ensure effective service delivery, instances of delayed and/or inefficient delivery of government services is wide spread as is evident from the large number of representations received from the people about service delivery during the public hearings held by Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC). It is in this broad premise that the Commission decided to assess delivery of services by government and submit recommendations on 'People Centred Service Delivery' rather than 'Processes Centred Service Delivery'. This report presents the findings of the study of government departments of Revenue, Survey and Land Records, Registration, Food & Civil Supplies and Police Department.

## **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. Assess service delivery of the selected government departments.
2. Assess service delivery process of selected services for people from these departments to understand bottlenecks in effective service delivery including issues related to infrastructure, hierarchical linkages, inter departmental

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convergence, service standards, etc. and to suggest measures to address these issues.

3. Examine experience-based perceptions of people about quality and effectiveness of service delivery, problems faced in accessing service, behaviour of government officials, redress of grievances, if any, and satisfaction of people with the service received.

4. Identify best practices in service delivery to recommend its adoption/adaption across government offices.

### **1.3. Methodology of the Study**

The selected departments offer a multitude of services that are varied in terms of the nature and mode of delivery, as well as the extent of 'people interface' with the offices and officials. Review of the initiatives by government aimed at improving service delivery from the government departments such as the Modernising Government Programme (MGP), the Kerala Local Self Government Service Delivery Project (KLGSDP), the Kerala State Right to Service Act, 2012 etc. was undertaken. Studies conducted as part of these initiatives and studies by other states in India and international studies were also examined. Citizens Charter of the selected departments were reviewed in detail. To broaden understanding on different aspects of service delivery in the selected departments, discussions were held with few officials of the departments, particularly with those who are working at the service delivery points. Inputs on service standards, present level of service delivery, areas for reform/improvement and impediments in improving level of service delivery were sought from the Departmental committees constituted to assist ARC in the study. Based on this initial work, services to be examined in each department, norms of service delivery and other aspects of service delivery are examined and finalised.

To understand ground realities, exploratory field study was conducted in selected service delivery points of each department, including the end-point and the vertically linked points, to understand the systems, processes and procedures followed, method of service delivery, infrastructural facilities, human resources, grievance redress systems and other issues involved in delivering services. In some cases, delivery of particular services required vertical linkages across institutions under one department,

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necessitating visits to more than one institution at different levels in the department hierarchy. Given the nature of this exploratory study, the process of seeking information is typically iterative which means that some of the aspects were evolved over the course of the study and therefore, subsequent to in-depth interviews, many of the offices/respondents were contacted again to seek their responses on additional aspects identified during the field work. Specific issues or good practices suggested by departments or identified otherwise were examined through additional visits/interactions. Apart from interviewing stakeholders at the service delivery point, officials at higher levels in the departments were also interviewed.

An expert committee was constituted to support ARC in the study. Inputs from the committee is used in finalising contours of the study and the recommendations. Another source of information is the public hearings organised by ARC in different parts of Kerala. Feedback from people who attended the public hearings helped to gauge public perception on service delivery. In addition, consultations at the department level were held to clarify issues identified through other methods.

#### **1.4. Structure of the Report**

The report has six chapters, including the introductory chapter. Chapters II to V discuss department-specific findings of the study pertaining to Revenue, Survey & Land Records, Registration, Civil Supplies and Police Department, respectively. In these chapters, an insight into the issues seen in delivery of services specific to these departments and their institutional mechanisms are given. The final chapter presents a synthesis of commonalities in the service delivery process across departments and service domains that are not people centred, and recommend a way forward to people -centric service delivery<sup>4</sup>.

## CHAPTER II

# LAND REVENUE, SURVEY & LAND RECORDS DEPARTMENTS

### 2.1. Introduction

Land Revenue Department has close interaction with the public as most people have to approach revenue offices for various requirements. The department is entrusted with duties related to land administration which include collection of various taxes, handling land related matters of assignment of government land for various purposes, acquisition of land for public purpose, lease of government land, etc. and general administration duties such as issuance of certificates for general public purposes, conduct of elections, revision of electoral rolls, implementation of welfare schemes, calamity relief operations and disbursement of compensation and assistance under Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF). Survey & Land Records department undertakes survey and demarcation of land for land management and updating of land records.

Of the various functions of the revenue department, the service or the purpose for which people frequent offices of the department is for various certificates, completing procedures for getting benefits under government schemes (including receipt of calamity relief and CMDRF assistance), payment of taxes and for redress of grievances related to survey and re-survey. There is interaction between the two departments mainly when a dispute with regard to land arises for which copies of documents related to land are sought from the survey department and settlement of the raised grievances are sought from the revenue department. This study aims to examine people centeredness of service delivery from these departments, with respect to the services most sought after and the offices most visited by the people.

### 2.2. About the Departments & Services

Land Revenue department is headed by Land Revenue Commissioner, assisted by Joint Commissioner and Assistant Commissioners. The administrative units at different levels, i.e. District, Revenue Division, Taluk and Village are headed by District Collector, Revenue Divisional Officer,

Tahsildar and Village Officer, respectively. Survey operations and updating of land records are done by Director of Survey and Land Records, assisted by the Additional Director, Deputy Directors and Joint Directors. Resurvey operations in each district are carried out by the Assistant Director in the district.

Services sought from the land revenue department can be categorized mainly in to two viz. services related to general administration and services related to land administration. Issuance of various certificates is a major service in general administration. Land related services are mainly Transfer of Registry and resolution of grievances related to discrepancies in land measurement and boundary disputes. Most of the services of the Revenue department are delivered by the grass-root level unit of the department, i.e. the Village Office (VO). However, for some services, people may need to visit the Taluk Office (TO), the intermediate link in the hierarchy of the Revenue Department. In these cases, the VOs are required to inquire and prepare verification report and forward the same to the TOs. Vertical linkage is thus observed in the delivery of some services to the people. The interaction of people with the higher-level offices, Revenue Divisional Office (RDO) and District Collectorate (DC), is mostly as appellate authorities and for redress of grievances.

The VO is entrusted with the responsibility of issuing twenty-five types of certificates required by the people for different purposes; admissions to educational institutions, scholarships, job reservations, ration cards, bank loans, etc. If the certificates are for use outside the state and for use of Government of India institutions, it is issued from the TO. Similarly, Transfer of Registry (TR) of a plot without sub-divisions is done by the VO, and of land with sub-divisions, is done by TO. Land disputes are also to be settled by the TO. Such disputes arise mainly when there is difference in the boundaries or extent of land as reported in the land deed and the records in the village office.

At the VO level, there is one Village Officer, and at least two clerical staff to assist her/him (Special Village Officer and/or Village Assistant). Apart from this, there are two Village Field Assistants, for field level activities. At the Taluk level, Tahsildar is responsible for general administration of the TO and administration of villages under the jurisdiction of the TO. In each Taluk, there is also a Tahsildar (Land Records). Tahsildar deals with matters related



to issuance of certificates, election, tax assessment, etc. Certain duties; Transfer of Registry, land conservation, issue of possession certificate, paddy land-watershed conservation, land acquisition, boundary dispute, redressal of grievances, etc., are assigned to Tahsildar (LR). There are Deputy Tahsildars/Junior Superintendents to assist the Tahsildar, and each one might be in charge of one or two particular sections like certificate, Transfer of Registry, establishment, etc. and supervision of villages as assigned by the Tahsildar.

As stated above, one of the main services for which people approach revenue offices is for certificates that are to be submitted for admission to educational institutions for getting scholarship, bank loan, job reservation, eligibility for assistance under social security schemes, etc. Timelines are framed under the RTS Act<sup>5</sup> for issuing of various certificates, except minority and community certificates. Table 2.1 provides details of the time frame i.e., the number of days by which the certificates are to be issued and the validity period of the issued certificate. For the notified services, Tahsildar is the first appellate authority and District Collector is the second appellate authority, whom people can approach if the required certificate is not given within the prescribed time limit.

**Table 2.1: Time Norms and Validity of Certificates issued from VO and T O**

Sl.No.	Name of Certificate <sup>1</sup>	Time Norm (Number of days)	Validity
1.	Caste/Community <sup>2</sup>	3	3 years
2.	Residential	3	Special purpose
3.	Relationship	6	Special purpose
4.	Nativity	5	Life time
5.	Domicile	3	Life time
6.	Income	6	1 year
7.	Possession	7	Particular purpose
8.	Possession & non- attachment	7	Particular purpose

5. Kerala Gazette, 2013 January.28, vol.2

9.	Identification	5	10 years
10.	Location	5	Particular purpose
11.	Dependency	7	Particular purpose
12.	Destitute	5	3 years
13.	Family membership	6	3 years
14.	Inter caste marriage	7	Particular purpose
15.	Non remarriage	5	Particular purpose
16.	Life		Particular purpose
17.	One and the same	5	Life time
18.	Widow-widower	5	Particular purpose
19.	Conversion	7	Particular purpose
20.	Legal Heirs	15 <sup>3</sup>	Lifetime
21.	Solvency <sup>4</sup>	15	Particular purpose
22.	Valuation <sup>4</sup>	15	Particular purpose
23.	Non-creamy layer	7	1 year
24.	Community	5	3 years
25.	Minority	3	Specified period

- Note:**
1. Certificates to be submitted within state can be issued by the Village Officer while those to be submitted at the national level have to be issued by the Tahsildar
  2. Caste certificates for Non-SC/ST is issued by the Village Officer and those for SC/ST by the Tahsildar
  3. 15 days after the time limit for any objection from the date of gazette publication (30 days)
  4. Issued by the Tahsildar if the amount exceeds Rs. 5 lakhs

Table 2.1 shows that different certificates have different periods of validity. Only four certificates have lifelong validity. Most of the certificates are issued for specific purposes and can be submitted only for the specified purpose. Therefore, people have to approach concerned office each time they require these certificates and each time submit all the supporting documents.

In 2013, the e-District project was launched in the State under the National e-Governance plan. The project envisages making government services more accessible by providing services from different departments through Common Service Centres (CSC). As per the guidelines of the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), Akshaya Centres have been chosen as CSCs in Kerala.<sup>6</sup> All the twenty five certificates of the Land Revenue department are included in the e-District project and can be accessed by the people through Akshaya centres or from the online portal, on their own<sup>7</sup>. Other services such as Transfer of Registry (for land transaction after 2017), land tax payment, application for assistance under CMDRF, registration of complaints under Chief Minister's Public Grievance Redressal Cell (CMPGRC), etc. are also included in e- District. However, people can also submit application for service directly at the concerned revenue office.

As per the work study report of the village offices done in 2010 by the Personnel and Administrative Reforms (P&AR) department, certificate issuance takes up a major part of the working time of a VO as an average of around 70 applications for certificates are received per day. The number of applications for certificates in the sample VOs covered by the present study ranged from 700 to 1000 in a month. Reportedly, the certificates demanded mostly from VO are those relating to income and possession of land. For example, in one of the village offices visited as part of the study, 30 percent of the applications were for income certificate and 27 per cent was for possession certificate. Other certificates frequently applied for are non-re-marriage certificate (15%), caste/ community certificate and one and the same certificate (6% each). In addition to the applications received online, large numbers of applications are submitted in person at the VO. For example, in one of the village offices visited, while 9816 applications were received online in a year, 3210 applications were directly submitted to the VO; i.e. around one-fourth of the total applications for certificates were submitted in person.

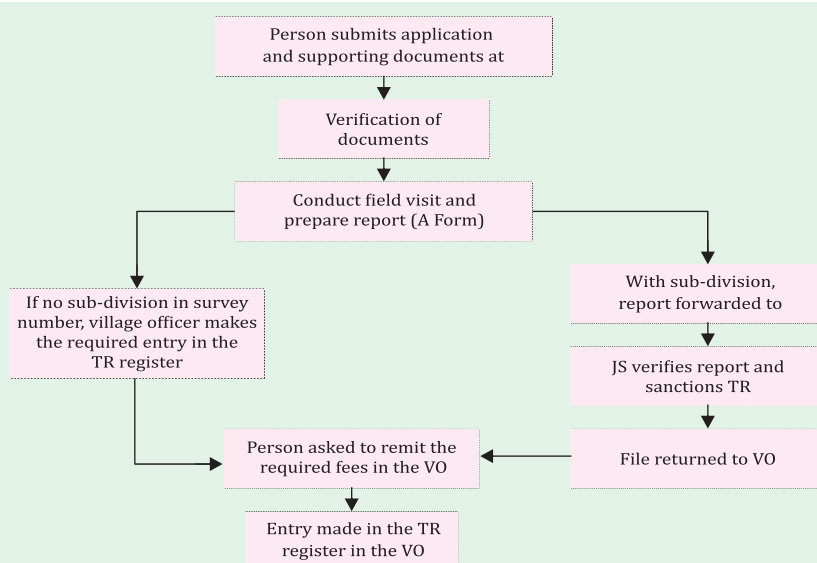
6. <https://edistrict.kerala.gov.in/services.html>

7. A total of 49 services pertaining to various department are covered under E-District project

From TO, the certificates mostly demanded are caste certificate for SC/ST, non-creamy layer certificate and caste/community certificate for submission to institutions outside Kerala. For example, in one of the TOs visited, of the 764 applications received for certificates in a month, 60% (459) applications were for SC/ST certificate. Applications for non-creamy layer certificate constituted 26 percent. Caste certificates and income certificates constituted around 6-7 percent each.

Another service for which most people visit VO is mutation or Transfer of Registry. If there are no sub-divisions in the survey number, the applicant can remit the required fees and necessary entry is made in the *Thandaper* Register. If there are sub-divisions, the village staff prepare the survey report/sketch and forward it to the TO and the Tahsildar verifies the report and sanctions entry in *Thandaper* Register (See Figure 2.1). The process becomes complicated in the TO as there are villages that have completed re-survey, villages where re-survey is not done and villages where rectification of re-survey is under way. Reportedly, every day, 4 to 6 TR applications are received in a VO and around 10 in a TO. For land transactions after 2017, the process of TR is done online, through integration of activities of revenue and registration departments. Data regarding registered deed is transferred to the concerned VO to aid the village officer in ascertaining the records to sanction TR.

**Figure 2.1: Procedure for Transfer of Registry**



In contrast to the magnitude of people seeking services from the revenue department offices, the offices of Survey and Land Records Department is mainly visited by people who need copies of land records to be produced in the concerned office of the Revenue Department/courts to settle land disputes related to survey and re-survey. As said earlier, while the mutation (*Pokkuvaravu/ Transfer of Registry*) is done by Land Revenue department, the survey and preparation of land records is done by Survey department. For registration of title deeds and all other transactions, the Survey/Re-Survey number, subdivision number and extent are followed.

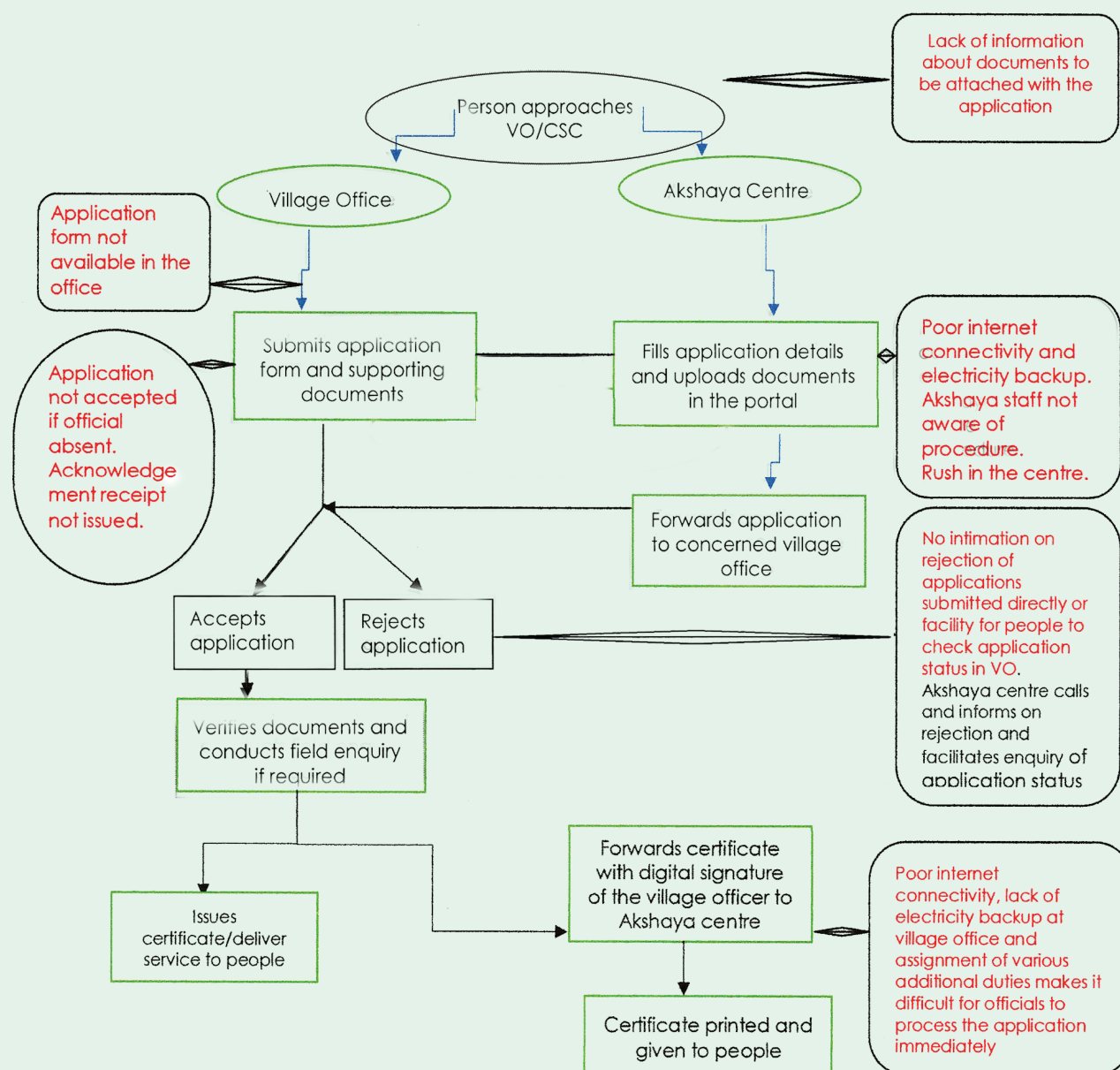
Original survey of the state was conducted during 1883-1928, separately for erstwhile Travancore, Cochin and Malabar areas. Following the formation of the state in 1956 and land reforms in 1970, major changes occurred in the area under the state as well as in the land holdings. In order to update land records, total re-survey of the state began in 1966, targeted to be completed within 10-15 years. However, the target was repeatedly extended and an analysis in 2006-07 showed that only 45% of the field work had been completed. However, this process also brought in around 22 lakh complaints of errors in field measurements and recording of details. Basic tax is to be paid by people as per the area in the re-survey records. In many cases, there is variation in the extent of land in the re-survey records and the previous survey and settlement records, which led to disputes. The process was kept on hold to address the grievances. The suspended re-survey work restarted in 2017.

The office that people often visit in the Survey Department is the Office of the Deputy Director Survey (DD Survey), which is the district level office of Survey and Land Records. About four-fifths of the visits to the office of DD Survey is to get copies of Field Measurement Book (FMB) of land. Apart from FMB copies, supplementary FMB copies and land registers are also available in the DD Survey office. Earlier, it was the DD Survey who decided on resurvey related complaints. When the resurvey process was suspended, the settlement was handed over to the Tahsildar (LR). However, appeal against the decision of Tahsildar can be submitted to DD Survey. The DD office receives four to five appeals monthly. Apart from this, there is an office of AD Survey which functions only for re-survey process. The main service received by the public from this office is the delivery of copies and sketches of re-survey.

## 2.3. Issues in Service Delivery

This section discusses issues in service delivery process of the revenue and survey & land records departments that are against the ethos of people centric service delivery. Figure 2.2 traces the process flow of receiving services from the VO, including the identified bottlenecks.

**Figure 2.2: Process Flow and Identified Bottlenecks in Service Delivery<sup>8</sup>**





- The study examined the timeliness of issue of certificates. It was found that most certificates are issued within the set time frame, some even on the same or the next day. However, inordinate delay is seen in the issue of certificates such as legal heirship and possession certificate.
- As seen earlier, several certificates are issued by VO. Of them, only four certificates have lifelong validity. Some certificates have a validity period of three years. Majority of the certificates can be used only for the specific purpose for which it is sought and a person has to apply repeatedly for the same certificate.
- Settlement of land disputes is a service for which people repeatedly visit the office of the revenue department. One Taluk office visited by the study team received around 300 applications related to land disputes in a month, of which, only around half are settled in the same month. It is reported that, in some months, the office could settle only less than one-fifth of the applications and that 30 to 50 people visit the office daily to enquire about pending disputes.
- With respect to getting documents related to land from the survey offices, it was observed that 150-200 applications are received in a month in the office of DD survey while the office of AD survey receives around 30 applications, related to complaints about re-survey. These offices are reportedly not able to handle these cases expeditiously.
- Apart from its functions as the basic unit of the land revenue department, VO often act as the grass root level institution engaged in general administration functions. As a result, it is entrusted with the issue of several certificates which, following decentralization of governance, can be entrusted with the LSGIs. Some of the certificates such as residential certificate is issued by both VO and LSGI. It is also noticed that LSGIs are demanding certificates from the VO to prove eligibility for some services even when the LSGI is better informed about such aspects related to the people.
- Ignorance of people about the procedures and supporting documents leads to errors, which in turn, results in rejection of applications. It is often seen that a person's first visit to the VO/Akshaya centre is to enquire about the procedure and the documents required to be submitted, as access to such information is limited, elsewhere. Major mode of information dissemination

is the notice board at the office. Poor availability of display/notice board in the offices with requisite information for accessing services such as eligibility, required documents, timeframe for service delivery, etc. shows that information dissemination is not done with due diligence. Standard norm is not followed in the offices with regard to the details to be displayed. There is also lack of regular updating of the displayed notices. It is also observed that the notice board is kept in an inconspicuous place in some of the offices. In the case of Akshaya centres, lower level of awareness of the Akshaya employees about various procedures involved in the delivery of services was reported. Due to this, Akshaya centres are unable to provide correct information to the people who seek their services. Akshaya staff constantly contact officials at the village office to clarify their doubts, which hinders the work of the latter.

- Errors are often reported in applications submitted through Akshaya centres and lower level of awareness about service procedures among the Akshaya staff is one of the reasons for this. Often, the entry is done in overcrowded spaces which increase the chances of committing errors. Errors occur when the applicant is relatively lesser educated and not accustomed to use of computers because of which she fails to identify errors when asked to check details filled in the application. It is observed that applications submitted at the offices are often verified at the time of submission and if errors are found, it is rectified after getting required information from the applicant. If any additional information is to be furnished, the applicant is asked to re-submit the application. But in the case of applications given through Akshaya centres, a message is sent to the registered number of the applicant about the errors from Akshaya Centre only after getting notice to this effect from the VO. This delays the processing of application. People may also have to make repeated visits to upload their application due to technical issues such as poor internet connectivity and power breakdowns in the Akshaya centres.

- Another mode of information dissemination is the website of the department. However, information about services of the department are spread across the websites of the Land Revenue department, e-district and Akshaya. While the website of the department does not give any details about the services provided and the supportive documents required<sup>9</sup>, website of the e-district initiative provides only a list of services that can be accessed through



the initiative, and not about the procedures and the supportive documents to be submitted for accessing services<sup>10</sup>. It is also found that the list of services of the land revenue department provided through e-district includes only the details of certificates issued online and the not for other online services. A positive feature of the e-district website is that the status of the submitted application can be verified online through the website. Details of the documents to be provided for each certificate are, however, provided in the Akshaya website<sup>11</sup>. Thus, to get a complete picture, people have to browse three websites.

- The applicant has to submit different supportive documents to avail a service from the land revenue department. For example, for getting possession certificate, the person has to submit copy of Aadhaar Card, land tax receipt, proof of ownership of property, encumbrance certificate and copy of Voter ID. Similarly, for Income certificate, she has to produce proof of income, basic tax payment receipt, ration card, land tax receipt and salary certificate (if applicable). Given the multitude of documents to be submitted, the process can be intimidating and tiring for the people. It is also found that some of the certificates only duplicate the information available in the supporting document. For example, the supporting documents required for 'caste certificate' are proof of caste of the applicant, i.e. ration card and school leaving certificate. Similarly, it is also seen that Aadhaar is now being accepted as the identity proof by many institutions including for enrollment in electoral rolls. It is not clear why additional document such as voter's id is asked even when Aadhaar is submitted.

- Application forms for services are not issued from the VO due to lack of funds. The applicant has to buy forms from nearby shops. Usually, the shopkeepers do not provide blank forms but give the form only after filling it based on the information provided by the applicant. The applicant is charged around Rs 25 towards service charges and cost of application form. Standard application forms have been prepared and made available in the e-district website, but most of the people are not aware of it. The forms are not available in the website of the land revenue department.

- In village offices, the applications are sometimes not accepted if the village officer is absent. On many days, the village officer has to undertake

10. <https://edistrict.kerala.gov.in/> as on 10th July 2019.

11. <http://www.akshaya.kerala.gov.in/> as on 10th July 2019.

field visits, attend meetings, hearings, court cases, etc. They are also often asked to attend to matters relating to other departments in the village.

- The applicant gets an acknowledgment receipt on submission of applications online while an acknowledgment receipt with expected date of service delivery is not issued in many cases when the application is submitted in person at the office. Even if it is issued, expected date of service delivery is not recorded in it.

- Considerable delay is observed in the delivery of services from village offices that require field visits. Main reason for the delay is reported to be inadequacy in provisioning of funds for conveyance expenses of the officials. Most of the times these expenses are borne by the persons who require the service, which could be perceived as “bribe”. It is also seen that such payments vary from applicant to applicant. According to few people interviewed, priority of field visit is also decided on the basis of these payments.

- The applications for certificates submitted through Akshaya are verified at the VO and the certificate is issued later by the village officer with her digital signature. A message is sent to the applicant informing that the certificate is ready. Printout of the certificate can be taken from Akshaya. However, poor internet connectivity and power failures at the village office as well as at Akshaya centres results in delay in service delivery, necessitating repeated visits by the applicant to Akshaya/VO. The village officers also reported that due to poor internet connectivity in the office, they often do the processing of the online applications from home using their personal internet connection.

- Services are provided by the Akshaya centres at a rate of Rs.18 towards Akshaya service charges + Rs. 7 as Government service charge + Rs.3 per page for scanning/printing. The services are provided to people from SC/ST and BPL families at a lower rate. If the documents to be uploaded are more, such as for Transfer of Registry, the total amount to be paid could be quite high.

- It is found that each time a person applies for a service the documents have to be scanned and uploaded even if these documents were uploaded earlier to avail some other service from the Land Revenue department or other

departments. As a result, more time and money are to be spent at the application stage.

- Currently, three certificates (legal heirship, valuation and solvency) of the land revenue department are not issued online though they are identified under e-district programme for online service delivery, avowedly due to the complex procedure/ mandatory field visit. For valuation and solvency certificates, the procedure is the same as for other certificates, but field verification is compulsory and a greater number of documents is to be submitted. The issue of legal heirship certificate, however, involves a more complex process. It is also one of the most demanded certificates from land revenue office as it is required to transfer property/service benefits of a deceased person to the dependents/legal heirs. The process up to the forwarding of the verification report from the VO to the TO is the same as for other services wherein the Tahsildar is the issuing authority. On approval of the report of VO by the Tahsildar, an advertisement is published in the gazette issued by Government Central Press, Thiruvananthapuram. A copy of the gazette is displayed in the concerned VO and TO for 30 days to provide time for persons to raise objections, if any. If there is no objection, the certificate is to be issued after 15 days. However, in practice it takes longer time, about 3-4 months. The applicant is forced to make repeated visits to the office as there is no system to inform the applicant about the status of the application.

- In the case of services where Tahsildar is the designated authority and the verification report has to be sent by the village officer, the report is usually delivered in person to the TO, by the Village Field Assistant (VFA). It is reported that once or twice a week the VFA carries all the verification reports pending till then along with other official documents to be submitted to the TO. As an alternative, for faster service delivery, the officials at the VO themselves instruct the applicant to carry the verification report to the TO. This can cause inconvenience to the people.

### **Box 2.1: Putting people through unjustified difficulties**

Gomathy submitted an application for mutation of a land with subdivisions in 2018 in the Taluk Office and in February 2019, she was told that the survey process was completed. The report of the VO was submitted to TO in October 2019. The file was pending with the TO when the study team

interviewed the woman towards the end of November. She was told that all procedures have been completed and the mutation will be completed once the Tahsildar puts in his signature. Every week the applicant visits the office to enquire about the file status. Many times, she was told that the concerned staff is absent. Couple of weeks back, she was told that her file is missing. She has now filed a complaint with the Tahsildar. The case is extremely disheartening as the person is an elderly widow, without anyone to support her.

- Services delivered by the TO such as the caste certificate for the SC/ST are meant for vulnerable groups. It is also likely that people from vulnerable groups like disabled, senior people, ST, etc. are the ones who are least likely to opt for online services. So, more among the vulnerable groups are likely to visit government offices. Therefore, inadequate facilities and poor service delivery at the office is likely to affect the vulnerable groups more than others.
- It is observed that there is no rational/norms for deciding the number of villages to be included in a taluk. For example, there are 7 villages in Kunnathur Taluk of Kollam district where as in Thrissur Taluk the number of villages is 74, including group villages. It is interesting to note that the total number of villages in Pathanamthitta district is 70 and taluks only 6. Staff strength is almost similar in all village offices. The staff structure of the VO does not take into account the area, population or socio-economic profile of the village. This is seen to affect smooth delivery of services as these factors have significant effect on the workload of the VO.
- All the services of the survey office notified under the RTS Act viz. issue of copy of the block map, field measurement, correlation statement and area list is given a timeframe of 5 days for completion. However, it was reported that in most cases, they are given on the same day when the person comes to the office. However, it is also seen that while Photostat copies of FMB are issued, copies of other registers such as land register, BTR and TPR are given in writing, while copy of fair location is drawn and given.
- There is no provision for applying online for services from the DD/AD office of the survey department. The application requires to be submitted in writing in a white paper along with the fee receipt and Rs. 5 Court fee stamp pasted on the application. Applications are also forwarded from the Taluk Office, which comprises around one-fourth of the total applications received.

- With the induction of modern survey equipment like Total Station the works of Draftsman in Survey & Land Records department has reduced considerably. Qualification for the post of Surveyor and Draftsman is same, but recruitment for these posts is done separately. Since there is a dearth of Surveyors in resurvey and for other services integration of these posts shall be considered.
- A major issue faced by the people is the delay in resolving land disputes, for which they have to run between offices for one or two years. There is no facility to track the movement of the file even for such time-consuming processes. Therefore, people visit the office at regular intervals (often once every week) to track their files. They are sometimes informed that the files are missing or misplaced and hence not traceable. Similarly, they are also told that on transfer of an official, the new official is not able to trace the file. Some of the people who were interviewed also reported their difficulty in identifying the official to be met in the office. Such systems can lead to hardships for the people, develop discontentment with government and increase the possibility of corruption.
- At present there is no time-frame for settlement of land disputes. It was pointed out that, sometimes, applicants obtain special orders from the district collector to expedite the process by citing urgency in selling property in situations such as medical treatment, education or marriage of family members. As a result, the priority in processing is changed.

**Box 2.2 : Discrepancies in Registration deed and Revenue records- an issue unsettled for past 24 Years**

Jacob John, a senior citizen and retired army personnel has a dispute over his land holding, unsettled for the past 24 years, regarding non acceptance of basic tax of his land by the Revenue officials. He alleges that, the situation arose from the illegal alteration of re-survey subdivision number by Revenue authorities and thereby reduction in the extent of the area of land holding in the Revenue records. The Survey Number and Extent of land referred in the Registered deed (Document) and recorded in the Revenue records are different. Hence the complainant is not able to remit the land tax.

As per the Registered deed, (1974/88 and 1649/93 deeds of Cheriyanad Sub Registry), he owns an extent of 45 cents of land. He inherited a portion of the said land from his father and the remaining portion was transferred from his brother through a sale deed. The registered deeds of the land were prepared based on the tax receipt received from village office. Subsequently mutation of the property effected in his name and he remitted land tax for two consecutive years. After that the Revenue Authorities reportedly realized that the Survey Number and Thandaper Number of the land under reference are incorrect and hence the mutation effected on the land was cancelled. Moreover, after resurvey, the extent of the land also got reduced from what entered in the deeds.

In an endeavour to settle the issues, three different surveys were conducted by three different teams, i.e. survey by Survey Department, by Total Station Survey, and by Survey Vigilance Team. The area measured by the three different agencies shows considerable variations in the extent of the holding.

Here, the issue remains unsettled for the last 24 years and the complainant continues running from pillar to posts.

### **Box 2.3: Inordinate Delay in Complaint Resolution**

Zachariah noticed that a private road in the land he purchased years ago was categorised as public road in the resurvey. To rectify this error, the applicant has been visiting different offices for the last three years. Although four surveyors from Taluk office have come and surveyed the land at different times, none of them clarified the position. When enquired about details of those surveys, each time he was informed that the official got transferred and, therefore, another official has to examine the land again. The expenses of the officials for all the four surveys were borne by the applicant. People perceive this as an opportunity taken by the officials to get bribe. The person also procured all required sketches from the DD/AD survey office as well as the Central Survey Office in Thiruvananthapuram, to confirm that the road was not a public road in the earlier survey. Finally, on the basis of the No Objection Certificate received from the Panchayat, it was approved that the road is a private road to the home of the land owner.



- The Kerala Land Conservancy Act distinguishes land into private and government land. Still in many documents category of land is provided in different names such as brahmaswam, kanam, otti etc. This creates complications in land transactions as correction requires complex procedures. Hundreds of such complaints are remaining unsettled in land tribunals.

#### **Box 2.4: Torrens System**

The National Land Records Modernisation Programme (NLRMP) of Government of India is formulated to modernize the land records and to move towards the land titling system following the Torrens system. The mirror principle of the Torrens necessitates a reflection of ground situation in records and vice versa, for which the preparation of accurate and continuously updated survey records is the prime requirement, which is easier to achieve in a digital environment.

Torrens system envisages the reduction of land related disputes in future. Torrens is a system which insists the presentation of survey map along with the registration deed in respect of any transfer or sale of land. The survey map shall be prepared by a licensed surveyor or by an officer authorised by the Government. Under this system, the people have to get approval for the survey map from the Torrens office. At the time of land registration, this sketch is to be submitted along with other documents. Kerala has made a feeble attempt to introduce Torrens in 13 villages under the Principal Sub-Registrar Offices of Kottayam & Angamaly since 1995. Due to the strong opposition and court cases, this initiative could not be scaled up but is still being followed in these villages.

Twenty-four years' experience in implementing the Torrens system in 13 villages in Kerala shows that boundary disputes and related court cases has shown a considerable downward trend and people are willing to accept the new system. However, this does not mean that a conclusive titling system is in place in these villages. Only difference in the present system and Torrens as implemented is that an approved survey sketch forms part of the title deed.

- Delay in the completion of the re-survey process and disputes arising out of differences in the findings of re-survey and original survey are a major

cause of distress to the people. As per the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) website, only less than half of the villages in the state have completed the process and the digitization of the Record of Rights. This needs to be resolved at the earliest. There is also a mismatch between the number of complaints received and the number of surveyors assigned. For example, one of the Taluks visited receives about 300 complaints in a month. In the TO, with 21 villages, there used to be 21 surveyors earlier, but currently only seven surveyors are available and delays are seen in the process.

- Lack of sufficient facilities in the offices of the revenue department adversely affects the people who approach these offices for services. The offices do not have sufficient seating facilities, toilet facilities, drinking water, etc. and also lack in sufficient space in the verandah or the waiting area. It is also observed that Akshaya centres are also now functioning like government offices with poor facilities for people and are overcrowded. It is to be understood that reduction in people visits and waiting time through better systems, would ease the pressure on such facilities in the offices.

## **2.4. Recommendations**

- i. Government shall review relevance of various certificates sought and its validity norms. The requirement for submitting certificates when applying for an examination or job needs to be discontinued. Instead, only the shortlisted/selected candidates need to be asked to produce required certificates. This will reduce the number of persons seeking these services and ease workload of the VOs. Government shall also discontinue the present practice of issuing certificates for specific purposes and ensure that once a certificate is issued to a person it can be used for other purposes during its validity period. (e.g. Residential, Relationship, dependency, inter caste marriage). In the case of caste/community, family membership certificates, the validity period shall be for life. The onus of reporting any change in caste, community or family membership shall be on the service seeker. Penalty, as decided by government, for furnishing incorrect information shall be imposed on the person concerned. Burden of proof needs to shift from the service provider to the service seeker. Penalty may include denial of government services for a period.



### Box 2.5: Family Register

Study on People Centric Services reveals that majority of footfalls in local level offices like Village Offices and Taluk Offices are for obtaining certificates from or for producing certificates before the authorities for proving either caste, income, residence, legal heirship, non-marriage, encumbrance or one-and-the same, etc. Practice of asking such certificates like residence, one-and-the same, etc. by Grama Panchayat authorities as well is a paradox. Our entire administration is built upon mistrust and hence the present 'Certificate Raj'. Governments have initiated several steps to move towards people centered service delivery. A defining step for achieving people centered service delivery is the introduction of self-certification, - acceptance of an affidavit from the person who seeks a service rather than certificate from a government official stating the person's eligibility for availing the service. Till adoption of the system of '**self-certification**' Kerala, as part of its accelerated implementation of e-governance initiatives, may consider introduction of a digital Family Register (FR) accessible to notified officials/offices of the government. Head of household can update information of the family in the register through a secure online process. This will eliminate distress of people to a great extent, and the cumbersome procedures and related delays in other offices/ departments. Database of families maintained by Civil Supplies department for issue of Ration Cards could be used as base data for creating Family Register. After the roll out of Family Register family number on the card can replace the use of ration card. In addition to the existing data required for availing ration articles, details with regard to NRKs, land in possession of the family members, Aadhaar numbers, PAN, Voter ID, Driving license, Health Insurance, Ration card number, etc. shall be available in the family register. In brief, Family Register will serve as a master register for authenticating individual information.

