

## **An International Webinar on**

### **Grassroots Participation and Local Development: Learnings from the 'People's Plan Campaign' in Kerala (India) and 'Batho Pele Initiative' in South Africa.**

**May 25, 26 & 27, 2022**

**(Scheduled at times convenient to the global audience)**

*Organized by*

**Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kottayam, Kerala (India).**

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**Department of Public Management and International Relations,  
School of Public Service and Governance, The Ghana Institute of  
Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), Ghana.**

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**The National School of Government (theNSG), South Africa.**

#### **Concept Note**

The *Batho Pele* (People First) is rooted in the philosophy in which “a person fully becomes mature and complete by making his or her needs subservient to those of others” (Gelfand, 1970). The *Batho Pele* concept was introduced to restore the justice, dignity and humanity of a nation, especially for generations and generations of South Africans scarred by the painful legacy of apartheid, the inhuman system that lasted nearly three and a half centuries. In 1994, when the South Africa transitioned towards a democratic system under the visionary leadership of Nelson Mandela, it was clear that the administration focused and emphasized extending equitable service delivery to all South African citizens. To make public service organization more people-centered the Mandela Administration launched the *Batho Pele* initiative. It was in 1997 that a White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (the *Batho Pele*, “People first”, White Paper) was introduced to put into effect the commitment and the vision of the Mandela Administration to extend the services to all citizens, not merely a privileged few. The *Batho Pele* is based on the following eight principles:

- Consultation: Citizens should be consulted about their needs.
- Standards: All citizens should know what service to expect.
- Redress: All citizens should be offered an apology when service standards are not met.

- Access: All citizens should have equal access to services.
- Courtesy: All citizens should be treated courteously.
- Information: All citizens are entitled to full and accurate information.
- Openness and Transparency: All citizens should know how decisions are made and departments are run.
- Value for Money: All services provided should offer value for money.

The *Batho Pele* principles seek to improve the quality and accessibility of government services by improving efficiency and accountability. It provides a framework about how public services should be provided in a more consultative, inclusive, accessible, efficient and effective manner. The Mandela administration envisioned that the application of the *Batho Pele* concept would ensure that governance would be fashioned to meet the people's needs and expectations, enhance customer satisfaction, while simultaneously upholding the government's promise that access to public services is no longer a privilege enjoyed by a few, but a mandatory fundamental right of all citizens. An efficient and accountable public service delivery to all the citizens was the very foundation to build a strong democratic society in South Africa. The introduction of the *Batho Pele* sought to eradicate an apartheid bureaucracy that favored a minority based on race and replace it with a set of democratic principles. Between 1994 and 2004, South Africa witnessed significant service delivery achievements. Though the democratic transitioning in South Africa has been celebrated worldwide, its radical transformation in public service delivery is yet to be fully acknowledged.

Meanwhile, in 1996, a year before the launch of the *Batho Pele*, Kerala, a state in India launched a democratic decentralization initiative titled *People's Plan Campaign (PPC)* to foster local democracy and development through effective and accountable service delivery at the grassroots level. The *PPC* was the most extensive and efficient decentralization program undertaken in India. The *PPC* has been considered as a far reaching and radical experiment in grassroot-level decentralization not only in Kerala but also across India. *Kudumbashree*, a self-help group network rooted at grassroot level is one of the significant outcomes of the *PPC*. The state of Kerala has been a forerunner in terms of the devolution of funds, functions, and functionaries to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The grassroot-level democratic decentralization initiatives like the *PPC* paved the way for opportunities to ensure better delivery of services to the people in the state.

