

## CHAPTER V

### HUMAN RESOURCES

#### 5.1 Regulation of Manpower in Urban Local Bodies

Along with transfer of functions and funds, functionaries also need to be available with the Municipalities in sufficient numbers to facilitate the effective functioning of Urban Local Bodies as full-fledged units of self-governance. Audit observations on assessment of staff requirement on the basis of norms prescribed and adequacy of availability of manpower in ULBs are as follows:

##### 5.1.1 Inadequate assessment of manpower requirement

As per Section 222 of KM Act, the Government was to constitute a common municipal service for the employees under the service of the Municipalities in the State and regulate the recruitment and conditions of service of the employees of the Municipalities.

In accordance with the above provision, the State Government regulates the classification, method of recruitment, conditions of service, pay and allowance, discipline and conduct of staff and officers of ULBs. The Kerala Municipal Common Service (Ministerial and Revenue Branch) Qualification and Method of Appointment Rules 2001, Public Health Recruitment Rules 1972 and Special Rules for the Kerala Local Self Government Engineering Services 2007 regulate the recruitment of the staff in ULBs.

The broad framework of functions carried out by various wings in the ULBs is depicted in **Table 5.1**:

**Table 5.1: Functions entrusted to various wings in ULBs**

Wings	Functions
General Administration	Council, General establishment, mail distribution and despatch, Typing and Legal matters.
Revenue	Tax Assessment and Collection, fee collection of Municipal properties, Rent of Municipal building, issue of certificates like residential certificates, ownership certificates and change of ownership.
Public health and sanitation	Supervision of sanitation work, Registration of birth and death and marriage, issue of Licence to Factories, Trades, Entrepreneurship Activities and Other Services, Registration of hospitals and paramedical institutions, Registration of Tutorials, implementation of projects related to waste management, supervision of public health awareness programme and poverty alleviation activities.
Finance/Accounts	Handling of all Municipal funds and accounts, Preparation of Budget and Annual Financial Statement, All receipts and payments, social security pension, recoveries, Advances, Loan, GST and Audit.
Engineering and town planning	All Municipal works and Town planning works, building permit related activities and public works,

Wings	Functions
	maintenance of municipal vehicles, water and electricity charges, land acquisition, establishment of Engineering wing.
Development	All works relating to decentralised planning, convening Ward Sabha and Development Seminar, Plan Approval, etc.
Miscellaneous	Kudumbashree, Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme (AUEGS), National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), etc.
Welfare	Social security pension, unemployment wages.

(Source: Data furnished by Directorate of Urban Affairs, Thiruvananthapuram)

Adequate staff strength was essential to cater to the needs of the fast growing population in ULBs. The ULBs passed resolutions for upgrading their status and revising the establishment structure by creation of new posts. Audit observed that though the Municipalities were graded<sup>56</sup> as I, II and III in 2014, based on revenue and population, no such categorization of Municipal Corporations was attempted. It was also noted that no new posts were created in existing ULBs consequent upon the grading exercise, except for the newly created 27 Municipalities and Kannur Corporation, and two Corporations<sup>57</sup>. Audit observed that even among Municipalities belonging to the same grade, there was wide variation in the number of staff in various posts such as Junior Health Inspector Grade II, Senior Clerk, Office Assistant, etc.

Audit noticed that there was no sanctioned strength as regards the manpower in ULBs. As per the current practice, the number of existing posts in ULBs is increased based on requests from individual ULBs forwarded to Government by the Director of Urban Affairs. The cadre strength was seen fixed in the case of Engineering wing of Local Self Government Institutions only. For other categories of staff, there were no criteria for assessing the staff requirement. No work study or assessment was conducted by the Government or any external agency to assess staff requirement of ULBs on a scientific basis.

The Fourth SFC had recommended a scientific rearrangement and fixing of staff pattern to be implemented as early as possible, which was accepted by Government. The Action Taken Report submitted (March 2011) by Government on the recommendation stated that an effective result oriented study on manpower requirement in ULBs was to be conducted and that LSGD may select the agency for this purpose. However, no action has been taken in this regard till date (March 2021).

As per data furnished to Audit by the Director of Urban Affairs (DUA), as against the existing 7736 posts in ULBs, the men-in-position was 6754 as of 31 March 2020. Government in LSGD reported that there were 982 vacancies in the State out of which 123 (12.52 per cent) was in the Engineering wing of ULBs. The DUA also stated (April 2021) that when the Municipalities were upgraded (July 2014), posts were not sanctioned according to the revised grade

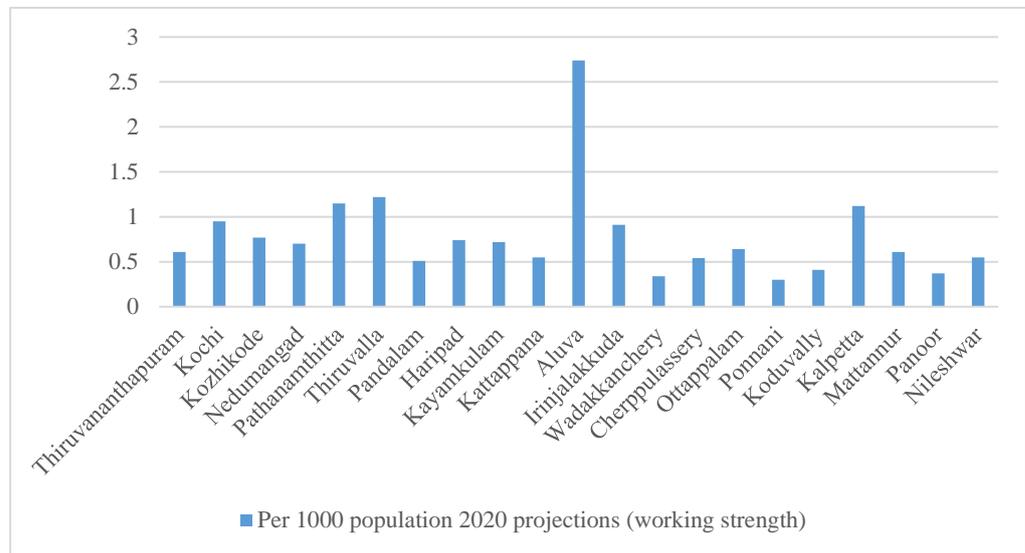
<sup>56</sup> Based on the recommendation of First SFC, Municipalities were first classified in 1993 on the basis of income. Post 1993, the grading of Municipalities was done after a gap of 20 years in 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Kollam and Kozhikode Corporations.