- ii. The certifying authority vested with the VO as the basic unit of general administration in the state needs to be re-examined as this system was in practice before decentralization of administration and governance. Government may consider whether some of the functions of VO related to general administration can be entrusted with the LSGIs.
- iii. LSGIs are institutions at the grass root level with closest contact with people. The Commission recommends that certificates not related to

land needs to be issued by the LSGI, for example, non-remarriage, one and the same etc. VOs shall continue to provide certificates on land related matters.

iv. A manual detailing the procedure involved and the supporting documents to be submitted for accessing services across departments may be prepared and distributed at the grass root level. All grass root level functionaries such as LSGI elected representatives, LSGI officials, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, etc. shall be provided the same and be given training in effective information dissemination. Service standards, supporting documents required to be submitted along with application forms and names of appellate authorities for registering complaints shall be prominently displayed in all offices and Akshaya centres. A standard protocol shall be developed with respect to the information display and shall be followed in all offices.

v. Information related to the services of the land revenue department, which is now available in three websites (Land Revenue department, e-district and Akshaya), shall be integrated and provided in one portal with provision for access from any portal. ARC recommends that online services of the state government shall be available in a single portal as people may not always be aware about the department which delivers the service. At present, most of the information about services in the websites are available only in English. ARC recommends that all relevant information regarding all services shall be made available in Malayalam also.

vi. All Government departments shall review the necessity of demanding certificates to prove eligibility to access services or avail assistance. Services from government shall be delivered based on affidavit given by the service seeker. This will entail a paradigm shift in service delivery and ensure that people are at the centre of service delivery. Till a policy decision is taken in the matter Government shall examine the feasibility of accepting documents issued by other government departments such as marriage certificate, ration card, school leaving certificates etc., as substitutes rather than issuing new certificates by the revenue Department certifying caste, marriage, etc. that are already certified in these documents. Land Revenue department shall dispense with the system of asking supporting documents for issuing certificates and delivering different services. Government needs to, without

delay, evolve a system and frame legal support, if necessary, enabling the service seeker's affidavit to be the basis for service delivery.

vii. Uploading of the same supporting document each time a person seeks a service from the state government shall be dispensed with immediately. Government shall create a repository of documents submitted by people for availing services and this shall be accessed for subsequent applications received by any government department. This will mitigate hardships of the service seeker to a great extent and reduce the transaction cost of submitting application for services of the government. Workload of the Akshaya centres can be reduced through this decision enabling them to be more efficient in the delivery of services.

viii. The Commission recommends that application forms (in Malayalam and English) shall be issued from the VOs. Assistance for filling the application, if required, shall be provided through helpdesk set up in the office, which shall also function as the enquiry counter. Issues such as paucity of funds for stationery items shall be addressed.

ix. Akshaya staff shall be given necessary training with regard to services of various departments and Manual containing all necessary information and Standard Operating Procedures shall be made available to them. This will help in reducing errors in data entry and increase the speed of service delivery. There shall be a provision in the portal for automatic checking of errors.

x. Charge of the village officer in her absence shall be handed over to another official in the same office to ensure that there is no hindrance/delay in service delivery. Work study report of VO has recommended the same, but is not yet implemented. To ensure accountability, it is suggested that the absence of officials (on leave as well as on other official duty) needs to be properly displayed in the office. Duration of absence needs to be specified.

xi. Acknowledgment receipt with expected date of service delivery shall be issued on submission of applications, irrespective of whether it is applied online or offline. Integration of offline applications with the online system needs to be done for effective tracking of the service processes.

xii. The revenue department shall fix fees for field visits for reducing

corruption. Field visits shall be divided among the village staff by ensuring required delegation of authority. Time limits shall also be set for the same. It is found during the study that permanent conveyance allowance given to Village Officers and Village Assistants is grossly inadequate to perform their functions. The Commission recommends increasing these limits to realistic levels. Government needs to consider providing two wheelers for mobility of the village staff.

xiii. Government aims to deliver more of its services through use of information technology and e-governance solutions. Even ensuring effectiveness of service delivery through solutions already in use will require uninterrupted power supply and internet connectivity with sufficient bandwidth in the offices. Government needs to ensure that all computers, printers and UPS have valid maintenance contracts.

xiv. License to Akshaya centres shall be renewed only after ensuring that service standards are met with respect to internet connectivity, power backup and work load that the centre can handle. There shall be a grievance redress system to register complaints against Akshaya centres. Revoking the license of poor performing centres or imposing penalties shall also be considered.

#### **Box 2.6: Madhya Pradesh: The Pioneer in Guaranteeing Public Services**

Madhya Pradesh State Government passed the Public Services Guarantee Act in 2010. Through this, the state government gave citizens legal right to public services and provisions for punishing officials who did not meet notified deadlines. It initially covered 26 services, which has increased to 428 in 2018. Though many states followed suit, they have not been as successful as Madhya Pradesh in effective implementation of the Act. Many reasons have been pointed out for success of the State. To implement the act, government created the Department of Public Service Management for coordination between various government departments and agencies. The government also set up a new agency, the State Agency for Public Services, with more flexibility. Widespread campaigns were undertaken to create awareness about the new Act through newspaper advertisements, hoardings, radio and TV, school visits, etc. All government offices displayed information about the Act and the timeframes for service delivery. Public officials were

given training about the new Act, timeframes, and also on the new mode and systems for expedited service delivery. Nodal officers were appointed in all districts to oversee these activities.

To simplify service delivery, the government set up “people service centres” (known as Lok SewaKendras, or LSKs) where citizens could apply for a range of services from different government departments in one location i.e. “one-stop shops”. The LSKs were established as public-private partnerships, with a local entrepreneur as the private partner and the government providing space, furniture, and software to run the LSK. The LSK operator scanned and uploaded citizen’s documents and confirmed whether all necessary documentation for the required service was provided, using checklists. Once the application process is completed, a computer-generated receipt indicating the deadline by which the service was to be provided was issued. The application was forwarded to the concerned department. The citizen could opt to either receive a notification by SMS or visit the LSK to know about the status of service. To ensure sustainability of these LSKs, a “viability gap fund” was created. A small fee could be charged by the LSK (in addition to the fee charged by the department providing the service), and about 15% of that fee went to the viability gap fund. If an LSK received fewer than 2,000 applications in a month, the gap in income was topped up by the state by using the viability gap fund. By 2016, 336 LSKs were established i.e. at least one in each of the state’s 313 blocks.

In 2015, with the assistance of the World Bank, MP government launched a project to increase the number of services through LSKs and to increase the availability of services in areas with access issues. Government envisaged giving citizens the choice of applying by phone, online, or through LSKs. Government also wanted to simplify processes by removing unnecessary certificates. The LSK network was widened by incorporating other “kiosks” (which provided access to national government and some private sector services). By 2017, citizens could apply for services at 36,000 MP Online kiosks spread across the state. The services were then made available at the Citizen Service Centres, i.e. 30,000 additional locations. A mobile phone application was also developed as an additional channel for service delivery. Digital database of citizen data is also being created to reduce the need for

multiple documents when applying for a service. Once in place, when a new application is given, the database could provide officials with the required documents of the citizen, if she had applied for a service and submitted documents for it, in the past.

The Government has also undertaken evaluation surveys of the implementation of the Act from time to time, and made necessary modifications and improvements, depending on the feedback received from the citizens.

xv. The average number of Akshaya centres per village is less than two. Given that the villages in Kerala are large in size, this network is not sufficient to provide easy physical access to online services of the government. There is also a concentration of centres in more urban/developed areas. Possibilities of opening service delivery kiosks in public sector office premises as seen in Madhya Pradesh (See Box 2.6) and doorstep delivery of people services through linkages with private providers by the Delhi Government (See Box 2.7) shall be explored. Government shall also explore the possibility of notifying other village level entities as service providers or increase the network of Akshaya centers.

#### **Box 2.7: The Delhi Government Initiative of Doorstep Delivery of Public Services**

In September 2018, the Delhi Government launched the programme “Sarkar AapkeDwar” i.e. a programme for doorstep delivery of public services. Under this programme, a Delhi resident in need of a particular service needs to dial 1076 to register their details and a facilitator (mobile sahayak) would come to their house with the necessary papers and deliver the service. The person will charge Rs.50 and would perform all the required procedures on a tablet. When started only 40 services were delivered at the doorsteps. Now, 100 services across 14 departments such as Transport Department, SC/ST Welfare Department, Women and Child Welfare Department, Higher Education Department, Certificates provided by Government departments, etc. are provided at the doorsteps. It has been reported that nearly 2.64 lakh applications have been disposed, since the launch of the programme. The services that are most in demand through the



programme are certificates from the revenue department and driving license. The success rate of doorstep delivery is also reported to be higher vis-à-vis direct and online applications. Around 125 mobile sahayaks and 100 odd call centre executives are recruited for delivering these services. The Delhi government has tied up with a private service provider for facilitating these services.

xvi. For services/certificates requiring field enquiry or multiple stages as in the case of legal heirship, time frames need to be developed for the completion of each step in the process and the designated officials at each stage shall be held accountable for delay.

xvii. Government shall enforce that reports of VO are sent to TO or other offices by email or by uploading the report instead of the present practice of submitting the same in person by the VO staff.

xviii. Major delay in issuing of legal heirship certificate is the procedure of publication in Gazette before issue of certificate. It is seen that no value is added by this procedure. Government needs to consider adopting the procedure of publication in the website of the department, notice board of offices and ration shops in the locality, in place of publication in the Gazette.

xix. Based on a work study, the staff structure of the VO needs to be re-fixed taking into account population, number of land holdings and area of the village.

xx. ARC recommends that government needs to ensure uniformity in the number of villages in a taluk for efficient service delivery.

xxi. The practice of providing hand-written or hand drawn documents such as land register, BTR, TPR and fair location even in this technologically advanced period needs to be discontinued. This process is time consuming and compels the public to spend an entire day in the office waiting for the required document/sketch to be prepared and also increases work load of the officials.

xxii. Facility for payment of fees and submission of applications online in case of services of DD/AD Survey office needs to be provided. When the document is ready, the applicant shall be informed via mobile message.

People shall have the option to receive the document online, directly from the office or by mail.

xxiii. File management system in the offices of the Survey department shall be strengthened. Digitization of records and computerization of file movement with online tracking facility will ease pressure on the staff by reducing search time and reduce hardships of the people. Until such a system is in place, a system of classifying files on the basis of survey/re-survey number shall be put in place for systematic retrieval of files and scheduling of field visits.

xxiv. Land dispute settlement shall be brought under the RTS Act and a time-limit fixed for disposal of files. As there are inter-office linkages, time-frames shall be fixed for each activity in the process such as field work, preparation of sketch, taking copy, etc. and official in charge of a particular activity shall be the designated officer for that activity, rather than only the head of the institution for the final service delivery. Such measures will bring in collective responsibility and accountability and help in mitigating unnecessary difficulties faced by the public.

xxv. To reduce the number of complaints due to the classification of land as Brahmaswam, Kanam, Otti, etc., the state government shall take steps to classify all land as government or private land and the usage of all other nomenclature needs to be discontinued.

xxvi. Settlement of land disputes, which is the responsibility of the revenue department, needs to be done along with the re-survey process. A time frame or a window period may be announced within which persons can raise their grievances/objections and try for settlement. Once that period is over, the re-survey decisions shall be binding on all parties.

xxvii. There shall be proper definition of roles and integration between revenue, survey and registration departments on matters concerning land. It is through the integration of all concerned departments, including the local governments that the Bhuseva programme of registration of title deeds and assignment of an identification number to the property, 'Bhudhaar' was implemented in Andhra Pradesh (See Box 2.8). Such programmes need to be implemented in the state, with required adaptations and changes.



### **Box 2.8: Bhuseva and Bhudhaar: Towards Integrated Delivery of Land Related Services**

In 2019, Andhra Pradesh embarked on an ambitious programme, Bhudhaar, of assigning a 11-digit unique number to every land parcel in the state. This move is envisaged to eventually reduce all land title related disputes. Land in the state of Andhra Pradesh is generally categorized into agricultural land, rural properties, and urban properties (like houses, house sites, vacant lands) and forest land. These lands and their records are mainly managed by eight departments in the state: Revenue, Panchayat Raj, Municipal Administration, Registration, Survey & Settlements, Forest, Endowments and Wakf. An inter-departmental committee, Bhuseva Authority was formed to implement and monitor the progress of the programme. To bring in efficiency in land records management, all land related departments are to integrate their services to the Bhuseva core platform and assign a temporary Bhudhaar number to all properties. A permanent Bhudhaar could be generated and tagged to the survey number after completion of field level survey with the support of geo-reference. Automatic updating is undertaken when transactions are done with regard to a particular land parcel. As on 2nd January 2020, 83 percent of the land under Revenue administration, has been allotted temporary Bhudhaar number. Sixty four percent of land under Panchayats and fourteen percent under Municipal administration has also been assigned temporary Bhudhaar number. The State administration is planning to conduct re-survey operations on a mission mode and assign geo-tagged permanent Bhudhaar number.

Even prior to this, in 2015, the Revenue Department of the state launched the Mee Bhoomi portal to enable citizens and land owners to view their land records and ownership status at any time. Land records consists two types of data. Textual data (like village name, name of land owner, survey number, extent, owner ID proofs like Aadhaar, voter id or other related documents) and spatial data (the data depicting the sketch of the land, its measurements (in links/meters/feet), adjacent fields, location on ground). The departmental integration problems due to the differences in procedural guidelines observed during Mee Bhoomi is envisaged to be overcome by integrating the land related services across departments under Bhuseva. There is also an emphasis on redress of grievances raised as well as making these portals and services people friendly through launching of mobile applications.

xxviii. The digitization of re-survey records shall be done along with the re-survey process. Timely updating of changes in the extent of boundaries of land shall be done in the map when any transaction of land is done.

xxix. The extent and boundaries of a plot without disputes shall be fixed prior to the registration of the deed. It shall also be mandated that the Record of Rights is presented along with the deed for registration.

xxx. The scope of expanding the Torrens system, which insists on presentation of survey map along with registration deed in respect of land transactions, to the entire state needs to be examined. Norms with respect to the time as well as fee should be set to ensure that people do not have to wait long and spend a non-negligible sum of money for the preparation and approval of the document. The fees for the surveyor need to be regulated through law as applicable in the case of document writers.

xxxi. Presently Torrens sketch gets approved as part of transaction of land. In the resurveyed villages land holders may be given the option to apply for approved Torrens sketch, even if there is no land transaction.

xxxii. It is found that the fees to be borne by the applicant for getting the re-survey done is not specified, due to which allegations of corruption are often raised in the delivery of this service. Fees shall be prescribed and displayed in the office to check corruption.

xxxiii. Basic facilities for people including seating facilities, toilet facilities and drinking water shall be made available in the offices. The possibility of introducing ISO certification in revenue offices may be considered by the government. It may be noted that some of the LSGIs in the state are ISO certified and others are in the process of certification. Akshaya centres shall also provide basic facilities to people such as waiting area, seating facilities, drinking water, toilet facilities, etc. It is important to ensure that the offices provide people friendly environment and services.

## CHAPTER III

### REGISTRATION DEPARTMENT

#### 3.1. About the Department

Registration Department is entrusted with the implementation of the Registration Act in the state. Major services delivered by the department are registration of different types of documents, issue of certified copies of registered documents, issue of encumbrance certificate, registration of marriage, registration of societies and chitties and attestation of power of attorney. The department is the third largest contributor to the State Exchequer, after Sales Tax and Excise Departments.

The Department is headed by Inspector General of Registration. The state is divided into four zones; South, South Central, North Central and North. Each zone is headed by a Deputy Inspector General. At the district level, there is a District Registrar (General) and District Registrar (Audit)<sup>12</sup>. The higher-level registration offices have supervisory and monitoring functions in respect of the lower tier of offices, the lowest one being the Sub Registrar Office (SRO). SRO is the office with maximum people interface as most of the services of the department are delivered through this office. The higher-level offices also function as appellate authorities for redress of grievances related to service delivery. The District Registrar is also the Registrar of Societies. There are 315 SROs in the state, ranging from 7 in Wayanad district to 41 in Thiruvananthapuram district (Table 3.1). On an average, an SRO in the state covers five villages.

**Table 3.1: District-wise Number of SROs in the State**

Zone	District	Number of SROs	Number of Vos	Average number of VOs per SRO
South (Thiruvananthapuram)	Thiruvananthapuram	41	124	3.0
	Kollam	30	105	3.5
	Pathanamthitta	15	70	4.7

12. In Idukki, Wayanad and Kasaragod districts, the District Registrar (General) also attends to the work of District Registrar (Audit).

South Central (Ernakulam)	Alappuzha	20	93	4.7
	Kottayam	23	100	4.3
	Ernakulam	25	127	5.1
	Idukki	9	68	7.6
North Central (Thrissur)	Thrissur	30	255	8.5
	Palakkad	23	157	6.8
	Malappuram	27	138	5.1
North (Kozhikode)	Kozhikode	33	118	3.6
	Kannur	23	132	5.7
	Wayanad	7	49	7.0
	Kasaragod	9	128	14.2
<b>State</b>		<b>315</b>	<b>1529</b>	<b>4.9</b>

### 3.2. Services of SRO

The SRO renders services such as registration of document, issue of encumbrance, issue of certified copy of documents, registration of marriage, chitty registration etc. Services most sought after by people were identified through discussions with officials of the Registration Department, these include registration of documents, issuing of encumbrance certificate and issue of certified copy of documents. To understand the magnitude of services from SROs, details of the services delivered during 2018-19 has been collected from five SROs. Table 3.2 provides the monthly average of the transactions in the sample SROs.

**Table 3.2: Average Number of Transactions in a Month in the Sample SROs**

Service	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Registration of documents- Total	320	182	512
Registration of sale deed	154	82	307
Registration of Settlement deed	60	19	143
Registration of other property related	62	4	44

## documents

Registration of Will and adoption	24	7	35
Registration of Power of attorney	20	26	125
Encumbrance	1259	726	2235
Certified Copy	287	84	507
Special Marriage Act	7	0	15

*Source: Primary data from sample SROs*

The most important function of SRO is registration of different types of documents numbering nineteen in total, mainly relating to sale, exchange, gift, settlement, partition, will, adoption, mortgage, lease, partnership, decrees, release of immovable property, adoption, cancellation of deed, deposit of title, indemnity bond, partnership, public trust, ratification, rectification, license agreement, and general and special power of attorney. On an average, 320 documents were registered in an SRO in one month in 2018-19<sup>13</sup>.

The average number of registrations in a month ranged from 182 to 512 in the sample SROs indicating the wide variation in the workload of the SROs in relation to registration of documents. Monthly variations are also observed with maximum registrations occurring in the month of March (12% of the annual transactions). Rural-urban differences in the number of registrations was also observed with more registrations in urban SROs. Nearly half of the registrations were registration of sale deed. The next major document registered is the settlement deed which constitutes nearly one-fifth of the registrations.

The issue of encumbrance certificate is another major service of the SRO. These certificates need to be produced for taking loan from a bank or financial/co-operative institution by pledging property. The certificate testifies that there are no earlier liabilities or encumbrances on the said property. The average number of encumbrance certificates issued in a month was 1259 in the sample SROs<sup>14</sup>, ranging from 726 to 2235. Number of encumbrance certificates issued from urban SROs are more compared to

13. An earlier study on service delivery in SROs found that on an average, 273 registrations were undertaken in an SRO in a month, the maximum being 495 (CSES, 2006).

14. There seems to be an increase in the practice of seeking encumbrance certificates. In an earlier study, the average number of encumbrance certificates issued by an SRO in a month was 442, with a maximum of 846 (CSES, 2006).

rural ones. Another service, for which people frequent SROs is to get certified copy of registered document. On an average, certified copies of 287 documents are issued from an SRO in a month. The number of certified copies issued in a month ranged from 84 to 507, with larger number issued from urban SROs<sup>15</sup>.

Apart from the above-mentioned services, the SRO also provides services such as registration of marriages under Special Marriage Act and registration of chitty. However, only a few marriages are registered in the sample SROs, with an average of 7 marriages per SRO per month. In one of the sample SROs, there was no marriage registration in 2018-19. Apart from marriage registration under Special Marriage Act, the Registration Department is also the authority to register marriages under the Cochin Christian Marriage Act which is applicable only in the area under erstwhile Kingdom of Cochin and under Indian Christian Marriage Act applicable in the area under erstwhile British rule (Malabar). The registration of marriages under these two Acts can be done only in SROs designated for the purpose. In the case of chitty registration, 60 percent of the chitties registered in the state are in Thrissur district. Another service which is frequently sought is the release of Gahan, which is required for availing loan from Co-operative societies/cooperative banks. However, the proceedings for this service with the SRO are initiated by the financial institution and not the people themselves. Apart from these, the SRO has to provide information sought by the people under the Right to Information (RTI) Act and attend to redress of public grievances in respect of services delivered.

Following the implementation of the Right to Services Act 2012 in the state, timelines for services provided by the SRO have been notified. With respect to grievances regarding services provided by the SRO, the District Registrar (General) is the first appellate authority and Zonal DIG is the final appellate authority. Table 3.3 presents the maximum time allocated for delivering the services rendered by SROs in the state.

**Table 3.3: Timelines for services of the SRO notified under the RTS Act 2012**

Service	Stipulated time for service delivery
Registration of documents	Return of documents within 3 days*

Encumbrance certificate (if details digitalized)	Next day
Encumbrance certificate (if details not digitalized)	7 days
Certified copy (Digital print & Print copy)	Within two days*
Certified copy (Manual system)	Within three days
Chitty registration	2 days
Chitty minute filing	30 minutes
Marriage Registration (under Special Marriage Act)	30 minutes for receipt of application Within 2 hours once the applicants arrive on the day of registration
Gahan/Gahan release	24 hours
Private attendance/ holiday registration	24 hours
Sale of filing sheet	Every day from 10.15 am to 10.45 am and from 3.30 pm to 4.30 pm for general public. From 4 pm to 5 pm for document writers
Attestation of Power of Attorney	Same day
List certificate (for period with computer data)	Next day
List certificate (for period without computer data)	7 days
Refund of registration fees/ revocation of power of attorney	1 hour

*\*Note: for registration and certified copy of digital document, it is mentioned that, if possible, it should be issued on the same day as it is applied.*

Computerisation of the Registration Department has been taken up as a major step towards e-governance in the State. A software titled PEARL<sup>16</sup> has

16. PEARL (Package for Effective Administration of Registration Laws) is a comprehensive user-friendly menu driven software designed for the Registration Department.



been developed. As of now, the entire service delivery process, i.e. from application to completion of service (receipt of EC) can be done online in the case of Encumbrance Certificate. In the case of services such as registration of documents, certified copy, chitty registration and marriage registration under Special Marriage Act, the application can be submitted online. However, people have to visit the SRO in person for registration of the document. In the case of registration under Indian Marriage Act and Cochin Christian Marriage Act, private registration and for getting filing sheet, no part of the service delivery process can be done online.

### **3.3. Issues in Service Delivery**

● The first step with respect to registration of documents is the preparation of the document to be registered. Earlier, this could be done only by licensed document writers or practicing advocates, as the language used in the documents is technical and different from what is used in common communication. To make the process more transparent and people-friendly, a set of model templates for all the 19 types of documents were prepared and is available on the department website. This can now be used by people to prepare the documents themselves. However, it is reported that very few people are preparing the documents on their own. Many reasons have been furnished for the same. Given that these documents are of high value (especially in the case of deeds of property), people are apprehensive about making mistakes while preparing the documents on their own. It is reported that banks often refuse to take the documents prepared by the people as authentic documents. It is also observed that even in the template provided, many of the details that are required are still technical in nature (such as Survey number, resurvey number, thandapernumber, boundaries of the property in four directions, etc.) which the person may not know or is not used in common parlance. As per the Registration Act 1908, documents related to property shall be accepted for registration only if the property is described in an identifiable manner, i.e. specifying the roads in the front, house number, existing and previous occupants, in reference to a government map or survey, etc. The writers also impress upon the people that the documents may not be registered if not prepared in a specific manner. Even in the case of documents where the template is simple; as in the case of adoption deed, people depend on a third party, pointing to a lack of awareness, which could also be due to



lack of promotion of such an option, by the department. In fact, the department website has not been updated and still says that the documents are to be prepared by the writers or advocates.

● Service procedure for registration of documents is now partly online. Once the document is prepared, the relevant details or “abstract” has to be entered into the online portal of the department. Following this, the person can choose a date and time for registration and a token is generated. Prescribed registration fees can be paid online or in person at the Government treasury, before registration. The person has to visit the SRO on the date and time given in the token for registration. Steps up to token generation can be done online, but the registration process is still manual. While the token system is beneficial to people as they have to visit the SRO only at the scheduled time than wait at the SRO for their turn, the online process for generating the token is not as people-centric as it should be. For generation of the token, the person has to enter information across fields such as presentation details, presenter details, document details, previous document details, executant details, claimant details, property details, claimant property link, enclosure, witness details and stamp paper details. This process can be extremely cumbersome and intimidating for a lay person. Therefore, the applicant usually depends on the document writer for facilitating this process, as well. It was observed in an earlier study, conducted prior to the introduction of online services, that people circumvent the complexities involved in the registration process by routing it through the document writer (CSES, 2006). There are also some issues related to the website of the department. For applying online for a service, the person will be directed to the online portal (<http://keralaregistration.gov.in/pearlpublic>), from the main department website (<http://keralaregistration.gov.in>). It is observed that the details and instructions regarding the services are spread out over many portals, rather than in one location. For example, while the registration fees and stamp duty are notified in both the websites, details regarding the writer’s and scribe’s fees is available only in the main department website. Fair value is published in another website (<http://igr.kerala.gov.in/>) to which the person is directed to from the main website. Thus, it is not possible for people to easily access information. In order to help people to fill in the applications online, the department is providing a manual on the online portal on how to fill the fields in the online application. However, not all instructions and guidelines are given in Malayalam.

● Once the online submission of details of the registration is done, a token number is issued. The token number is allotted through a centralized system, i.e. with a gap of 8 minutes between tokens, timed from 10.15 am to 3.45 pm. Parties to the registration have to present themselves with the documents to be registered at the time allotted, at the SRO. However, it is seen that the process of registration is a time consuming one. For registration, various documents have to be submitted. This include original document, filing sheet, previous documents (munnaadharam), encumbrance certificate, copies of ID proofs of the executant and claimant, receipt of fee remitted, token generated and Form 60 (declaration that the property is within the ceiling set under the Land Reforms Act). The Sub Registrar has to verify all the presented documents for any incomplete or incorrect details in comparison to the details submitted online. The entire document is then to be read out by an official, while another official verifies the prepared filing sheet accompanying the document. It is reported that there is acute staff shortage in the SROs. There will be only 2 clerks apart from the Sub Registrar, a Head clerk/Superintendent and an Office Assistant in an SRO. The registration process requires exclusive service of 2 staff, apart from the Sub Registrar. The staff of the SRO have to simultaneously deliver other services such as search and issue of encumbrance certificate, certified copy, etc. The processes can also be affected when officials are on leave. Due to this, it is mostly the person/document vendor who reads the document while the SRO official verifies the filing sheet. The entire process can take around 30 minutes, due to which the successive token will be taken up at a time later than the one allotted. It is often observed that there is more rush in the SRO in the afternoon due to the time taken for registering documents one after another, till then. It is also reported that delay of subsequent registrations also happens when people arrive late at the SRO.

● Another system that needs to be re-examined is that of copying the entire document, word by word, on to a filing sheet. It is amusing that while the original document which contains the photographs and signatures of the parties to the registration is given back to the person after registration it is the filing sheet, which does not have any such documentary evidence but is recorded only in words, i.e. it is recorded “photo is attached and signature/thumbprint entered”, in the place of the same in the original document, that is kept at the SRO as a copy. The writing is done only on the

particular paper, called 'filing sheet' sold by the SRO, which is another source of income to the department.

- A service guaranteed under the RTS Act is that the original document will be returned to a person within a maximum of three working days after the registration. The study team attempted to trace the time taken for return of documents, but it was not possible as the date when the document is returned is not recorded in a systematic manner, while the date of registration is available. It was reported that the process after registration referred to as endorsement is again a time-consuming process. Endorsement refers to the process by which details such as date, time and persons present when the document was presented for registration as well as the date when the document is ready to be given to a person is entered in the back of the original document and the filing sheet that is to be filed in the office, as these details are required for future retrieval for certified copies/encumbrance. Registration details also need to be entered in the respective book (Book 1,3 or 4 depending on the type of document) and the page number into which the entry is made is also entered in the endorsement. Though all this is envisaged to be done on the same day of registration by the Sub Registrar herself, it is reportedly not possible given the time allotted for a registration. It was reported that usually the Sub registrar does it in bulk. The SRO staff also reported that they try their level best to give it as soon as possible, but it could take between 7-10 days and people are asked to come to the SRO after this period. The fact that people are asked to come after 7 days, despite the same being a guaranteed service to be delivered within 3 days is a violation of the right of people. It was seen in an earlier study held before the introduction of the RTS Act, that people normally received the document after 5 days (CSES, 2006). This points to a scenario where there has not been any improvement in spite of the RTS Act and introduction of online processes in service delivery.

- Issue of encumbrance certificate is another major service of SRO. This service process is completely online. People can log in to the registration online portal, enter all the details required and remit the prescribed fees. The fees depend on the number of years for which the search has to be carried out. There is also an option to fast track delivery by paying a higher fee. Once the entire process is completed, an acknowledgment receipt can be printed out which specifies details of the applicant, the transaction ID (for future

reference), fee remitted and the date on which the certificate would be issued. When the certificate is ready, the person gets a message on the mobile number provided she can track the status on the site with the reference number. The encumbrance certificate is prepared with digital signature of the Sub Registrar and can be downloaded and printed by the person. As per the RTS Act, the encumbrance certificate is to be issued next day if the necessary details are already digitized. In other cases, it should be issued within seven days. It was reported that in most cases a minimum of three days is taken for the issue of an encumbrance certificate. Acknowledgement for the online application for encumbrance certificate states that the certificate will be issued within 14 days i.e. the RTS timeframe is not adhered to. As only part of the documents with the registration department is digitalized, it is not possible to complete the search process digitally. Manual retrieval is a cumbersome process due to poor indexing and maintenance of records.

- The issue of certified copy of documents also entail a search process. However, unlike for encumbrance certificate, for which people can apply online, people have to visit the SRO for getting certified copy. This is necessary as the service seeker is required to verify and confirm whether the retrieved document is the one she had applied for as there can be mistakes in the number of the prior documents (munnaadharam), and if they need a printed copy. Fee has to be remitted depending on the number of pages of the document. While application fee and search fee can be paid online, copying fee has to be paid in cash at the SRO. The person also needs to purchase stamp paper worth Rs. 50 for the front page of the certified copy.

- “Digitization of Land Registration Deeds” has been initiated as a major project by the State Government, and the responsibility of the same has been entrusted with C-DIT (Centre for Development of Imaging Technology). This move would improve service delivery as digitization of the deeds will facilitate better storage of documents and easy retrieval. In the first phase, the digitization of documents from 2005 onwards till 2019 is to be done. In the first year (2018-19), the project started in the SROs in Pathanamthitta District and its envisaged to be extended to seven districts in 2019-20<sup>17</sup>. The deputation of staff from C-DIT is done in a phased manner. C-DIT team finish work in one SRO and then move to another. Absence of sufficient resources for simultaneous initiation of the process across all SROs, is causing delay in the

coverage of all SROs. However, “abstracts” of documents of around 30 years have been computerized with the support of Keltron and Kudumbashree in all SROs, which is helpful for search for generation of encumbrance certificate and certified copies. Apart from this, since 2019, the filing sheets of documents are scanned and entered in the system, after registration, by the SRO officials themselves. It is also seen that some of the staff in the SROs are not technology savvy which makes the transition as well as expedition of service delivery difficult, despite initiation of digitization.

- A major lacuna in the SROs is the lack of proper storage space and proper system of storing documents. In an office like SRO, which primarily deals with documents, it is a sign of mismanagement that documents are either piled up or even bundled up due to insufficiency of storage space, or due to absence of a system for record maintenance. Improper record keeping further delay search processes, which is key to speedy delivery of encumbrance certificates and certified copies of documents. People also submit copies of documentary evidence such as declarations and ID proofs which need to be kept in the office for a limited period.

- Registration of a document is to be done on the same day given in the token issued. However, it is reported that many times registration work in the SRO is delayed due to issues such as poor network connectivity, power failure, non-availability of generator and inadequate UPS backup. This affects people adversely as they have to wait till the issue is resolved or may need to reschedule their registration to another day. This especially affects people coming from far off places and senior citizens. This also adds to the workload of the SRO as on the next day there will be registrations scheduled for that day. Issues such as nonfunctioning of computers and related accessories, difficulty faced in timely repair, shortage of funds for recurring expenses on stationery, toner refill, internet charges, etc. are also reported as factors hindering smooth delivery of services. It is also seen that the department website is inaccessible at times which could affect people looking for details about services, online filing of application, etc.

- Key to satisfactory service experience for people, apart from speedy service delivery, is the facilities that the office provides to them while waiting for their turn. Many SROs lack facilities for service seekers such as proper



waiting area, seating and writing facilities, fan, drinking water, etc. Non-availability of toilets is another major issue as people may have to wait for a long time in the office premises. A jarring observation across government offices in the state is that there is no seating arrangement for people in front of the official they are interacting with. They have no option but to stand throughout the interaction/service delivery proceedings, even in case of elderly and disabled.

- Components of the cost for services rendered by the SRO are registration fees, stamp duty, fee to the document writer and scribe, and search fees. The fees charged by the document writers is fixed by the Registration Department, depending on the value of the document to be registered, which ranges from Rs.400 for registrations where value specified in the document is below Rs. 7,500, to Rs. 7,500 for registrations where the value in the document is more than Rs. 8,00,000. A scribe fee can be charged for copying the document on to the filing sheet (A minimum of Rs. 30, with a rate of Rs. 20 per page). However, it is often observed that the amount taken by the document writer is much more than the prescribed rate. It is widely believed that a significant share of the money taken by the document writer is given to the officials of the SRO, for favours including reducing the value of the property or for expediting service delivery. However, the SRO officials refute this allegation and say that the document writer charges fees in excess of what is prescribed and blames it on the SRO officials. It is also reported that there is no scope for favoritism or prioritization now as the registration is as per the token generated. However, in an earlier study it was seen that speed money is given not only in the case of registration, but also to speed up the search process involved in the issue of encumbrance and certified copies (CSES, 2006).

- The services of the SRO are closely associated with that of Village Office under the Land Revenue department. Though the registration process transfers the ownership of the land in the name of the buyer, it is only when the same is changed in favour of the new owner in the 'ThandaperRegister' in the village office that the process is complete. This process is made seamless, but certain technical issues were pointed out in this process. While the Registration department uses "PEARL" software, the one used by the Revenue department is "RELIS". It is reported that the documents scanned on PEARL are sometimes not readable on RELIS, which is new software.

