

RESIDENTS WELFARE ASSOCIATION:ITS INFLUENCE AND USES FOR PUBLICS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KOTTAYAM DISTRICT OF KERALA STATE IN INDIA

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Introduction:

Residents' Associations are formed by groups of people from a specific geographic community who come together to address issues within their local area and acts as a voice of their local community .In one form or other they existed since the mid nineteenth century. Membership of aResidents' Association is normally open to all local people residing in a defined area in Grama panchayath, Municipality or Corporations. Residents associations are a prominent category of community based organization.

Key words: Category, Grama panchayath, Munciplality,Membership etc etc

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Review of Literature:

Residents associations came to existence in Kerala at Trivandrum in 1984. People from other parts of Kerala came to Trivandrum for doing the job. They faced a lot of difficulty, mainly because they came from the rural Kerala and lived in their houses in joint families. No body knows who is staying adjacent to him and nobody is there to extend a helping hand about forming a residents association. Later it is extended to other cities/towns across Kerala. But it took time for formation of a residents association in rural Kerala. In village/rural areas, lot of practices were there for working together for house construction, lake-well cleaning, agricultural farming etc.

As time passed, joint families changed to micro/nano families. Urbanizations came in rural areas also. In order to keep different levels of people living together under one umbrella, they decided to form residents associations.

Associations collect a monthly subscription from all the house members covered by the association. All associations are taking a joint bank account in favor of its Secretary and President. The association is not linked with any political party, religions/caste etc. All people are working together for the overall development of their areas/locality. Every month all executive members and office bearers are conducting a meeting, reviewing their activities and chalking out new development programmes, Maintaining a tie up with the police authorities, local government (panchayath/municipality) etc. Each Family of the RA is provided with separate small board to be displayed in their gates or in front of the houses. Any unknown people entering the jurisdictional areas of the RAs can easily be identified and if required they can be given assistance to locate the houses or persons they are looking for.

All RAs are doing a lot of developmental activities in their own areas. The fund required is usually raised by way of monthly subscriptions, donations etc. Some associations are giving importance to organic farming, some for works, or solving water scarcity etc. The headaches of government local bodies and state government for waste disposal are able to be controlled effectively by the influence of RAs. They are converting the waste materials into good manure at the source itself.

In the historical perspective , RAs like unions/associations /co-operatives were functioning in European community in 19Th century.After World d war 11(two) , such associations were there, to provide food and shelter to the affected victims of the war.

Activities done by various RAs are: 1)Awareness class to children/publics on various topics like : drug abuse, charectarization,torturing ,seminar on cancer guideness etc

2) Health awareness program like life style disease: how to prevent /control.

3) The need of farming/agriculture with special reference to organic farming

4) At present different species of herbal/medicinal plants have vanished from the face of earth. RAs make efforts to create necessary awareness among the members about such important herbal plantshaving immense medicinal values and the need to ensure its existence.

5) Water scarcity is a major predicament in almost all places across Kerala .Most of the lakes ,public wells, rivers were dry up in summer. The reason behind it is : people encroached that area causing damage to water sources, throwing waste in their peripheral/flowing areas, preventing its free flow.In several districts of Kerala especially some rivers are planned to be mutually linked overcoming the above said impediments. BY doing so all the thrown away wastes and other polluting items (non-perishable materials) are removed. In this way a new civilization is taking shape in the society in general.By doing so people are bound to refrain from their habit of throwing wastes to rivers/lakes and the waste materials are removed in the source itself.

In Kottayam district of Kerala state at present a total of about 1000 (one thousand) RAs are functioning. Under Pampady police circle 94 RAs have been got registered .In 2008, in order to make a strong bonding between the police and the public an organization named “Police & Residence association initiative in Kottayam” started functioning.In continuation to this, Government of Kerala has taken initiative across kerala in this direction and named it as “Jenamythri”.As part of this, Circle inspector of police is calling for a meeting on the first day of every month for discussing about local issues etc.All things noted are recorded in minute book. So if any RA has any grievances to be solved will be discussed and try to find solution to all problems. By doing so a strong bond/relationship is being recreated between the police and the members of public.

As part of this ,new beat system came in to effect in police station. Police officers from each station visit all houses and collect .Telephone numbers of all the police officers are made known to the houses in their beat.By doing so a regulated screened relationship is established between the public and the police officials.

By making such a tie up with police by RA ,following achievements were reached.1) Criminal cases were reduced considerably..