Local governments at the grassroots level are closest to the people and so they expect that the services offered by PRIs will be delivered in a people-friendly manner. With the launching of the *PPC*, the local governments have been entrusted with the responsibility of providing a large number of public goods and services including water supply, sanitation, health, nutrition, education, housing electricity connectivity, and so on. While the main objective of decentralization and transfer of grassroots institutions was to make Panchayats, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations focal points for planning, local economic development and service delivery, it has succeeded only to

some extent. It is true that local governments were empowered through decentralization to carry out public service delivery, but they had not succeeded enough to contextualize and localize the principles of effective service delivery (Chathukulam, 2021). The demand to improve service delivery management in Kerala has been increasing more than ever as improving the quality of public service delivery has become very important for reducing poverty and accelerating development in post-pandemic Kerala. Local service delivery in Kerala should be rooted in and based on the core basic principles of people-centeredness or ‘people-first approach’, clear standards of service, equity, transparency, accountability not only to government but also to the citizens, high standards of integrity, fairness, good behavior, rationality, efficiency, convergence, right to service delivery, grievance redressal, continuous improvement, sustainability, inclusion and holistic approach.

Apart from these basic principles, it would be ideal to incorporate the eight *Batho Pele* principles of service delivery which include: (i) consulting users of services, (ii) service standards (iii) increasing access, (iv) ensuring courtesy, (v) providing more and better information, (vi) increasing openness, and transparency (vii) remedying mistakes and failures; and (viii) getting the best possible value for money. However, it should also be noted that though the implementation of the principles of *Batho Pele* was expected to improve service delivery and accountability, the truth is that service delivery is still a dilemma in South Africa. The country has witnessed a series of protests over lack of access to a variety of basic social needs, incompetence, and the collapse of service delivery at the local level (Martin, 2021). Though there were attempts to revive the concept of *Batho Pele* in South Africa and *PPC* in Kerala, it has been met with a lukewarm response.

### **Can a Convergence between *Batho Pele* and *PPC* Give a New Lease to Governance?**

South Africa has three levels of government – national, provincial and local. While corruption and incompetence are a characteristic feature of the three, it is the local governments that have been dubbed as the unpopular tier for various reasons including poor service delivery (Friedman, 2021). In the case of Kerala, local government has made some remarkable contributions in the realm of service delivery but could not sustain its initial success and lacks professionalism to the core. However, the deficits in the quality of local service delivery - be it in the case of implementation of *Batho Pele* principles to improve public service or in the case of *PPC* in Kerala, can be rectified. For instance, Kerala can revive democratic decentralization and inculcate professionalism by taking note of the eight principles of *Batho Pele*. Also, South Africa can borrow and imbibe the positive aspects of democratic decentralization applied under *PPC* to strengthen its local governments and improve public service delivery. In the case of local governments in South Africa and Kerala, a developmental and professional leadership is the need of the hour to improve public service delivery and it

is only with their application can adherence to *Batho Pele* principles be assured. In addition to that, Kerala and South Africa share a common ground in terms of being a consolidated democracy; they also share a celebrated history of social mobilization and vibrant civil societies (Heller, 2001). However, their administrative and bureaucratic structures need to be more professionalized and grounded. It has also been observed that political clientelism is often blamed for public service delivery failures in developing countries, and in the case of Kerala in India and South Africa, it is a major challenge (Tornquist, 2022).

Democratic states embedded in welfarism, and sustainable development are characterized by high quality people-centric service delivery in an equitable and fair manner; and for them, citizens are supreme and enlightened. Local government has a special place in democratic governments, and it is a well-accepted fact that democratic systems rely heavily on local government for effective delivery and implementation of services as well as policies. It is the need of the hour to propose and be committed to reinventing and establishing a highly professional local government system that is transparent, accountable and devoted towards improving public service delivery for the benefit of all the people.

To give impetus and encouragement to further discourses on *Batho Pele* and *PPC*, especially as both mark 25 years, the **Centre for Rural Management (CRM) Kottayam, Kerala, (India) together with the Department of Public Management and International Relations, School of Public Service and Governance, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and The National School of Government (theNSG), South Africa**, is hosting an international webinar on May 25, 26 & 27, 2022. We are inviting research papers discussing the significance of the *Batho Pele* and *PPC* in improving service delivery, good governance, deepening decentralization, local democracy, local development and discussions on possible convergence between them and its outcome. We are also planning to publish an Edited Volume by compiling the peer reviewed papers presented at the Webinar. The following are the suggested themes for exploration, (only suggestive in nature). We welcome contributions on these themes or related ones from across the world.