### 3.4. Recommendations

i. It is necessary that the performance of various offices on the service parameters notified under the RTS Act are published in the respective office as well as at the state level. This is possible only if there are proper reporting and monitoring mechanisms in place including proper recording of the date when the document is returned to the service seeker after registration, date when an encumbrance certificate is issued, integration of service delivery specifics available online (date of application) and offline (date of issue), etc. As of now only publishing of provisions of the RTS Act in the office is mandated. For services such as encumbrance certificate and certified copy, different timeframes are fixed for documents with and without digital copies. It is not clear whether people are aware of the period for which digital records are available in the SRO so that they can set their service delivery expectations according to the prescribed timeframe. A display of how the office delivers on these parameters, at least on a monthly basis, is essential to build accountability of the officials into the system. This would empower people with information that they otherwise may not have access to. Such a performance indicator is important to persons who are hesitant to appeal to higher authorities despite inefficient service delivery, if such inefficiency is observed to be a norm in the office.

ii. There needs to be a radical shift in the way documents are prepared for registration. The language used in document preparation as well as the method should be simplified and standardized, at the earliest. Instead of voluminous documents written in lengthy sentences and complicated language, the mandatory details for registration related to the executants, claimant and the plot/property/transaction could be recorded in a tabular format. The department could review and decide on the essential information required to be presented. Necessary amendments to the Registration Act need to be made as it is archaic, for which the state shall put due pressure on the Central administration. Technological advancements allow better identification of property by use of geo co-ordinates than by describing physical borders, roads, numbers, etc. which may alter with time. A model that could be studied in detail and emulated in the state, with required local adaptations and modifications is the Bhudhaar scheme of land registration in Andhra Pradesh. Under this scheme, every plot of land is assigned a unique



identification number/ Bhudhaar (in line with the Aadhaar number for person identification). The Bhudhaarc card gives all technical details related to the land and is geo-tagged so that no manual defining of boundaries is required. The card also has a QR code that can be scanned to retrieve all data related to previous transactions and liabilities for encumbrance. By linking this to the Aadhaar of the people, it will also be possible to know the extent of land owned by a person. As per the website of the programme ([www.bhuseva.ap.gov.in](http://www.bhuseva.ap.gov.in)), nearly three-fourths (72%) of the implementation of the programme has been achieved in the state.

iii. Process for online submission of registration details shall be simplified and made people friendly. Once the document writing itself is simplified, details required for online application will also be reduced. Rather than expecting people to enter information in all the fields, entry for certain fields shall be automated. For example, the entry of the book number shall be system generated depending on the type of document to be registered. Similarly, filling the same details across multiple fields shall be avoided. For example, when the presenter details are filled once in the first tab, the entry shall be auto filled across all similar fields in the successive entry tabs. All the fields and tabs for entry shall have option to fill in Malayalam and a manual of instructions about every step of the process shall be prepared in Malayalam for use of the service seekers. In Punalur SRO, steps to be followed for various services of the SRO is clearly displayed. The explanatory display of service processes at the SRO is beneficial in improving service delivery to the people, and shall be replicated /adapted in SROs across the state.

iv. Different websites of the department shall be integrated and all required details shall be available to people at one place, in easily accessible format. Regular updating of all changes, including on process shall be included in the website. The websites shall be dynamic forums. Changes are now reflected only in the application portal, while the main website is more or less static, as mentioned earlier.

v. Even after increased adoption of e-governance and online delivery of services, option for offline application shall continue till efforts of Government to empower all people to access services online is successful. To ensure effectiveness of offline facility, service systems such as application

forms, personnel and system to receive, acknowledge and process the applications, etc. shall be clearly defined and in place.

vi. A work study to assess the time and human resources required for registration of various kinds of documents, along with the other services of the SRO shall be undertaken immediately. It is noted earlier that the number of transactions in SROs vary widely depending on the geographical area covered by the SRO. The Commission recommends that restructuring of the department shall be done on the basis of work load as well as assessment of time taken for delivery of various services, to ensure delivery of service to the satisfaction of the people. The time between generation of tokens needs to be changed from the present 8 minutes to ensure that the registration process is undertaken in a smooth manner and people coming for subsequent registrations do not have to wait for long at the SRO. If a person fails to reach the SRO on time, there shall be mandatory rescheduling of the registration to the end of the day or to another date chosen by the person.

vii. The system of use of filing sheet during registration shall be replaced by scanning the original document and storing soft copy. This shall be done at the time of registration itself. If hard copies are mandated, photostat copies shall be kept. People should be able to print them as certified copy of the document with digital signature of the Sub Registrar. This will ensure that there will be no errors while copying and will prevent tampering of original documents. It is also an authentic copy of the original. Once these records are stored digitally, search fee component of the fees for certified copy can be reduced or eliminated as “search” service shall not be required and people can download the document from the digital repository on their own.

viii. Template for endorsement shall be prepared and printed on the document to ensure that only required details need to be filled and the sub registrar’s signature is entered on it. This will enable endorsement to be done along with presentation of the document, as required by the Registration Act. Entry in to books at the SRO shall also be done simultaneously. This shall replace the current system of bulk entry of endorsements into the SRO books. Adoption of the procedure may require increase in the time for each token, as recommended earlier. The document can be given back to the service seeker on the same day, thus eliminating the need to come again to the SRO to collect

the document. In case the process is not over on the same day a system enabling persons to track the status of endorsement of their document and to inform them when the documents are ready to be collected shall be implemented. It shall also be ensured that the service is provided within the timeframe prescribed under RTS Act.

ix. Search and retrieval of records can be expedited and done in an efficient manner only if there is proper classification and record keeping. The department shall develop a classification system like the one used in libraries. It is seen that Thrikkakkara SRO uses a system of compacter or collapsible shelves which facilitates easier navigation between rows and shelves and also easier retrieval of files, and is regarded as a model. There shall also be a radical shift towards paperless administration, and all supportive documents such as declarations and ID proofs shall be accepted in digital format. The digitalization process now undertaken is only for the period from 2005 onwards. For years prior to this, it is to be done later in a phased manner. Till the digitization is fully completed, manual record keeping shall follow this system so that transfer of records to the digital system will be easier. Old documents (especially those of historic value) are vulnerable to be destroyed and shall be stored in a scientific manner. For this, district level or zonal level archival record rooms needs to be established with the support of the archeology department.

x. Measures to expedite the digitization process needs to be taken. Specific phased timelines shall be fixed and necessary systems shall be put in place to ensure that targets are met. As of now, the first page of a document registered in 2019 can be seen by the people by searching online. However, payment of fees for the document is not possible as the subsequent pages are not accessible. As stated earlier, if the documents are scanned and stored as soft copies, the same could be printed out by the people themselves. This would also facilitate online payment of a prescribed fee, during the time of application.

xi. Officials shall be provided regular training to meet challenges of the new system and shall be equipped with skills required for efficient delivery of services to the satisfaction of the people. There needs to be a paradigm shift in the assessment of skills of the officials. Testing of the handwriting of an official

in the Registration department was of paramount importance in the earlier years. The current scenario requires mandating of skills in use of computers and applications and its testing.

xii. Currently digital signature of the Sub Registrar is applicable only for encumbrance certificate. If the same is applicable for certified copies as well, people can take copy when they require. Facilities for online payment such as e-pos machines shall be made available at the SROs or payment interface needs to be evolved.

xiii. As in the case of e-stamp for stamp duty of higher denominations, e-stamp for lower denominations shall be implemented as getting lower denomination stamp paper is a hindrance and affects people centered service delivery.

xiv. Technical issues such as poor network connectivity, power failure, non-availability of generator and inadequate UPS backup needs to be resolved at the earliest. High speed internet connectivity as well as adequate power backup shall be ensured across offices. All computers and peripherals shall be covered by Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC), and it shall be ensured that timely servicing and repairs are undertaken.

xv. Permanent advance available with sub registrars needs to be increased from the current Rs.25 to a reasonably sufficient amount (assessed by the department depending on the requirements of the office) so that the offices do not run out of stationery and other required articles for services to be delivered by them. Now they are often dependent on the document writers to meet these requirements to ensure prompt delivery of service to the public.

xvi. It shall be mandated that the prescribed fees are displayed in all SROs as well as in the document writers' offices. System for grievance redress shall also be displayed in the offices, if fees in excess of what is prescribed has been charged and for other grievances related to availing of services.

xvii. Monitoring of the document writers' transactions needs to be undertaken and measures such as revocation of license shall be implemented if they are found guilty of overcharging. Fee for document writing shall be revised periodically. If the timelines set under the RTS Act are strictly followed and appellate action taken in case of complaints, people shall not

have to grease the palms of officials to speed up the services of encumbrance and certified copies.

xviii. Fair price is fixed jointly by the Revenue and the Registration departments. It is seen that though the fair price is notified in the website of the registration department (<http://igr.kerala.gov.in/>), it is also stated that the department does not take responsibility or liability for any incorrectness of the data provided. This statement is against principles of service delivery and accountability of officials to the system. It is only when responsibility is fixed on concerned officials (from the revenue or the registration department) to undertake registration after verifying that the transaction is as per the fair value that transparency in the process can be ensured.

xix. A common IT protocol shall be developed for the departments dealing with land, namely Registration, Revenue and Survey departments, in which usage of same software and seamless service shall be mandated. A software most suited for the needs of these departments and for proper integration of land ownership rights shall be adopted. Integration of all departments involved in land transactions is the key to the successful implementation of Bhudhaar in Andhra Pradesh. If Kerala is to move towards an advanced system of land tenure administration, similar integration needs to be initiated. A feeble attempt at integration of services was made on a pilot basis by the introduction of the Torrens system in selected villages in Kottayam and Angamaly SRO limits, wherein presentation of the survey map prepared by a surveyor, along with the registration deed was made mandatory for any land transaction. However, this was not scaled up.

xx. Government shall ensure that across offices, facilities such as waiting area, seating facilities, drinking water, toilets, etc. are provided. These are areas wherein CSR partnerships can be sought at the local level. The design of the office shall include provision for a seat for service seeker in front of the officials that they interact with. This will also help in reducing the divide often experienced between the people and the officials. Protocol for ensuring priority in service delivery to the senior citizens, disabled and to pregnant women and women with babies shall be put in place.

xxi. **Conclusive Titling through Integrated Functioning:** This chapter along with the preceding one on services from the Departments of Revenue,

Survey & Land Records discussed issues that people face from disputes arising out of discrepancies in land records issued from the various departments. Ownership of land is established mainly through registered sale deed which is a record of property transaction between the buyer and seller. It is only a record of transfer of property and the onus of checking past ownership records is on the buyer as the presumptive nature of land ownership based on sale deeds is subject to challenge. Record of Rights (document with details of property), property tax receipts and survey document; the other documents relating to land ownership are given by the Revenue and Survey & Land Records department. But these do not provide a government guaranteed title to the property and disputes often arise relating to ownership as well as discrepancies in the extent of land as mentioned across various documents.

These disputes take up a considerable amount of resources and time of people, government and the courts. A World Bank study of 2007 (“India- Land, Policies for growth and Poverty reduction” Agriculture and Rural development Sector Unit, India Country Management Unit, South Asia Region, World Bank)) estimates that land- related disputes account for two-thirds of all pending court cases in India, while a NITI Aayog paper (Strengthening Arbitration and its Enforcement in India-Resolve in India-Niti Aayog) suggests that land disputes on average take about 20 years to be resolved. Poor and unclear land records have wide – reaching impact across sectors. The committee on Financial Sector Reforms (FSRC) in 2009 (constituted by Planning Commission in 2007) recommended moving from presumptive to a conclusive titling system and recommended rules to allocate the liability for any loss or damage caused by an error in the administration of the registration and record search system.

Adoption of conclusive titling system requires clear and updated land records, consolidation of information on land records currently spread across multiple departments, changes in laws governing registration, transfer of land and institutional changes in maintenance of land records. It also requires joined up and seamless functioning of Revenue department (including the department of Survey) and the Registration department.

Land Records are poorly maintained and regular updating does not



happen. The records consist of various types of information, property maps and sale deeds, maintained by different departments working in silos. Government of India has implemented the National Land Records Modernisation programme (NLRMP) (now known as Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme). The programme aims to computerize completely the property registration process, digitalize all land records and move towards conclusive titling based on Torrens system to address issues connected to land records.

In the Torrens system of land registration and land transfer, state creates and maintains a register of land holdings, which serves as a conclusive evidence of the title of the person recorded in the register as owner and of all other interests. Easements and creation and discharge of mortgages, are also recorded in the register. Ownership of land is transferred by registration of transfer of title instead of by registration of deeds. The Registrar provides a certificate of title to the new owner which is a copy of the related entry in the register. Any change to be made in the boundaries of the registered title requires a revised plan to be prepared and changes made in the Register of Titles, accordingly. The system enables enhancing certainty of title to the land and simplify dealings related to/involving land thereby ensuring transfer of title / registry with speed, accuracy and possibly at reduced rates. In Torrens system government provides guaranteed titles and compensation for ownership disputes.

Adoption of the system is easier said than done as can be seen from Kerala's attempt at introduction of a limited version of the system way back in 1996 in villages in the area of 2 SROs in the state. Creation of a land holdings register requires that land parcels are identified, boundaries and ownership established. Maps of individual land parcels and their location within an area's land grid, both correlated accurately with the prevailing ground conditions, is to be prepared for establishing boundaries. Establishment of ownership requires undisputed, litigation-free ownership rights. Both the records have to be publicly notified before it takes effect. Hence the difficulty of a time-bound mission mode project to build land holdings register has to be acknowledged/accepted. A more realistic approach will be mandating, after sufficient ground work, of new registrations only with a digitalised map of the parcel of land to be registered. Its location and ownership shall be established



by the competent authority. The registration shall be notified publicly and appeals disposed and then the transaction entered in the register. A time bar also can be fixed for claimants to raise their interest in a property. Existing land owners need to be given the option of proactively getting their lands included in the register through this process. The land parcels where protracted legal disputes may arise shall continue in the present system.

A beginning can be made in the villages where resurvey and digitisation of land records is completed. To expedite resurvey and digitisation of land records, government needs to adopt technology-based solutions already in use, for expeditious completion of survey and settlement of boundaries and finalisation of land records, including block chain technology, satellite-based surveys and the reportedly more accurate drone surveys.

Conclusive titling leading to reduced litigation, improved efficiency in government functioning and a milestone in ensuring people centred service delivery, requires, as said earlier, joined up functioning of Land Revenue and Survey departments and the Registration Department under common supervisory control. ARC recommends that Government shall study the matter, set a timeframe for implementation of merger/joined up functioning of these departments without delay. In land related matters, government needs to evolve a concrete time frame for completing the activities undertaken currently under various schemes. Ushering in a system of litigation free land titling and land transfer will be a giant leap in ensuring people centred service delivery.

## CHAPTER IV

### FOOD & CIVIL SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT

#### 4.1. Introduction

Ensuring food security to people is the primary responsibility of Governments. To carry out this responsibility, Public Distribution System (PDS) and control of market prices by marketing of essential commodities through government agencies was introduced. This chapter examines service delivery by the Food and Civil Supplies Department, the department in charge of the administration of PDS in the state and its effectiveness and people centredness.

#### 4.2. About the Department and Administration of PDS in the State

Kerala is a pioneer in universal rationing following implementation of the PDS in 1965. With a wide network of ration shops, the state achieved Government of India norm of at least one ration shop for 2,000 population, and ensured that card holders do not have to travel more than 2 Kilometres to reach a ration shop. However, PDS in the state faced criticism on grounds of poor demand due to poor quality of ration items on one hand, and corruption, hoarding and black marketing by ration shop owners, on the other. The entire PDS underwent a major overhaul with the implementation of the National Food Security Act 2013 (NFSA) in the state in 2016.

Enactment of the NFSA envisages a paradigm shift in PDS, from welfare-based to a rights-based public distribution system. NFSA is an “Act to provide for food and nutritional security ..., by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people ...” The Act envisages the governments to progressively undertake necessary reforms in the system, which include doorstep delivery of food grains to the outlets, application of information and communication technology tools (ICT) including end-to-end computerisation to ensure transparent recording of transactions at all levels to prevent diversion, leveraging "Aadhaar" for unique identification, biometric information of entitled beneficiaries for proper targeting of benefits, transparency of records, preference to public institutions or public bodies such as Panchayats, self-help groups, co-operatives, in licensing of fair price shops and management of fair price shops by women or their collectives, diversification of commodities distributed under the PDS over time, support

to local public distribution models and grains banks, introducing schemes such as cash transfer, food coupons, etc. to the targeted beneficiaries to ensure their food grain entitlements.

It is in the context of the reforms brought forth in the PDS machinery on account of NFSA implementation since 2016 as well as the RTS Act in the state in 2012, that the delivery of the services by the Civil Supplies Department is discussed. Two service points where people interact with the PDS machinery are at the processing and issue of ration cards and the supply of ration articles, i.e. the Taluk Supply Offices and the Ration Shops, respectively.

Under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in the state, essential commodities (Rice, Wheat, Sugar and Kerosene) are allocated to the people at two prices, a highly subsidised price for the poor and the other without subsidy, but at prices lower than the market price. PDS items allotted by the Central Government are lifted from authorised godowns and distributed to people through ration shops, based on the ration card entitlements of the households. Major functions of the Civil Supplies department which impact people in the implementation of PDS, are issue of ration cards and the supply of rationed articles through the ration shops. Both these functions are undertaken by the lowest tier of the four-tier administration of the department; i.e. the Taluk Supply Office.

Commissioner of Civil Supplies is in charge of the department and Director of Civil Supplies is the Chief Executive of the department. Controller of Rationing and Controller of Rationing (Enforcement) with State wide jurisdiction look after matters of rationing. Four Deputy Controllers of Rationing with zonal jurisdictions function as supervisory officials carrying out inspection of subordinate offices and conduct of enquiries on complaints against dealers and members of staff. District Supply Officer is the head of the Civil Supplies administration in each district. Under the District Supply Officer, there are Taluk Supply Officers, attached to Taluk Supply Offices (TSO). City corporations of Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Kozhikode are divided into two zones each and a City Rationing Office (CRO) is in charge of each zone. There are 63 TSOs and six CROs in the state. These are the grass-root level offices of the department, where the people come for services related to rationing, i.e. processing of ration cards.

As per the website of the department, there are around 86 lakh ration

cards and 14239 ration shops in the state. As shown in Table 4.1, a TSO on an average is handling around 1.2 lakh ration cards. There is an average of around 600 ration cards per ration shop and around 200 ration shops in a TSO's jurisdiction.

**Table 4.1: Average Number of Ration Cards and Ration Shops per TSO**

Particulars	Number
Average number of ration cards per TSO	125270
Average number of ration shops per TSO	206
Average number of ration cards issued per ration shop	607

Before implementation of NFSA, ration cards were classified as Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards and Above Poverty Line (APL) cards. The BPL category included beneficiaries of schemes for the poorest of the poor and the elderly destitute, i.e. the AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana Scheme) Cards and ANP (Annapurna Scheme) cards. The process of renewal of existing ration cards in the state coincided with implementation of statutory provisions of the NFSA. Under NFSA, categorization of ration cards was altered to AAY, Priority, Non- Priority Subsidy and Non-Priority Non-Subsidy households. Each category is distinguished by the colour of the card viz. yellow, pink, blue and white, respectively, with category specific entitlements. Month-wise entitlement of the articles can change, which is intimated to the people. As can be seen from Table 4.2, AAY and priority categories together constitute 43 percent of the total cards. Another 32 percent is eligible for state subsidy.

**Table 4.2: Category-wise Percentage of Card Holders and PDS Entitlements**

Type of card	% in total cards#	Entitlements under PDS*	All houses
AAY (Yellow)	7.1	Rice (30 kg/ card) & Wheat (5kg/card) – free Sugar: Rs 21/ kg (1 kg/card) **	without electricity will be allotted 4 litres of kerosene and those with electricity, 1 litre,
Priority (Pink)	36.0	Rice: Rs 2/kg (4 kg/person) Wheat: Rs 2/kg (1kg/person)	respectively, at Rs.35 per litre
Non- Priority Subsidy (Blue)	32.1	Rice: Rs 4/kg (2kg/ person) Atta: Rs 17 /kg (2-3kg/ person) ***	
Non- Priority Non-Subsidy (White)	24.7	Rice: Rs 10.90/kg (6 kg/ card) Atta: Rs 17/kg (2-3 kg/ card) ***	

Note: #Source: Economic Review 2018, State Planning Board, Government of Kerala.

\*Goods, Quantity and Price as on June 2019

\*\*Sugar is supplied to non-AAY categories as well during festival seasons.

\*\*\* depending on availability 2 to 3 Kgs will be allotted.

Certain service parameters are laid down with respect to 14 services, relating to issuance of ration card and associated services, provided by the TSO, under the RTS Act. If the delivery of these services is not done within the prescribed time, people can appeal to higher authorities. District Supply Officer is the first appellate authority and Deputy Controller of Rationing the second appellate authority.

The Act states that a ration card shall be issued by the TSO on the same day of application. Seven-day timeframe is fixed for issue of ration card for people without permanent residence number. Duplicate ration card can be issued only within 15 days from date of application. This card is required when the original document is lost or damaged due to natural calamities or other reasons. The TSO can issue a temporary ration card when people cannot be given a permanent ration card due to difficulties in timely delivery, and when the stay of a person is temporary (not more than one week) in the Taluk. Apart from these, the TSO shall also deliver other services such as addition/deletion of members in a ration card, corrections such as alteration in names, income, address, electricity, etc. on the same day that the people apply for the service.

People require certificates from the TSO to initiate processing of a new card. These include surrender certificate, which certifies that the ration card issued from one TSO has been withdrawn as the family has shifted from the taluk, and reduction certificate, which certifies that the name of a person included in a ration card has been deleted as she has shifted from the taluk. These certificates are to be issued on the same day, as per the Act. –Certain other certificates, i.e. non-inclusion and renewal certificates are no longer required as the changes are automated due to Aadhar seeding.

With respect to the services of the department, online delivery of services has been implemented to a great extent. People can register and log on to e-people portal (<http://epeople.civilsupplieskerala.gov.in/>) and avail services, or avail services through Akshaya centres. In order to understand the quantum of work of the TSOs, the study team collected data from five TSOs. On an average, a TSO receives nearly 3000 applications a month for various services (See Table 4.3). Maximum number of applications received were for the addition of new members to a card, constituting around one-fourth of the total number of applications received. It is followed by applications for new

ration cards, transfer of members from one taluk to another, name correction, reduction of members, etc. Wide variations can also be seen in the quantum of application received across TSOs for various services. Apart from these services enlisted, few applications across TSOs were for services like providing LPG details, surrendering ration cards, etc.

**Table 4.3: Monthly Average of Applications Received in a TSO**

Service	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Applications received in total	2963	2264	3443
New ration card	510	376	600
Addition of members	851	617	982
Reduction of member	234	158	329
Change of ownership	70	61	91
Name correction	249	137	323
Address Change	95	68	137
General details	125	90	165
Transfer of members	350	280	439
Profession change	240	176	345
Other services*	239	-	-

*Note: \*Other services include issue of duplicate cards, providing LPG details, surrender of cards, etc. The minimum and maximum applications vary from service to service and from TSO to TSO, hence not reported.*

### 4.3. Issues in Service Delivery from TSOs

People can apply online for a new ration card or any other service delivered by the Civil Supplies Department. They can access the services by logging in directly or through an Akshaya centre, to the website of the department. After entering the required details online, application form has to be printed and signed by the person and a scanned copy of the signed application is uploaded for final submission.



After online submission of application at Akshaya, depending on the urgency, persons visit the TSO on a later day with a copy of the application and submits the same again in person. It seems that in such cases, processing of the application is done only when a person visits the TSO with the printed copy. It is seen that many people have to wait at the TSO for an entire day for receiving the card. The system of delivering services only when people come to the office even when processing is done online, is against the principles of people entered service delivery. Availability of a service centre like Akshaya and facility for availing services through the centre is regarded as a move towards improving service delivery. But the ground level reality is that by making the application process online, entering of application details into the system which used to be done by the officials earlier, is now delegated to Akshaya centre, while there is no improvement in the actual delivery of service.

- Following implementation of NFSA, ration cards are issued in the name of the eldest female member in the household, as head of the household. In most cases, women, many even with small children, are seen waiting at the TSO for a whole day.
- In some offices, a day is fixed for receiving applications and another day for delivering the services. In one of the TSOs visited, the applications are received on Wednesday and service delivered on Friday and Saturday.
- As per the RTS Act, all services of TSO (except temporary and duplicate cards) are to be delivered on the same day. What is observed is that though people apply online, in most cases it is only when they bring the application in person to the TSO that it is processed and service delivered on the same day. If evaluation of the service against the RTS parameters is done according to this it will be highly misleading as the date when a person gives the application online, i.e. when the process is initiated by the person, is not taken into account at the TSO and hence the system does not capture the delay in service delivery. At the same time, in the present system of online application, it may be unfair on the officials for people to expect the service to be delivered on the same day.
- It is found that issue of a ration card takes around 5 or more days, though it is a same-day service. The officials themselves reported that it takes at least a week, if not more, for issuing a ration card. Many reasons are furnished for the same.



- Implementation of NFSA provisions coincided with ration card renewal in the state, which led to an unprecedented workload in the TSOs. Enough preparation was not done at the state-level for the smooth transition from the earlier system to the new one. The receipt of applications for new ration cards was also kept on hold during this process, and was re-started only in June 2018. There was thus a flurry of applications which resulted in huge backlog and delay. The occurrence of floods in the state also affected the service delivery process.
- It is also reported that present staff strength of the department is not sufficient for timely delivery of services, especially in TSOs with larger jurisdiction as the staff pattern across TSOs is the same, irrespective of the area and population covered by a TSO.
- Another issue is the errors in ration cards. The major error/grievance raised by people is that following the transition to the NFSA and the classification of households from APL-BPL to Non-Priority, Priority and Subsidy households, many households who were earlier in BPL are no longer in the Priority category. This affects their eligibility for benefits under various social security schemes. Many people visit the TSO for re-categorisation into priority category. In some cases, people may need to get their ration card changed to priority list urgently (for applying for medical treatment of chronic diseases or to get other government benefits).
- In a TSO visited, there were 3517 applications in three months to change the status from non-priority to priority. The team also interacted with a person who was waiting for two months after applying to change her ration card status to priority. She and her husband are chronically ill and needs to change the status for getting free/subsidised medical assistance for them. Her name has been enlisted for re-categorization, but can be done only when a person in the priority quota is removed, as the allocation is done centrally.
- Delays, reportedly, mostly are in the case of applications where detailed inspection as well as physical verification of the applicant is required, which is the duty of the Rationing Inspector (RI). Field inspections are often postponed due to other duties of RI such as supervising the movement of ration articles from the godowns to the ration shops and inspections at the ration shops.
- NFSA implementation coincided with the renewal of ration cards in the

state. Following this, renewed cards as well as new ones are issued in the name of the senior female member in the household, as the head of the household. However, several errors have been reported for rectification of which people are seen to frequent the TSO. Great value is attached to the ration card not only for availing of PDS, but as a basic identification document for services from other government offices, e.g. village office, LSGI offices, etc. People reported minor errors such as spelling errors, relationship wrongly mentioned, etc. as well as major errors like deletion of an eligible person from the card.

- The main reason why people need to come to the TSO to receive any service related with the ration card, is that the ration card currently uses is a 22-page booklet with details of the members given in the front followed by the provision to enter PDS supply details every month when people collect ration. It is also reported that the TSO cannot use digital signature, as done by other offices like the village office, due to which people have to imperatively visit the TSO. It is reported that there is a proposal to change the ration card format to an e-ration card which can be printed from the Akshaya centre.
- A major shortcoming observed by the study team as well as the people the team interacted with is that there is no clarity on the part of the officials about which official should people meet for different services. Neither is any information displayed in this regard nor is any information provided by the officials resulting in the people running from one person to another. A proper enquiry/information counter/desk is not available in the TSOs, which handles more than 100 applications a day. Even in offices where such a provision is seen, either the seat is vacant or proper support is not provided to the people.
- Only less than five percent of the applications are applied online, directly by the people. Remaining applications are routed through Akshaya centres. It is also reported that many times people discard the online application process midway without completing the process. As mentioned earlier, scanned copy of the signed application form needs to be uploaded for the application process to be completed, this is not done by the applicants. When mistakes are seen in applications sent from Akshaya centre, the TSO officials inform the concerned Akshaya centre and ask them to rectify the error and resubmit the application. However, the team also interacted with people who were informed of errors in the application only when they visited the TSO and not through the Akshaya centre, thus requiring them to repeat the entire process.

- It is seen that real time updating of information with respect to each TSO and ration shop, is available on the department website, as mandated by NFSA. However, the same transparency and accountability with respect to RTS is not seen. All the TSOs visited had mandatory display of information regarding time frames set for delivery of services under RTS Act in the notice board, but there is no data with respect to performance on these indicators.
- Very few people make use of the grievance redress mechanisms available at the TSO or approach the appellate authorities. It was reported that complaint registers are kept at the TSO and sometimes complaints over phone are also received, which relate mostly to ration shops. However, no record of the same was seen in the offices.
- Infrastructure of TSOs are not people friendly. The visited offices were congested and facilities for people such as waiting area, seating and writing facilities, etc. were inadequate. It is also observed that TSOs often function within a government office complex such as the mini civil station. Offices delivering services directly to the people and function on upper level floors of the building makes access difficult for disabled and elderly persons.

#### **4.4. Issues in Service Delivery from Ration Shops**

Following NFSA implementation, major reforms have been initiated in the ration shops across the state. First, the data of all ration card holders was digitised in a format that can be accessed and modified at the TSO level. Secondly, Ration Card Management System (RCMS) was put in place that manages allocation of different goods to ration shops. In the third phase, computerisation of ration shops was undertaken and a biometric interface using Aadhaar card as a means of user recognition, was introduced. E-POS machines were also installed in the ration shops. Under this Aadhaar enabled PDS, when a ration card holder visits the shop, the ration shop owner enters the ration card number in the E-POS machine which will display allotments due to the card. Authentication of the person is then done by scanning her fingerprint using the biometric scan and entitled ration is allotted. The system has brought in major changes as sales are updated real time enabling tracking of the entire purchase process, thus putting a cap on leakages. However, certain issues were also pointed out by the people.

- A major issue related to computerisation of PDS is the denial of ration articles due to network problems in the ration shops. The E-POS machines would not work if there is no network connection. People are then asked by

the ration shop owners to come back later. One of the persons the team interacted with said that she usually hires an autorickshaw and comes to collect the ration. But, due to lack of network connection, she was asked to go back and come during the evening hours and try her 'luck'. Due to this, she is losing her time and money. Sometimes, 'issuing of the articles is done manually and updated on E-POS when the network is restored. This can lead to leakages.

- Another problem highlighted is failure of finger scan of card holders. It is reported that the scan is not successful in the case of people whose fingerprints have altered over time, as in the case of those involved in manual labour, senior people, genetic reasons or also temporarily when the hands are sweaty or injured. Once the scan is unsuccessful even after multiple attempts, consumers are denied ration. Alternatively, an OTP is sent to the registered number which needs to be entered at the ration shop or the Aadhaar number could be entered to get the details. However, the ration shops are reluctant to use facility since those transactions would come under manual listing. This would be then questioned by the officials on inspection. It is also reported that sometimes finger scanning needs to be done multiple times to be successful, due to which customers have to wait for long. Due to these issues, some people opined that the earlier system was more convenient.
- Once ration allotment is displayed and a person is issued the ration articles, bill is generated by the E-POS machine and she can make payment in cash. However, it was reported that in some ration shops, it is only when people ask for bill that the ration shop owners give the same to them. In such circumstance, what can happen is that while the entire ration due to the card would be displayed in the machine and billed into the system by the shop owner, it is possible that the quantity actually issued to the person would be lesser.
- According to people with whom the team interacted, there is marked improvement in the perception about the quality of service delivery from the ration shops. They are positive about availability of sufficient stock in the shops as well as the quality of the rationed articles.
- People are also positive about the reforms undertaken, especially the messaging system by which they are informed when stocks arrive and also about their quota for the month. The notification received when ration is

issued gives a sense of security that their ration is not misused. However, sometimes they do not receive the message, which as per the officials, is due to server issues.

- Introduction of PDS portability has also given people the flexibility to buy ration from any ration shop by verification on the biometric scan system. This helps people in getting ration even if the ration shop to which the household card is attached is out of stock or if they are not happy with the behaviour of ration shop owner. Such flexibility may also make the ration shop owners strive to improve service delivery experience for the people.
- There is a move towards standardising exteriors of all ration shops. While all the ration shops have now been painted uniformly (red and yellow), maintenance and upkeep of the shops differs from shop to shop. While some shops have a bright exterior and lighted interior which look very neat and welcoming, there are also shops which are shoddily maintained and poorly lit.
- It is also envisaged that the ration shops display quantity of stocks of all ration articles available in the shop, the price and quota allotted for different categories of households. People are also to be provided a sample of the ration articles to check the quality. However, these directives are not followed by all the shops.
- RIs are expected to visit the ration shops in their jurisdiction at least once in a month. RI has to report whether the ration shop has displayed the number of the ration shop, name of the owner, timing of the shop, quantity of stock available and distributed, civil supplies helpline number, sample of ration article, etc. However, it is reported that inspection of the ration shops is increasingly becoming a difficult job, given the limited number of RIs. An RI is assigned all the ration shops in a Firka, and the number of ration shops varies from Firka to Firka. For e.g. in the TSOs visited, the average number of ration shops per Firka was 44, ranging from 38 to 49. In an earlier study, it was seen that an RI on average is not able to visit around one-fourth of the ration shops under their jurisdiction, in a month (CSES, 2006).
- Intent of the monitoring and inspection is not only to ensure effective delivery of ration items but also to keep a check on erring ration shop licensees. It is reported that there are instances where the ration shop owners indulge in hoarding and black marketing, and when caught they are

penalised with a fine of Rs.3500 and the cost of the items for which the shortage was noticed in the stocks.

- Under NFSA, implementation of the doorstep delivery of rationed articles has been entrusted to Supplyco. Food grains are lifted from FCI godowns and matta rice and sugar from mills and taken to NFSA godowns managed by Supplyco. The RIs have to monitor the movement of goods to ensure that there is no leakage or malpractice. But it is reported that with the current strength of RIs it is difficult to ensure constant monitoring.
- There are around 200 NFSA godowns managed by Supplyco in the state. Unlike FCI godowns which have specifications with regard to space, distance between piles, days of fumigation, air and light circulation, humidity control, etc. the NFSA godowns are functioning in rented premises without any specifications. Even private houses are taken on rent, depending on availability and cost. This would affect quality of the ration items stored there. It was also mentioned that Supplyco is not willing to take up responsibility of quality of the food grains as that responsibility is vested with the Civil Supplies Department.

#### **4.5. Recommendations**

- i. The present system of issuing card by filing of online application, printing and uploading of scanned copy and submission of printed copy to TSO is cumbersome and not people centric. Government needs to make the service people friendly.
- ii. When a person submits an application online, the system shall generate the date and time for collection of the ration card. A system needs to be put in place by which people can opt a date convenient for them to visit the TSO to collect the ration card, as is done in the case of generation of token for registration in the registration department.
- iii. The number of people who use online application platform for ration cards is limited as the procedure of downloading application forms and uploading it again after putting signature is cumbersome. The procedure of authenticating by signature may be dispensed with by using Aadhar details.
- iv. Feasibility of sending the card by post, as in the case of Aadhaar, shall be examined avoiding the need for people to visit the TSO, unless their presence is required for verification.



- v. Till implementation of this recommendation the system of informing people through a message when the card is ready to be collected from the TSO shall be followed consistently. All issues affecting the smooth functioning of the messaging service shall be resolved to ensure that the applicant is informed when the card is ready and does not have to make repeated visits to the TSO to enquire. It will also reduce crowding in the TSO.
- vi. The ration shops are now expected to be involved in processing of services, as in Aadhaar seeding. Increased utilisation of the ration shop network shall be done to bring the administrative machinery closer to the people, than asking people to come to the offices. Ration shops can serve as information hubs; facilitate processing of applications, serve as delivery points of ration cards, etc. The feasibility of such an option shall be examined.
- vii. Proper evaluation of service delivery as per RTS parameters is possible only when the time taken is assessed from the date when a person applies online. When a person submits application online, it shall also be registered in the system at the TSO and monitoring of the performance on RTS parameters shall be done accordingly.
- viii. RTS timelines shall be redefined accordingly (as next day), otherwise people have to unnecessarily travel between the Akshaya centre and the TSO. Officials also need to be given sufficient time for processing the application.
- ix. A work study shall be conducted to assess the responsibilities and workload of different categories of officials in the TSO. The number of ration shops and ration card holders in the TSOs shall be a criterion for fixing staff strength. Necessary rationalisation, proportionate to such factors, may be made in the staff pattern to ensure prompt delivery of services.
- x. It is seen that most people who visit the TSO for services, especially for re-categorisation, belong to the socio—economically vulnerable population and daily wage labourers. Visits to an office for availing services often results in loss of wages, which shall be avoided at all cost. While scrutinizing the applications, if further verification is required this could be done by the RI through site inspection. Urgent cases need to be given priority through objective criteria and transparent process, and the removal of non-deserving people from the priority list shall be expedited to ensure that deserving people do not miss their benefits. A specific timeframe shall be fixed for the process and conveyed to the people.



xi. Even in cases where physical verification is required, people shall be informed of the date (at the earliest) they should visit the TSO and the process shall be completed on the same day. Repeated visits as well as asking people to wait at the TSO for entire day needs to be eliminated.

xii. The errors that appear in the cards points to lack of diligence from the staff in the preparation of the cards. Workload may have contributed to the mistakes, but that cannot be a reason for deficiency in services to the people. The department shall prepare a manual of commonly reported errors as well as a self-appraisal protocol for the officials to ensure that all applications undergo all necessary checks and no errors occur.

xiii. It is reported that the contract of C-Dit officials deputed to the TSOs to help with the printing of the ration cards and provide assistance to the people has expired. Government shall assess the situation and continue their service if assistance of third-party service providers is essential for implementation of the services to the satisfaction of the people.

xiv. While the move towards an e-ration card is welcome, it needs to be mentioned that it is not only to get a ration card that people have to visit the TSO but also to rectify errors in it. Quality of the e-ration card, in terms of elimination of errors needs to be ensured.

xv. Speedy implementation of new services without causing hardships/inconvenience to the people needs to be ensured. Details of all the ration card holders are available with the department. Department shall issue e-card to the people without them having to apply again for it. People shall be intimated about status of delivery of the card and a system for delivery by post of the e-card, as in the case of Aadhaar, shall be implemented.

xvi. Option shall be given to the people to verify correctness of details on the card before the e-card is issued.

xvii. There shall be proper delegation of job responsibilities. Name and designation of officials who interact with people for acceptance of application, issue of cards, rectification, etc. shall be prominently displayed and the people shall be assisted to meet the concerned official for availing the service.

xviii. A proper guideline/standard operating procedure needs to be developed concerning procedures to be followed for availing services and for addressing recurrent queries. The same shall be adhered to. There shall also be a functioning front office/information desk.

xix. It is only when people are empowered to avail services on their own from an office, or from a third party authorised to provide the service as in the case of passport services, can service delivery be deemed as completely people centric. Though the civil supplies department has successfully implemented e-governance processes with respect to the rationing system, the same cannot be said about ration card services. The support provided by the department to the people on application process through the website, is poor. There shall be Standard Operating Procedures and a manual for availing all services and people shall have access to it. It shall be in English and Malayalam with illustrative description of different steps in the application process. There shall also be an option to check whether the application is complete and ready for processing.

xx. Given that mobile phone numbers are furnished in the online applications, people shall be intimated about errors and directed to rectify defects and resubmit the application. As all details of a household with ration card is available in the office a system of rectification of the defects by the officials themselves shall be considered.

xxi. Access of people to data shall not be limited to quantity, i.e. the number of applications received and issued, number of cards, number of ration shops, quantity of ration supplied, but they shall have access to data on quality of service delivery as well. Display of time taken for service delivery on applications across services needs to be mandatorily displayed in the offices and consolidated information shall be available at the state level

xxii. There shall be proper record of the complaints received and the follow-up taken, along with the time taken for action on/disposal of the grievance. The information shall be accessible to people motivating them to follow up on negative service delivery experience. Officials shall use this system of feedback from the public for improving transparency, accountability and service delivery.

xxiii. All offices shall provide seating facilities, waiting room, toilet, drinking water, etc to the public. But the ultimate aim of all innovations and improvements leading to a people centered service delivery shall be delivery processes that eliminate or at least limit the necessity of service seekers visiting the offices. This will also reduce work pressure on the officials and lead to better-quality service delivery.

xxiv. It is to be ensured that service delivery is not affected due to network issues. It is reported by officials that network issues are observed more often in remote areas with poor internet connectivity. It is likely that households in these areas (hilly areas) already face access issues viz. distance to the ration shop maybe more than in other areas. In such areas it shall be ensured that people do not have to make repeated visits to get ration articles for the reasons of electricity failure and poor quality of network. A best practice reported was the linking of the E-POS in a shop in a remote area (Ayyampuzha Plantation) with earth-net provided by BSNL following the intervention of the concerned TSO.

xxv. With real time updating of ration intake, it is easy for the department to assess the pattern of people behaviour in buying rations, i.e. the phase when most people buy their rations and increases the load on the server. Required technical support shall be provided centrally to handle overloads and address network issues

xxvi. Alternate measure to biometric scan such as iris scan shall be implemented in all ration shops. Currently, it is done on a pilot basis in few shops.

xxvii. Ration shops shall be instructed to issue ration under manual listing, with provision in the system to confirm that the full quantity is allotted to the people. People shall also be notified when the system is updated.

xxviii. Linking of E-POS machine with weighing scales shall be expedited to prevent leakages.

xxix. People need to be made aware of the steps that are to be followed to avail their entitlements from ration shops to ensure proper service delivery. Awareness campaigns shall be organised through audio-visual displays, social media, hoardings and through radio, a medium that has regained its popularity, and also create awareness about available forums for grievance redress. This information shall also be displayed in the ration shops.

xxx. There shall be standardisation in maintenance of shops, display of prices and quantity, provision of samples, etc. across all ration shops to assure uniformity in the quality of service delivery.

xxxi. Ration shops could also provide facilities for people such as card payment and special incentives could be given to ration shops that are seen to be adopting people-friendly practices.

xxxii. Role of ration shops is crucial in ensuring people centered service delivery. Government has taken steps to address and find solutions to issues faced by authorised ration dealers. Government needs to establish a functional grievance redress system for timely redress of their grievances.

xxxiii. The current penalty system is quite ineffective in checking malpractices as the errant shop owners can start operating as soon as they pay the fine. Suspension of license for a certain period of time could be enforced, but it is not resorted to as it affects delivery of services to the people. The current penalty may be made heftier and the Department may explore the possibility of entrusting responsibility of running the suspended shop to cooperative societies during the period of suspension.

xxxiv. The state government shall specify and notify quality standards for NFSA godowns, hired by Supplyco. Only buildings which conform to standards set by FCI, except for specifications on space, may be used as NFSA godowns. The godowns shall also be monitored centrally through CCTVs at the TSO ensuring monitoring of quality of ration articles which is the responsibility of the Civil Supplies Department. NFSA envisages tracking of trucks using GIS, which shall also be implemented across the state at the earliest. Building more NFSA godowns by District panchayats and Block Panchayats may also be considered by the Coordination Committee on Decentralized Planning.

xxxv. Under NFSA, doorstep delivery refers to the supply of ration articles from the godowns to the ration shop, as against the earlier system of the ration shop owner collecting the items from the wholesale distributors. However, in people-oriented service delivery, doorstep delivery shall be the system through which the ration articles are supplied to the doorstep of the people, at least, to begin with, to senior citizens and persons with disabilities. This can be done through mobile ration shops with E-POS machines. Presently, the supply of the ration articles to people who are unable to come to the ration shop is done through a proxy system. This system is implemented in some tribal areas, where access is an issue. It is also seen that functioning of the ration shops in some tribal areas has been altered, i.e. Sundays are functional days for ration shops in some tribal areas as it is on Sundays that tribal people come out of the forest in to the town area. Depending on the demand of the people, flexibility in service delivery shall be adopted.

xxxvi. With respect to guarantee of services under the RTS Act, it is seen that only those services of the TSO with respect to issue and updating of ration cards has been notified. The ration card is only a document which guarantees access to entitlements under PDS. What the people shall be given is a guarantee of timely delivery of good quality items, ration shops never being out of stock, ration never being denied due to network issues, etc. It is only when such guarantees are given, that the right to services becomes comprehensive.

xxxvii. Commodities available through the PDS are limited. NFSA speaks of ensuring minimum nutritional requirements. This can be attained only if people have access to a food basket containing food grains and other items used by local population and provides nutrition, other than the normally supplied food grains. Diversification of commodities supplied through PDS is a reform suggested in the NFSA and Government shall take steps to implement the suggestion in letter and spirit.

xxxviii. There are other Government agencies striving to provide commodities, including food grains, at minimum prices to people, namely Consumer fed and Supplyco. But the number of outlets of these agencies is no match for the network and reach of PDS. It is hence high time that the government decides on evolving synergy between ration shops and other government agencies enabling supply of other essential commodities through PDS along with the ration items currently provided.