2)Dress bank,rice distribution to poor classes in Government Medical college at Kottayam etc are arranged.

3)A new mobile application called “Thanuthra”was introduced for extending help to ladies..

4) An awareness program(seminar/meeting) was conducted in Changanassery Municipality highlighting rules and laws by making a tie up with the Legal Service Society.

5)Text books and other study materials were donated to students of all classes by RAs.

6)Medical camp,Tromocare , Disaster management seminar ,Free eye-check up camp etc were conducted in various RAs areas.

7) Special coaching classes were arranged for class X failed students and necessary study materials were provided..

8)Due recognition encouragement and honours were bestowed on eligible members of the community ,found meritorious in their respective fields.

The majority of associations are structured to include a chair, vice chair,secretary,treasurer and committee members. This was the concept in olden time. Now the structure include, president,Secretary,Assistant secretary ,Treasurer and executive committee members.All the office bearers are chosen from the whole members in a general body.

Residents associations initially started in few metro centres. Now it is being spread to the suburban and rural areas. People in a particular locality gather together on a house hold basis, chart out a common programme of activities and register themselves into an organization ,what is called residents associations(RA).The number of house holds as members in a resident association varies from a few tens to many hundreds. The organization is usually registered under the charitable society act.

Some of the residents associations have engaged in study and interaction programmes in different arena of community development such as 1) Promotion of indigeneous primary health practices,2) promotion of cultivation and uses of medical plants,3)Campaign for sustainable and clean environment ,4) HIV/AIDS preventive and control programmes,5) study on thriving factors of small scale enterprises ,6)Entrepreneurship development programme,7)Vocational training and literacy training programme,8) Empowerment of deprived section and women and 9) Need assessment and development of invention projects and programmes.

The success of RAs ,more than community organizations, is often attributed to their non-partisan, democratic and participatory nature of functioning.With the introduction of the decentralised local self governments,R As are supposed to play the role as major stake holders in grass root level planning and implementation of developmental programmes in the community.

The study has been an attempt to address the following focal questions.

1. What are the major development activities under taken by resident's associations?
2. What is the modus operandi of mobilising resources for specific developmental activities?
3. To what extent the intervention of RAs has succeeded in ensuring quality, quantity and cost effectiveness of services provided by bodies of public utilities and welfare?
4. To what extent did the different people extend services for the upliftment of their (poor/low profile) neighbourhoods .
5. To what extent the phenomenon of RAs functions as a micro level developmental paradigm?

Objectives:

The averred objectives of RAs like any other community based organization, have been the physical ,mental and social well being of its members in particular, and that of the community in general.

To work for health and family welfare of the members ,to encourage their intellectual artistic and cultural talents .

To help the members for gainful employment ,to work for fraternity and friendship among the residents.

To develop and maintain ample roads , drainage and sanitation facilities, to maintain healthy environment etc.RAs also take up problem pertaining to public utility services ,consumer disputes, security issues etc.

Specific objectives:

1 To survey the major socio economic and cultural activities of residents association in Pampady circle area in Kottayam district of Kerala.

2 To analyse the various modes of resource mobilization adopted by RAs for their development activities

3 To analyse how much their activities are participatory and transparent ,so that these contribute to the importance of RAs micro level institution in local level development.

4. To assess to what extent RAs can apply supplementary and complementary and other developmental institutions.

5 To put forth inferences of the study for public scrutiny and dissemination.

Methodology:

The data for the study were elicited from primary as well as secondary sources. Sources of secondary information was obtained from a) memoranda of associations and rules and regulations of RAs (b) Annual reports of RAs.(c) Media reports on RAs (d) published works and studies about RAs.

Primary data collection: Under the jurisdiction of Pampady circle inspector of police ,about 94 registered residents associations are working. First day of every month the ,circle inspector is conducting a meeting for discussing about the associations' work,what are the things to be initiated from police side etc.From most of the associations one or two representative minimum are attending this meeting.

Since the author is an Ex-secretary of one such residents association ,attended one such meeting .A questionnaire served (in local language) to the members and data was collected from 100 members..The questionnaire prepared to meet the objectives of the study.

The information was collected for the following

1. Institutional details of RAs
2. Activities for physical, mental and social well being of the residents
3. Resource mobilization.
4. Collaborative activities.
5. Opinions and suggestions.
6. No of years of functioning
7. No of members in RAs
8. No of medical camp conducted
9. No of health awareness classes conducted.
10. Anti mosquito drive was conducted or not.
11. Awards to toppers in school/colleges or public exam.
12. Distribution of study materials
13. Any coaching class ,cookery classes etc conducted or not .
14. No. of cultural programme conducted or not?
15. No. of recreation facilities conducted .
16. No of activities conducted for road construction ,drinking water facilities ,drainage facilities ,solid waste disposal etc

Tables and calculations:

The data collected from 100 members of different association across Kottayam District under Police circle Pampady.