of Municipalities. Hence, there is no particular staff pattern for Municipalities/Corporations conforming to their grading.

Analysis of working strength<sup>58</sup> in 21 test-checked ULBs in terms of the number of employees per 1000 population as per the projected population for 2020 showed that it ranged between 0.3 and 2.74 as indicated in **Chart 5.1**:

**Chart 5.1: Analysis of working strength against projected population**



(Source: Data furnished by ULBs)

While Aluva Municipality had a working strength of 2.74 employees per 1000 population, 17 ULBs had less than one employee for every 1000 population. Only three ULBs had employees between one and two per 1000 population. The shortage in working strength would adversely impact the quality of delivery of civic services.

Audit notes that devolution of powers to local bodies to be fully effective would necessarily require involvement of the local bodies in determining the staffing norms, recruitment, etc. With Section 223 of KM Act explicitly advocating that no post in the service of a Municipality shall be created except with the previous sanction of the Government, Government needs to address the dearth of manpower in Local bodies with utmost priority. Insufficient manpower in local bodies would undermine the goal of ensuring a system of effective institutions of self-government in place in the ULBs.

In the Exit Conference (November 2021), ACS LSGD accepted the audit observation and remarked that the ULBs were overburdened as responsibilities had both expanded and deepened over time and the resources to meet the needs were not complementary.

### 5.1.2 Inadequacies in Recruitment of staff

Despite the steps taken so far for implementing the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA to empower ULBs, the Government still exercises control over the classification, method of recruitment, conditions of service, pay and allowance, discipline and conduct of staff and officers of ULBs.

<sup>58</sup> Excluding Engineering wing of LSGD

The vacancies are reported by the ULBs to DUA which are forwarded to the Kerala Public Service Commission (KPSC) for recruitment of staff. There was unexplained delay in reporting of vacancies by ULBs, sending vacancy proposals to KPSC, completion of entire process of recruitment and appointing of persons, as listed below:

- There was delay extending to 169 days in sending the proposals received from ULBs by DUA to KPSC.
- The KPSC had taken a total time ranging from 22 to 1640 days for completion of the entire process starting from notifying of posts to selection of candidates.
- Time gap of six to 595 days occurred between receipt of selection list from KPSC and appointment of staff by DUA.

#### 5.1.2.1 Insufficiency of staff in Urban Local Bodies

Audit observed that there was considerable shortage of staff against the existing posts in ULBs, as shown in **Table 5.2**:

**Table 5.2: Existing posts vis-à-vis actual strength of staff in ULBs in the State as of 31 March 2021**

Wing and Category	Existing posts	Appointment	Vacant posts
<b>General</b>	3655	3323	332
<b>Revenue</b>	1018	948	70
<b>Health</b>	1847	1410	437
<b>Municipal Secretaries/Assistant Secretaries</b>	99	79	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>6619</b>	<b>5760</b>	<b>859</b>

(Source: Details furnished by the Directorate of Urban Affairs, which do not include details pertaining to Engineering wing)

There were only 994 men in position against the sanctioned strength of 1117 in the Engineering wing of ULBs, as revealed by data furnished by LSGD, GoK as stated in **Table 5.3**:

**Table 5.3: Sanctioned strength and men-in-position in Engineering Wing in ULBs in the State**

Sl. No.	Designation	Sanctioned strength	Men-in-position
1	Superintending Engineer	6	6
2	Executive Engineer	20	19
3	Assistant Executive Engineer	52	41
4	Assistant Engineer	179	169
5	Overseer Grade I	262	227
6	Overseer Grade II	221	190
7	Overseer Grade III	350	318
8	Clerk	27	24
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>994</b>

(Source: Data furnished by Chief Engineer, LSGD)

As the Engineering wing in ULB plays a crucial role in planning and execution of projects designed to implement mandatory functions, inadequacy of staff may pose problems in timely execution of projects and assurance in quality of outcome. Non-filling of vacancies in posts involving technical expertise would adversely affect the timeliness and competence in execution of approved infrastructure projects. Besides, as already indicated in Chapter III, functions such as water supply continue to be handled through parastatal agencies in all Municipalities other than Thrissur Corporation. Certain functions in many Municipalities continued to be handled by staff lent by the Government and hence risk of conflict of interest owing to dual accountability could arise.

The Government replied (December 2021) that the State has been continually responding to the need for additional human resources and enabling local governments to take up additional specialised resources for specific projects and interventions. Kerala also has been tapping into its rich community resources and finding new modalities of engagement and cooperation which enables harnessing human resources that are available locally without permanent employment.

Audit observed that the new modalities of engagement remain limited to specific projects and are not adequate to equip the ULBs in terms of all functions devolved and mould them into self-governing institutions in the true sense.