## CHAPTER V

### POLICE DEPARTMENT

#### 5.1. Introduction

Kerala Police Department is entrusted with maintenance of law and order in the State, which encompasses safeguarding life and property of the people and providing them security, by prevention of crimes. General Executive branch i.e. police personnel functioning from the local police station, is entrusted with this responsibility leading to the local police playing a significant role in the day-to-day lives of the people. The present study assesses how people-centric service delivery of the police department is. Focus of the study is on interaction of people with the police for availing service either at the police station or through channels of virtual service delivery. There have also been various community-based initiatives of the police intended to improve relationship with the public. These are also discussed.

#### 5.2. Kerala Police and Service Delivery

Kerala Police is under the control of the Home Department, Government of Kerala. The hierarchy in the police department, in descending order, is as follows:

- Director General of Police & State Police Chief.
- Director General of Police
- Additional Director General of Police
- Inspector General of Police
- Deputy Inspector General of Police
- Superintendent of Police
- Deputy Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent of Police
- Inspector of Police
- Sub-Inspector of Police
- Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police
- Senior Civil Police Officer/Police Head Constable
- Civil Police Officer/Police Constable

The State Police is headquartered at Thiruvananthapuram. For

administration purposes the state is divided in 2 zones; North (headquartered in Kozhikode) and South (headquartered in Thiruvananthapuram) and each zone is headed by an ADGP. Each zone is divided into two ranges, and a range is headed by a DIG. There are five Police Commissionerates and 14 Police districts (See Table 5.1). Commissionerate is usually headed by City Police Commissioner in the rank of DIG/IG while the District Police Chief who heads the district police unit is of the rank of SP. Divisional Office is headed by Assistant Commissioner in the city limits, and DySP in the rural limits.

**Table 5.1: Police Zones, Ranges and Districts**

Zone	Range	Police District/ Commissionerate
South	Thiruvananthapuram	Thiruvananthapuram City
		Thiruvananthapuram Rural
		Kollam City
		Kollam Rural
	Ernakulam	Pathanamthitta
		Alappuzha
		Idukki
		Kottayam
		Kochi City
		Ernakulam Rural
	Thrissur	Thrissur City
		Thrissur Rural
		Palakkad
		Malappuram
	Kozhikode	Kozhikode City
		Kozhikode Rural
		Wayanad
		Kannur
		Kasaragod

A Police Station, also referred to as “Station House” is the next subordinate office and is the basic unit of the department which registers



crimes and does investigation. As per the information provided by the department, there are 527 Police Stations in the state, which include 15 Traffic Police Stations, 13 Railway Police Stations, 16 Coastal Police Stations, 10 Women Police Stations, one CBCID Police Station and one Cyber Crime Police Station. Entire police strength in the state is around 50,000. Police to population ratio in the state is 1:625, and is envisaged to be brought down to 1:500.

Being the basic unit of the department, people who require assistance/service from the police, usually contact the local police station. Functioning of the police station or the Station House is supervised by the Station House Officer (SHO), who is an Inspector/Sub-Inspector of Police<sup>18</sup>. The SHO will be assisted by Senior Civil Police Officers and Civil Police Officers.

Police personnel in a station carry out wide range of functions. These include registration and investigation of crime, attending to and enquiring about complaints from people, recording of all proceedings of a day in the daily diary and maintaining records at the station. The police personnel also have to carry out many duties outside the station which include verification of persons and premises, escort and security for VIPs, escort of arrested persons and under trials, serving of summons and warrants, ensuring presence of witness, production of properties connected to cases at the court, attend to traffic emergencies and evacuate injured, etc. Intelligence as well as law and order functions entrusted with them include regular monitoring of identified anti-social elements in the area, collecting information about crime, conducting beats, maintaining check posts at strategic points, liaison with the community, maintaining law and order during public gatherings such as religious/political events, etc. Police are also entrusted with the removal of unclaimed dead bodies, removal of encroachment, escort of destitutes to care homes, settle labour and wage disputes among employee and labourers, etc.

As can be seen, the scope of the functions of the police has a wide canvas. In the discharge of their functions, they are governed by various Acts and guidelines, namely the Kerala Police Act 2011, the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1973, the Kerala Police Manual 1960, the Citizens Charter of the department and the Right to Services Act 2012. Apart from these, executive

orders and guidelines are also issued from time to time. The right of the people to obtain efficient services from a police station is encapsulated in the KP Act 2011 (Sections 7 and 8). Citizen Charter enlists rights of the people while seeking police services. This study is limited to services delivered by the police when people approach them for a service or services that directly affect people.

Interactions with police officials at the state level as well as visits to few police stations across the state were conducted to understand the services or needs for which people approach the police. People reportedly come to the police station mainly to file complaints and petitions. People also seek the assistance of the police as mediator in disputes over property, family feuds, etc. where they do not want registration of a case but mediation and settlement by the police. People also seek services that are mandated. e.g. passport verification, character certification for employment purposes, permission for conducting public events etc. The department has notified 14 specific services provided by the police under the Right to Services Act. Timelines have been fixed for delivery of these services and first and second appellate authorities designated, for the people to appeal in case the service is not provided as guaranteed. The present study examines the delivery of the services from the police station, and six of the 14 notified services is to be provided by the SHO (See Table No.5.2). For most of these services, DySP/AC is the first appellate authority and the District Police Chief the second appellate authority.

**Table 5.2: Services of the Police Station/Station House Office Notified under Right to Service Act, 2012**

SINo.	Service/ Activity	Stipulated time Limit
1	Petition Enquiry	15 days from the date of receipt of application
2	Issuing receipt for receiving petition	Same day
3	Copy of FIR	Same day
4	Post Mortem Certificate	3 days from the date of receipt of PMC from the Medical authority
5	Releasing of vehicles taken into custody after completing formalities	3 days
6	Service of Summons and execution of warrants	Before the posting date of the case

Apart from these services, for other services notified under RTS like mike sanction, procession sanction, police clearance certificate, job verification, NOC for Arms & Explosive license and Foreigner's registration, are to be provided by the District Police Chief, Special Branch Office, etc. For these services also people may route applications through the local police station and collect approval/sanction from the local police station. The local police personnel may also be directed by the higher offices to conduct enquiry required for issuing these sanctions and certifications. In the case of passport verification instructions are sent directly to the police personnel in charge of the duty and necessary procedures carried out.

As per the report provided by the department, in 2017 around 24 lakh applications were received for the services notified under the RTS Act across 17 of the 19 police districts. The number of applications ranged from 6377 in Wayanad to around 3.5 lakh in Ernakulam rural. It is also reported that of the petitions received, four in five petitions have been disposed of at the end of the year, but with wide inter-district disparity in disposal, the lowest disposal recorded in Malappuram (54%). However, it is seen that data on the number of petitions disposed after the time limit is only partially available, viz. only in some districts (See Table No 5.3). Thus, it is not possible to comment on how far the department has been able to deliver its services as mandated by the RTS Act.

**Table 5.3: Applications received for Services notified under RTS Across Police Districts -Received and Disposed in 2017**

Police District	No. of petitions received	Percent of petitions disposed within the year	Percent of petitions disposed after the time limit
Thiruvananthapuram City	55861	91.8	NA
Thiruvananthapuram Rural	200368	96.3	NA
Kollam City	16309	95.8	1.6
Kollam Rural	95870	95.3	3.0
Pathanamthitta	113449	59.7	1.8
Alappuzha	NA	NA	NA
Idukki	90185	91.9	NA
Kottayam	287170	87.0	NA

Kochi City	91246	94.6	NA
Ernakulam Rural	352391	86.5	0.7
Thrissur City	106512	95.4	0.6
Thrissur Rural	NA	NA	NA
Palakkad	183123	98.8	1.2
Malappuram	293166	54.2	0.2
Kozhikode City	162507	83.2	NA
Kozhikode Rural	164172	80.7	NA
Wayanad	6377	94.7	NA
Kannur	91174	67.1	7.9
Kasaragod	88336	62.5	NA
Total	2398216	82.3	NA

*Source: Report submitted to ARC by the Police Department*

As per the data available, offices in a police district handled on an average 11,755 petitions related to services notified under RTS, in a month. As stated earlier, local police stations deliver services designated to them and are involved in the processing of services delivered by higher offices. Given that the number of police stations in the state is 527, on an average 375 applications were received in a month, per police station. However, it is only when the break-up of applications is examined across services, that an understanding can be gained about service delivery, especially of the local police stations. As the same is not available at the state level, the scenario is discussed with the help of a case of a police station visited (See Box 5.1).

#### **Box 5.1: An Illustration of Receipt and Disposal of Applications for Services Notified under RTS**

In order to understand disposal of services notified under RTS, the number of applications pertaining to March 2019 across services was collected from Thodupuzha station. The services notified to be provided from the station are mostly a deliverable related to a service delivery sequence. So, the actual incidence, viz. number of petitions, number of FIRs, number of post mortems, number of vehicles taken into custody and the number of summons and warrants were enquired.

<b>Incidence of events requiring RTS notified services in March 2019</b>	<b>Number</b>
Petitions	213
FIR prepared	162
Post mortem certificates prepared	60
Vehicles taken under custody	83
Summons	298
Warrants	195

With regard to petitions, the 2 services notified under RTS are issue of receipts and conduct of enquiry within 15 days. It was reported that receipts are issued, however there was no register for the same. In the case of petition enquiry, the date of disposal was not recorded in the register. However, it is seen that 13 petitions from the previous month were pending during the month under study. Of the total 226 petitions under consideration in the month, 183 petitions (81%) were disposed. It was reported that the non-disposed petitions are mainly those reporting loss of mobile/documents, etc. Intention of the petitioner is to receive an acknowledgment receipt that states that the person has lost a particular property, as proof of loss to be produced elsewhere. In such cases, the people themselves do not pursue the complaint. However, there may also petitions on which action is to be taken and were not disposed within the timelines prescribed. Apart from these, 52 petitions were received from higher offices, of which 51 were reported to be disposed within a week. In the case of FIR, though it was reported that a copy is given then itself, it is seen that copy was given only in 63 cases, i.e. in less than two in five cases. It was reported that the copy is given only if requested by people. Postmortem certificates are issued, but timeframe in which it was issued was not available. The execution of summons and warrants is a mandatory process as it is followed by court proceedings. As said earlier, among the services notified under RTS, there are services in which the work involved in the delivery of the service is delegated to the personnel at the local police station though the designated officer is a higher level official. The police station handled 24 applications for mike sanction, 74 applications for police clearance certification, 6 applications for NOC for arms & explosive license and 236 passport enquires. For all these services the maximum number of days within which the service was provided, was reportedly three days i.e. within the prescribed time limit.

As can be understood, in the case of services such as mike sanction and sanction for holding processions, there is a service “deliverable” that is expected to be delivered within a specific date for which sanction is requested. It can also be observed that rather than services, it is an activity in the service delivery process that has been notified under the Act. For example, giving receipt is an activity associated with petition registration, a function of the police. Similarly, provision of a copy of FIR is an activity to be done when crimes are registered and FIR filed, another function of the police. In the case of petition enquiry, people shall need timely and effective enquiry. Thus, the demand for the services guaranteed under the Act will depend on whether the people perceive it as a service to be delivered/ received and are aware that it is a right to be demanded.

In Kerala, many initiatives are introduced recently to make the services more people friendly, introduction of a PRO system in the police stations, introduction of online portal Thuna, community policing initiatives such as Janamaithri police and Student Police Cadets etc. Based on interactions with police officials as well as chronicles of people’s experiences presented through selected case studies, the next section discusses issues in the delivery of services sought by people and suggestions to address these issues. The discussion traces the entire journey of the people through the service delivery process in order to assess how people centric the process is and also discusses the effectiveness of initiatives towards making the services of the police people friendly.

### **5.3. Issues in Service Delivery**

#### **The PRO System**

- As discussed above, people visit police station for various services. The first point of contact in the police station is of relevance in making a person feel comfortable about reporting their issues, applying for a service etc. Introduction of front desk and the Public Relations Officer (PRO) is a major step taken by the department towards making the services people friendly. Every station has a designated PRO who is responsible for receiving people when they come. PRO is expected to be seated at a conspicuous place and be available in the station from 8 AM to 8 PM and provide all required information and support to the people when they visit the station. The PRO is



not to be entrusted any other duty, except in utmost emergencies. However, the PRO system is observed to be ineffective in almost all the nine stations visited as part of the study. A proper PRO system with a cabin indicating “May I help you” was seen only in one station. In another, though indication of who the PRO is and a designated seating for the PRO was provided, the PRO was not present during the visit. In another station, the PRO had to be sent out to manage a traffic emergency as all the other personnel were on other duties. In another station, the PRO was transferred a couple of months ago, and currently the General Duty (GD) of the day was handling the PRO duty as well. It was also reported that the PRO received training only once when selected and there has not been any refresher training to update them about new initiatives or to receive their feedback about the system and their training requirements.

### **Complaint, Petitions and FIR Registration**

- A main service for which people visit the police station is to report an incident or give a complaint. As per the Status of Policing in India Report 2018, at the national level, major incidents regarding which the people contacted the police was property related disputes (15%), physical assault (14%), family disputes (11%), loss of essential goods and documents (9%) and domestic violence (8%). The people also approached the police for petty disputes such as parking issues. It was also reported that sometimes in cases such as disputes between spouses and other petty disputes, people do not want a complaint to be registered but want the police to mediate and settle the dispute.
- There can be incidents such as loss of valuables that are reported by people and also cases where a person (petitioner) gives a complaint against another party (counter petitioner). If a complaint is given in the station against a party, the counter-petitioner has to be informed about it by the police officials. An enquiry will have to be conducted by the police officials and a meeting of both the parties have to be arranged for settling the issue. The date of the meeting will be intimated to both the parties and the meeting will be in the presence of the SHO or an officer in charge of the case/complaint. But sometimes, it is seen that either the police do not register the petition or embark on the mediation process without registering the petition, which



makes people apprehensive of the efficacy of the system (See Box 5.2). The confusion with regard to conducting a preliminary enquiry is also associated to registering the First Information Report (FIR) on the reported complaint.

- When people report a complaint, the FIR is to be registered, depending on the gravity of the offence viz. whether there is a cognizable offence or not. As per Section 154 of the Cr.P.C, when information regarding commission of a cognizable offence is disclosed, registration of FIR is mandatory. If the information does not disclose such a cognizable offence, a preliminary inquiry is to be conducted and then FIR is registered, if the investigation discloses the commission of a cognizable offence. According to Cr.P.C 1973, of the 445 listed offences, 292 are cognizable, 131 non-cognizable and the remaining 22 can be treated as cognizable or non-cognizable depending on the circumstances. The confusion with regard to filing of petition and FIR mainly pertains to the kind of offences that are reported against viz. whether they are of a cognizable or non-cognizable nature. Following the *Lalita Kumari vs. Government of Uttar Pradesh* case in 2013, the Supreme Court laid down clearly the category of cases in which preliminary inquiry may be made: a. Matrimonial disputes/family disputes. b. Commercial offences c. Medical negligence cases d. Corruption cases, and e. Cases where there is abnormal delay in initiating criminal prosecution. For every other complaint, FIR is to be registered without any preliminary enquiry.

- Studies show that there is a conscious non-registration of petition and FIR by police, latter, by reducing the gravity of the cases into non-cognizable offence. This is done either under external influence or to reduce the reported crime rates and their case load; the latter phenomenon referred to as “burking”. It has been estimated that if all the petitions that qualify to be registered as FIRs are registered, the quantum of FIRs would be at least double that of the present situation.

### **Box 5.2: Procedure or Burking?**

Thomas had gone with his family to an amusement park. He fell out from a ride while the ride was operational. He had slight injuries and was upset that the park management was not providing any kind of assistance. So, he decided to file a complaint against negligent operation of the park. In his complaint he had stated that the park management had tried to blame him for

the accident and when the accident occurred, immediate attention was not given by the management. The person who had gone to the nearby police station to register a complaint was first directed to go to another police station saying that the park was not in its jurisdiction. Though he had registered the petition, he was not given a receipt. In the enquiry call made by a police official a week later, he was informed that it might be because the SHO was not in the station when he had come that his receipt was not issued. His petition has been entered in the direct petition register, due to which follow up is being done, but the registration of FIR will take place only after the version of the counter petitioner is also heard and the receipt can be collected by the petitioner only then. The follow up meeting was called after a week of giving the complaint. He was also informed that cases are not taken up usually in the afternoon as the SHO would be doing his rounds. In the *Lalita Kumari vs. Uttar Pradesh* judgment, it has been mandated that preliminary enquiry should be carried out only for cases related to matrimonial disputes, financial offences, medical negligence, corruption or delay in criminal prosecution and the period of enquiry should not exceed 7 days, though this is not the scenario observed. It is also seen that in case of any delay in proceeding about the petitions submitted, effort is not always made by the station to intimate the petitioner unless she enquires about the status of the petition.

- As can be gauged from the discussion above, aggrieved people visiting the police station may largely be classified into three: (a) people who do not want to register a complaint but want the police to mediate between disputing parties and not engage in any further legal process, (b) people who want to register a complaint against another party and want the police to take necessary action, and (c) people who are victims of a cognizable offence and want their complaint to be registered and the legal process followed-up with the preparation of an FIR and then the involvement of the judiciary. It goes without saying that a people-centric service delivery mechanism shall be equipped to address all these needs.
- The officials were of the opinion that receiving petitions does not strictly come under their purview. The ambiguity is even echoed in the citizens charter. "... , petition enquiry is not the job of the police particularly when it relates to matter that do not have a reasonable bearing upon the occurrence or the likelihood of the occurrence of a cognizable offence or a law and

order/public order problem..., it falls within the realm of social service.” It is felt that people should not see this as an alternate to a judicial remedy and should get grievances redressed through the prescribed channels and departments. It is also felt that efforts the department takes in maintaining harmony in the society is not reflected in any statistics, as mediation of disputes is a service which takes up considerable time, but is not accounted for.

- As per the Status of Policing in India Report 2018, reporting of crimes is higher in Kerala compared to the national scenario. It is also observed that the share of grievous crimes in the total crimes registered is lower in Kerala. This means, in Kerala all kinds of crimes, irrespective of its gravity, gets reported, which may be because of higher literacy and better awareness among people and also because the police are relatively more approachable. Interestingly, while at the national level about three-fifth of the police officials are of opinion that despite seriousness of the complaint, preliminary investigation is to be done before registering FIR, percentage of police officials in the state who felt so is lower (34 %), indicating a better attitude towards reporting of crimes. But it is also seen that people are not guaranteed that their petition would be registered.

### **Receipt for Petition and copy of FIR**

- Acknowledgment receipt is proof for registration of a petition. Similarly, copy of the FIR is proof of filing of a case. As discussed above, two rights guaranteed by the RTS Act regarding services of complaint registration are (i) petitioner is to be given a printed receipt on submission of petition to the police station, and (ii) a copy of the FIR to be given on day the case is registered. However, in the interaction with people and from the petitions received by the Commission, it can be inferred that in many cases receipt is not given to the petitioners as a proof of registration of the complaint (See Box 5.3). The officials with whom the study team interacted reported that though receipts may not be given promptly in all cases, entry of the complaint is made in the register as well as in the General Diary and it is followed up by them. But it is only when the petitioner gets a receipt that she can follow up her petition.

### **Box 5.3: Is the Right really Guaranteed to People under RTS?**

In a petition sent to the Commission, a person reported that he had filed a petition in the police station and the enquiry was not conducted within the time limit (15 days) set under the RTS Act. He filed an appeal before the first appellate authority, the Circle Inspector, but no satisfactory action was taken. He then appealed to the Second Appellate Authority, the DySP. The appeal again met with the same fate. As the person is an RTI activist, he was aware of the various services guaranteed under the RTS Act and observed that though an acknowledgment receipt is to be given for every complaint filed, the same is not being done. A complaint against this practice was also raised with the First and Second Appellate Authorities, sans action. In such circumstances, people feel disheartened with the relevance of an Act which though meant to guarantee rights of the people, does not do that. People also opine that in order to ensure that the rights are guaranteed, a highest appeal authority i.e. RTS Commission needs to be formed in the state, on the lines of the RTI Commission.

- As per the Status of Policing in India Report 2018, only three in five (59%) of those who registered a FIR, received a copy of the same.
- In the case of FIR, it was reported that a copy is given only if the petitioner asks for it. Shortage of stationery is a reason pointed for the same. It is also reported that sometimes people are asked to buy stationary if they require any written/printed documents from the police station.
- Proper procedures are laid down in Cr.P.C regarding preparation of FIR. It provides for a written or oral statement by the petitioner, reading out the prepared FIR to the petitioner before getting her signature on it, entry of details of the complaint in the daily diary and its sealing etc. It needs to be added that in most cases people are not aware of their rights and the procedures to be followed. Only persons who are aware of their rights ask for compliance with the procedures. Conventional forms of information dissemination of citizen charter, RTS, online services, etc. are display of posters related to them and to display the information on notice board of the police station. But this mode of dissemination of information is not very effective and is not adhered to rigorously. Majority of the police stations visited by the study team have not displayed the information. Another major

source of information could be the state police website. However, the petitioners may not have been tech savvy or at times, even in a frame of mind to access information online.

### Technology-enabled service delivery

- In order to reduce visits of the people to police stations to file complaints and to apply for other services such as mike permission, police clearance, etc., an online portal 'Thuna' was launched in the state in May 2018<sup>19</sup>. Acknowledgment receipts are automatically generated for registration done through the portal. However, the project received limited public response, especially in the case of filing petitions<sup>20</sup>.
- To improve acceptance of the programme, a circular was issued by the Police Chief in November 2018, directing that applications for all services including receipt of petitions from the public should be allowed only through the portal. It was also directed that even when people come to the police station, registration of complaints should be done via Thuna by making them aware of the facility and making an entry in the Thuna portal from the station itself<sup>21</sup>. However, in practice this is not being done as seen from the visit to a police station (See box 5.4). Various reasons have been furnished for the poor compliance in transition to online service delivery.

#### Box 5.4: Status of Online Portal Usage

In a station visited as part of the study it was seen that in 2018 there were 469 direct petitions and 81 petitions from higher officials. It is reported that only 3 petitions were filed online in the jurisdiction of the station since introduction of the online system. At the same time 27 applications for mike sanction were registered through the portal. One petition was received through the CMO website. There was only one petition against police within the last two years. It is also reported that all petitions are received directly and though there are registers for women, SC/ST, etc. petitions are received in a general manner. However, petitions by SC/ST are immediately filed as FIR registered.

In another police station, it is reported that in the past year since the launch of Thuna, only 4 complaints have been received through the portal, 2 relating to cybercrime and 2 were registered by people outside the jurisdiction of the particular station. It was also enquired as to how many petitions that were

19. *The New Indian Express*. Kerala Police lend a helping hand. 9th May 2018. Thiruvananthapuram

20. The poor usage of online alternatives was reported at the national level in Status of Policing in India Report 2018 as well as none of the people initiated the contact with the police via internet/online. Around seven in ten of the people (69%) had visited the police station, while 14 percent had contacted the police over the phone and the remaining were visited by the police.

21. KP Saikiran. Police trying to give Thuna a helping hand. *The Times of India*. November 2018. Thiruvananthapuram.

received directly in the station were registered in the iAPS, so as to facilitate status search. It was seen that of the 213 petitions received, only 12 i.e. about 5 percent only has been entered into iAPS. It was reported that only cases of grievous nature are entered into the system and also that written complaints are likely to be registered as against oral ones as in the latter, even the concerned persons do not want the case to be pursued. They need only an informal intervention by the police. When a summary of petitions entered in iAPS was accessed, it was seen that there is a delay in forwarding/redirection of cases between stations, i.e. to the cyber police station, or from the SDPO, etc.

- It is acknowledged that better publicity needs to be given about the portal among the people as well as police personnel. Though instructions were given to mandatorily display a poster about Thuna in all the police stations, it was seen only in two of nine stations visited. These stations are relatively better equipped and have higher level offices functioning from the same premises, e.g., the Dy. SP office. It seems that executive orders are better implemented in bigger stations.
- Availability of computers and internet connectivity is reported as a major hindrance for the police personnel to provide computer-aided services. In the police stations visited, it was observed that some of the computers and associated accessories such as printers were out of order and could not be used due to issues in installing the systems and lack of an Annual Maintenance Contracts. As per the Status of Policing in India Report, only two-thirds of the police officials in the state reported that they had access uninterrupted access to computers (See Table 5.4). A lesser proportion reported regular availability of the all-India police network system, Crime and Criminal Tracking & Networking System (CCTNS). This affects regular updating of the processes undertaken.

**Table 5.4: Availability of Technological Infrastructure**

Indicator	Percent of respondents	
	Kerala	India
Functional computer is available always	66	68
Functional CCNTS is available always	55	55
Forensic technology is available always	38	27
Technology/experts to investigate cybercrimes is available always	37	67

*Source: Status of Policing in India Report 2019*



- Apart from the lack of proper infrastructure in the station and poor awareness among the people, other reasons were also pointed out by the officials for the poor response. The number of police personnel who are technology savvy and can handle the portal operations are limited. Officials who can handle it are often allotted other duties due to which access to online processing of applications at the station cannot be consistently assured to the people.
- It was also reported that high tech crimes are on an increase in the state. Enquiry into such crimes require advanced technological support system. Advanced facilities and expertise with regard to forensic and cyber technology is seen to be lacking (See Table 5.4).
- It was also opined that people prefer to describe the incident in detail to the official and this can be done only when they come to the station and not through the portal. People waiting to see the SHO in person and hand over the petition was seen in some of the stations visited. It was seen that people wait for an entire day as the SHO might be on site visits and other official duties and will be available in the station only at certain timings. However, online requests for other services such as mike sanction, permission for procession, police clearance, etc. are now reportedly on a rise.
- There are also initiatives such as i-APS, where people can track the status of their petition, e-FIR, where a copy of the FIR can be downloaded, etc. But as in the case of Thuna, people have limited awareness about such initiatives. Tracking of status of a petition can be done only when receipt for registration of the petition is received by the petitioner.

### **Petition Enquiry and Disposal**

- The time stipulated in the Lalitakumari vs. Government of Uttar Pradesh 2013 judgment for conducting the preliminary enquiry prior to filing of FIR, is 7 days. In the case illustrated earlier regarding petition enquiry related to an accident at an amusement park, it is seen that the initiation of the preliminary-enquiry itself started only after a week (See Box 5.2).

RTS Act states that the petition enquiry must be completed within 15 days of receipt of the petition.



- In order to understand the time taken in the disposal of petitions, registers were examined to track dates from the date of receipt of application to the date of disposal, along with the nature of disposal has been done. It is seen that there is no proper system for recording the date of disposal of the petition (See Box 5.5).

#### **Box 5.5: An Illustration of Disposal of Petitions and Conversion to Cases**

The study team attempted to understand the process in more detail by tracking the time taken and follow up action of the last ten petitions filed in the police stations. In all the visited stations, it was difficult to track the process as date of disposal is not uniformly available. For example, in one station it was reported that petitions are settled in a time bound manner, but the date of disposal was not found in the register. Most petitions have been settled in the presence of the SHO. Issues among individuals such as family members, neighbours, etc. are mostly settled in the station. Two public interest cases, one related to traffic and the other about causing destruction to school board were also resolved. Among the last ten petitions considered, three have been registered as cases and FIR filed (all involving physical assault i.e. cognizable offence). Among three land related issues, one each was forwarded to the civil court, Revenue department and Registration department. In 2018 there were 469 direct petitions and 81 petitions from higher officials, i.e. 550 petitions were handled, of which 15 percent were received from higher offices. At the same time 1344 FIRs were filed. Most of the cases are related to drunken driving, physical assault, etc.

- Though there is a provision for the concerned official to sign the register along with date when a petition is disposed, across stations visited it was seen this is not done systematically. It is done only by officials who have the habit of signing along with the date.
- In an earlier study it was seen that petitions that have been disposed are rounded off to indicate that they have been disposed, rather than entering the date (CSES, 2006).
- In the case of registration of FIRs, an important process is the preparation of the Mahassar the date of reporting of the incident. No timelines are fixed for this under the RTS Act. An earlier study had pointed out that while in most cases the Mahassar is prepared on the same day or the

next, relevant dates are not recorded in the case of some, thus making it difficult to trace timeliness of the process (CSES, 2006). Inordinate delay was seen in the case of a road accident that was reported by a person (See Box 5.6).

**Box 5.6: Delay in registration of FIR and preparation of Mahassar**

On a Saturday evening, a person was involved in a road accident when the car he was driving hit a motorbike coming from the opposite direction. After seeing to it that the injured are admitted to the hospital for medical assistance, he went to the station to report the accident. The person who was injured in the accident was admitted to the nearby hospital, along with his wife (who was not injured). The next day, probably being Sunday and because the victims were still in the hospital, the police did not take their statement. On Monday evening, the person who had been charged rang up the station to enquire whether their statement had been taken and the Mahassar prepared. But this was done only on Tuesday evening.

A delay was also reported in releasing the vehicle after inspection. However, this was because the Motor Vehicle Inspector (MVI) had not come for checking the vehicles. It is observed that though accidents occur on a daily basis, inspection by the MVI may be done only once or twice in a week. In this case, involvement of influential persons (i.e. superior officers from other police stations) as well as handing over of money (which was reported to be given out of relief for getting the matter dealt with, rather than a bribe) was also reported.

- In the case of disposal of FIR, it was reported that once the complaint is registered and it enters the judicial proceedings delays are seen mostly in the proceedings in the judiciary. In fact, as per the Status of Policing in India Report 2018, disposal rates of cases by police in the state is seen to be significantly better (0.9) than disposal rates of the courts (0.6).
- Given this scenario, it is nearly impossible to monitor implementation of the provision of disposing off petitions within 15 days from the date of application. The department also opined that the officials have to undertake time consuming inquiry procedure such as preparation of Mahassar, taking statements of witnesses, etc. and also have to attend to many other duties simultaneously, the timeline for petitions disposal should be increased.

- As per the citizen charter, the people are entitled to make enquiries about action taken on the petition. However, the words used are ambiguous. It states “expecting instant justice is neither practicable nor desirable” and the people should enquire on the status of the petition only “after a reasonable time”.
- As mentioned earlier, most people are not aware of the option of tracking the status of their petitions online. So, they keep visiting the station for enquiry.

### **Evaluation and Monitoring**

- The key to proper evaluation and monitoring is proper record keeping. However, as discussed earlier, there does not seem to be a proper and standardized “record-keeping system” followed in the police stations. It’s seen that entry of dates of petition disposal etc., are subjective.
- The Police Station has to maintain 8 registers concerning petitions. They are preliminary enquiry register, direct petitions register, Thuna complaints register, registers for petitions from higher officials, petitions against police, petitions on atrocities against SC/ST, petitions against women and petitions against transgender. There are also 100 other registers to be maintained in the police station. Many of these records are not maintained properly and on time. However, FIR is properly indexed as they are to be produced in courts.
- The police officials say that they have to spend more time in “paper policing” viz. maintaining files and registers than on actual investigations and law and order activities, and perceive it as a waste of time. They envisage that with increased digitisation, the filing/maintaining of records will become easier.

### **Behaviour of the Police**

- The KP Act 2011 (Section 29) clearly spells out how the police should behave with the complainant/petitioner and persons detained in relation to an investigation. They are also expected to understand and respond to the special needs of women, children, senior citizens and disabled persons.
- Studies show that more than the procedural issues and delay in justice, it is the actual handling of the case/complaint i.e. how the police behave with the people, that adversely affect them.

- During the present study, varied behaviour of the police; viz. good as well as bad was observed and reported. In one of the stations visited, the WCPO at the desk was attending empathetically to a desolate complainant who had come with her infant to give petition on a family dispute. The lady was even escorted to privacy so that she could feed her baby. At the same time, in the case of the person involved in the road accident chronicled above, the first question that the officer on duty had asked him was, “ethraperuchathu (how many people died?)”. This is a disturbing behaviour exhibited by the officer on duty, especially in the scenario where the person is already in a vulnerable state of mind, being involved in an accident.
- People feel that in traffic enforcement and checking the police personnel often misbehave or even harass them. This is also an area where corruption is often reported. It is felt that motor accident cases (as seen in the one reported in Box 5.6) are handled poorly by police personnel. Often, FIR and other documents are not given to the people and they are directed to go to selected advocates, and if not done, the case may be referred to the MACT tribunal. There is a lack of transparency and accountability in traffic offences.

### Training

- The available data points to the need for regular training for all police personnel. As per Status of Policing in India Report 2019, in Kerala only around 3 percent of the personnel received in-service training during a five-year period (2012-16), vis-à-vis 6.4 percent at the national level.
- It is also seen that the percentage of constabulary receiving in-service training is much lesser than higher-ranking officers, despite the former constituting majority of the overall police strength.
- The report also shows that there is a consistent decrease in training inputs over the years.

**Table 5.5 : Rank-wise percent of police personnel who received in-service training (2012-16)**

Rank	Percentage of total strength who attended in-service training in 2012-16	
	Kerala	India
Overall	3.4	6.4
Constables	3.7	6.4

ASIs/SIs	6.3	17.0
DYSPs	48.8	27.2
IPS	16.4	38.3

*Source: Status of Policing in India Report 2019*

### **Human resources**

- Many of the officials met were extremely positive about community policing initiatives, Janamaithri and Student Police Cadet and are of the opinion that these initiatives are of great use to the society and in bringing the police closer to the people. But it was unanimously opined that it is extremely difficult for them to carry out all these activities effectively in addition to their earlier responsibilities.
- However, the scenario is seen to be better in Kerala compared to other states. As per Status of Policing in India Report 2019, there are very few instances in Kerala on inability to reach a crime scene or escort an accused to court on account of lack of human resources (See Table 5.7). It was also reported that matters related to court, issue of summons/warrants, escort of accused, is mostly done without fail. But police personnel said that due to multitude of tasks assigned to them, many a time they are not able to attend to their primary duty i.e. crime investigation as well as maintenance of law and order, due to which there can be delay in disposal of petitions and cases.
- It was also observed as well as seen in the Status of Policing in India Report 2019, that the presence of women in the police force is found to be gravely inadequate, 6 percent. It is stated in the citizen charter that women complainants as well as arrestees should be handled, as far as possible, by women police. Women police officers handling the front desk is also envisaged to improve people friendliness of the police stations. However, the delivery of such services is not effective, due to lesser number of women in the police force.
- It was also reported that the police force is the only employee group in the state which do not have holidays and for whom even casual leave has to be pre-sanctioned. They also do not have a fixed time schedule. Though the KP Act prescribes timings for the staff to be at the station and how the duty needs to be rotated, many times the staff have to put in more hours.

## Infrastructure

- Police stations generally lack proper waiting area and facilities for people, such as seating facilities, water, toilets, etc. This is also because in many cases the police station is on rented premises or attached to other buildings, where such facilities are either unavailable or limited.
- A major issue reported by the police officials was the lack of required infrastructure for the timely discharge of duties. Earlier studies have also reported the lack of office space and structure as well as accommodation for personnel, vehicles, locker rooms, proper cells for keeping the persons in custody and Thondy room to store property seized as part of case proceedings (CSES, 2006).
- Such issues were observed by the study team during their visits to the police stations. However, larger police stations which function in the premises of or along with a higher-level office, available infrastructure is observed to be better.

**Table 5.6 : Issues related to Infrastructure and Human Resource Availability affecting Service Delivery in Police stations**

Indicator	Percent of Respondents	
	Kerala	India
When needed, government vehicle/ fuel was unavailable many times	14	20
Had to spend money from your pocket for expenses such as stationary, carbon paper etc. many times	26	28
Unable to reach crime scene on time because of lack of Human Resources many times	6	15
Unable to escort accused to court because of lack of Human Resources many times	1	10

*Source: Status of Policing in India Report 2019*

- As can be seen from the Table above, there have been instances when government vehicle or fuel allowance is not provided during discharge of duty. Similarly, one-fourth of the police personnel have had to spend on stationery from their own pocket. It was discussed earlier that people are either asked to bring their own stationery or are not given printed deliverables



such as acknowledgement slips or copies of FIR due to lack of stationery. However, the scenario in Kerala is seen to be better.

