

An International Webinar on

Rethinking the Role of Local Governments in a Post Covid-19 World

December 10, 11, 12, 13 & 14, 2020
(Scheduled at times convenient to a global audience)

Organized by
**Centre for Gandhian Studies, Central University of Kerala,
Kasaragod, Kerala (India)**
&
Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam, Kerala (India)

Concept Note

People all over the world are making frantic efforts to contain the covid-19 pandemic. Governance has become a challenging one in most countries. In some countries, citizens have responded to the call of governments to practise self-responsibility admirably. In many countries, a mix of measures including some tough ones infringing on human freedom have been tried. It is found that local governments everywhere have responded more effectively to prevent the spread of the virus and in some countries their actions were more effective than interventions by provincial and central governments. This is an opportune moment to revisit the role of local governments the world over. There has to be a movement for further decentralization based on the principle of subsidiarity. COVID-19 has raised challenges related to the financing of the local governments, the mandate on health devolved to them and the extent to which the local governments can handle health independently. More important is the question of continued delivery of services and the protection of the livelihood of the people. Since local governments are closest to the people, they will have greater ability to influence behavioral changes among their constituents.

In a pandemic scenario, a local government should detect imported infections by limiting the entry of travelers into its jurisdiction or at least keep a tab on them. A decentralized approach is critical in times of a public health

emergency. Secondary and tertiary health care units are concentrated in the cities, which can negatively impact the timely delivery of health services particularly in countries with a large rural population. Decentralized production and marketing is needed in times of pandemics. While central capacity is useful as a resource to be tapped by the other levels, it is decentralized capacity and ability to work with other levels in a multi-level governance system that matters. The delineation of responsibilities and the injection of necessary capacities to perform them are crucial in pandemics. In the health sector there is bound to be some overlap among these responsibilities across different levels of government.

Some countries have performed relatively well. Countries like the UK actually faltered initially by centralizing measures, finally giving way to a decentralizing approach when the situation actually worsened. At the same time, questions relating to the nature of the executive at the local level, the range of functions that should be devolved to that level and the ability of the local governments to raise their own revenue by expanding their revenue base have become important points for enquiry. It is in moments of crisis that the robustness and resilience of systems of governance are tested. The pandemic has created an opportunity to think about reforming and strengthening local governments.

It is in this context that the **Central University of Kerala and Centre for Rural Management (CRM)** propose to organize a webinar on *rethinking decentralization in the post-covid-19 era*. The following are the suggested themes for exploration. We welcome contributions on these themes or related ones from across the world.

1. Ideas on and models of decentralization
2. Covid-19 and the regulatory framework/functional domain of local governments
3. The role of subsidiarity in assigning health-related roles to local governments
4. Local governments in federal and unitary systems

5. Recentralization during Covid-19 and their positive and negative effects
6. Issues relating to the efficacy of different types of executive –directly elected vs Mayor-in Council models in crisis management
7. Local government capacitation for more effective functioning in crises
8. Issues of coordination among different levels of government including multi-tiered local governments
9. Areas of reform of the local government in the light of Covid-19
10. Gender of leaders and performance of local governments
11. Models of co-production at the local level
12. Stimulus packages and local governments
13. Experiences from Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas, Oceania and post-communist states
14. Experiences from different states in India
15. Similarities between local government response to pandemics and disasters
16. Epidemics, planning and cities
17. Synchronisation between institutions of local solidarity economy and local government
18. Local democracy and elections during pandemics
19. Voluntarism and public participation at the local level
20. Local government experiences from Kerala

Last date for Submission of Abstract (250 words)	: 20 October 2020
Intimation of Accepted Abstract	: 25 October 2020
Last date for Submission of Paper	: 05 December 2020
Papers should range between 3000 and 6000 words and be prepared in MS Word following APA style of referencing. The papers will be peer-reviewed, revised and published as edited volumes.	

Contact

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