- 1 Number of houses under your RA?.
 - a. Up to 50 (11), b.Between 51-100 (44), c.Above 100 family/houses (45)
- 45 Percent Association have above 100 houses and 44 percentage have between 51-100 houses in there Associations.
2. When did your association come in to existence?
 - a. 5 years or less(48) , b.Between 6 to 10 years (40), c.Above 10 years (12)

48% of the associations are were formed in less than 5 years and 40% between 6 to 10 years.

3. None of the associations having own land/building .Most of them are functioning in local club room etc ,However none of them are working in rental buildings . All participants of the survey have marked their opinion like this .

4. Opinion about reduction of theft rate after the formation of RA

Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Reduction of theft cases	28	48	24	0	0
percentage	28	48	24	0	0

Opinion survey came to the conclusion that theft level in the local area have reduced considerably, after the formation of RAs'..

5. Opinion about tie-up with administration (Panchayath,police etc) after the formation of RA.

Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Tie –up with administration	24	68	8	0	0
percentage	24	68	8	0	0

Again, the survey came to the conclusion that all residence associations are maintaining a strong bond with administration ensuring smooth functioning.

6 .Opinion about influence of RA for controlling the atrocities/harassment towards ladies and children.

.Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Harassment towards ladies /children	25	52	23	0	0
percentage	25	52	23	0	0

Participants have the opinion that residents association effectively helped in reduction in atrocities/harassment towards ladies and children.

7 Opinion about involvement of RA for the welfare/good being of the public/people:

.Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Involvement of RA for the welfare of the people	40	52	8	0	0
percentage	40	52	8	0	0

The study revealed that 92% of the participants are of the view that RAs contributed vigorously in the welfare/good beings of the people .

8. Opinion about Associations involvement for the social upliftment of the society:

.Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Involvement for social up-liftment of the society	24	72	4	0	0
percentage	24	72	4	0	0

The study came to conclusion that 96% of the participants are of the view that residents associations are involving in the upliftment of the society.

9. Opinion about relationship enhancement with police officials:

.Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Relationship enhancement	40	56	4	0	0

with police					
percentage	40	56	4	0	0

The study revealed that 96% of the participants are of the view that there is an enhancement in their good relation with police officials by all RAs.

10. Opinion about influence of RAs for eradicating/controlling the drug abuse among the public:

.Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Eradicating/controlling drug abuse	24	52	24	0	0
percentage	24	52	24	0	0

The survey revealed that 76% of the participants are of the view that RA helped extensively in eradicating/controlling the drug abuse among the public.

11. Opinion about influence of RA for reducing road accidents:

.Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Influence of RA for reducing road accidents.	16	62	12	0	0
percentage	16	62	12	0	0

The study come to a conclusion that 88% of the participants are of the opinion that RA had taken active steps for reducing road accidents in their jurisdiction.

12. Opinion about educating the society for social change :

.Opinion	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
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	Agree				disagree
Influence of RA on social change	24	72	4	0	0
percentage	24	72	4	0	0

The survey shows that 96% of the participants observed that the RAs made extensive contributions in educating the society for positive social changes .

Findings: Following things were found in this study:

1. The majority of the associations were formed /came into existence within the last 10 years.
2. None of the Residents Associations have own building to functions and none of them functioning in rental building.
3. Formation of the Associations helped in reducing the theft cases in there areas by effective supervision /monitoring.
4. All the associations maintain good relationship with the police authorities and local administration.
5. Associations helped to reduce/control harassment towards children and woman ,and have involvement in the welfare of the public and up liftment of the society.
6. Residents associations help in general in reducing the road accidents and reducing the abuse drugs by common people in the society.
7. Survey also come to a conclusion that residents associations have considerable role in promoting welfare activities of their areas, like: conducting free medical camps solving water scarcity ,improving extracurricular activities among the children, educating public about the menace of life style diseases, conducting health awareness class, anti mosquito drive, distribution of study materials, coaching class, cookery class, recreation facilities, solid waste disposal etc etc.

References:

- 1 leaflets published by several residents association
- 2 “Prathysa” a combined publication by Residents Association and Kottayam District Police