#### **5.4. Recommendations**

i. The PRO system shall be strengthened in all police stations. A proper cabin/room/table in the front of the police station shall be arranged for the PRO. The PRO shall be a person with required training and experience and aptitude for the job, preferably from among the senior personnel in the station. Training shall be given in customer relations, soft skills, counseling, etc. The PRO shall also be provided with all necessary information regarding various services of the department to function as the contact point for the people. Refresher training needs to be provided on regular basis to impart up to date information. Based on their feedback, necessary modifications shall be made to the system. ARC recommends that PRO, shall not be entrusted with any other duty and round the clock (8 am to 8 pm) presence of the PRO shall be ensured. All officials in a police station shall be given training necessary to function as PRO to provide substitute in the absence of designated PRO. Effectiveness of the PRO system can lead to reduction of work in the police station and improvement in efficiency of the police station.

ii. Complaints where police intervention is requested as a mediator, as in family disputes, marital issues, etc., may require personnel with training and experience in counseling. A petitioner/victim support system as seen in developed countries need to be developed. This could be done in collaboration with departments of Social Justice and Women and Child Development. Legal counsel needs to be provided as this would give people an opportunity to voice concern and get further information for registering a formal complaint, if required, in due process. Services of legal aid clinics are available now at the Taluk level once in a month. Such support needs to be provided on a more regular basis as people are reported approach police stations every day with complaints. Such an alternative system would ensure that persons who want to make a formal complaint can proceed with that, while people in need of mediation are also not denied of it.

iii. It may also be considered whether cases of property dispute, denial of wages, breach of contract, defamation and others of a clear civil nature can be transferred to Taluk Legal Service Society, when attempts by police for



mediation fail. This will also require building up of trust of people about efficiency of the Society in speedy disposal of the petitions at less cost.

iv. Registration of petitions shall be mandatorily done. There have been departmental circulars which detail the procedure to be followed for registration of petitions. These shall be implemented. These circulars need to be displayed prominently in the police stations and in the web site of the department for informing people and empowering them with the right to register petitions. Petition registry and enquiry needs to be monitored by senior personnel. There shall also be a proper appellate or grievance redress mechanism for the people to express their grievances if their petition is not registered, even after they request it to be registered.

v. Acknowledgment receipts shall be issued as it is required for people to follow up on the enquiry and is an evidence for filing appeal before appellate authorities, if required. RTS provisions shall be displayed in the police station. Creatively designed posters that interact with people shall be displayed; asking them whether they received acknowledgment receipt, if not to demand the same and if not provided, to use grievance redress mechanisms. Empowerment through information dissemination will lead to increase in online filing of petitions, ensuring automatic generation of acknowledgment receipts.

vi. There is a move towards e-governance through the Thuna portal. Public response to such initiatives is limited, so far, indicative of need for better promotion of such initiatives. Appropriate advertising/promotional campaign needs to be designed and implemented by the department to increase public awareness about people oriented programmes such as Thuna. Communication through newspapers, FM radio, cinema theatres, TV, social media, hoardings at prominent places etc., shall be done along with attractive, eye catching and interactive posters in all police stations and public places such as railway and bus stations, markets, schools, etc.

vii. It is necessary that the people be informed about the status of their petition. Though the petition status can be known online on iAPS, it is yet to become popular. Promotion and awareness activities need to be intensified, as said earlier. People, when they come to register their application shall also be given a demonstration on how to search status of their petition.

viii. While registering any type of case in Thuna, a system for providing the details through SMS to the mobile number of the petitioner/people should be made. There needs to be a facility for providing phone number of the official in charge of a petition to the petitioner enabling them to contact the official and enquire about the status of petition, in cases where petitioner is not able to access information from the portal. The same could be provided on the acknowledgment receipt for the petition registration.

ix. The entry of petitions and cases, processes, date of receipt of petition and disposal shall be done with a time stamp. Monitoring can be effective only when all relevant dates are recorded. Manual registration of complaints and their disposal shall also be entered in Thuna for making monitoring more effective. It is only when the performance of each official is evaluated against the set parameters that logical interventions for delays in service delivery can be formulated. The transition to online processing of applications and cases needs to be expedited. The need for maintaining so many registers in the police station shall be studied. Change over to a digital system with maintenance of minimum needed records shall be done without delay, freeing up time for core duties, especially in the absence of ministerial staff and proper storage space in the police stations.

x. There shall also be display of the number of petitions received, cases registered, etc. along with the number disposed and those disposed within the stipulated timelines, on a monthly basis. This will ensure improved transparency and accountability. Social audit shall also be conducted on providing services notified under RTS.

xi. It is observed that traffic enforcement is an area where people face harassment during their interaction with the police. There have been various circulars from the department regarding how vehicle inspection shall be done, how the police shall go to the vehicle to inspect, how the police shall interact with people, etc. However, these circulars/instructions are not followed. Monitoring and supervision of adherence to the instructions needs to be done to ensure people centered actions of police personnel. Allegations of corruption is widespread. Detection of traffic offences needs to be done through use of technological solutions and fines and fees shall be collected only through online payment facility. This is now done in a limited way and needs to be rolled out throughout the state for all vehicle users.

xii. Violation of speed limits by vehicle users is a major reason for road accidents. It shall be ensured through surveillance cameras that all vehicles that violate speed limit is fined and that exemption shall be only for vehicles exempted under law.

xiii. It is seen that the number of days as stipulated in the judgment related to preliminary enquiry before registration of FIR is much lesser (7) than the stipulation in the RTS Act (15). The RTS timeframes set for all other services is also seen to be more in relation to the actual time taken in delivery. Hence, the RTS timeframes needs to be revisited and reduced to ensure guaranteed speedy delivery of services.

xiv. It is seen that RTS does not cover essential services such as registration of petitions, preparation of Mahassar, etc. All these service processes, which are important to people, shall be brought under the RTS Act with defined timelines. Similarly, for cases which are referred to higher offices or special units, e.g., cybercrime cell, s time norms shall be stipulated for handing over of the cases.

xv. All the stations shall be properly equipped in terms of computer infrastructure, network connectivity and trained personnel to handle e-services for ensuring effectiveness of envisaged initiatives. An official shall be given exclusive charge of handling online services, without entrusting any other duty at the police station. All officials shall be given proper training as service delivery progresses toward technology driven solutions. Regular updating of technology, imparting training for updating skills and knowledge of officials on changes happening across the world, shall be undertaken. Regular training is necessary in the changing nature of crimes, transition from conventional methods of service delivery and investigation and technology-based services. Proper training modules shall be prepared for use in induction and refresher trainings.

xvi. Proper and regular training shall be given to officials who interact directly with people who include the PRO, writer, SHO, etc. It is to be ensured that the constabulary who are likely to interact more with people are provided regular training, equipping them with up-to-date information and training on etiquette while interacting with the people. Training shall focus on communication skills and enhancing empathy of the personnel. Modules for

enhancing listening skill of police personnel shall be included in the training programmes to move towards better service delivery.

xvii. The existing ratio between number of Civil Police and Armed Police need to be re-fixed in favour of the Civil Police to ensure that young people are deployed at Police stations for law and order duties and thereby ensure greater role for civil police.

xviii. It is observed that strength of women in the police stations are quite low. Initiatives such as handling of front desk by women civil police officers (WCPO), attending to complaints from women by WCPOs, etc. can be effective only when there is sufficient strength of WCPOs in civil police. Currently a certain percentage of total strength of police force is reserved for appointment of women. Travancore was the first state in India to recruit women in the police force. The concept of 'women battalion' is outdated. Gender mainstreaming is the norm all over the world. Common recruitment for women and men at the constabulary level and common nomenclature is essential and it needs to be done at the earliest.

xix. Janamaithri, Student Police etc., are initiatives for bridging the gap between police and people and bring them together. If these initiatives are to succeed allocation of required Civil Police Officers with requisite training needs to be ensured. Training modules needs to integrate objectives of these programmes and responsibilities of the people involved in it.

xx. Government shall consider formation of a division for Human Resource Management and implementation of a Human resource Policy. Now experienced personnel are appointed in Local, Vigilance, Crime Branch etc. and allowed to continue for long tenures. A proper human resource management system will ensure that all officials are deployed to all wings including local police, Vigilance, Crime Branch and State Special Branch on rotation basis. Rotation of jobs among special wings and local stations with fixed tenure will ensure removal of entrenched interests and improve robustness and efficiency of all wings of police.

xxi. Pendency in finalisation of disciplinary action against the police personnel, even in the case of small offences, affect their promotion prospects and cause dissatisfaction among them. In the Commission's fourth report 'Personnel Reforms – Civil Service in Kerala' under chapter 6 Discipline &

Disciplinary proceedings (recommendation No. – VII), it was recommended that cases involving minor penalties shall be finalised within a period of six months and major penalties within one year. This shall be made applicable to the Police Department also.

xxii. Frequent transfer of officials affects smooth functioning of the concerned unit and adversely affect the confidence level of the officers. KP Act mentions only the tenure of Sub Inspectors. This shall be made applicable to all cadre of officials.

xxiii. In order to check the abuse of power by the Police officers, an internal mechanism needs to be introduced. System for verification of FIRs registered and cases investigated in Police Stations, by senior officers shall be introduced to ensure that proper procedures have been followed for investigation and to check abuse of power and corruption.

xxiv. Deficiency in the capacity of Police personnel in local stations for implementation of e-governance initiatives are noticed and is a major reason for poor take off of e-governance initiatives. One of the criteria for eligibility of transfer to local police shall be clearing atest on computer awareness and use of ITES during training.

xxv. Common Code of conduct and standardization of protocol for services in cases/complaints of accidents, physical assault, loss of valuables, etc. needs to be developed and all police personnel at the cutting-edge level shall mandatorily follow the code of conduct and standardised protocol. Action shall be taken against those who violate it.

xxvi. Work study report by the P & AR department recommended re-fixation of staffing at the police station, formation of station houses with smaller jurisdiction for effective management of duties, bifurcation of the investigation and law & order divisions in each station and delegation of duties. Government needs to study recommendations of the report within a fixed timeframe and shall consider its implementation to improve efficiency of the department and ensure people centered service delivery.

xxvii. Kerala Police Manual needs to be revised to include changes in delineation of a station area, staff, infrastructure, qualification, training, etc. The revised manual shall take into account factors such as area, socio-economic composition, case load, nature of crimes, etc.

xxviii. Rights of arrested persons, accused, etc. and procedures to be followed in their cases are included in the Kerala Police (KP) Act and reiterated through several court orders. These provisions of the Act shall be displayed in the police stations to enable the accused/arrested to request the officials for protection of their rights. These procedures also need to be subjected to social audit.

xxix. Pressure of work and stress experienced by police officials may reflect in their behavior adversely affecting people approaching them for services, resulting in deficiency of service delivery. Government needs to implement a rational work schedule for the police ensuring that they are able to avail leave in emergency situations. They need to be given compensation/perks commensurate with the duties they are mandated to perform. They shall also be provided with support systems such as counselling, sessions on stress management, etc.

xxx. Ambience of the police stations needs to be people friendly to make people comfortable leading to stress-free interaction with the officials. Initiatives such as child friendly police stations where the police station is brightly painted with cartoon characters and play area, etc., have been introduced. However, all stations need to be made people friendly by functioning from clean, well-managed and properly equipped premises. Better infrastructure and working condition are also required for the police personnel for efficient delivery of services. Availability of basic infrastructure in the police station as well as facilities such as transport is essential for the personnel to carry out law and order and investigation functions.

xxxi. In many cases investigation is delayed as there is delay in receipt of forensic reports. In order to avoid such delays, there is an urgent need for strengthening the forensic units in the state.

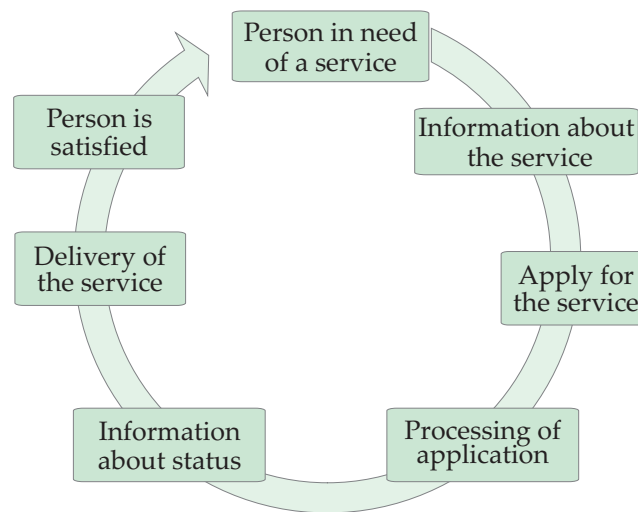
## CHAPTER VI

## TOWARDS PEOPLE CENTRIC SERVICE DELIVERY

## 6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters, findings and recommendations for people centered delivery of services in specific departments were presented. In this chapter, a synthesis of the findings across departments and domains of service delivery is presented with focus on the way forward. Service delivery is viewed from people's angle and presented as people's service journey (See Fig. 6.1). An overview of experience of people across the selected offices and services, from the start of the journey when she is in need of a service, to when the service is delivered to her, and the main recommendations evolving are presented.

**Figure 6.1: People's Service Delivery Journey**



There are many stages in the process. The person would require information about the services and then, apply for the service. Processing of the application is done at the concerned office. The person is informed about the status of processing and when the service is ready to be delivered. Once the service is delivered to the person, her satisfaction with the service would depend on factors across the service delivery experience. Many drivers of people satisfaction can be seen across literature such as timely delivery of



services, minimum points of contact, simplicity of procedure, polite behaviour of officials, receiving information about the status, facilities provided to people at the offices, etc. The present discussion follows the stages of service delivery experience, with illustrations from department-specific discussion that was undertaken in the respective chapters.

## **6.2. Need for the Service**

There are various life points at which the need for certificates, income, caste, possession, legal heirship, etc. arise. It is seen that people have to provide multitude of documents, school leaving certificate, marriage certificate, Aadhaar, etc. for getting a particular certificate. It needs to be examined whether these documents itself can be taken as proof of caste, income, possession etc. instead of a certificate based on the documents.

The Village Office and Taluk Office issue several certificates to be submitted to other government departments and agencies. Such certification was mandated in a pre-decentralisation as well as pre-Aadhaar era. Now local self-government institutions (LSGIs) are the units of administration closest to people and certification, if required, shall be done by the LSGIs. It also needs to be emphasised that people seek services of the government, and not departments/offices. What is required is a repository of all these certificates/details as a digital family register, which can be accessed by the different agencies, as and when the need arises.

Government shall, as a definite move towards people centered service delivery, accept affidavits given by people who seek services, instead of the current requirement of submitting certificates at multiple points for availing services. The responsibility of proving personal information shall be on the person herself and not on a government officer. Penalty for submission of incorrect information shall be sufficient deterrence in committing fraud. Adoption of this system will improve satisfaction of people about service delivery by government, reduce workload of officials and reduce/eliminate corruption. Certifying of personal information by government officials is a relic of the colonial era and has no place in the democratic system of governance.

In land related services provided by the revenue, survey and registration departments, payment of taxes and registration of deeds are

mandatory. But people have to visit these offices to resolve disputes related to land. This is observed to be one of the most time-consuming service that can be referred to as a painful people journey. Improvement in delivery of services concerning land related matters, to the satisfaction of people, can be achieved only through integrated service delivery of these departments and a time bound move to the system of conclusive titling. Till conclusive titling is implemented, it shall be mandated that the deed for registration is accompanied by survey map and Record of Rights. This would help in reducing disputes by ensuring that there is no difference in the extent/boundaries of land that is registered and the land for which tax is paid by people.

Need for visiting police stations mainly arise when there are petty disputes, loss of valuables, an incident of crime, accidents, etc. In the case of petty disputes, an alternate system which provides people a chance to voice their difficulties as well as directs them to approach the judiciary, if so required, needs to be in place.

### **6.3. Access to Information**

When the need for a particular service arise, people will have many queries; from where the service is delivered, what are the procedures involved in availing it, what documents are to be attached with the application, what is the fee to be remitted, when will the service be delivered, etc. Main points from where people get information are the concerned offices and the Akshaya Centre, i.e. the Common Service Centre. However, information dissemination from both these points are not effective. Major methods adopted in offices for dissemination of information are display of information through posters and on notice boards, or through an enquiry counter. However, the display is often in inconspicuous places or the notice board is overcrowded with notices that it is unlikely that people could filter relevant information. Diligence to provide information is also missing in some cases. For instance, poster related to online provision of services of police stations through “Thuna” portal is not displayed in most stations visited, despite being mandated. It is also seen that there are no standards for display of information. For example, while some offices display the RTS timelines, others do not. Similarly, while fee to be paid for various services is displayed in some offices, in others it is not done. Subjectivity in such a crucial

aspect of service delivery shall be rectified and a standard procedure for display of information shall be mandated. Most offices do not have an enquiry counter, and in offices where it is available, the seat is either vacant or the available officials are not able to provide required information. In the case of Akshaya, many of the staff are not properly aware of the information sought due to high staff turnover in the centres or are not updated about recent changes. There is also no uniformity in the information provided by the officials across Akshaya centres.

Above all these deficiencies in accessing information on services, people have to visit the offices for getting information about the service procedure, prior to applying. Facilities for enquiry over phone is not available in most of the offices, while in Akshaya it is possible, especially if you are a regular customer. The other option is to access information from department websites. But initiatives by departments to provide information through websites have not improved people's service delivery experience, due to certain inherent problems. While accessing information from web sites is favoured only by those who are technology savvy, it is seen that even for them information provided through the websites is limited and sometimes difficult to comprehend. It is observed that information regarding services is spread across different portals. For example, in the case of revenue department, while there is no information about the services on the department website (<https://www.revenue.kerala.gov.in/>), some information is available on the e-district portal (<https://edistrict.kerala.gov.in/>) and some more details on the Akshaya portal (<http://www.akshaya.kerala.gov.in/>). As in the case of notices and board displays in the offices, the information provided is spread all across the portal, and people find it difficult to retrieve information that they want. It is also seen that the information is not regularly updated (as in the case of Registration department, where it is shown that documents need to be provided by document writers or advocates, though now people themselves can prepare the documents using the model templates available in the website). The websites also need to address people as the primary user of the services as well as seeker of information given on the website, rather than catering to the need of officials, and giving administrative details, as is done now.

It is imperative that all departments develop a manual of standard

operating procedures, including details of documents required for each service, fees, etc. in Malayalam (Kannada/Tamil, where its applicable) and English and make it available to people through Akshaya centres or associated service delivery points; the document writer's office, ration shops, etc. Grass-root level community workers, Anganwadi workers, SC/ST promoters, ASHA workers, etc. shall also be empowered to provide necessary information to people. It is to be ensured that all relevant information is available on the department website and the web sites are updated as and when changes occur. This is especially relevant about services from the police station which may be needed by anyone, at any time, irrespective of their age. Posters of new initiatives like "Thuna" needs to be displayed prominently in public places, including schools. The posters shall be effective and interactive to invite attention of the people. Promotional activities across platforms of print, audio, video, theatres, FM radio, social media, etc. shall be done before roll out of any new initiative.

Enquiry/information counters shall be available and functional in all offices. Officials in charge of the counters shall be provided training in customer relations and service procedures. The enquiry counter shall also have a phone, to be attended by the person in charge, for providing necessary information.

#### **6.4. Applying for the Service**

People can apply for various services either online (on their own or through Akshaya centres) or directly at the respective office. However, it is seen that the proportion of people who apply on their own for services is insignificant, across departments. People mostly approach the Akshaya centres for services from VO and TSO. All the departments have their own online portal, and people have to register as a user across all these portals, while at the Akshaya centre, they need to log in via the Akshaya id only. It is observed that in case any errors happen in the applications sent through Akshaya centres, officials inform the Akshaya centres to rectify the same, while this is not done when people apply on their own. It is also seen that in some cases, people circumvent the complexities related to application process by getting it done through a third-party service provider. This is especially true in the case of Registration department, where the document writer takes care of all pre-registration formalities. In the case of TSO, it is seen that people

have to submit the application online and take a printed copy of the application to the TSO for initiation of processing of the application, which negates all principles of people centred service delivery.

Availability of an option to apply in person will be beneficial to those who are not technology savvy, especially among the senior citizens and other marginalised/vulnerable populations. However, it is also against their interest that unlike the others who have relatively better access to services via the Akshaya centres, the marginalised/vulnerable people are compelled to visit the offices if they are to get services. As of now, there is no facility for processing applications and delivering services at their doorsteps. Government shall take steps for door step collection of applications and delivery of services, at least for vulnerable people. There are also services for which the entire application process (for example, getting copy of a document from the survey office), or part of it (for example, payment for certified copy in the SRO) can be done only in person, at the office. The issues hindering provision of online end to end service needs to be resolved. Measures shall also be taken to promote awareness among people and police personnel about, “Thuna”, the online service portal of Kerala Police, which is not as successful as envisaged.

### **6.5. Complexities in Procedure**

Complexities in procedures for availing services can overwhelm people and lead to their dissatisfaction. In the case of most certificates, a multitude of other documents is required to be submitted. The present system of officials certifying personal information of people shall itself be discontinued, as recommended earlier. Among the departments studied, it is observed that in the registration department, the document itself is complex. Documents, especially those related to land are written in a particular manner, i.e. in lengthy and complex sentences, not used in normal communication. To overcome complexities involved in the filing of online application for token generation, people entrust the entire process of preparing document, applying online and generation of token to document writers, defeating the very purpose of the government in enabling document filing by people themselves by adopting/adapting model templates available in the web site of the department.

In this age of rapid adoption of ICT tools, the registration department continues with the conventional method of copying the entire document on to the filing sheet, word by word, which is then stored in the SRO. This needs to be discontinued without delay. The Act and manual based on which the registration process is undertaken is more than a century old. Amendments in the Act and manual is an urgent need to facilitate use of GPS to define boundaries, scan and save the original document and photocopy the document in A4 size paper, to replace the system of copying the entire document on to the filing sheet. Government shall consider this as priority in transition to People centered service delivery.

Similarly, digitisation and proper cataloguing of documents and records in the offices will make easier retrieval for issue of encumbrance certificate and certified copy of documents. Complexities are also seen in the redress of land disputes. Breaking down of silos and integrated/joined up functioning of the departments of Land Revenue and Survey along with Registration department under a common controlling officer needs to be done. Responsibilities of the Registration department that are not related to land shall continue to be delivered by the department under the unified controlling officer. Government shall also consider empowering the LSGI officials for registration of marriages under Special Marriage Act and special registration of marriage for Christians.

File movement between sections, vertically linked offices and departments needs to be better organised and all back-end processes handled in a timely manner so that people are provided services on time. People shall also be regularly updated about the status of their application till the service is delivered.

## **6.6. Timeliness of Service Delivery**

Framing of timelines for services notified under the RTS Act, by the departments is a major stride towards improving service delivery. However, it is seen that across departments, services without complexities are delivered within the set timelines; for example, the issue of certificates. It is also seen that in VOs, certificates with a timeline of three or more days are delivered on the same day, if applied in person instead of applying online, a contradiction to the concept of expediting service delivery through e-Governance. However,



in services where complex procedures or vertical linkages are involved, the service is not delivered on time; e.g., issue of Legal Heirship certificates, return of registered document after endorsement, etc. There is inordinate delay in delivery of services involving assessment of land, i.e. in the case of services such as ToR with subdivision and settlement of survey disputes.

It is also seen, especially in the case of police stations, that timeframe is set for a service activity rather than a service; i.e. issue of receipt of petition registration and copy of FIR, on the same day the petition is filed. However, no standards are prescribed on timelines for registration of petition or filing of FIR. It is also observed that in the case of online service delivery, the date of delivery can be retrieved, if required. But in the case of services for which application is given in person, there is no proper recording of the date of delivery of the service to facilitate evaluation of efficiency of service delivery. For example, in the case of disposal of petition there are no standards for entry of date of disposal in the police station register. In the case of TSOs, though applications are given by people through Akshaya centres, the date when the application is produced in the office in person is entered and the service delivered on the same day. Thus, the entire service delivery process and time is not captured as the date when the application is given online is not factored in.

In order to evaluate efficiency in service delivery of various offices in terms of timeliness, it is imperative that the dates when people apply for the service and date of receipt of the service are recorded in the office, for online and offline applications. It is recommended that government brings in collective responsibility in RTS and service delivery by fixing timelines for each stage and fixing responsibility on officials responsible for processing each stage of service to be delivered instead of fixing accountability only on a particular officer (mostly, the head of the particular office). This is essential in the case of services with many stages and vertical linkages. Performance of the offices i.e. the quantum of applications received vis-à-vis the proportion of services delivered within the timelines prescribed shall be displayed in each office. This will enforce better accountability among the staff and also help people to be aware of when service will be delivered.

It also needs to be mentioned that departments were asked to notify timelines for services when the RTS was framed in 2012. However, there has



been tremendous improvements in service systems and technology which needs to be factored in and new timelines framed. In many cases it is seen that the services did not require the number of days notified for delivery. The RTS Act needs to be amended by assigning “duty” to the departments to notify the services to be provided and not “power”, as it is now.

### **6.7. Mode of Delivery of Service**

Many services are now delivered online, i.e. service deliverables like certificates can be printed out by the people. But, as discussed earlier, most people depend on Akshaya centres for this service, and have to visit the centre to get the certificate. This does not lead to reduction in points of contact, which is envisaged in service delivery improvement. There is also a cost involved in getting the certificates printed from the Akshaya centres, unlike when it is provided directly from the respective office. In the case of some services, though the application can be given online, for receipt of service people have to visit the office, e.g. certified copy from an SRO or a ration card from the TSO. While in the former, the visit is necessitated for e-payment, in the latter, voluminous nature of the card, need for photograph to be attached and lack of provision for digital signature are the reasons. ARC recommends that these issues shall be addressed and alternate means of delivery of services adopted which reduces/eliminate points of contact. For services where presence of service seeker cannot be dispensed with, the point of contact needs to be limited to one as in the case of Aadhaar and passport services. Initiatives by Government of Delhi to partner with private agencies for delivery of services at the doorstep of people shall be considered for adoption with suitable changes. Delivery of services through related service providers like ration shops or grass root level workers shall also be considered. Feasibility of delivering by post also shall be examined. People centred service delivery can be ensured in its full spirit only when people do not have to visit the offices and the services are delivered at their doorsteps.

### **6.8. Infrastructure and Human Resource Development**

E-Governance can be successfully implemented only with improvement in facilities viz. provision of computers and peripherals (with AMC), sufficient storage and back-up, high-speed internet connectivity, uninterrupted power supply, etc. This is not the case in Kerala and it is

affecting efficiency and cost of service delivery across domains. Even in Akshaya centres, which are treated as the hub of e-governance, these issues are present. Necessary infrastructure in terms of network connectivity, power supply, provision of computers and accessories with facilities for regular maintenance, etc. shall precede the transition and also be sustained.

Another area which shall be given urgent attention is imparting training to the officials for handling upgradation to improved service delivery mechanisms. Projects such as digitisation of documents, printing of ration cards, etc. are outsourced to another agency (C-DIT) on contract. Often, by the time the contract period expires, the officials are not trained / equipped to seamlessly continue the work, leading to a stalemate. Just as people who lack knowledge about use of IT enabled tools prefer conventional modes of service delivery, officials who are not trained in use of technology led solutions find it difficult to complete the tasks assigned to them. ARC recommends that regular training shall be given to all officials to update them about innovations and handling of new technologies, changes happening in their domain etc, enabling them to deliver effective and people centered service. Inadequacy of personnel was reported across offices. Work studies were conducted in certain departments, but changes recommended in the work studies are not implemented, so far. Scientific assessment of quantum of work in the departments shall be done based on population of service area, number of transactions, coverage area, use of technology, etc and necessary changes in staff structure needs to be made. Proper standards of human resources and material infrastructure shall be developed factoring in all possible determinants, and the standards implemented across offices.

Infrastructure in terms of better storage facilities, better working environment for officials, proper record keeping facilities, better facilities for people, etc. needs to be ensured in the offices based on quantum of services provided from the office, footfalls in the office, etc. Local level participation through sponsorship for infrastructure such as office furniture may also be considered.

## **6.9. People' Satisfaction and Drivers of Satisfaction**

Timely delivery of service is a major driver of people's satisfaction. Keeping people in the dark about delivery of a service for which they have

applied for increases dissatisfaction with service delivery. Any government which intends to keep people at the centre of service delivery needs to ensure that there are proper systems in place to make people aware of the entire service delivery process. They shall be informed when the service will be delivered and also when it is ready to be delivered. If there is delay, the service seeker shall be informed of the reason for delay. For processes that are observed to be time consuming, like those involving vertical linkages, the entire chain of service processing shall be intimated to the people viz. current status of the file/application including where it is pending, and when the next stage in processing will commence. Manner of interaction of the officials with people when they approach the office for a service, information, or registering a grievance, etc. have a major impact on the entire service delivery experience of the people. ARC in its report on 'Capacity Development of Civil Servants Kerala' have included a chapter on 'Ethics and Civil Service Values' and has recommended promotion of civil service values and ethics in the officials enabling them to deliver services with integrity, honesty and without discrimination. (Page 50, recommendation No.11). Departments shall develop standard protocols for interaction of the officials with people in different situations. Customer relationship management training modules shall be developed and incorporated in the training sessions. Maximisation of efficiency and minimisation/ elimination of grievances of people shall be the service delivery objective. Systems shall also be put in place across offices to receive regular feedback from people on the services provided, and if dissatisfied, the grievances need to be redressed with an apology.

#### **6.10. In Conclusion**

There have been many initiatives to improve service delivery by government. Modernising Government Programme (MGP) was the most ambitious among these, and its proper implementation would have brought in a paradigm shift in administration and service delivery in the state. The programme had to face rigid attitudes, lack of co-operation and co-ordination and absence of political ownership. Still, MGP led to the development of service delivery standards and citizen charters which consider services as rights of people than a "service" provided by the government. The programme was followed by the framing of "People-centric service delivery policy" and the rights were encapsulated when the Right to Services Act 2012

was framed and timelines for various services were notified by the departments. But the State has to still travel a long way to ensure this right to its people.

“Right to service delivery” is only one of the 18 principles that is enunciated in the service delivery policy of the State. The first principle is people centredness which is yet to be ensured. Clear standards of service delivery are developed only for some of the services. Current service delivery design may adversely impact principles of equity and inclusiveness as it is observed that it is mostly elderly people, SC/ST and the marginalised who are most likely to be overwhelmed with the shift towards e-governance and may have to keep going to the offices in person to get their services. It is also seen that vertical linkages such as in the case of caste certificates for SC/ST makes travel to a distant TO mandatory for them. Similar is the case with people living in hilly and remote areas (mainly ST) who have issues of access. Economic dimension of accessing services through Akshaya also affect vulnerable population more.

It is with respect to changes required in the attitude of officials and mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability, integrity, convergence, etc. that least progress is observed. Timeliness of service delivery can be ensured only when these principles are also followed. It can be observed, and is evident to anyone who studies the present system, that though RTS has succeeded in establishing an institutional grievance redress mechanism through appellate authorities, the response to it is disappointing. It can be seen and understood that most of the services notified by the departments are more or less of an easily deliverable nature. It is unlikely that people may complain about these services, even if there is some delay in its delivery. However, there are services which take more time than others and also present as difficult people journeys. In these cases, people may also be apprehensive that reporting of any grievances by them would further delay the service. ARC recommends that Government shall examine the feasibility of replacing the internal review mechanism by formation of an external agency, an RTS Commission as in few states like Uttarakhand, Maharashtra etc. It is also imperative that redress of grievances raised by people due to poor service delivery are also handled with diligence. Such an external agency would be more effective in redressing grievances by ensuring that services are

delivered effectively and errant officials are made accountable. It remains a fact that internal mechanisms will always be more lenient towards the officials and accept the delays as justified, while when a third party looks at the issues from people's point of view their rights can be ensured. It is only when the people are able to demand a service as a "right" than a "charity" given by the government, can service delivery be truly people-centric.

ARC concludes the report with the observation that best public policies, to ensure rights of people and their economic and social development, can achieve its intent only when implemented with people at the centre of service delivery. Government officials are crucial in placing people at the centre of service delivery, as service is delivered by and through them. It is in the context that attitudinal change of officials through constant efforts in capacity development become the corner stone of people centered service delivery.

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## **Annexure**

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

#### **Public hearing-Background**

Government of Kerala has always given priority to the needs of the marginalised and vulnerable communities and the policies and programmes implemented to ensure this is reflected in the higher rates of literacy, better sex ratio, low infant mortality rate and better access to education and medical care. However, despite diligent efforts to ensure timely and appropriate service delivery, Government is not able to create trust in its institutions among the people and change public perception about inefficiency and complex nature of service delivery mechanisms and systems. A major concern is the procedural delay as a result of the complex work flow within and between the departments.

Government of Kerala set up the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) to study various issues in governance and to suggest reforms to make the public services more public-centered, efficient, effective, equitable, affordable, accountable, sustainable and accessible to all. The Commission has selected “Citizen First Services” as an important area of its study.

In this backdrop, to identify the flaws in the current service delivery mechanism and to harness valuable suggestions from public regarding improvement in efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery, ARC held public hearings at Thiruvananthapuram (Nedumangad), Alapuzha, Malappuram, Kasaragod and Wyanad districts. Government functionaries, dignitaries from non-governmental organizations and the general public participated in the hearings and voiced their opinions and concerns.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF  
PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON NOVEMBER 23, 2018  
NEDUMANGADU.**

Smt. Sheela Thomas (Member Secretary, ARC) welcomed the members of the Commission, the participants and the organizers to the public hearing. She said that the prime motive of Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) which was constituted in 2016, under the chairmanship of Shri. V.S. Achuthanandan was to promote new ideas for improving the effectiveness as well as efficiency of the state administration system. She added that the Commission had submitted reports related to various other sectors studied by the Commission. She stated that the Commission is analysing various ways for the improvisation of the Government services. The Commission aims to critically analyse the functions/activities of the departments which directly deal with the citizens, to define service/service delivery improvement needs and to devise a citizen centered approach that can truly meet the complex needs of the citizens. She highlighted the importance of the public hearings organized by the Commission in developing suitable reform measures.

Shri. V. S. Achuthanandan (Chairman, ARC) in his presidential address stated that in the last two years the Commission had studied the improvisation of Vigilance system, capacity building of government servants and welfare legislations and had submitted the reports on the aforementioned topics. He also stated that the Commission is in the process of analysing the bottlenecks in delivering various services to the public sector. He emphasized that the motive shall be to make the service delivery mechanism transparent and citizen centred. Even though the citizens are considered to be the flag bearers in democracy, in real practice the public hardly have any power in the administration. He highlighted that just delivering the service is not enough and that the service should be delivered in a transparent and time bound manner. He drew attention towards the various government services that have been made available online and also pointed out that there are more services that could be delivered online. He added that the Commission organizes the public hearings in an attempt to harness valuable suggestions regarding the improvisation of the service delivery and urged the participants to express their opinions wholeheartedly.

Shri. C. P. Nair (Member, ARC) informed the audience that the Administrative Reforms Commissions in Kerala had strived to devise approaches to make the services of various government bodies available, without any hindrance, to the poor people in the state. He stated that no service delivery mechanism could be considered effective if it does not deliver the right service at the right time. He stressed that various schemes and programmes had been formulated for the welfare of different

strata of the public, but the efficiency of such initiatives is not adequate. He quoted that the study on “Citizen First Services” would be one of the most important themes for the Commission and urged the participants to raise their concerns and express their views.

Shri. ChettachalSahadevan (Chairman, Municipal Chairman, Nedumangad) in his felicitation address stressed on the need for revamping the administration in Nedumangad municipality. He mentioned that Grievance Redressal Cell and Adalats are formed from time to time in the Municipality and efforts are taken to address all the issues. He pointed out that the Municipality was upgraded as Grade A Municipality during the previous UDF ministry, but the staffing pattern has not been revised till date and that the prevalent staff pattern was formed in 1978, which is not sufficient for delivering the necessary services to 80,000 people in the Municipality. He also stated that 300-350 projects (most of them being PWD projects) are being undertaken annually by the Municipality, but due to the limited staffing, the same could not be completed in stipulated time. He said that necessary steps shall be taken to upgrade the Municipality at least to Grade B level.

Adv. D. K. Murali (MLA from Vamanapuram Constituency) emphasized on the procedural delays and the lack of coordination among various government departments. He stated that it is difficult for proper implementation of development activities due to the lack of coordination among government departments/bodies. He recommended that a coordination mechanism shall be constituted at the legislative assembly constituency level to ensure the coordination among various government departments and organizations. He also said that a nodal officer shall be appointed to overlook the coordination activities from the planning phase to the execution phase of the development projects. He also pointed out that in certain cases, the development activities are delayed as the LA constituency falls in different Development Blocks, and therefore he recommended that the Development Blocks shall be fixed based on the LA constituencies. He concluded wishing all success to the event.

### **Summary of Verbal Comments Received at the Hearing**

Shri. P.G.Premachandran(Councillor, Nedumangad Municipality) concentrated on the usage of revenue land for development purposes. His comments include:

- 37 cents of land was kept under possession by various private parties. However, the same was retrieved as per the decision by the Municipal Council. The decision was made to use the land for a Buds School. But the indifferent approach of various officials caused too much delay in the implementation of the same.
- Only 6 cents out of the total 37 cents of the foresaid property has been used for

the Buds school. The remaining land is still not available for development purposes in the Municipality.

Shri. A. Prasannan (State Secretary, Forum for Social Justice) stressed on the delay occurring in the cases at the disposal of the Land Tribunals and the pitiful condition of the SAT Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram. His suggestions include:

- The cases in the Land Tribunals of the Revenue Department, regarding shall be resolved as quickly as possible. He pointed out that various files regarding the cases of kudikidappu (homestead) applications are pending in these tribunals. As they are already included in the eligible list for the same, they are not even able to avail the benefits provided by the government for the homeless.
- The staff in the SAT hospital has been reduced from 13 to 5. Such a staff pattern could not timely serve the significantly high number of pregnant ladies arriving at the centre.

Shri.K. SukumaranAchari (Secretary, Plavara Residence Association, Venkavila) stressed on the ineffectiveness of the gramapanchayats. He cited that the villagers had given a complaint to the grama Panchayat and subsequently to the Panchayat Director, but no action was taken. He requested the Commission shall study how to ensure quick solution for such complaints submitted by the public.