1. Participatory Local Governance (Transparency, Openness and Accountability)
2. Revenue Mobilization and Local Economic Development
3. Development and Management of Sub-Structures of Local Governance Institutions
4. Capacity and Service Delivery in Local Governance
5. Empowerment of Front-line Managers in Local Governance
6. An Assessment of Local Governance Performance (Achievements and Challenges)
7. E-governance and Utilization of Technology in Service Delivery of Local Governments
8. Gender Mainstreaming in Local Governance
9. Environmental Health and Waste Management at Grassroots

10. Planning, Rating and Budgeting in Local Governance.
11. Revisiting the legacy of *Batho Pele* in Africa and *People's Plan Campaign* in Kerala
12. The Role of Subsidiarity in assigning Health-related Roles to Local Governments
13. Local Government Capacitation for more Effective Functioning in Crises
14. Models of Co-production at the Local Level
15. Stimulus Packages and Local Governments
16. Synchronization between Institutions of Local Solidarity Economy and Local Governments
17. Voluntarism, Citizen Participation and Public Action at the Local Level
18. Local Democracy and Citizenship
19. Local Governments and Service Delivery
20. Local Electoral Democracy and Development
21. Measuring the Quality of Local Governments across Countries: Concepts and Theories

### Important Dates

Last date for Submission of Abstract (250 words)	: March 28, 2022
Intimation of Accepted Abstract	: March 31, 2022
Last date for Submission of Paper	: May 15, 2022
Webinar Date	: May 25, 26 & 27, 2022

Papers should range between 5000 and 7500 words and be prepared in MS Word following APA style of referencing. The papers will be peer-reviewed, revised and published as edited volumes by a well reputed publisher.

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## **Brief Note on Organizers**



### **Centre for Rural Management (CRM), Kerala, India.**

The Centre for Rural Management is an autonomous multifaceted research organisation located in Kottayam, Kerala. Established in 1990 under the Charitable Societies Act, the Centre has been concentrating on research, project evaluation, training, consultancy and social action. The Centre has been assigned projects by Ford Foundation, Institute of Development Studies (Sussex, U.K), Department of Planning (Lakshadweep Administration), Government of Kerala, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Panchayati Raj (Govt. of India), Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, India Eco Development Project-Periyar Tiger Reserve, Swiss Development Agency and Arghyam among others. The Centre has published a number of manuscripts, books & articles. A Board of Directors representing both academic and activist streams manages the Centre. CRM works jointly with other think tanks and civil society groups as well as universities, research institutions and Local Governments.

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### **The Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA).**

Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) is a financially self-sustaining Public University in Ghana and Africa. It was established in 1961 as a joint Ghana Government/United Nations Special Fund Project as the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) to develop the public administrative systems and to produce civil servants with the administrative and professional competence to plan and administer local, national and regional services. GIMPA has transformed from small public service institution to a tertiary institution offering a wide range of programs. Presently, it is made up of six schools, namely: School of Public Service and Governance (SPSG), Business School (GBS), School of Technology (SOT), Faculty of Law (FLAW), School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (SOLASS), and School of Research and Graduate Studies.

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### **The National School of Government (theNSG), South Africa.**

The National School of Government (the NSG) is a South African state training institution with a mandate to provide or facilitate the provision of education, training and development (ETD) in the three spheres of government, state-owned entities (SOEs) and organs of state. Compulsory and demand-led education and training is provided to serving and prospective public servants as well as public representatives through a range of accredited and non-accredited programmes and courses. The courses and programmes are offered directly, facilitated by NSG employees, through a contracted panel of experts, and former public servants who are specialists in their fields. The curriculum content is continuously evolving to serve the needs of individual public servants as well as the delivery demands of the public sector. The NSG ensures that basic values and principles of public administration are inculcated into the value system.

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