Shri.B.Chakrapani (Retd. Superintendent, National Sample Survey Office and a resident of Nedumangad) put forward various suggestions from his experience working in the National Sample Survey Office. His suggestions include:

- It has been observed that mostly the land is owned by men. Therefore, the possibility of making land registration free for women owners shall be studied.
- Proper skill test needs to be conducted for the selection of teachers at various levels.
- The employment in the aided institutions is not monitored by government. Therefore, government shall verify and publish the number of teachers belonging to SC/ST groups in the aided institutions, wherever the salary is given by the government.
- Basics of Medical Science and Law needs to be introduced in the primary school level and punishments for various crimes shall be included in the curriculum.
- Necessary steps shall be taken to ensure the quality of drinking water in households.
- A white paper may be published with detailed content regarding the guidelines as well as criteria for various government services/programmes.
- A separate branch of medical education shall be initiated for the medical care given to the elder citizens.

- All information regarding the PWD works should be published, including the estimate for the proposed project.
- Academic syllabi in the schools should include the biographies of great leaders such as Shri. V. S. Achuthanandhan.
- Appropriate measures shall be adopted for ensuring guarantee regarding the security and accuracy of the government approved weighments and measurements.

Shri V.Jayakumaran (Lottery agent, Vithura) talked about the atrocities faced by the lottery vendors. He pointed out the following problems and suggestions:

- As a result of the unexpected hartals being announced in the state, a lot of vendors/workers in the lottery sector are under crisis, and on the verge of committing suicide.
- A welfare board was formed during the V. S. Achuthanandan Ministry for the upliftment of the poor as well as disabled. However, the same is now under the direct control of corporates.
- A suggestion was put forward by the Welfare Board Chairman. The suggestion was to abolish the lottery drawn on Sundays, and granting Sundays as leave for the workers. These Sundays shall be utilized for drawing the tickets that was earlier scheduled to be drawn on the hartal days.

Shri. T. Arjunan (Councillor, Nedumangad Municipality) shared his views and suggestions pertaining to the delivery of government services. His suggestions include:

- Information regarding the type of service and the required time period for the same in each office shall be published.
- The efforts to make various government services available online shall be made efficient.
- Front office system shall be implemented in all government offices.
- Measures shall be adopted to upload the orders and proceedings of government related to various services into the websites on a regular basis.
- Training programmes shall be conducted to enhance the productivity of the government servants, on a regular basis.
- Biometric attendance punching shall be implemented in all government offices.
- Multiple incidents had been reported where people, including children, were mauled or bitten by stray dogs in the Nedumangad town area. Any effort to address the same would be appreciated.

Shri. Muralidharan Nair (Retired officer from KTDC, from Melancode) concentrated on the need for the four-laning of Peroorkada-Nedumangad road and the issue regarding agriculture and livestock.

- The construction of four lane road was approved from Peroorkada to Nedumangad. But, the same was halted later. This route is heavily congested during peak times and nearly 50 ISRO buses commute through this route. Therefore, the four-laning of the route shall be done.
- The Agriculture office/Veterinary hospital was shifted from the town to Puliyoor, 4-5 kilometres away from the town). For the same reason, the farmers are experiencing trouble in reaching the centre. Therefore, the foresaid service shall be made available at the town itself.
- The beverages in the Kallingal junction shall be moved from the town area.

Adv. R. Jayadevan (Nedumangad Court) stated that Revenue department is the major department in which the services are to be made citizen centred. He added that:

- The possibility of delivering various government services to the citizens based on the various identification cards, ration cards, etc., instead of various certificates from the revenue department shall be studied.
- Measures shall be adopted to change the indifferent attitude of the officers, in various government offices, towards the citizens.
- The staff pattern of government offices/institutions should be revised periodically, in line with the quantum of service to be delivered. He cited the examples of reduced staff pattern and associated problems in the Nedumangad Municipality and Nedumangad District Hospital.
- The tendency to frequently increase the registration charges associated with the sale of land shall be reduced. At least the rural areas shall be avoided from imposing excessive fees.
- Government shall help the farmers continue in their profession by initiating efforts in fixing base value of crops, their collection and marketing.
- Various errors are present in the records of the revenue department where the dry land has been recorded as wet land. These shall be rectified, as the owners are not able to utilize the land for their uses.
- The attitude of the officers in the police station has to be changed.
- The measures shall be adopted to make the patients in the government hospitals to be aware of the treatment he/she is undergoing.



- When an injunction suit is being issued, a copy of the same is sent to the third party, who does the mischief. But the same is not given to the plaintiff. The possibility to rectify this shall be studied.
- Significant time laps occur while transferring the money in the bank account of the deceased to that of his/her relatives. These procedures shall be minimized.

Shri.Gopakumar (Kerala Revenue Department Staff Association, Nedumangad branch) talked about various issues faced by the citizens in relation to the services from the revenue department, and pointed out the remedial measures.

- The applications forwarded to various offices of the revenue department, by the AkshayaCentres usually do not contain copies of all the required supporting documents and this leads to delay in service delivery. A front office system shall be established in the offices to help the citizens complete their applications also to inform them regarding the status of the applications.
- Currently, all candidates appearing for the Medical/Engineering entrance examination are required to submit four types of certificates issued by the Village offices. The procedures shall be amended so as to make the submission of such certificates mandatory only for the candidates who qualify for the entrance examination.
- A two wheeler shall be allotted for the village officers so as to perform their duty more efficiently.
- The staff pattern in the department shall be revised.
- The infrastructure facilities at the village offices shall be improved.

Shri.Mundela P. Basheer (Social Worker, Nedumangad) concentrated on the services related to the Right to Service Act. He stated that the government offices in the state are not taking necessary actions when applications under 2G of the Right to Service Act are received. His suggestions before the Commission included:

- All government offices shall be mandated to perform accordingly when applications under 2G of Right to Service Act are received.
- An acknowledgement, as prescribed in the Rules of Right to Service Act, shall be given when the application is being submitted.
- MLA offices shall be established in the respective constituencies, so that the citizens will be able to contact MLAs directly, or at least their staff. This would also enable the newly elected MLAs to study the files of the development projects in the constituency.
- Possibilities of controlling the private vehicles on the road, and thereby strengthening the public transport system shall be studied.



Smt.Vijayakumari A.(a resident of Manikkal Panchayat) shared her views related to different sectors of public life. Her suggestions include:

- Purampokuthodu needs to be preserved and necessary actions need to be taken to improve its condition.
- Measures shall be taken to restrict the usage of plastics.
- Appointment to various posts in the Government sector shall be strictly made from the PSC list and selection on daily wage basis shall not be promoted.
- The tireless work done by ASHA workers and Anganawadi teachers shall be given proper recognition and their rights shall be protected.

Adv.Shajudheen M. (Nedumangad Court) concentrated on the ways to remove the number of confiscated vehicles in the police station and to reduce the traffic congestion in the city premises. The suggestions are as follows:

- Confiscated vehicles in the police stations which remain unclaimed by the owners during the allotted period of three months shall be auctioned by giving a temporary registration number.
- To reduce the traffic congestion within the city premises, private vehicles of government employees shall be halted at different locations and their further journey to the respective offices shall be facilitated by means of season tickets and special bus services of KSRTC.

Shri. S. S. Biju (Representative of Agricultural Workers' Union) stressed on the proper decentralization of the administration and suggested a few ways to enhance the effectiveness of the current service delivery mechanism. He put forward the following points:

- Although at the time of inception of the decentralization of power it was stated that the officials will be deputed from the Secretariat to the lower levels, it has not been implemented so far. In order to ensure proper service delivery to the citizens, the same has to be operationalized.
- In addition to the establishment of front offices in government offices, necessary steps shall also be taken to inform the citizens regarding the status of the service to be delivered.
- The welfare boards and their activities, including the remittances from the members, shall be revised periodically.
- A well-equipped Disaster Management Team shall be formed at least at the Taluk level.
- The transfers of the teachers shall be made only during the vacation periods, and not in between an academic year.

Shri B. Raju(Scheduled Castes Welfare Council - PKS) said that by the end of every financial year, considerable amount of money sanctioned for the department is being wasted, and that efforts shall be taken to avoid this tendency. Other suggestions include:

- Procedures shall be minimized for obtaining the caste certificate.
- SSLC certificate shall be made a basis for the caste certification, as is the case with the usage of SSLC certificate as address proof and proof of age.

Shri. M. K. Nizamudin(Pullambara Panchayat Resident) stressed on the problems faced by Pullambara residents. He said that in the mentioned locality the ration shops are 4-5 kilometres away and therefore the poor families are not available to buy ration on regular basis. As a result of the government's decision to not open new ration shops, new ration shop could not be allotted in the locality. He requested the Commission to consider the same as a special case and to adopt measures to allot a ration shop in the locality.

Shri.G. Sudhakaran (Retired Municipal Secretary from Tholicode)elaborated on the issues faced by different strata of citizens in availing the services from the government departments. He also stated that Right to Service Act and Right to Information Act are two important acts for providing citizen centric services. He made a few suggestions regarding the same. His suggestions include:

- The Appellate Authority in Right to Service Act are officers from within the department. This, in turn, may result in a situation where over a time period, an officer may be required to decide upon a case including him, which was filed when he was a junior officer. The Appellate Authority shall be another agency, as is the case with the Right to Information Act.
- The records provided by the Survey Department are based on the 1978 resurvey and are marked as approved but not finalized. This shall be looked into.
- The fees collected by AkshayaCentres for submitting applications in various offices of Revenue Department shall be standardized.
- In Municipalities and Corporations, the files works until obtaining DPC approval are tedious and complicated. This shall be looked into.
- Awareness shall be given to citizens regarding the importance of Ward Sabhas in Municipalities and Corporations.
- The possibility of collecting fees from the citizens through an online system, by making use of UPI/bank apps, shall be studied.
- The possibility of making various certificates available online shall also be studied.

- The farmer communities in certain parts of the district, particularly the areas adjacent to the forest, are forced to stop agriculture due to the crop damage by wild animals. Projects such as fencing, growing trees in forest areas that would also provide food for the wild animals, etc., shall be considered.
- The attitude of the officials in the government needs to be changed. Pre-service training of at least one year shall be given to all the government officials. KSR, KSSR, Treasury codes, various relevant schemes and programmes, etc., shall be included in the pre-service training.

Shri. Babu R. (Member, PKS Nedumangad) talked about the issues pertaining to the services for the welfare of the Scheduled Caste citizens. He said that, earlier, the citizens among the Scheduled Castes were given financial support for building home/purchasing loans through various government bodies. However, these schemes had been integrated to form the Life Mission scheme. But the scheme does not state anything about the inclusion of scheduled castes. Necessary actions shall be taken to ensure that at least two or three out of every ten beneficiaries are from Scheduled Castes.

Shri. P. Harikeshan (Standing Committee Chairman, Nedumangad Municipality) made three valuable suggestions regarding the service delivery. The suggestions are as follows:

- The resurvey activities undertaken by the Revenue Department should be completed in a time bound manner, as the citizens could neither transfer the land nor avail a possession certificate during the time of resurvey.
- The interest charges shall be removed for the past due accounts, for which the title deeds of the property has been submitted as the security.
- 24 % interest is accrued on property tax dues from the citizens. This interest shall be reduced to 10-12 %.

Shri. Vijayan G. (President, KVVES Nedumangad Branch) stressed on various issues faced by the merchants in the state. His statements include:

- Business has not been considered as a means of living by government, and consequently no effort has been taken to assess the loss incurred during the recent flood. This should be looked into and adequate amendments shall be made in the Panchayat Rules and Revenue Act to consider business as a means of living.
- The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 mandates the provision of compensation for the people who lose opportunity for means of living, in addition to the land owners. However, the same has not been put into practice in most cases, and the compensation is being distributed as per the land acquisition act of 1959. This should

be looked into.

- While planning for the road development projects, the rehabilitation of existing merchants shall also be considered.
- Most of the shops in the state are functioning in rented buildings, and these shops might have to, in several cases, leave the buildings on a very short notice. Legal protection shall be given to avoid such incidents.
- The penalty for dues in labour registration has been raised from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1 lakh. This should be revised accordingly.
- The penalty for non-renewal of the weighing machines also has been raised from Rs. 150 to Rs. 2,000. This also need to be revised accordingly.

Smt. Thankamani(Anganawadi Worker, Manikkal Panchayat) put forward some remedies for the issues faced by the general public. Those include:

- Gynecologists shall be appointed in selected CHCs also, so as to avoid the need to visit SAT Hospital for far away patients.
- Instructions shall be given to the schools in the state to intake children only of age 4 years or above.
- Significant delay occurs in applications for benefits under AswasaKiranam scheme. This shall be looked into.
- Medi-claim benefits need to be introduced for Anganawadi staff and their families.
- Condition of the Buds school in Manikkalpanchayat shall be improved and basic amenities needs to be provided.
- Re-introduce the Flexi Fund benefits which were earlier available to Anganawadi workers to make purchases.
- Proper screening needs to be done to identify citizens below poverty line and deserving candidates should not be left out.

Shri. P. Kesavan (Secretary, Nedumangad Karshika Karma Sena) concentrated on the issues pertaining to the Krishi Bhavans functioning in the municipalities and corporations. He said that Krishi Bhavans in the Municipalities and corporations have a very limited number of staff. Nedumangad municipality, in particular, have a very small area with urban nature. A lion share of the area is used for agriculture purposes. The current staff pattern is insufficient for providing adequate services for the farmer community. Therefore, the staff pattern of the Krishi Bhavans shall be revised.

Shri. V.Rajappan(President, Kerala State Service Pensioners' Union, Town

Block Nedumangad) made a few suggestions regarding the functioning of the revenue department. Those include:

- When the ownership of land is being transferred as a whole (Entire area as mentioned in the title deeds), the applicant need not submit special applications to get the pattayachanged. Village officers have the powers to exercise the same on their own. However, the village officers are not exercising the same.
- Decisions on all applications submitted at the Supply Offices are currently being taken at the district level, and as a result of this, considerable time lapse is occurring. The decisions on such applications shall be taken at the taluk level.

Shri.B.Nagappan(Kerala ShashtraSahityaParishad) said that unwanted meddling with the natural environment is the main reason for various disasters. He added that:

- Most of the quarries are functioning near busy roads and that these quarries are now even permitted to operate 50 m (earlier, 100 m) away from human settlements.
- Amendments have been made to the Kerala Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland Act 2008 and permissions are being given for reclamation of backwaters.
- The crusheries are not following the operational guidelines and the waste from such crusheries include silica, which may lead to diseases such as silicosis.
- A waste management unit is sanctioned at the Peringamala Panchayat, which is very near to two rivers. This should be avoided, as the chances of the rivers getting contaminated are high and the consequences would be catastrophic.

Shri. S. Radhakrishnan Nair (Secretary, Chanthavila Residents' Association) complained that the citizens are concerned by the shifting of the KrishiBhavan from the town area to a hilly place. He also added that vast area in his locality is remaining not utilized, and that these areas could be used effectively for agricultural purposes. Agricultural department shall take initiatives for the same. His other suggestions include:

- Patrolling should be energized in rural areas, such as Chanthavila.
- Strict action must be taken against the vehicles violating the one way traffic restrictions.
- In several offices, boards have been placed displaying the time required for each service. However, the same is not being followed by the officials.

Shri. R. Krishnakumar (Secretary, Revenue Tower Merchants' Association) said that around 25 government offices are functioning in the revenue tower, but the infrastructure facilities are very poor. He made the following suggestions at the hearing:

- The Housing Board must be directed to make at least an entry corridor for the tower.
- He also elaborated on the menace caused by the drunkards in the premises during night, and said that at least one policeman should be placed on duty in the area.
- The tower lacks facilities such as adequate toilet facilities for visitors, appropriate waste management system, etc. The roof also has been damaged a long time ago. Instructions shall be given to rectify these.

Shri. A. T. M. Haneefa (Retired Airport Chief from Kanjirappally) made the following suggestions regarding the service delivery:

- There is a lack of provisions for taking precautionary measures in the current disaster management system.
- The agencies entrusted with the cutting of branches of trees touching the electricity lines are not functioning properly.
- A coordination mechanism between various departments is urgently needed.
- The basic facilities are either absent or in poor condition, even in district hospitals.

Smt. HaseenaBeevi R. (Councillor, Nedumangad Municipality) stated that applications for Pattaya land from applicants in different areas within the Municipality are pending and that the same should be processed and awarded at the earliest.

Shri. C. P. Nair pointed out that several cases regarding Pattaya have been reported by the participants and recommended that an Adalat be conducted for addressing the same.

Smt. Sheela Thomas expressed her appreciation and gratitude to all participants as well as organizers of the event and also requested to chime in any additional suggestions in written or digital format.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF  
PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON NOVEMBER 30, 2018  
ALAPPUZHA.**

**FORENOON SESSION**

Smt. Sheela Thomas (Member Secretary, ARC) welcomed the members of the Commission, the participants and the organizers to the public hearing. She underlined that it is the responsibility of a government to ensure that the services are delivered to the citizens in the most appropriate manner. She said that the prime motive of Administrative Reforms Commission(ARC) which was constituted in 2016, under the chairmanship of Shri. V.S.Achuthanandan was to promote new ideas for improving the effectiveness as well as efficiency of the state administration system, and thereby to ensure that various services of the government are delivered in the adequate form.

She stated that the Commission is analyzing various ways for the improvisation of the Government services. The Commission aims to critically analyze the functions/activities of the departments which directly deal with the citizens, to define service/service delivery improvement needs and to devise a citizen centered approach that can truly meet the complex needs of the citizens. She also highlighted the importance of the public hearings organized by the Commission in developing suitable reform measures.

Shri. V. S. Achuthanandan (Chairman, ARC) in his presidential address stated that in the last two years the Commission had studied the improvisation of Vigilance system, capacity building of government servants and welfare legislations and had submitted the reports on the aforementioned topics. He stated that the Commission is in the process of analyzing the bottlenecks in delivering various services to the public sector. He emphasized that the motive shall be to make the service delivery mechanism transparent and citizen centred. Even though the citizens are considered to be the flag bearers in democracy, in real practice the public hardly have any power in the administration. He added that there is an urgent need to make the public aware of the various services offered by the government. He highlighted that just delivering the service is not enough and that the service should be delivered in a transparent and time bound manner.

He noted that, from a citizen point of view, there are many drawbacks in the current grievance redressal mechanisms. He drew attention towards the various government services that have been made available online and also pointed out that there are more services that could be delivered online. He added that the Commission organizes the public hearings in an attempt to harness valuable



suggestions regarding the improvisation of the service delivery as well as the bottlenecks in the grievance Redressal mechanisms. He urged the participants to express their opinions wholeheartedly.

Shri. C. P. Nair (Member, ARC) referred to the previous Administrative Reforms Committees constituted in the state and said that these Committees studied how the gap between the government and the public, occurring due to the inefficiency of the service delivery mechanism, can be reduced. He informed the audience that the Administrative Reforms Commissions in Kerala had strived to devise approaches to make the services of various government bodies available, without any hindrance, to the poor people in the state. He stated that no service delivery mechanism could be considered effective if it does not deliver the right service at the right time. He stressed that various schemes and programmes had been formulated for the welfare of different strata of the public, but the efficiency of such initiatives is not adequate. He quoted that the study on "Citizen First Services" would be one of the most important themes for the Commission and urged the participants to raise their concerns and express their views.

Shri. T. Venugopal (President, District Panchayat) highlighted that the studies undertaken by the Commission in the last two years and quoted that the Commission is striving to collect valuable suggestions regarding the improvisation of the service delivery mechanism prevalent in the state. He pointed out that the local government bodies are allocating funds for various projects aimed at the welfare of the fisher community, especially purchase of boats, nets etc. Through these projects 50 percent of the expenditure is covered by the government, however, the same could not be utilized as these fishermen are not able to raise the remaining fund. He concluded saying that 100 percent subsidy shall be given in such projects, to the fishermen community, taking into consideration the economic status of the community.

#### **Summary of Verbal Comments Received at the Hearing**

Shri. Subair, (Thrikkunnappuzha Panchayat Resident) requested for timely verification and sanction for his house and shop from the Panchayat. He said that he had been trying for the same for 10 years.

Shri. Natarajan (AryadGrama Panchayat Resident) spoke about the encroachment of public road in AryadGrama Panchayat for which he had to wait for 9 years to obtain justice. He also said that even though Court issued for recovery of the public land, the same was not initiated until the neglect was brought in front of the court. He iterated that such unwanted situations shall be avoided.

Shri. V. N. Ravikumaran Pillai (General Secretary, NCP Alappuzha District Committee) said that the employees of the government offices should behave

accordingly with the citizens who approach the office for various services and should take initiative for ensuring smooth delivery of citizen centred services.

Shri. Premchand D. (Alleppey District Auto rickshaw Workers' Union) spoke about the various issues faced by the taxi drivers in the state. He elaborated on the increase in the price of the vehicles, the price of petrol as well as diesel, insurance charges, road tax, etc., and pointed out that the cost of living is also increasing accordingly. He added that since the revision for taxi service charge has not been carried out so far, the taxi workers are finding it difficult to cope with the inflation. He requested for adequate measures at the earliest and also stressed on the need to fix the rates of allied services for a speculated time, as the case is with the taxi service charges. His key suggestions are:

- The service charges fixed for the taxis shall be revised at the earliest.
- Measures shall be taken to fix the charges for petrol, diesel, taxes, etc., for the time period to which the taxi service charge remain constant.

Shri. Kishor Kumar (Retd. S.I., Kerala Police and a resident of Punnapra North), shifting the attention towards the inefficiency in service delivery, said that once an application is registered in the inward register, it should be forwarded to the concerned officer, who should declare in how many days the service would be delivered. The officer is also responsible for intimating the applicant about the reason for delay, if any. His suggestions include:

- Measures shall be adopted to ensure that the services are delivered in a time bound manner and that applicants shall be intimated if any delay occurs in the service delivery.
- All employees in an office shall be equipped to handle all sections within the particular office so that even if one person enters into a leave, the other may handle the applications without any significant time delay.
- Citing the example of SLA scheme, he added that even the government employees are not aware of the benefits of various schemes. Therefore, proper publicity shall be ensured regarding the services offered at various government offices.

Shri. N. A. Gowreesanker (Social Worker and Para Volunteer, Taluk Legal Services Society, Cherthala) opined that majority of the nodal officers assigned for the RTI queries do not have proper understanding of the RTI Act. His suggestions include:

- The officers designated for such works shall be properly trained and made well aware of the Act.

- Similar to the case mentioned above, the employees are not properly aware of the Right to Service Act also. Referring to the absence of any response regarding the application he submitted to the Cherthala Taluk Office three months ago, he said that proper training need to be given to the employees regarding the Right to Service Act also.
- Adequate measures shall be adopted to ensure that acknowledgement slip is being given to all applicants at the time of receipt of the application.
- The issue of acknowledge slip shall also be mandated at the police stations, where currently no such receipt is being issued for the complaints received.

Shri. James Chinguthara (President, Fisheries Workers' Congress, Alappuzha District) concentrated on the need to ensure that the sea walls are being built for the protection of human habitation in the coastal areas of the district. His suggestions include:

- Proper rehabilitation of the people who lost land during various coastal phenomena shall be done at the earliest.
- The lump sum grant for the students among the fishermen community should be distributed in a time bound manner.
- The housing scheme particularly for the fishermen community had been merged into the LIFE Mission, and some of the eligibility conditions prescribed in the new scheme cannot be satisfied in the coastal areas. This shall be revisited.
- The construction works of the Arthungal Fishing Harbour has not been completed so far. Efforts shall be taken to complete the same urgently, as the harbor is essential for enhancing the business activities in the sector.

Smt. Lathakumari P.S. (from Edappon) expressed the concerns of the candidates included in the rank list for the post of Junior Public Health Nurse Grade II. She said that even though they had been included in the list two years ago, the appointments are not being made according to the number of vacancies. She requested that the vacancies in the Grade I category shall be filled by promoting the employees in the Grade II category and 1:1 ratio shall be maintained between the Grade I and Grade II staff by appointing candidates involved in the rank list.

Sri. Nazzar M. A. (a resident of Ambalappuzha) raised various issues pertaining to the functioning of the Government Medical College, Alappuzha. He made the following comments at the hearing:

- Around 213 doctors are receiving non practice allowance at the hospital, but majority of them are not attending the duty completely. These doctors are either coming late to the duty or going out early. This shall be avoided and the OP time must

be displayed at the concerned places.

- He referred to a reply given to him for a RTI enquiry, in which, no details regarding where to approach for further appeals, in how much time to approach, etc., was given. Proper training shall be given to the government officials regarding the guidelines of the Act.

- Doctors are not attending the night duty at the hospital currently, and the same is being attended by the PG students at the hospital. Appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure that the doctors are handling the cases during night, as the medical college has to attend a lot of accident cases throughout the day.

Shri. C. T. Thomas (Member, District Secretariat, Kerala Congress (M)) said that the pumping activities associated with the agriculture in the paddy fields of Kuttanad shall be entrusted with the KrishiBhavans or Padasekhara Committees, instead of Pancha Special Office under the Revenue Department. This will increase the speed of service delivery.

Shri. K. Haridas (District President of Joint Council, an association of the government employees) made a few recommendations for more efficient functioning of the revenue department. His suggestions include:

- Most of the village offices in the state are having the staff pattern mandated in the year 1972. There is an urgent need to revise the staff pattern, based on the population change that had occurred. The Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department, GoK had identified 140 village offices as overloaded. Revision in staff pattern shall be made at least in these village offices.

- There is a huge delay in handling cases related to changes in the area, sub division, etc., by the LRM section in the taluk offices. But, even in taluk offices with nearly 30 village offices, only 2 surveyors are allotted for handling these cases and no draftsman is present for the same. In many cases, these surveyors also have to attend the procedures pertaining to the land acquisition for various purposes. The staff pattern at the taluk offices, therefore, shall be revised accordingly.

- Different government departments/offices are using different online portals for data storage as well as data dissemination purposes. The online mechanism used by Revenue department is RELIS, however, that of the Registration department is PEARL. When a land is purchased, the deed for the same is first handled at the Sub Registrar Office (SRO) using the PEARL, and then the same is forwarded to the village and the process is completed by means of RELIS. However, in order to obtain a sketch of the land one has to approach the survey office. The PEARL as well as the RELIS online mechanisms shall be connected with the BHOOOREKHA portal, so that the sketch could be easily made available to the owners.

- It has been found that numerous illegal deeds are reaching the SROs. A Law officer shall be placed at the SROs for the legal scrutiny of the deeds.

Shri. Manzoor Ahmed (an employee of Revenue Department, GoK and a representative of the Kerala Land Revenue Staff Association) made the following suggestions at the hearing:

- While sanctioning filling of 10 cents of paddy field for housing purposes, the area is marked in the revenue department as 4.05 ares, however, the same is marked in the Panchayats as 4.04 ares. And the land area given in the directions to the Panchayats is 4.04 ares. For the same reason, the application is redirected to the RDO. Appropriate measures shall be formulated to tackle this issue.
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed on December 3 of every year. However, owing to the recent flood in the state, decision has been made not to observe the same in the district. He recommended that, if possible, the same shall be observed in the district.

Smt. Dhanya Mol P. T. (an employee of KSRTC and a resident of Muhamma) stressed on the plastic processing in Muhamma. She made the following comments:

- The plastic manufacturing units operating in Muhamma had acquired the license for the production of paper covers, bags, etc., but, are engaged in the high temperature processing and manufacturing of plastic products. The company is operating at around 3m from the human habitation.
- It has been found by Regional Cancer Centre, Thiruvananthapuram that 121 persons in the Muhamma Panchayat are cancer patients. Therefore, such plastic manufacturing units shall not be sanctioned at the densely populated villages.

Shri. Jose John (a resident of Mampuzhakari) requested that the Commission invite the farmers from all across the state and hear their concerns. He added that 5 hectares of land is not sufficient for a family for agricultural purposes, so the limit should be revised. He suggested that adequate measures need to be taken to ensure that the farmers continue in the profession.

Shri. T. Suresh Babu (a resident of Muhamma) made three important suggestions before the Commission.

- Scooters with side-wheels shall be provided to the parents of children with autism, multiple disability or similar disabilities, so as to ensure safety of both children and parents.
- The financial assistance for the differently abled persons are not being distributed accordingly. Efforts shall be made to ensure that such financial assistances are being sanctioned and distributed in efficient manner.
- The fund usually allotted for the observance of International Day of Persons

with Disabilities is Rs. 10,000/-. However, for the current year even that minimal amount has not been sanctioned owing to the post-flood situation. On the other hand, the Nehru trophy boat race, arts festivals etc., were conducted in the district. Sanction shall be given for the programme, if possible.

Shri. Sasikumar P. Panicker (District Secretary, Kerala State Service Pensioners' Union, Alappuzha Unit) presented a few problems faced by the pensioners.

- The pension documents in the public sector banks was recalled to the treasury department in the year 2016. These documents had been distributed to the fourteen sub offices stationed at each district. However, the pensioners are finding it difficult to locate their pension book and associated documents, as there are many faults occurred in the distribution of these documents. Directions shall be given to the treasury Director to transfer the PPOs to the respective treasuries in the districts.
- Just as the case with the time period specified for revalidation for pension, commutation and gratuity of the pensioner, the time period for revalidation of LTA shall also be made 3 years, instead of 1 year.
- Due to server issues, the pension through money orders are delayed and reaches the beneficiary very late. It has to be noted that the pension is being distributed through money orders only for the pensioners aged more than 75 years. Therefore, adequate actions shall be taken to ensure timely disbursement of the pension.

Shri. Sugathan (from Mannancheri Grama Panchayat) presented his suggestions regarding the disbursement of pension.

- The pensions obtained from various agencies such as Construction Workers' Welfare Board, Agricultural Workers' Welfare Board, etc., are being provided as the corresponding amount was collected from the members in regular time intervals. And, therefore, these pensions shall not be treated as the same as the welfare pensions being provided through the panchayat. The receipt of these pensions shall not affect the eligibility for welfare pensions issued through panchayats.
- He cited an example whereby a senior citizen lady receiving old age pension stopped receiving the same as she transferred her place of residence to an old age home. As reported by the officials, the pension cannot be transferred between the panchayats, instead need to be applied again. However, as per the guidelines, the pension could not be sanctioned for those residing in old age homes.
- The welfare pensions are being distributed from the date on which the final approval is obtained. However, it usually takes more than one year for an application to get this approval. Measures shall be taken to ensure that welfare pensions are provided to the beneficiaries for the entire period for which they are eligible.



Smt. ShahidaBeevi K. A. (Anganawadi Worker, Valiyakulam)highlighted various issues faced by the Anganawadi workers in the state. Her recommendations include:

- The pension amount for the Anganawadi workers shall be increased.
- The Anganawadi workers also shall be covered under the ESI scheme.

Shri. Mohammed Riyad (Zakkariya Ward, Alappuzha) said that a criminal, who was punished earlier for the offence against him, along with the police officials are framing up cases against him. He said that he was proved innocent in all the cases so far and added that he has been protesting in front of the District Collectorate for one hour every day for the last 158 days.

Shri. K. Sasidharan (Kanichukulangara SNDP Union Counsellor) informed that the present condition of the workers in the coir industry is very pathetic and demanded adequate measures for the upliftment of this stratum of people.

Shri. BinuKallikkattu (Secretary, Matsyathozhilaali Congress, Alappuzha District) pointed out that the financial assistance of Rs. 1,350/- under the Thanal scheme is not being provided to the fishermen for the last two years. He added that the kerosene supplied to the fishermen had been reduced from 129 litres to 45 litres. His suggestions are:

- The reduction in financial assistance as well as sanctioned supply of kerosene shall be reversed.
- Appropriate efforts shall be taken to give compensation timely for the fishermen engaged in the rescue activities during the flood, so as to repair their boats.

Shri. Soumyaraj (Area Joint Secretary, BMS, Alappuzha) stated that cost of living as well as the costs associated with various charges for the auto rickshaw had increased rapidly in the last four years. But, the service charge for the auto rickshaws are not increased for the last four years. Adequate change shall be brought in the service charge for the auto rickshaws.

Shri. Prasannakumar P. P. (Social Worker and Chairman, Human Rights Action Council, Cherthala) shared his views regarding problems of the teachers in the unaided sector and requested the Commission to study and suggest suitable reform measures.

Smt. Sreelatha K. (Anganawadi Worker, Ambalappuzha) presented her views regarding various welfare schemes of the government. Her concerns include:

- The pension applications of numerous differently abled persons are rejected as their annual income is little higher than the limit set for the same.
- For the same reason, they are not being covered under the Health Insurance scheme.



- The benefits of the AswasaKiranam scheme is provided to the applicant only after a year or so. This benefit should be provided at least within two months.

Shri. Thomas John (Para Legal Volunteer, District Legal Services Society, Alappuzha) made two recommendations before the Commission.

- In Cheriyanad Grama Panchayat, 34 houses were destroyed during the flood, out of which 20 of them were provided by the government itself. He added that those people are living in adverse conditions and recommended that efforts shall be taken to rehabilitate them.
- Around 350 para legal volunteers, with proper training, are available in the district. The service of these volunteers shall be used by the government accordingly.

Acharya T. V. Rajendran (Volunteer, District Legal Services Society, Alappuzha) stated that even though provisions are made by the government for the cremation of the bodies of landless people, the efforts are not fully implemented in certain cases. He demanded that the Commission look into the matter seriously and recommend adequate measures to the government.

Smt. P. S. Swarnam (Deputy Collector, Alappuzha) addressing various issues raised related to the flood and disaster management, said that data collection regarding the houses affected has been entrusted with the local self-government department. 3000 houses were marked as completely destroyed in the preliminary phase, however, inspection was carried out through the Panchayat officials and 2315 houses are included in the revised list. Efforts are being taken to rehabilitate the people, who lost land during the flood. Land had been identified for this purpose in Chengannur, Cherthala and Mavelikkara Taluks, and efforts are also taken to identify land through LIFE Mission and from the PSUs under loss. Persons have agreed to rebuild houses themselves with the financial aid from the government. An appeal committee has also been constituted for handling the controversies and appeals regarding the service delivery. The first instalment of the financial assistance, Rs. 95,100/- has been distributed among 548 beneficiaries so far. An assistance of Rs. 10,000/- has been given to 1,63,928 persons affected by the flood.

#### **Key Suggestions:**

- The Court orders regarding the recovery of public land shall be implemented without any delay.
- The service charges fixed for the taxis shall be revised at the earliest.
- Measures shall be taken to fix the charges for petrol, diesel, taxes, etc., for the time period to which the taxi service charge remain constant.
- Measures shall be adopted to ensure that the services are delivered in a time

bound manner and that applicants shall be intimated if any delay occurs in the service delivery.

- All employees in an office shall be equipped to handle all sections within the particular office so that even if one person enters into a leave, the other may handle the applications without any significant time delay.
- Proper training shall be given to Government officials regarding Right to Information Act and Right to Service Act.
- Adequate measures shall be adopted to ensure that acknowledgement slip is being given to all applicants at the time of receipt of the application.
- Proper rehabilitation of the people who lost land during various coastal phenomena shall be done at the earliest.
- The lump sum grant for the students among the fishermen community should be distributed in a time bound manner.
- The construction works of the Arthungal Fishing Harbour shall be completed at the earliest.
- The service of the doctors at the medical colleges shall be ensured.
- The pumping activities associated with the agriculture in the paddy fields of Kuttanad shall be entrusted with the KrishiBhavans or Padasekhara Committees.
- The staff pattern in the village offices and taluk offices shall be revised.
- The PEARL as well as the RELIS online mechanisms shall be connected with the BHOOREKHA portal.
- A Law officer shall be placed at the SROs for the legal scrutiny of the deeds submitted for registration.
- Plastic manufacturing units shall not be sanctioned at the densely populated villages.
- The pension amount for the Anganawadi workers shall be increased.
- The Anganawadi workers also shall be covered under the ESI scheme.
- The reduction in financial assistance as well as sanctioned supply of kerosene for the fishermen shall be reversed.
- Appropriate efforts shall be taken to give compensation timely for the fishermen engaged in the rescue activities during the flood, so as to repair their boats.

Shri. C. J. Suresh Kumar (Under Secretary, ARC) assured that all the suggestions as well as the petitions received will be considered by the Commission, and adequate measures will be initiated at the earliest. He requested all the

participants to chime in their opinions in written or digital format as well.

Shri. Suhas S. (District Collector, Alappuzha) expressed his appreciation and gratitude to all participants.

#### **AFTERNOON SESSION:**

Smt. Sheela Thomas (Member Secretary, ARC) welcomed the members of the Commission, the participants and the organizers to the public hearing. She underlined that the purpose of the government is to deliver the services to its citizens in the most appropriate manner. She cited the Doorstep Service Delivery (DSD) Scheme of the Delhi Government, whereby 40 government services are proposed to be delivered to the citizens to their homes. She further made a presentation on the activities of the Commission, the Service Delivery Principles and the key areas being studied for developing suitable reform measures. She also briefed on the government departments as well as the key sectors selected for study by the Commission.

She stated that the government officials need to understand that the role of every government is to provide services to the public. It has been commonly found that the government officials are not able/willing to interpret the prevailing rules and regulations properly. She elaborated on the service delivery principles related to the service delivery to the public. She remarked that the system is lacking appropriate decision making based on the guidelines and the circumstances. The employees need to take rational decisions properly interpreting the laws/rules. She urged the participants to present their views wholeheartedly.

#### **Summary of Verbal Comments Received at the Hearing**

Shri. V. Dinakaran (Ex-MLA) commented that, in most cases, the reports submitted by Commissions appointed for studying various issues are not implemented. He pinpointed that the reports submitted by ARC also has not been implemented so far. He put forward the following suggestions during the hearing:

- The Legislative Assembly should be able to perform its intended functions in a transparent manner, giving due importance to the ideas/suggestions of the opposition.
- It has been observed that senior employees are altering the decisions, taken by the junior employees, abiding relevant rules and regulations. This affects the transparency and accountability of the system. Appropriate efforts are required to tackle such issues.
- A major source of corruption in public service delivery is the role of middlemen. Citizens should be able to approach the public servants without fear and the employees should hear their grievances and should take necessary actions so as to avoid the middlemen.

- Due to the lack of inter-departmental coordination, the public remain bereft of the eligible benefits from the government. Adequate mechanism at the top level of administration system shall be established.
- The intimations regarding the disasters shall be made to all the concerned officials at various levels in a time bound manner.
- 149 families in Alappuzha are residing in shelter homes for years. Convergence of the efforts of different departments could have helped in the case.

Shri. Joseph Palathra (Senior Journalist) underlined the need for proper implementation of the existing laws and for the effective evaluation of the grama sabhas. He stated that corrupt politicians use grama sabhas as a tool for implementing illegitimate practices. His suggestions include:

- The effectiveness of the grama sabhas shall be restored, and the practice of preferential presentations at grama sabhas shall be checked.
- Proper evaluation of the grama sabhas shall be ensured.
- Government officials need to directly interact with the public.

Shri. A. Lakshmanan (Councillor, Alappuzha Municipality) emphasized on the need for ensuring the proper delegation of powers to the panchayats. He said that the panchayats are not in receipt of all powers delegated to them and consequently public is not able to harness the benefits of existing legislations. He also made the following recommendations at the hearing:

- Proper monitoring and evaluation of fund utilization by the Padasekhara Samithis shall be ensured.
- Corrective measures are not being adopted for the issues raised in the grama sabhas. Also, a mechanism needs to be implemented for recording the issues raised by the women and to initiate appropriate actions.
- The subsidy provided through the Pancha Special Offices are reaching the farmers. Hence, the subsidy distribution shall be entrusted with the Panchayat.

Shri. J. T. Ramsey (Secretary, Alappuzha District Congress Committee) stated that the development activities are not implemented in a time bound manner. Significant amount is being spent on the construction of bridges. However, adequate solution for shortage of drinking water is urgently needed. He requested the Commission to intervene in the matter and to ensure development and implementation of a Master Plan for the same.

Shri. Mani J. (A resident of Sadanandapuram) made various recommendations for improving the service delivery, particularly in the Kuttanad area. His recommendations include:

- Adequate measures shall be initiated to correct the behaviour of government officials at all government – public interfaces, including KSRTC buses.
- Decision has been made to rehabilitate the families in the Kuttanad R block owing to the frequent flood situations. Instead of rehabilitating 36 families, it would be highly recommended to increase the depth of the river and extending the AC canal to Pallathuruthy.

Smt. Lalithabai (Kerala State Service Pensioners' Union) pointed out several issues in the service delivery. Her suggestions include:

- Various schemes are being introduced for providing different services to the public. However, these are not being implemented in a time bound manner. A coupon of Rs. 500/- was announced for the widows during the flood situation. But the same has not been efficiently distributed yet. Such hitches in service delivery need to be addressed.
- The palliative care system is not functioning properly, and the utility of the same shall be revisited.
- The conductors in the public transport buses are not ensuring that the reserved seats are given to the eligible ones. This shall be corrected.
- Kudumbashree has a provision to provide loans for home maintenance. However, the process is neither simple nor transparent. Such issues shall be studied by the Commission.

Smt. Poly Thomas (Ex-President, Chambakulam Block Panchayat) expressed her concerns regarding functioning of the government offices. Her concerns include:

- Commission shall check whether the government officers are reaching the offices on time and whether they are working as per the time schedule.
- The involvement of government officers in politics shall also be checked. Also, the government officers shall not be made victims of the political agenda.
- There is no coordination among various departments of the government.
- The audit objections are hindering the service of officers with good motive.

Shri. C. P. Nair remarked that mechanism for coordination among departments exists within the system. This is done at the state level by the Chief Secretary and at the district level by the District Collector.

Smt. C. S. Sujatha (Former MP) stated that development is to be obtained through proper coordination among the departments.

Shri. Lenin Joseph (Bureau Chief, Deshabhimani) looked into the problems encountered by the general public in various types of certifications from the

government service. His recommendations include:

- Several certificates issued by the universities are not necessary and are consuming time as well as causing additional financial burden to the students. Such certificates shall be identified and avoided.
- In cases of agricultural loss, the farmers are forced to arrange the transport for the inspection authority, so as to get their loss certified. This shall be avoided.
- The need for a block panchayat as an intermediary between the grama panchayat and district panchayat shall be reviewed.

Shri. K. Ashokan (Chairman, District Panchayat Standing Committee) mentioned certain measures to be adopted to ensure good service delivery and also praised the efforts made by the government during the times of Kerala Floods 2018. His suggestions include:

- The details regarding the assets of the government officials shall be collected and monitored periodically. This will help in reducing corruption.
- In several cases, the fund allotted for development purposes could not be utilized completely. Such procedural inadequacies shall be rectified.
- Several issues could be discussed in the Taluk Sabhas. However, since the sabha do not have the authority to take decisions, appropriate actions are not being taken.

Shri. Maloor Sreedharan (District Secretary, Library Council) mentioned several areas where reform measures are urgently needed. His concerns include:

- Fund for building maintenance could be easily obtained for libraries. However, for those libraries functioning in the Poramboke (unassessed land) could not avail this facility due to lack of appropriate deeds. Possession certificate shall be issued and considered sufficient for such libraries.
- The number of ordinary buses shall be increased.
- Adequate stamp papers shall be issued.
- The vehicles seized by the police shall be put on auction and the revenue thus obtained shall be used for other development purposes.

Shri. A. Shoukath (District Secretary, Senior Journalist Union) pinpointed various bottlenecks in the service delivery by various departments of the government. The major suggestions are:

- Proper coordination mechanism shall be implemented between PWD and Kerala Water Authority so as to avoid the demolition of the newly built roads. The lack of coordination is also causing delay in the supply of drinking water.
- Police department shall be made citizen friendly.



- As the hospitals already do not have adequate manpower, therefore additional responsibilities shall not be assigned to the hospital staff.
- It shall be ensured that the fund given to the Kerala Agricultural Workers' Welfare Fund Board is utilized effectively.
- The financial aid to women's marriage and as assistance during pregnancy periods shall be distributed in a timely manner.
- The transactions in the ration shops are not transparent. Stringent actions need to be taken to ensure that the ration shop owners provide all details regarding each transaction to the consumer.
- A mechanism shall be devised to set deadlines for the files to be processed by the government officials.
- Adequate measures shall be taken to ensure the safety of the journalists.

Shri. A. N. Puram Sivakumar (A social activist) stressed on the need for adequate capacity building interventions and the need for bringing about change in the attitude of the government officials. He said that in order to deliver the services appropriately, the government officials need to have endurance, affection, magnanimity and common sense. He also added that it is the responsibility of the government to take care of the health of people with age of 62 years or above, and that appropriate changes be incorporated in the legal framework.

Shri. Antony Francis (Retd. Sub Inspector and a resident of Edathua) made the following recommendations before the Commission:

- Corruption shall be arrested in all sectors of the Government.
- Technology shall be made use of in ensuring the availability of officers in the Government offices.
- Drainages shall also be built during the construction of roads.
- Adequate number of doctors shall be placed in the government hospitals.

Smt. C. S. Sujatha (Former Member of Parliament) congratulated the Commission for the efforts made so far and made the following recommendations for a better service delivery mechanism:

- 40 percent of the total budget is going to the local self governments. Therefore, it shall be ensured that development programmes are being carried out in a timely and effectively manner.
- A fair share of the total budget is earmarked for the welfare of women. However, the effectiveness of utilization of the fund shall be reviewed.

Shri. Varghese Kannampalli (State President, Kerala Government Contractors'

Association) remarked that the contractors are being blamed on most cases. He said that many government employees are also ignorant as is the case with the public. He added that public money is being looted through the infrastructure development projects undertaken by external consultancies.

Shri. M. D. Vamadevan (Social Worker) informed the Commission that the Revenue Department is not accepting tax for the same land for which tax was paid in 2016 and 2017. He added that the pension schemes of Social Justice Department shall also be distributed in a timely manner, as is the case with the pension for former government employees. He also remarked that smooth transit of vehicles is being hindered due to the operations of street vendors and demanded for adequate measures to address the same.

Adv. R. Sanal Kumar (A resident of Komana) pointed out the following at the hearing:

- District Collector is not attending the meetings of Committees under his chairmanship.
- In order to increase the productivity of workforce, measures shall be taken to reduce the stress of the government employees.
- Government officials do not have adequate awareness regarding the Right to Information Act.
- Receipt shall be given for the complaints submitted by the public, and reason for the procedural delay shall be intimated promptly.

Shri. Jose John (Kuttanad) stated that Kuttanad Development Authority needs to be formed.

Shri. M. R. Kesavakkurupp (Former Government Employee) remarked that the retired employees should have the attitude to serve the government along with the receipt of pension. He also added that the functioning of government hospitals need to be made effective.

Shri. V. J. Sreekumar (Ambalappuzha) opined that the government employees must have a friendly approach to the public and that these officials should have awareness regarding the changes in the schemes and programmes for the welfare of the public.

**Key Suggestions:**

- Citizens should be able to approach the public servants without fear and the employees should hear their grievances and should take necessary actions so as to avoid the middlemen.
- Government officials should interact directly with the public.

- In order to increase the productivity of workforce, measures shall be taken to reduce the stress of the government employees.
- Government officials do not have adequate awareness regarding the Right to Information Act.
- The details regarding the assets of the government officials shall be collected and monitored periodically. This will help in reducing corruption.
- The transactions in the ration shops are not transparent. Stringent actions need to be taken to ensure that the ration shop owners provide all details regarding each transaction to the consumer.
- The conductors in the public transport buses are not ensuring that the reserved seats are given to the eligible ones. This shall be corrected.
- Due to the lack of inter-departmental coordination, the public remain bereft of the eligible benefits from the government. Adequate mechanism at the top level of administration system shall be established.
- Several certificates issued by the universities are not necessary and are consuming time as well as causing additional financial burden to the students. Such certificates shall be identified and avoided.
- In cases of agricultural loss, the farmers are forced to arrange the transport for the inspection authority, so as to get their loss certified. This shall be avoided.
- The intimations regarding the disasters shall be made to all the concerned officials at various levels in a time bound manner.
- 149 families in Alappuzha are residing in shelter homes for years. Convergence of the efforts of different departments could have helped in the case.
- The effectiveness of the grama sabhas shall be restored, and the practice of preferential presentations at grama sabhas shall be checked.
- Proper evaluation of the grama sabhas shall be ensured.
- Several issues could be discussed in the Taluk Sabhas. However, since the sabha do not have the authority to take decisions, appropriate actions are not being taken.
- Proper monitoring and evaluation of fund utilization by the Padasekhara Samithis shall be ensured.
- The subsidy provided through the Pancha Special Offices are reaching the farmers. Hence, the subsidy distribution shall be entrusted with the Panchayat.
- Adequate measures shall be initiated to correct the behaviour of government officials at all government – public interfaces, including KSRTC buses.

- Decision has been made to rehabilitate the families in the Kuttanad R block owing to the frequent flood situations. Instead of rehabilitating 36 families, it would be highly recommended to increase the depth of the river and extending the AC canal to Pallathuruthy.
- The vehicles seized by the police shall be put on auction and the revenue thus obtained shall be used for other development purposes.

Shri. V. S. Achuthanandan expressed his sincere gratitude towards the participants for their wholehearted participation and assured them that the recommendations will be studied thoroughly by the Commission.

## **PROCEEDINGS OF PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON DECEMBER 28, 2018 MALAPPURAM**

### **The Public Hearing**

The Government of Kerala has set up the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) to study various issues in governance and to suggest reforms to make the public services more public-centered, efficient, effective, equitable, affordable, accountable, sustainable and accessible to all. The Commission has selected “Citizen First Services” as an important area of its study. In this backdrop, the Commission held a public hearing session on December 28, 2018 at Malappuram, to identify the flaws in the current service delivery mechanism and to harness valuable suggestions from public regarding the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery. Various government functionaries, dignitaries from Non-Governmental Organizations and members from the general public turned up at the venue to voice their opinions and concerns.

Smt. Sheela Thomas (Member Secretary, ARC) welcomed the members of the Commission, the dignitaries present, the participants and organizers to the public hearing and adjured the participants to express their views and suggestions. She said that it is the responsibility of a government to ensure that the services are delivered to the citizens in the most appropriate manner. She said that the prime motive of Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) which was constituted in 2016, under the chairmanship of Shri. V. S. Achuthanandan was to promote new ideas for improving the effectiveness as well as efficiency of the state administration system, and thereby to ensure that various services of the government are delivered in the adequate form.

She stated that Grievance Redressal Cell is a mechanism to resolve the issues in the public service delivery. However, complaints do exist regarding the functioning of the grievance redressal mechanism. She also highlighted the importance of the public hearings organized by the Commission in developing suitable reform measures.

Shri. V. S. Achuthanandan (Chairman, ARC) greeted the audience and deliberated on the activities of the Commission so far. He stated that all aspects affecting the public service delivery need to be addressed and that the cooperation of the public is required for the same. It is for this reason that the Commission is holding public hearing sessions in various districts.

### **Summary of Verbal Comments Received at the Hearing**

Smt. P. Gouri (P. Sarojini Ammal Mahila Samajam, Manjeri) shared her views about the issues related to women and child development. Her main suggestions were:

- The welfare plans of women and child welfare department are implemented jointly by State and Central Governments. The funds released for these activities become lapse due to the delay in execution from the part of non- profit organizations associated with this. Remedial measures should be taken to avoid delay in executing programmes.
- The shifting of service provider's centres that works to aid those affected by domestic violence, to CDPO office will affect the working of the NGOs.
- Relevant experience shall be mandated for appointment of district level officers.
- The benefits entitled for the tribal people shall be made available at the earliest.
- Hostel facility shall be ensured for SC/ST students.

Shri. Kunhalan Venniyur (Janakiya Samithi Chairman, Venniyur) suggested to reconsider the study to check the feasibility of splitting Tirurangadi village into two villages. He also added that the list of available services in an office should be strictly displayed for the people.

Shri. K Abdul Azeez (District President, Kerala Federation of the Blind, Malappuram) shared his views about the welfare activities for people with disabilities. His main suggestions were:

- The RPWD Act which shall be implemented in the state.
- New card for the concessions for person with disabilities should be issued.
- The pension for blind persons should be raised to Rs.2000/-.
- The concessions related to electricity consumption, for differently abled persons shall be restored.
- The travel passes for differently abled persons needs to be considered in private buses too.

Smt. Sheela Thomas replied that the matter has been already considered and the same has been included in the report prepared by the Commission on Welfare Rights.

Youth Wing, Kerala Federation of Blind), suggested to avail computer learning facilities for blind and requested to avail any aid for the husbands of blind women.

Shri. Mammudu Nannanbra (Venniyur Janakiya Samithi), requested upgradation of Venniyoor UP School to High school.

Smt. Sarojini (Anganwadi worker), shared her concerns regarding functioning of Anganwadis and made the following recommendations:

- Land shall be allotted for building Anganwadi centre.



- ESI scheme shall be made available to Anganwadi workers and wages shall be increased.
- Government shall provide necessary assistance to improve the living conditions of the Anganwadi workers.

Shri. P. Mundi (Joint Treasurer, Calicut University) asked to regularize employees with more than 30 years of service.

Shri. Sukumaran Vaidyan (a resident of Pang Chendi) suggested providing facilities such as, Residential schooling system, skill training and service oriented-doctors, to wheel chair-ridden students.

Shri. Noorjahan M.A. (An entrepreneur in Malappuram) requested to extend the validity of panchayat license and to speed up the process of issuing license. He called for actions to aid and promote entrepreneurs.

Shri. E Abdul Razak (District President, Pravasi Congress) raised his concerns about Non Resident Indians. He made the following suggestions:

- Actions shall be taken to ensure that banks accept the proposals put forward, in compliance with the schemes of NORKA, by the returned Non-Resident Keralites.
- The government procedures shall be made simple and accurate.

Shri. Anvarudheen T. P. (an Akshaya entrepreneur) grieved that the Akshaya centres are in severe financial crisis. He pointed out the following suggestions for reviving the Akshaya centres:

- Insurance coverage shall be given for Akshaya centres.
- Minimum wage shall be ensured for the entrepreneurs.
- Akshaya centres shall be included in various activities of Government for reducing unemployment.

Shri. K. R. Ravi (Vice President, Sai Sneha Theeram) stressed on the issues pertinent to the operations of government hospitals and suggested the following:

- At present, a patient admitted in a government hospital could be discharged only by the consulted doctor. This shall be changed.
- Facilities shall be made available in the hospitals in tribal areas.
- The tendency to issue referral for medical checkups even after submission of requisite disability certificate shall be arrested.
- Adequate training shall be given to the employees entering in civil service.

Shri. Latheef Koottalungal (Member, Youth Congress) informed that three out of the seven candidates who got appointment in the Pallikkal Village Office are on

leave and that adequate number of staff shall be ensured in government offices. He added that the Government UP School in Nediyruppu shall be upgraded to High School and that Pallikkal Village office shall be reorganized.

Shri. T. H. Kunhali (District President, Pravaasi Kaarya Samithi) requested that the NRK returnees should be given pension with minimal eligibility criteria. The procedures for NRKs to enroll names in the ration cards also shall be simplified.

Smt. Rajitha (Attappady Anganwadi Workers' Association) stated that the system permits opening of pre-schools without any qualification, while the Anganwadi workers are trained so as to ensure the physical and mental development of the children. She also said that the pension for retired Anganwadi workers be increased.

Smt. Vijayalekshmi (Anganwadi worker, Malappuram) remarked that Anganwadi workers shall be avoided from the meetings and events organised in connection with other sectors of service delivery. Such occurrences result in less time for teaching children. She also highlighted the need to fill in multiple registers, mostly with repeated entries. She added that flexi funds to be retained and that the wages for the employees shall be based on the number of years of service. She also pointed out that government officers should not take part in events of other organisations.

Smt. Mumthas (Member, Dhanashree Kudumbashree) demanded for actions to make Kudumbashree sustainable.

Shri. K. Abdul Kayum (Citizen Council, Ponnani) an office shall be set up at district level and the development activities shall be carried out in the leadership of Shri. V.S. Achuthanandan.

Shri. Kunjali remarked that the post of Secretary is vacant in Ponnani Municipality and it is creating difficulties in the smooth operation of the local body. He stated that the administration of Municipalities be reviewed and that the officials need to have a public friendly attitude.

Smt. Maya C. K. (Teacher, Mahadheen Special School) stated that there has been decision to upgrade the special schools to aided status. However, this has been changed later. She informed the Commission that these schools have already done the necessary renovation of the infrastructure. She requested the Commission to look into the matter. She added that packages for Special Schools shall be devised and that BUDS schools should be permitted only in places where special schools are not functioning.

Shri. Abdul Latheef (A resident of Malappuram) said that the promotion of employees under Protection of Judges Act need to be reviewed. He also remarked

employees under Protection of Judges Act need to be reviewed. He also remarked that many activities of the Malappuram district administration is not being done in a good manner.

The Janapaksham Party representative present at the hearing stated that the actions of banks in case of loan recovery are very cruel and need to be reviewed.

Shri. K. V. Shaji (District Coordinator, Vivaravakasha Koottayma) the government offices are responding to the RTI applications and that it shall be mandated to follow the rules and regulations laid down under RTI Act. He added that files are not being stored in government offices as per Section 4 of RTI Act. He also highlighted various faults in the operation of the police department. His concerns/suggestions include:

- A copy of the FIR shall be given to the applicant.
- Investigation procedures shall be in compliance with section 1/73.
- District officials of the police department should take appropriate actions upon receiving complaints against police officers under their control.
- Arrest shall be recorded only for cases in which the guilty could be imprisoned for a minimum period of 7 years.

Dr. Bijesh K. Krishnan (Member, Inclusive Parent Association, Thiruvananthapuram) made the following suggestions at the hearing:

- Differently abled students also should be taught in ordinary schools.
- The student-teacher ratio shall be strictly followed in the case of differently abled students.
- The Resource Rooms for the students shall be made Smart Resource Rooms.
- Home based Training Programmes shall be restarted.
- Vehicles shall be provided to the parents for transportation of students.

Smt. Fareeda stated that government shall take steps for helping the persons earning their bread by writing applications for the public. She added that a counter shall be opened in all offices for such persons.

Shri. Vasudevan (DAWF, Malappuram) the rehabilitation package shall be provided for differently abled persons. Pension scheme also shall be restarted.

Shri. Shameer V. P. (Representative of State Employees' Union) remarked that similar to the way how government offices were made ladies friendly, offices shall be made babies friendly too.

Shri. Chekkutty (Karippur) said that welfare fund, ESI benefits or Health insurance shall be provided to newspaper agents.

Shri. Rasheed said that utmost care need to be given while issuing permit for the quarries. He said that the ban for quarries in the red zone shall be extended to orange zone also.

Shri. Shaji Kaliyath (Representative, E. Moidu Moulavi Memorial Charitable Trust, Perumpadam) said that the legislations shall be revised periodically and that the file works in the government offices should be processed in rapid manner.

Shri. K. C. Abdul Latheef (Retired employee of Revenue department) made the following recommendations at the hearing:

- Direct benefit transfer shall be implemented in the state.
- The assistance and benefits provided to the farmers shall be increased.
- The supply of lime shall not be reduced.
- Chamravattam irrigation project shall be implemented.

Shri. Saleekh P. Mongam (Kerala NGO Association, Malappuram) made the following suggestions at the hearing:

- The basic facilities in the village offices shall be renovated.
- The staff pattern in the village offices shall be revised.
- Proper coordination shall be ensured between various departments.
- Rules and regulations shall be revised periodically.

Boards displaying similar messages shall be combined.

Shri. Vincent (Joint Council) stated that the villages in Malappuram district shall be increased so as to deliver the services properly and also said that provision shall be made so that lower level of employees could make complaints against higher officials in case of corruption.

Shri. Noushad (Area Secretary, CITU) submitted a complaint regarding the administrative reforms needed.

Shri. Chakrapani (Member, Kerala Government Drivers' Association) said that the government vehicles shall be serviced/maintained periodically and that the rules and regulations to be reframed so as to aid such processes. He added that government orders shall be written in language more suitable for the public and that the auditing in all government offices shall be made effective and efficient.

Smt. Maya Sasikumar (CDS Chairperson, Amarambalam) pointed out that the funds allotted by Panchayat for the Kudumbashrees are not being received by them.

Shri. Ummer (Koottilangadi Grama Panchayat) stated that people are not able to harness the benefits of LIFE Mission due to tough eligibility criteria.

Shri. Ummer (Koottilangadi Grama Panchayat) stated that people are not able to harness the benefits of LIFE Mission due to tough eligibility criteria.

Shri. Haneefa (Road Safety Association, Malappuram) opined that road safety awareness programmes shall be conducted at schools and public places, with proper coordination among the departments.

Smt. Rukhiya (Malappuram) said that the benefits shall be given based on the income and not the size of the house.

Shri. Hussain C. (NCP, Malappuram) opined that a provision needs to be made for replacing the seized KSRTC buses and that the benefits for the employees in the unorganised sector shall be restarted.

Smt. K. P. Vijaya (District Secretary, Asha Workers' Union, Malappuram) requested either to reduce the work load of Asha Workers or to increase the their wages.

Shri. Biju (Ward Member, Amarambalam Grama Panchayat) stated that Pattaya applications are not being processed even after being advised by the Chief Minister. He also said that equivalency certificate shall be provided to VHSC students.

Shri. Shamsudeen (Thamarakkuzhi Residents' Association) informed that the residents of Thamarakkuzhi, near Collectorate are facing transportation difficulties due to the frequent marches and protests and demanded kind attention of the Commission.

Smt. Nazeena Beegum (State Secretary, Anganwadi Workers' Union) requested that Anganwadi workers be removed from the post of Grama Sabha Coordinator of Pradhan Manthri Mathru Vandana Yojana. She also said that land shall be allotted for building Anganwadis.

Shri. Haider Haji (A resident of Porur Panchayat) requested adequate actions for providing Pattaya to him.

Smt. Santhakumari P. (CDS, Tirur) opined that the no. of working days under NREGS shall be made 200 days and that adequate assistance shall be given from the government for education and marriage of their children. She also said requested jobs to their children based on their level of education. She added that working hours be made from 10 am to 4 pm.

Shri. Thomas (Trauma Care, Malappuram) requested that insurance coverage shall be provided and said that vehicles are needed to reach faster.

Smt. Sameera Pullikkal (Akshaya e-Centre Entrepreneur) stated that the resurvey process to be completed at the earliest and that the websites of all

government departments be improved.

Shri. Fadis (Trauma Care, Malappuram) remarked that the receipts are not being provided in the government offices, even though it is mandated in the Right to Service Act. He also informed that the activities of the village offices are not carried out in effectively.

Smt. Smitha (CDS Chairperson, Triprangode Grama Panchayat) said that the toilet facilities shall be improved in Kudumbashree offices also requested for hike in honorarium and other benefits.

Smt. Shibitha (Malappuram) said that the applicants under Aswasakiranam scheme be resolved quickly.

Shri. P. T. Moideen Kutti (Vice President, State Parallel College Association) stated that arts and sports festivals be carried out every year.

Shri. Rijas (Malappuram District) informed that a running water stream in the Thuvvakad-Pothannur route has been encroached by a private person and that adequate interventions are needed.

Shri. Satheesh (Member ,Kudumbashree Accountants' Union) requested for regularization of their jobs and a hike in their salary.

Adv. U.A Latheef (District President, Muslim League) remarked that the district is rapidly progressing in terms of educational attainment and that adequate options for higher education are urgently required. He also said that government fund should not be utilized for activities of the ruling party.

The representative of Kakkad Juma Masjid said that necessary measures shall be taken to ensure that religious institutions are not being affected by the development projects.

**Key Suggestions:**

The shifting of service provider's centres that works to aid those affected by domestic violence, to CDPO office will affect the working of the NGOs.

- Relevant experience shall be mandated for appointment of district level officers in Women and Child Development department.
- The benefits entitled for the tribal people shall be made available at the earliest.  
Hostel facility shall be ensured for SC/ST students.
- The feasibility of splitting Tirurangadi village into two villages shall be studied.
- The list of available services in an office should be strictly displayed for the people.

- The RPWD Act which shall be implemented in the state.
- New card for the concessions for person with disabilities should be issued.
- The pension for blind persons should be raised to Rs.2000/-.
- The concessions related to electricity consumption, for differently abled persons shall be restored.
- The travel passes for differently abled persons needs to be considered in private buses too.
- Land shall be allotted for building Anganwadi centre.
- ESI scheme shall be made available to Anganwadi workers and wages shall be increased.
- The work load of Anganwadi workers shall be reduced.
- Facilities such as, Residential schooling system, skill training and service oriented-doctors, shall be provided to wheel chair-ridden students.
- Actions shall be taken to ensure that banks accept the proposals put forward, in compliance with the schemes of NORKA, by the returned Non-Resident Keralites.
- Insurance coverage shall be given for Akshaya centres.
- Akshaya centres shall be included in various activities of Government for reducing unemployment.
- At present, a patient admitted in a government hospital could be discharged only by the consulted doctor. This shall be changed.
- Facilities shall be made available in the hospitals in tribal areas.
- The tendency to issue referral for medical checkups even after submission of requisite disability certificate shall be arrested.
- Adequate training shall be given to the employees entering in civil service.
- The special schools with all necessary facilities shall be given aided status.
- The student-teacher ratio shall be strictly followed in the case of differently abled students.
- The Resource Rooms for the students shall be made Smart Resource Rooms.
- Home based Training Programmes shall be restarted.
- Vehicles shall be provided to the parents for transportation of students.
- It shall be mandated for the government offices to follow the rules and regulations laid down under RTI Act.
- A copy of the FIR shall be given to the applicant.



- Investigation procedures shall be in compliance with section 1/73.
- District officials of the police department should take appropriate actions upon receiving complaints against police officers under their control.
- Arrest shall be recorded only for cases in which the guilty could be imprisoned for a minimum period of 7 years.
- Utmost care need to be given while issuing permit for the quarries. The ban for quarries in the red zone shall be extended to orange zone also.
- Direct benefit transfer shall be implemented in the state.
- Chamravattam Pirrigation project shall be implemented.
- The staff pattern in the village offices shall be revised.
- Proper coordination shall be ensured between various departments.
- The government vehicles shall be serviced/maintained periodically.
- Road safety awareness programmes shall be conducted at schools and public places, with proper coordination among the departments.
- Adequate options for higher education shall be ensured in the district.

Shri. C. J. Suresh Kumar (Under Secretary, ARC) expressed his appreciation and gratitude towards all participants. He assured that all suggestions will be well taken and appropriate reform measures will be included in the study report.

#### **AFTERNOON SESSION:**

The Commission welcomed all participants and organizers of the hearing. Smt. Sheela Thomas (Member Secretary, ARC) made a detailed presentation about the background for constitution of the Commission and the activities carried out so up to then. She also elaborated on the service delivery principles and the way Commission intends to study various aspects of it. She assured that all the suggestions will be studied and prompt reform measures will be taken.

#### **Summary of Verbal Comments Received at the Hearing**

Shri. M. M. Narayanan concentrated on the problems in the decentralization of power. He said that the decentralization has not been effective so far and suggested that officials ranging from District Collector to Village Officer shall be brought under Local Self-Government Department for making it more effective. He added that the government departments lack proper coordination and highlighted that for proper administration, effective coordination mechanism shall be in place from the ministerial level to the lower level of officers. He recommended having a strict monitoring of the activities of bureaucrats.

Shri. Keshavan Nair (Advocate, Manjeri) opined that grama panchayat and district panchayat are more important than the block panchayat. He also stated that the bureaucrats are showing the ego of power to the common people. His suggestions include:

- The workload of the village offices are hectic. A proper workload management could change the attitude of the officers towards the work.
- The feasibility of a new post under the secretary in municipality and panchayat shall be considered in order to reduce their workload.

Shri. Joy made the following suggestions:

- A Social Audit shall be conducted in government bodies to know whether there is a need for more postings of officials.
- The government officers shall be trained to improve the quality of service provided.
- The utilization of funds allocated to the ST category shall be monitored and it shall be ensured that the needful people are receiving the benefits.

Shri. Keshavan (Collectorate employee) said that the Government officers should be citizen friendly and the applicants shall be given proper directions regarding the documents needed to be attached for the particular application.

Shri. Jayachandran (Social Worker & Ex. Government Employee) expressed his concerns regarding the bottlenecks in decentralization of power. The lack of proper coordination among departments is causing serious concerns. He added that in Malappuram district the departments are showing reluctance to cooperate with panchayat.

Dr. Sanjay (Malappuram Govt. College Lecturer) said that application forms shall be in Malayalam and the officers should accept this. He added that there should be transparency in the working of all offices.

Shri. Narayanan (Secretary, CPI (M) District Committee) spoke about having effective civil service in Kerala. He pointed out the following:

- The files pending in revenue department shall be processed immediately.
- People's planning shall be used in its true spirit.

Shri. Subramanian K. (Calicut University) made the following suggestions:

- Actions shall be taken to make the final expenditure of a project to stand below or same as the estimated amount.
- Seized sand shall be auctioned so that the income of government can be increased.

- University and its allied departments are scattered in different places. They shall be brought under one block.

Shri. Mohammed Salim (Chairman, Perinthalmanna Municipality) expressed his views on the following:

- The process for corrections in birth and death registrations shall be simplified.
- There should be uniform guidelines for the schemes and should not be changed yearly.
- The procedures for developmental programmes shall be simplified.
- An Act is needed for availing GST share for Local Self Government department.
- Appropriate amendments shall be made in Municipal Act so that tax for 12 year period can be accepted so that the income of municipalities could be increased.
- Financial irregularity shall only be checked during auditing.
- Training shall be provided for officers for their skill enhancement.

Shri. Ramakrishnan (Kerala State Excise Staff Association) requested to appoint enough staff in the excise department and that the buildings need to be renovated. Facilities at the check post shall be improved.

Shri. Jayan Das (Asst. General Secretary, KSEB Workers' Association) expressed his concerns about the issues caused by digital payment in KSEB transactions. People are unable to pay bills above Rs.2000 directly at the KSEB offices.

Smt. Nusaiba (Health Department) asked to improve facilities in the hospital. Hygiene shall be maintained in all hospitals and alert facility should be there in all hospitals.

She also added that inadequacy in number of staffs in hospitals should be ruled out and units with all facilities should be started in tribal areas.

Shri. M. P. Faisal (District Panchayath member) made the following comments:

- Training shall be given for officers before appointment.
- For clearing pending files, Adalath shall be done once in every month.
- Monitoring shall be done while utilizing SC/ST funds and directions shall be given.

Smt. Hemalatha (Kudumbashree District mission coordinator) made the following comments for the upliftment of women:

- The projects for women shall be made in such a way that it enhances their skill and income.

- Public places should be made women friendly.
- Monitoring is needed for Asraya scheme. This can facilitate smooth and efficient working of the scheme.
- Actions shall be taken to avail bank documents in Malayalam.

Shri. Aneesh (KSEB Asst. Engineer) said that simplification and uniformity is needed in citizen centered development. Information Technology usage can simplify the process. Grievance addressing bench shall be implemented.

Shri. Rajeev (Senior Superintendent, Civil Supplies Office, Malappuram) congratulated the efforts of Government in civil supplies. The concerned departments shall give approval to civil supplies to start warehousing facility.

Shri. Santhosh (President, KSRTC Employees' Association) requested to take steps to improve safety facilities in transport sector.

#### **Key Suggestions:**

- For proper administration, effective coordination mechanism shall be in place from the ministerial level to the lower level of officers.
- Strict monitoring of the activities of bureaucrats shall be ensured.
- The workload of the village offices are hectic. A proper workload management could change the attitude of the officers towards the work.
- The feasibility of a new post under the secretary in municipality and panchayat shall be considered in order to reduce their workload.
- A Social Audit shall be conducted in government bodies to know whether there is a need for more postings of officials.
- The government officers shall be trained to improve the quality of service provided.
- The utilization of funds allocated to the ST category shall be monitored and it shall be ensured that the needful people are receiving the benefits.
- The application forms shall be in Malayalam language.
- The files pending in revenue department shall be processed immediately.
- People's planning shall be used in its true spirit.
- Actions shall be taken to make the final expenditure of a project to stand below or same as the estimated amount.
- Seized sand shall be auctioned so that the income of government can be increased.
- University and its allied departments are scattered in different places. They shall be brought under one block.

- The process for corrections in birth and death registrations shall be simplified.
- There should be uniform guidelines for the schemes and should not be changed yearly.
- The procedures for developmental programmes shall be simplified.
- An Act is needed for availing GST share for Local Self Government department.
- Appropriate amendments shall be made in Municipal Act so that tax for 12 year period can be accepted so that the income of municipalities could be increased.
- Financial irregularity shall only be checked during auditing.
- Training shall be provided for officers for their skill enhancement.
- Facilities at the check post shall be improved.
- Inadequacy in number of staffs in hospitals should be ruled out and units with all facilities should be started in tribal areas.
- For clearing pending files in various government offices, Adalath shall be done once in every month.
- Monitoring shall be done while utilizing SC/ST funds and directions shall be given.
- Monitoring is needed for Asraya scheme. This can facilitate smooth and efficient working of the scheme.
- Actions shall be taken to avail bank documents in Malayalam.
- Necessary steps shall be initiated for improving the safety in transport sector.

Smt. Sheela Thomas (Member Secretary, ARC) expressed her appreciation and gratitude towards all participants. She assured that the Commission will conduct a detailed study regarding the suggestions made and will prepare a detailed report for submission to the Government.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON JANUARY 22,2019 KASARAGOD.

### The Public Hearing

The Government of Kerala has set up the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) to study various issues in governance and to suggest reforms to make the public services more public-centered, efficient, effective, equitable, affordable, accountable, sustainable and accessible to all. The Commission has selected “Citizen First Services” as an important area of its study. In this back drop, the Commission held a public hearing session on January 22,2019 at Collectorate Conference Hall, Kasaragod, to identify the flaws in the current service delivery mechanism and to harness valuable suggestions from public regarding the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery. Various government functionaries, dignitaries from Non-Governmental Organizations and members from the general public turned up at the venue to voice their opinions and concerns.

Shri. C. J. Suresh Kumar (Under Secretary, ARC) welcomed the members of the Commission, the District Collector, the participants and other organizers to the public hearing. He adjured the participants to express their views and suggestions.

Smt. Sheela Thomas (Member Secretary, ARC) said that it is the responsibility of a government to ensure that the services are delivered to the citizens in the most appropriate manner. She said that the prime motive of Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) which was constituted in 2016, under the chairmanship of Shri. V.S. Achuthanandan was to promote new ideas for improving the effectiveness as well as efficiency of the state administration system, and thereby to ensure that various services of the government are delivered in the adequate form. She stated that Grievance Redressal Cell is a mechanism to resolve the issues in the public service delivery. However, complaints do exist regarding the functioning of the grievance redressal mechanism. She also highlighted the importance of the public hearings organized by the Commission in developing suitable reform measures.

Smt. Sheela Thomas read out the message from Shri. V.S. Achuthanandan (Chairman, ARC), in his absence. Even though the service is considered to be a right of the citizens, the citizens are not always in receipt of the benefits and their complaints do not get resolved accordingly. The Commission is of the view that the inefficiency of the bureaucracy had affected the service delivery and expects to derive solutions based on the valuable inputs from the citizens. The public hearings are being conducted in this regard. He urged the participants to give their suggestions in relation to the betterment of service delivery. And he assured, through his message, that all the suggestions will be carefully examined by the Commission and appropriate measures will be put forward.

Shri. C. P. Nair (Member, ARC) referred to the previous Administrative Reforms Committees constituted in the state and said that these Committees studied how the gap between the government and the public, occurring due to the inefficiency of the service delivery mechanism, could be reduced. He informed the audience that the Administrative Reforms Commissions in Kerala had strived to devise approaches to make the services of various government bodies available, without any hindrance, to the poor people in the state. He stated that no service delivery mechanism could be considered effective if it does not deliver the right service at the right time. He stressed that various schemes and programmes had been formulated for the welfare of different strata of the public, but the efficiency of such initiatives is not adequate. He quoted that the study on “Citizen First Services” would be one of the most important themes for the Commission and urged the participants to raise their concerns and express their views wholeheartedly.

Smt. Neela Gangadharan (Member, ARC) in her speech said that the citizens need to be aware of the services and the delivery mechanism for each service. She also added that in the new era, proper communication and transportation facilities are also considered as basic facilities. In such a context, it is important to understand how the government addresses the associated problems and to assess the capabilities of the bureaucracy. The gap between the government and its citizens has to be bridged. The Commission will study and assess the problems and will submit the same to the government along with feasible recommendations. She urged the participants to express their opinions whole heartedly.

Dr. D. Sajith Babu IAS (District Collector, Kasaragod) stated that there is a significant delay in processing the files and such issues are to be addressed keeping in mind the views of the general public. He requested the participants to share their difficulties as well as bad experiences in availing the services from government. He added that G2C (Government to Citizen) services need to be provided without delay, and that these services are to be delivered to the public at their homes without any need to visit the government offices. He welcomed valuable suggestions from the participants in this regard.

### **Summary of Verbal Comments Received at the Hearing**

Shri.T. Krishnan (District President, AITUC) stressed on the lack of officers in various government offices in the district. His suggestions include:

- Adequate staff in all government offices in the district shall be ensured.
- There is a tendency among government employees appointed in the district to avail transfer as early as possible, leading to stagnation in public service delivery system. This shall be studied.



- Kannada and Tulu languages are predominant in Manjeshwaram and Kasaragod taluks in the district. Recently, a Kannada teacher was appointed in a school who did not even knew the language well. Such instances shall be avoided.
- *Pattaya* shall be given to the people holding the land for a long time.
- There are a lot of Beedi workers in Kasaragod and Kannur districts. Currently, the benefits from the Kerala Beedi and Cigar Workers Welfare Fund Board are available only for the workers in organisations in the cooperative sector. However, there are a lot of workers in the private sector also. Adequate measures shall be taken to extend the benefits to these employees also.

Shri. K. Bhaskaran (District Secretary, CITU) raised his concerns regarding the quality of medical facilities available in the district. His major concerns include:

- The facility for eye operation has been stopped in the district general hospital for nearly one year, due to some machine failure.
- Requests were forwarded to the Health Minister and District Collectors for improving the conditions of the hospital. Previous district collector also had called for a hospital development council. However, the condition still remains the same.
- The hospital building do not have lift facility. The corpses are being carried down to the basement. Also, ramp facility is not available for using wheel chairs.

Shri. Moideen Kunju (District President, INL) concentrated on the procedural errors in the service delivery mechanism in the district. His suggestions include:

- There are people in Kalnadu region, who are living there for more than 50 years. However, during the last distribution of *pattaya*, only two or three families were awarded *pattaya*. Others' applications also should be considered.
- The Endosulfan package shall be implemented in a timebound manner.
- Adequate measures shall be adopted to avoid frequent transfer of employees from the district.

Shri. K. Viswanatha Rao (A resident of Pilikunja) stressed on the problems faced by the people in regions where Kannada is used as the main language. He said that even in the Kannada minority areas, Malayalam language is used in the signage boards. Kannada language shall also be used in the boards in such areas. Also, proper interventions shall be made to make the reply to the applications in the same language as applied.

Shri. A. Kunjiraman Nair (A resident of Panayal) stressed on the problems faced by the *pattaya* applicants. He said that *pattaya* are not being awarded to the applicants who are living in the land for generations. He also pointed out that while one acre is allotted in Kanhangad taluk, only 3-10 cents are given in Kasaragod taluk.

He also requested take urgent actions to improve the conditions of the hospitals in the district.

Prof. A. K. Sankaran (A resident of Kanhangad) congratulated the Commission for organizing such an event to incorporate public views in the reform measures. He emphasized on the need for protecting the environment. He said that developments have to be made environment friendly. He reminded the fact that the environment is getting polluted and added that before providing sanction for new ventures, appropriate pollution control procedures also shall be made necessary.

Shri. K. A. Sreenivasan (District Secretary, BMS) concentrated on various issues encountered by the citizens in the district. His suggestions include:

- The widening of the national Highway from Thalappady to Kalikkadavu should be completed in a time bound manner.
- The waiting area in Kanhangad bus stand for buses towards Panathur do not have a waiting shed, which is an inconvenience for the patients and children. There has been a solution in the previous development council to build waiting shed. However, the same has not been materialised.
- The theme chart given to the anganwadi teachers are in Malayalam language. This is not suitable for the anganwadi teachers in the Kannada dominant regions of the district. Therefore, the theme chart shall be provided to them in Kannada or (at least) English language.
- Applicants are choosing Kasaragod district only for the sake of getting jobs. Once inducted, they avail transfer to other districts within a period of 6-12 months. Adequate measures shall be taken to maintain a stable staff strength.

Shri. Krishnadas (A resident of Nileshwar) informed the commission that they had been protesting against the encroachment on their land for a long time. He added that, so far, the elected representatives as well as the government officials had not properly intervened in the matter. He requested the commission to look into this matter.

Shri. Manoj P. (ST Promoter, Bala Panchayat) stressed on the issues and problems faced by the ST communities in the district. His suggestions include:

- A TDO shall be set up in or around Parappa, as there is nearly 25,000 SC/ST population and the current TDO is in Kasaragod which is around 100 km away.
- There are several patients in the region who require frequent dialysis. An ambulance service shall be set up for helping those patients.
- There are several people in the region without patta. Patta shall be provided at the earliest.

Shri. Fazal Rahman (A resident of Pulloor-Periya Grama Panchayat) highlighted the adversities faced by school in the region which was established in the year 1978. He stated that the electrification of the school has not been done yet and that the school lacks even basic facilities. He requested the Commission for appropriate modernisation measures and for the enquiry on reason for backwardness of the school.

Shri. Khader Many (Ex-Member, Kerala State Youth Commission) emphasized on various difficulties encountered by the public in availing benefits from the government. His concerns and suggestions include:

- It usually takes 11 hours of travel to reach the capital city, and the visitors have to wait until 3 pm to submit their application to the Secretariat. The visiting time should start from at least 11am for the visitors from northern districts.
- It takes 3-6 months to process legal heir certificates submitted in the village offices. A provision shall be made to provide the service through District Collectorate or RDO.
- A mechanism shall be initiated, at the District Collectorate, to collect the applications and complaints of public to the MLAs.
- The district do not have any government press or similar unit working. Provision shall be made to address the same.

Shri. Abdul Salam A. C. (Vice-President, Voice of Revenue) deliberated on the problems faced by the employees and the reasons for hiccups in service delivery. His notable points include:

- Various certificates are mandated by various government bodies. Consequently, village offices are required to issue these certificates several times. Such repetitions shall be avoided.
- In certain instances, income certificate is being asked by various departments, where the same is not mandatory.
- Even though data pertinent to birth, death and marriage are kept in the local self government institutions, certificate proving marital status of a citizen is being issued by the village offices.
- If the *Aadharam* (Deed) and the *Adiyadharam* (original property source document) are converted in to a single document, then related applications could be easily processed.
- The prevalent staff pattern and infrastructure facilities shall be reviewed.
- The promotional avenues are not being practiced as per the Pay Commission norms.

Smt. Shahina Sahib (President, Chengala Grama Panchayat) spoke about the difficulties faced by the Panchayat Office and possible remedies for the same. Her suggestions are:

- The gaps in the current service delivery mechanism could be bridged, to a greater extent, by revising the staff pattern in the government offices.
- Service delivery could be better if centralised division is followed rather than political division.
- Bringing the village offices under the local self-government department will be beneficial.
- Even though e-office facility is available and various applications are filed through online process, in many occasions, the hard copy of the application is still being collected. This shall be avoided.

Replying to her comments, District Collector remarked that the village offices should not be made a part of the panchayat administration. Hiccups shall be resolved, but the system shall continue. He added that in addition to the population, number of files shall also be considered as a criterion for determining staff pattern.

Shri. V. B. Sathyanath (District Joint Secretary, BMS) shared his views regarding the functioning of welfare boards as well as the difficulties faced by its beneficiaries. The drawbacks highlighted are:

- In areas such as Manjeshwaram, various certificates including school certificates and marriage certificates, are provided in Kannada language. However, the welfare boards stationed at Kasaragod and Kanhangad do not accept such certificates. Hence, the eligible applicants are deprived of the entitled benefits.
- A single authority is in charge of the Kerala Tailoring Workers' Welfare Fund Board for Kannur and Kasaragod districts, and he will be available only for two days in the office. Hence, the workers are forced to visit the office several times for various needs.
- Usually, the employees in the welfare boards are fellow members of the ruling party. Consequently, every five years the staff in these offices get changed and the incumbents, in most cases, have no idea about the welfare board schemes or benefits. This puts additional burden on the beneficiaries.

Addressing his concern regarding the problems encountered due to language difference, the District Collector assured that in near future a new division will be set up in the civil station to convert the applications in Kannada to Malayalam language.

Shri. Moosa B. Cherrukkala (District Secretary, Muslim League) stressed on

the issues regarding the reservation in employment and lack of adequate staff strength in government offices in the district. His suggestions include:

- Reservation norms have not been included in the proposed Kerala Administrative Service (KAS). Prevalent reservation norms for the backward communities shall be extended to KAS also.
- There is significant shortage in staff strength in government offices with in the district. Adequate measures shall be taken to solve this.
- It is estimated that there is a shortage of 800 teachers in various schools, including primary schools, of the district. This will, in turn, affect the quality of education given to the children. Adequate number of teachers shall be deployed in the schools.
- There has been an increasing tendency among the employees of various government offices in the district, to avail transfer to other districts. This leads to stagnation in the service delivery. Appropriate reform measures shall be initiated. Stringent actions shall be taken against those who avail deputation also.

Shri. K.V. Raghavan (Ex-Employee, ST Department, GoK) talked about the concerns of the tribal population in the district. His major comments include:

- Currently fund allotment for the welfare of tribal population is based on the population of 20,000 in the year 1986. However, several new communities were included in the SC list thereafter, and the total ST population has increased to nearly 85,000.
- Related office for the welfare of the tribal population is located on the border of Kannur and Kasaragod districts. It becomes tedious for the tribal people to reach there.
- The tribal population is highly concentrated in the Parappa block in the district and is sufficient enough for allotting a TDO post in the block. The staff pattern has been revised in Wayanad district based on the tribal population.
- There are four Tribal Extension Officers in the district, which is very less compared to the workload. These four officers could not cover 1,261 tribal colonies in one month time.
- ST Development Offices do not have a clear idea regarding the utilisation of the Tribal Development Fund.

Shri. N.A. Nellikkunnu (Member of Legislative Assembly, Kasaragod Constituency) highlighted various bottlenecks in the service delivery. His suggestions include:

- It has been understood that no disciplinary action has been taken since the enactment of Right to Service Act. This has to be rechecked.

- More than 30,000 files are pending in the State Secretariat. In similar fashion, 6,000 files are pending in the District Collectorate. A drastic change in the mind-set of the employees is inevitable for efficient service delivery.
- The citizens in the Kasaragod Municipality mostly depend on the hospitals in Mangalore Corporation. The birth certificates issued by the Corporation for the births in these hospitals are not attested by the home department of the state government. As a result of this, people are finding it difficult to obtain passport. Such procedural complications shall be avoided.
- As a result of arduous efforts, 24 hours of post-mortem was issued in 5 Medical Colleges and Kasaragod General Hospital. However, this decision was reversed by the doctors with the aid of judiciary. Such complications shall be avoided.

Shri. K. Kunjiraman (Member of Legislative Assembly, Udma Constituency) remarked that there is an urgent need for studying the public service delivery system and added that reform measures are more required in Grama Panchayat office and Village office, being the major offices with government-public interactions.

Shri. Vinod P.P. (Senior Superintendent, Office of the Deputy Director, LSGD) deliberated on possible solutions to various issues raised by the participants also pinpointed the key issues faced by the employees. His comments include:

- Certificates generated through software are usually in English language. However, such a system is not prevalent in the Kannada dominant regions. Certificates are being issued in written format in such areas. Hence, the certificates are given in Kannada language. This will be resolved.
- In most cases, all the requisite documents are not made available at the offices. This leads to bottlenecks in service delivery. Total e-governance is the possible solution for this.
- In various offices, separate software is to used as different certificates are part of different schemes.
- Currently, distribution of workload is not clearly defined. This leads to tedious work for some employees and consequently to reduced output. This shall be solved.
- Transportation and accommodation facilities shall be arranged for government employees.
- Consultancy services must be come accountable.
- Pre- service training shall be given to induce consciousness regarding constitution, science, economics and statistics.
- A certificate issued by one office must be accessible for other offices as well.



Shri. Thankappan K. (President ,ChengaraBhoosamara Colony Committee) informed the Commission about the hardships of the people in rehabilitation colony in Periaivillage. 166 acres of land was allotted earlier form three survey numbers for distribution through Pattaya. However, among the 50 families residing in the area, only 10 families are given Pattaya so far. Also, landtax has not been accepted from the ten families with pattaya. Even though directions were given by the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribes on 15/09/2017, no further action has been initiated.

He also pointed out that the building built, spending 1 Crore for providing employment to the colony residents is remaining unused.

Shri. Ismail B. A. (Aresident of Bandichal) highlighted unfair service in the distribution of Pattaya in the region. During the last pattaya distribution, land has not been allotted to even families residing for 50-60 years. He alleged that the then-incumbent village officer demanded for giving 5-10 cents to his benami for sanctioning pattaya. Later, the same official tried to convert pattaya land to government land.

Shri. A. Narayanan (A resident of Cherukkala Panchayat) demanded urgent actions for resolving waste problem in the panchayat and for rebuilding Cherukkala Townroad, that was demolished for development purposes.

Meanwhile, a lady made a request before the Commission for providing a job to her grandson whose father is ailing from cancer.

Shri. Joseph Vadakara (Member, State Governing Committee, Nationalist Congress Party) made recommendations regarding the upliftment of health and tourism sectors in the district. His suggestions include:

- A medical college shall be set up along with the Central University so as to avoid the need to travel to Mangalore for various check-ups and treatment.
- A mini- airport was proposed earlier for boosting the tourism sector in the district. However, nothing has been materialised. The same shall be initiated at the earliest.

Shri. P. M. Abdulla (A resident of Angadimogar, Kumbala) remarked that government employees should assess themselves whether they are performing their duties properly. He commented that measures need to be taken to reduce vehicle accidents and that the benefits of Kerala Agricultural Workers' Welfare Fund Board are pending for the last ten years.

Shri. Biju P. (Officer, Kasaragod District Child Protection Department) deliberated on various measures to be adopted for helping the senior citizens as well as the children. His suggestions include:

- Several offices that are frequently visited by the public are situated in the



second or third floors of buildings. Such offices shall be placed at the groundfloor.

- Provision shall be made at the helpdesks to accompany senior citizens to the concerned officers.
- Male students are finding it difficult to open up during consultation with female counsellors. Therefore, adequate number of Male School Counsellors shall be ensured.

Shri. K. V. Damodaran (District Vice- President, INTUC) stated certain measures for effective service delivery in the district. Those include:

- The discrepancies in the legislations for Pattaya distribution shall be studied.
- The distribution of the Endosulfan Distress Relief Fund shall be reviewed.
- Ramp facility shall be mandated in all hospitals.

Shri. Radhakrishnan C. (Assistant Development Commissioner, Rural Development Department) cited the problems faced by the employees in various government offices within the district. His suggestions include:

- Providing accommodation facilities for employees from other districts may reduce the tendency to leave the district.
- Capacity building of government servants must be made mandatory. Several employees in various departments have not attended the training programmes. Such instances shall be avoided. While considering promotional avenues of the employees, number of training programmes shall also be considered.

### **Key Suggestions:**

The key recommendations from the public hearing are as follows:

- Adequate staff strength shall be ensured in the government offices with in the district.
- Around 800 vacancies are reported in the schools in the district. These vacancies shall be filled at the earliest.
- Adequate number of male school counsellors shall be ensured.
- Measures shall be initiated to avoid frequent availing of transfers to other districts by the government employees.
- In linguistic minority areas, the signage boards shall also include the minority language.
- Qualified personnel shall be deployed as teachers in the linguistic minority areas.
- The theme charts provided to the Anganwadi teachers in the linguistic minority areas, shall be either in English or in the minority language.

- The benefits of the Kerala Beedi and Cigar Workers' Welfare Fund Board shall be extended to the workers in private sector also.
- The benefits provided by Kerala Agricultural workers' Welfare Fund Board are pending for the last 10 years. This shall be distributed at the earliest.
- Fellow members of the ruling party are usually appointed in the welfare boards. Due to lack of knowledge regarding the schemes of the boards, leads to stagnation in service delivery. This practice shall be avoided.
- The treatment facilities in government hospitals shall be renovated and adequate equipment shall be ensured for catering the needs of the general public.
- Ramp facility shall be made mandatory in the hospitals.
- The government offices frequently visited by the public shall be placed in the ground floor of the building.
- *Pattaya* distribution shall be carried out in a transparent and timely manner.
- Endosulfan package shall be implemented in a timely manner.
- The development of roads shall be done in minimum time period.
- The number of TDO posts sanctioned shall be based on the total tribal population in the district.
- The time allotted for visit to the Secretariat shall be adjusted appropriately for the citizens from the northern districts of the state.
- The unwanted delay in processing after the submission of the documents at the government offices shall be prevented.
- For work related to various schemes and programmes, different softwares are being used. Instead of using several softwares, a stem software shall be developed.
- Proper criteria shall be devised for efficient distribution of work load.
- Transportation and accommodation facilities shall be made available to the government employees.
- At the time of induction, government employees shall be provided with training on topics such as constitution, social justice, economics and statistics.
- The number of training programmes completed shall be a criterion for promotion of government employees.
- Provision shall be made to collect the complaints and applications to the Ministers and MLAs at the District Collectorate itself.
- For online applications, submission of hard copy of applications should not be mandated.

- Certificates issued by one government office shall be accessible to other offices also. There by, the need to submit the same certificate to different offices for varied purposes shall be avoided.
- Even though the registration of marriage, birth, death, etc., are done in panchayat office, related certificates are to be issued by the village offices. This shall be rechecked.
- Disciplinary action shall be initiated against the employees violating the norms of the Right to Service Act.
- The post-mortem of the deceased persons shall be conducted within 24 hours.
- Consultancy services shall be made accountable.
- Transportation and accommodation facilities shall be made available to the government employees.

Shri. Devidas N. (Additional District Magistrate, Kasaragod) expressed his Appreciation and gratitude towards all participants.

**PROCEEDINGS OF PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON FEBRUARY 13, 2019  
WAYANAD.**

**The Public Hearing**

The Government of Kerala has set up the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) to study various issues in governance and to suggest reforms to make the public services more public-centered, efficient, effective, equitable, affordable, accountable, sustainable and accessible to all. The Commission has selected “Citizen First Services” as an important area of its study. In this back drop, the Commission held a public hearing session on February 13, 2019 at Wayanad, to identify the flaws in the current service delivery mechanism and to harness valuable suggestions from public regarding the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery. Various government functionaries, dignitaries from Non-Governmental Organizations and members from the general public turned up at the venue to voice their opinions and concerns.

Shri. C.J. Suresh Kumar (Under Secretary .ARC) welcomed all the participants to the public hearing. He informed the audience about the purpose of the public hearing and urged the participants to share their opinions whole heartedly.

Smt. Sheela Thomas (Member Secretary, ARC) said that the prime motive of Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) which was constituted in 2016, under the chairmanship of Shri. V.S. Achuthanandan was to promote new ideas for improving the effectiveness as well as efficiency of the state administration system, and thereby to ensure that various services of the government are delivered in the adequate form.

She stated that the Commission is analyzing various ways for the improvisation of Government services. The Commission aims to critically analyze the functions/activities of the departments which directly deal with the citizens, to define service/service delivery improvement needs and to devise a citizen centered approach that can truly meet the complex needs of the citizens. She also highlighted the importance of the public hearings organized by the Commission in developing suitable reform measures.

Shri. V.S. Achuthanandan (Chairman, ARC) in his presidential address said that in the last two years, the Commission had studied the improvisation of Vigilance system, capacity building of government servants and welfare legislations and had submitted the reports on the aforementioned topics. He stated that the Commission is in the process of analyzing the bottlenecks in delivering various services to the public sector. He emphasized that the motive shall be to make the service delivery mechanism transparent and citizen centred. Even though the citizens are considered

to be the flag bearers in democracy, in real practice, the public hardly have any power in the administration. He added that there is an urgent need to make the public aware of the various services offered by the government. He highlighted that just delivering the service is not enough and that the service should be delivered in a transparent and time bound manner.

He noted that, from a citizen point of view, there are many drawbacks in the current grievance redressal mechanisms. He drew attention towards the various government services that have been made available online and also pointed out that there are more services that could be delivered online. He added that the Commission organizes the public hearings in an attempt to harness valuable suggestions regarding the improvisation of the service delivery as well as the bottlenecks in the grievance redressal mechanisms. He urged the participants to express their opinions whole heartedly.

#### **Summary of Verbal Comments Received at the Hearing**

Shri. K.V. Mathew (District President, Kerala Senior Citizen Forum) spoke about the issues concerning senior citizens and made the following suggestions:

- The new regulations in the pension scheme for senior citizens shall be revisited.
- Legislations shall be made for implementation of Senior Citizen policy in the state shall be made.
- Representatives from government approved organisations shall also be considered in to the councils and committees for senior citizens.
- Periodic council meetings should be organized and actions should be taken to resolve the complaints and grievances of tribal people.
- Jagratha Samithis should be formed in every panchayat.
- Provision exists for addressing needs of senior citizens through gramasabhas. However, this provision is not being utilized. Measures shall be initiated to ensure the practice of this provision.

Shri. Echom Gopi (a Farmer from Echom, Wayanad) drew special attention to the problems faced by farmers and requested for aids from the part of government.

Shri .P.P. Ayoob (Councillor, Sulthan Bathery Municipality) stated that it usually takes 3 hours to carry the injured patients to the Medical College in Kozhikode, and a medical college is urgently needed to address the treatment needs of the district. He requested the Commission to take appropriate measures to ensure that a medical college is being built in the district at a place convenient for all people in the district.

Shri. C.K. Sahadevan (Chairman, Development Standing Committee, Sulthan Bathery Municipality) made the following suggestions:

- Measures shall be adopted to ensure that the wild animals do not enter human settlements.
- The number of employees in Sulthan Bathery municipality office shall be made in proportion with population and land area of the municipality.
- The funds for the operation of the Municipalities shall be decided based on the population and shall be transferred directly to the Municipality.

Shri. K.V. Mathai (District Joint Secretary, D.A.W.F., Wayanad) remarked that instead of giving more importance to the special schools for differently abled students, consideration shall be given to induct such students into ordinary schools and thereby to create an equal platform for their mental development. He also stated that the ramps built in government offices, hospitals, etc., are unscientific and shall be rebuilt for smooth transit of the differently abled persons visiting the institutions.

Smt. Krishna kumari (An Anganwadi worker) stated that the Anganwadi workers are working at very low wage rates and she stressed on the problems faced by the Anganwadi workers and made the following recommendations at the hearing:

- There is no standardized menu for the children at the Anganwadis. This shall be standardized.
- Several registers are to be maintained by the Anganwadi workers. This creates additional burden and hence the number of registers shall be reduced.
- As the facilities available in the pre-primary schools are much better than those at the Anganwadis, parents tend to admit their children to the pre-primary schools. Thus, the Anganwadis are losing the edge and therefore, adequate and timely measures are needed to rectify this.

Shri. Hariharan (A resident of Muppainad Grama Panchayat) suggested the following at the hearing:

- Currently, sanctions could not be obtained under LIFE Housing Mission near forests or in company land. These regulations shall be changed accordingly.
- During Kerala Floods 2018, the district witnessed massive landslides and decision was made to bring the earth from the debris under the Land Bank with District Collector as its authority. However, in the coming days lots of fields were converted into dryland. This, in turn, is affecting the ecological system and will eventually lead to non-availability of drinking water. Urgent interventions are therefore needed to arrest such actions.

Smt. Beena Vijayan (President, Meenangadi Grama Panchayat) deliberated on the issues faced by the Gramapanchayats in ensuring effective service delivery and she proposed the following at the hearing:

- Even though powers have been delegated to the local self government bodies,

adequate number of functionaries has not been allotted to these institutions and consequently, it is affecting the efficiency of the public service delivery. Hence, adequate number of staff shall be deployed in these institutions. This may be based on the average number of files/tapals handled by the institutions.

- The services offered through the panchayat shall be provided through a single software.
- As the hotels, villas and resorts fall in a single category, therefore the building tax collected from these are in the same rate. This shall be revisited.
- There are a lot of people without appropriate deed documents in the district. Alongside with the LIFE Mission for providing shelter to the landless, interventions shall also look into providing the same to the people who are in possession of land, but homeless.
- The building permits are currently being done through the Sanketham software. However, since the rules have not been amended accordingly, therefore such permits do not have legal validity. Hence, rules shall be amended at the earliest.

Smt. Usha Vijayan (President, Edavaka Grama Panchayat Office) discussed the problems faced by the panchayat officials and made the following recommendations at the hearing:

- The Assistant Engineer, Overseers and Accountants deployed on daily wage by the Panchayats for works related to MGNREGA have considerable work load. The posts have neither been made permanent nor has an increment been issued. Adequate interventions are needed.
- The total staff strength in the panchayat offices shall be increased.
- Delay in releasing payment in connection with NREGA has become constant worries in the ST families. Such delay shall be checked.
- Even though the budget declared is usually 10 percent more, the district is not in receipt of the additional amount and considering the loss incurred in the district during the Kerala Floods 2018, the amount is urgently needed.

Shri. Balan P. (Standing Committee Chairman, Noolpuzha Municipality) said that the tribal people in the district are not in receipt of the benefits under the Forest Rights Act and that the roads to the tribal settlements shall be concreted. He added that the honorarium for the representatives in the three tier panchayat system is very low and the same shall be raised considerably.

Smt. Annakkutty Varghese (An Anganwadi Worker, Poothadi Grama Panchayat) remarked that 44 years have passed by since the inception of ICDS. However, the Anganwadi workers are still receiving a minimal wage of Rs. 10,000/-



for Workers and Rs. 7,000/- for Helpers. Similarly the pension given is Rs. 500/-for Workers and Rs. 300/- for Helpers .She inquired about the possibility of increasing the wages and the pension. Her other concerns and recommendations include:

- Apart from giving pre-school education to children, the Anganwadi workers have to do several other tasks mandated by various government departments. These additional duties are hindering the teaching of children. Also, the Anganwadis are now additionally required to take care of the senior citizens, but fund has not been allotted for giving food to them. This has to be addressed.
- Mini Anganwadis are have the same work load as the ordinary Anganwadis, with regard to the teaching and additional duties from the government departments. Therefore, Mini Anganwadis shall also be considered as ordinary Anganwadis and measures shall be taken to post a helper in these centres.

Shri. Shobhan Kumar (President, Noolpuzha Grama Panchayat) concentrated on the indifferent attitude of officials of Forest department. His concerns include:

- 43 percent of the total population of Noolpuzha Grama Panchayat belong to Scheduled Tribes. The Forest department is not permitting the construction of roads or similar amenities, in the tribal settlement areas, when it is permitted under the purview of Forest Rights Act.
- Forest department has also denied permission to transport the materials for the construction of Govt. LP School, Chettiyalathoor also. A total amount of Rs. 4 lakh was budgeted for the work by the Panchayat. However, a case has been charged against the Panchayat officials for obstruction in discharging their duties.
- The department has also blocked ambulance carrying medicine for the mentally retarded patients of Kattunayaka colony in Muthanga.
- The department has raised objections to the widening of road from Kalpetta to Muthanga, a fund of Rs. 5 crore has been allotted by NH authorities.

A resident of Noolpuzha Grama Panchayat (Name undisclosed) stated that since his father's death, his mother is not in receipt of any assistance from the government, and that he lost his house in his 10 cents of land during the Kerala Floods 2018. He informed that revenue department is not accepting tax for his land and requested the Commission to intervene in the matter.

Shri. C.K. Sahadevan (Chairman, Development Standing Committee, Sulthan Battery Municipality) spoke about the need for protecting the play grounds under the panchayats. He also pointed out that the revenue department has been issuing these grounds for several government and private agencies. He demanded that these grounds shall be transferred to other agencies only after proper liaison with the respective panchayats.

these grounds for several government and private agencies. He demanded that these grounds shall be transferred to other agencies only after proper liaison with the respective panchayats.

Shri. Abbas V.A. (A resident of Meenangadi) informed the Commission that the fare meters used in the autorickshaws are calibrated and certified by the Legal Metrology department and that a penalty of Rs. 2,000/- is being charged as a penalty for a delay on one day. He stated that these activities be brought under the Transport department of Government of Kerala. He added that several workers depend on the godowns of government agencies to earn their livelihood. As per the new regulations, the applicants for goods transport tender shall have at least 10 vehicles of their own and he stated that such regulations shall be removed.

Shri. Nazar P.M. (President, Vengappally Grama Panchayat) said that even though several powers have been delegated to the panchayats through the constitutional amendments, the same gets questioned by the orders issued by various government departments from time to time. He requested the Commission to devise appropriate reform measures so as to protect these rights.

Shri. Sanoop N.S. (A member of Wayanad LGS Rank Holders' Association) reported that the vacancies arising in the government departments are not being reported to PSC in a timely manner. He requested the Commission to intervene in the matter and to recommend suitable reform measures.

Shri. Nandakumar L. (DIET Student, Sulthan Bathery) stated that the ground and the land with well and pump house of their institution is being held by another organisation and that they are not able to carry out their activities. They also submitted a petition regarding the same.

Mx. Ravi S. Maya (A resident of Sulthan Bathery) said that there are around 210 transgenders in the district and that even after submission of applications at different offices, a shelter home has not been allotted for the transgenders. She stated that a shelter home is urgently needed for these homeless transgenders.

Shri. Ivin T. Joseph (A candidate included in the PSC Rank List for Driver category) stated that the driver vacancies in various government offices are not being reported timely and that various transfers of drivers are not being made as per the rules and regulations. He remarked that the discrepancies in the transfers shall be investigated and that the vacancies shall be reported by the departments at the earliest.

Shri. K. Shashangan (Secretary, Karshaka Sangham, Wayanad) said that the public are made to visit the government offices multiple times for the same reason and that such instances shall be avoided wherever possible. He also remarked that

various government agencies tend to call meetings for the same reason when this could be coordinated and conducted for a single time.

Shri. Vipin T.V. (A resident of Sulthan Bathery) said that the new building for the Taluk hospital shall be opened as soon as possible. He also highlighted the shortage of doctors in the Taluk hospital usually visited by around 200 pregnant ladies every day. Also, while entrusting tender works for road construction and repair, it shall be mandated to provide a guarantee for a specified period of time.

Shri. C.K. Saseendran (MLA from Kalpetta constituency) informed the audience that the Taluk Hospital building will be inaugurated by the minister on 21st February, 2019. He assured that the construction of medical college allotted in the district will start very soon. He also informed that the wages of the Anganwadi workers has been increased in the budget. He added that for distributing wages under the NREGA scheme, government has chosen Muttill, Panamaram and Pulpally panchayats in the district. And that decision has been taken to disburse their wages even before the receipt of central funding.

Shri. Sibi Varghese (Coordinator, LIFE Mission, Wayanad) made several suggestions at the hearing, aimed at effective service delivery. His suggestions include:

- Reform measures are necessary to make the information regarding various services offered by government departments, the procedure to be followed and the appellate authority, etc., available at household level.
- Database sharing between government agencies shall be implemented.
- More powers shall be delegated to the lower levels of the administration.
- Government institutions shall be provided with sufficient manpower and delegation of powers, giving priority to the institutions with more interactions with the public.
- Single window system shall be established in all government offices. That is, the service shall be rendered at the place where the application for the service has been made.

Shri. Rajendra prasad P.J. (President, Kaniyambetta Grama Panchayat) requested that the applications pending in the Krishi Bhavans, regarding financial assistance towards agricultural loss, shall be processed immediately.

Shri. Anil kumar M. (A resident of Nenmeni Grama Panchayat) said that his application for financial assistance for a toilet is still pending and that the same shall be processed as soon as possible.

Shri. O. Viswanathan (A resident of Nenmeni Grama Panchayat) commented

that a provision shall be made to inform the applicants about the status of their application through SMS or by post.

Smt. Sheela Johnson (Mini Anganwadi Worker) said that the workload in Mini Anganwadis could not be managed single-handedly and that these institutions be considered as major Anganwadis and sufficient manpower be sanctioned.

Shri. M.A. Chacko (A resident of Panamaram Grama Panchayat) made the following recommendations at the hearing:

- Corpus fund shall be used for the maintenance of the roads damaged during the flood.
- The financial assistance for the loss of agriculture due to the attack by wild animals must be processed quickly.
- The NREGA scheme shall be extended to the entire district so as to aid the SC/ST communities in the district.
- The honorarium for elected representatives shall be increased.
- Measures shall be taken to make the senior employees, among the daily wage category, permanent and to increase their wages.

Shri. Varghese N.T. (A resident of Nenmeni Grama Panchayat) stated that steps shall be taken to remove the dead trees along the highways.

Smt. Lisy M.V. (Anganwadi Worker from Pulpally) requested the Commission to take requisite measures to make the post permanent.

Shri. Eliyas Kurian (Akshaya e-Centre Entrepreneur, Koliyadi) made the following recommendations for better service through the Akshaya Centres:

- A login dashboard shall be allotted for the Akshaya centres for accessing the databases owned by the government, thereby increasing the efficiency of service delivery.
- Honorarium and welfare fund shall be set up for Akshaya entrepreneurs and workers.
- Solar PV system or generator shall be allotted to Akshaya centres from the plan fund of panchayats.

Shri. Aboobacker V. (Tahsildar(LR), Sulthan Bathery and Member, Kerala Land Revenue Staff Association) highlighted the need for deploying adequate manpower at Village offices, Taluk offices, Collectorate, Revenue Division Office, etc.

Smt. Rachel T.P. (Anganwadi worker, Ambalavayal) requested to complete the appointment of candidates included in the ranklist for ICDS Supervisor. She also sought for the financial assistance for cancer patients in the families of Anganwadi workers.

Shri. K. Ajeesh (ADM) proposed the following recommendations at the hearing:

- As regards the entrance examinations, various certificates proving eligibility shall be mandated to submit the concerned authority only after the candidate being involved in the shortlist.
- A separate login ID shall be allotted for every service in the village offices.
- The speed of KSWAN shall be increased.
- Land assignment ceiling limit is different for municipalities and panchayats. Therefore, decision shall be made up on receipt of application itself.
- Staff pattern in the government offices shall be revised.
- In order to address the rejection of applications of tribal girls, for admission to Plus two course, a specified percentage of the seats in the district shall be reserved for these girls.
- The scope of selection of beneficiaries shall be entrusted with the concerned departments.
- The digitalization of the land records shall be completed quickly.
- Building tax shall be collected based on the area certified by the Panchay at Engineer.

Shri. Vijaya kumar P.G. (Joint Development Commissioner, Rural Development Department, GoK) sought for actions to fill the vacancy of Block Programme Officer, and also to avail fund from the Central government for NREG Mission so as to timely support the tribal families in the district.

Shri. Prabhakaran K. (Deputy Director of Education, Wayanad) stressed on several measures for the youth of the district, particularly among the tribal communities. His suggestions include:

- In order to increase the attendance of SC/ST students in schools, transportation facility shall be arranged for them.
- A Folklore Academy shall be started to foster the tribal art forms.
- A Sports school with hostel facility shall be started for advancement in the sports sector. A synthetic track also shall be built.
- *Ooru vidyakendras* need to be started in certain colonies to attract more tribal students towards education.
- A swimming pool shall be built for the youth in the district for practice.
- Special recruitments shall be conducted for providing job opportunities to the youth in the district.

- Centres shall be opened for collection and sales of forest resources.

Mx. Ravi Maya added to her earlier suggestions that awareness classes shall be conducted to address the issues of transgenders.

Shri. Majeed P.C. (Project Director, poverty Alleviation Unit, Wayanad) stated that all panchayats in the district be included in the government programmes such as MKSP. He added that a centralized online process shall be implemented for beneficiary selection. With regard to the establishment matters, he said that the staff of Poverty Alleviation Unit also shall be brought under the purview of Service and Payroll Administrative Repository for Kerala (SPARK) under Finance department, Government of Kerala.

Smt. Vincy Byju (A resident of Sulthan Bathery) commented that steps shall be taken to timely release the wages of workers and also said that the honorarium need to be increased.

Dr. Renuka R. (District Medical Officer, Wayanad) said that a special package would be helpful for enhancing the health status of the district.

Shri. K.K. Gopinathan (A resident of Sulthan Bathery) stated that a pension scheme shall be introduced for the welfare of farmers, given the high rate of agricultural loss. He added that adequate measures are needed to empower Krishi Bhavans. He also said that the tourism sector be augmented.

Smt. Sindhu P. A (Pre-primary teacher, GHS Chenad) said that the study commission report on primary schools shall be finalized immediately and the honorarium for the teachers shall be ensured.

Shri. Kolliyil Rajan (Former Standing Committee Chairman, Edavaka Panchayath) requested to include rice cultivation in Employment Guarantee programme.

### **Key Suggestions:**

The key recommendations from the public hearing are as follows:

- The new regulations in the pension scheme for senior citizens shall be reviewed.
- Adequate legislations shall be made for the implementation of Senior Citizen policy.
- Representatives from government approved organisations shall be ensured in the councils and committees for the welfare of senior citizens.
- Periodic council meetings shall be arranged for resolving the grievances of tribal people.



- It shall be ensured that the tribal people are in receipt of the benefits earmarked under Forest Rights Act.
- In order to ensure attendance of tribal students, transportation facility shall be made available for them.
- Jagratha samithis shall be formed in every Panchayat.
- The services offered through panchayats shall be provided through a single software.
- The hotels, villas and resorts shall be categorized accordingly for collection of taxes.
- Amendments shall be made to ensure the validity of the permits issued through Sanketham software.
- Play grounds in the district shall be protected and Revenue department shall conduct prior meetings regarding the transfer of play grounds to other agencies.
- The staff pattern in various government offices shall be revised.
- The fund allotted for the municipalities shall be based on the total population and shall be transferred directly to the municipalities.
- The differently abled students shall be inducted in to ordinary schools and an equal platform shall be given for their mental development.
- The ramps in the government offices shall be built scientifically so as to enable smooth transit for the physically challenged persons.
- The menu for the children in the Anganwadis shall be standardized.
- The number of registers to be maintained by the Anganwadi workers shall be reduced.
- The facilities available at the Anganwadis shall be improved.
- Mini Anganwadis shall be given the status of ordinary Anganwadis and adequate staff shall be placed.
- Immediate actions shall be taken to arrest the conversion of wetlands in to dryland.
- The wages under the NREG Mission shall be released promptly.
- The vacancies in various government offices shall be reported in a time bound manner.
- Databases shall be shared between government agencies.
- Steps shall be taken to make information regarding the services, procedures, etc., available at household level.



- A provision shall be made to inform the applicants about the status of their applications.
- Single window system shall be established in all government offices.
- The financial assistance for agricultural loss should be processed without any delay.
- Measures shall be taken to cut the dead trees along the highways.
- The certificates for proving eligibility shall be mandated only after the candidate gets shortlisted.
- The digitalization of the land records shall be completed immediately.
- A special package shall be set up for enhancing the health status of the district.

Shri. K. Ajeesh, ADM expressed his appreciation and gratitude to all participants.