CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Within the framework of a theory of women participation and a methodology tailored to the needs, an attempt was made in the study to find out the different dimensions of women participation and their determinants. The present chapter of the thesis discusses the major conclusions of the study and policy implications emerging from them. It also contains suggestions to improve women participation in the development programmes of various organisations and areas for further research.

7.1 Conclusions and policy implications

Participation of the people in the programmes meant for them is not an area of contention at present. Except for the apprehensions of a very few, the idea is accepted worldwide. Invisible work of the women who constitute half of the human resource is also getting recognition. With the acceptance of women and their participation in development programmes as a necessity, the basic issue is to identify the factors which promote/prevent it. The policy implications emerging from the findings are analysed herewith.
An examination of the Kerala economy highlights that the Physical Quality of Life Index and the Human Development Index are satisfactory. Due to cent per cent literacy and progressive culture, women are treated more or less equal in Kerala. In population, women outnumber men. However, unemployment of educated youth, relatively high incidence of poverty, low work participation rate, low per capita income etc. reflect the gloomy side of the picture. These characteristics of the economy and society might have generally influenced the findings.

The participation of women in the development programmes is required in Kerala not merely to serve any democratic ideology but to accelerate the growth itself. With the long traditions of non-governmental organisations and the successful experience of development bureaucracy of governmental organisations, the development organisations are honestly striving to ensure women participation in their development programmes. Participation of women beneficiaries are assumed to be a function of type of organisation, nature of programme and characteristics of participants.

In many of the government development programmes like IRDP, TRYSEM etc. women participation is statutorily ensured. Besides, there are programmes like DWCRA, aid to mahila samajams etc. exclusively for women. Women are also
accommodated in various development councils as ex-officio members. These types of administrative arrangements have obvious impact on women participation though not a substitute for total participation.

From the analysis of the empirical data, the actual degree of women participation is found to be unsatisfactory. Majority of the participants (63.62%) are below the satisfactory participation rate. In the cases of average participation rate and number of participants above the satisfactory rate, GOs are far below NGOs. It shows that the type of organisation can result in differential impact on women participation. The claims of progressive nature of Kerala women and the theoretical recognition of women work are also found to be not reflected in real participation. Hence conscious efforts have to be undertaken by all development organisations, especially the government organisations to promote women participation. Government organisations have to be less bureaucratic and more flexible to accommodate participative initiatives of the people.

It is observed that degree of participation is significantly varying with respect to the nature of the programme. Highest participation is in the home-based production schemes like animal husbandry, poultry, kitchen gardening etc. followed by schemes for facilities at home.
Nearer the programme to the house, the higher will be the participation. Hence programmes should be attuned to the needs of women to work at home as followed by many of the NGOs.

A participant need not always be blamed for lower participation when provisions are beyond the control of the participants. But in the study, provisions for participation are within the reach of the participant and bifurcated into institutional and personal. It is observed that automatic non-participation constitute 54.82 per cent of the total non-participation. Though the average rate of participation and institutional arrangements for participation of NGOs are higher than GOs, automatic non-participation is also higher among NGOs. It implies that institutional arrangements for participation at NGOs are either ineffective or not fully utilised by beneficiaries, where higher participation is due to personal factors. Hence due care is required for better utilisation of given opportunities for participation by institutions and individuals.

Yet another inference is that the degree of participation and wilful non-participation are inversely related. It implies that higher the participation, the higher will be the influence of personal factors. It proves that like the organisation and programme, the participant is also
an important factor in determining the degree of participation. That is why in all organisations and programmes a few people are in satisfactory or above satisfactory level of participation as evidenced in the analysis of range of participation, type of organisation and nature of programme (Tables 5.6 and 5.9). Besides the inbuilt institutional arrangements for participation, efforts should also be made, therefore, to motivate beneficiaries to participate in the programme by their own means at different levels.

Participation of the same beneficiary or beneficiaries of the same organisation is found to be different at different stages of programme formulation and implementation. NGOs have the highest participation in pre-implementation stage, while GOs have the lowest participation for the same. It shows that NGOs are giving importance to participation at both pre-implementation and implementation stages. Hence beneficiaries are brought to a known programme which will increase the participation rate. Different stages of a programme should be phased out. Institutional arrangements can be adopted separately to ensure participation of beneficiaries specifically at different stages.

Women beneficiaries are found to be unable to participate in the later stages of programme implementation.
due to personal factors rather than non-utilisation of institutional arrangements. Institutional arrangements in the later stages are being fully utilised and in the initial stages are relatively less effective. Hence institutions and participants have to give more attention to the initial stages of programme implementation in the given conditions.

It is inferred that programme-wise participation has no association with different stages of participation though participation is influenced by both the nature of the programme and the stages of participation. Programme and stages are not interrelated. It denotes that though the nature of programme has influence on the extent of participation it may not be uniform at all stages. Since all stages are equally important, if a particular programme is to increase participation, it should increase participation at all stages. Participation at different stages denotes at what stage the organisation or participant is lagging and measures can be adopted accordingly to enhance total participation.

Among the various methods of participation, benefit sharing is the most important method since all respondents are beneficiaries. Personal methods are more used than institutional methods. Most important methods resorted are visit to the office of the organisation, proper utilisation of benefits, maintaining a positive opinion about organisational
personnel etc. Role in monitoring and evaluation are the least important methods, may be due to the nature of the programme or type of organisation. The method of participation differs among the beneficiaries and between organisations. Institutional methods can be strengthened by the organisation and personal methods can be improved by the beneficiaries.

As family/project income and cost sharing habit are increasing, the tendency of the beneficiaries for participation is also found increasing. Increased project income enhances the interest in project and cost sharing improves the responsibility. Hence, while selecting or formulating projects it is to be observed that project is giving direct income to the beneficiaries and should have compulsory cost sharing components.

Positive attitude and socio-psychological make-up are found to be directly related to the degree of participation. However satisfactory level of attitude and psychological qualities have not resulted in satisfactory degree of participation. It implies that participation is not the function of given variables alone though they are positively contributing. It shows the need to maintain proper care on organisational, personal and other variables in participation.
Analysis of participation rate among different religious groups and their socio-economic characteristics have revealed that in the case of a particular group or individual, high or low participation may be due to the powerful influence of certain variables which may not be significant in general, but compensating the effects of major variables. It is also noted in the analysis of participation of male and female that though male beneficiaries had favourable socio-economic characteristics than females, participation rates of males were lower. Analysis of participation and beneficiary characteristics also showed that the highest participation group has unfavourable characteristics (Tables 6.1, 6.6 and paragraph 6.2.2). It implies that the theory of participation can explain only general tendencies and not all specific cases or situations. It constraints the attempts to enhance participation uniformly among all beneficiaries.

It is observed that women participation is higher in organisations exclusively meant for women than in general development organisations. Similarly, women participation in the programmes specifically formulated for women is higher than in general development programmes. When organisation and programmes are tailored to the needs of women, their propensity to participate increases. It implies that those who are eager to enhance the participation of women have to
promote organisations and programmes for women until women are getting equal opportunities for participation.

Among the different programmes, female participation is the highest in the female-dominated programme than female and male-oriented programmes. Male participation is lower than female in general due to the predominance of female-oriented programmes in the selected NGOs. These observations reiterate the former conclusion that female-dominated and female-oriented programmes have better chances to ensure women participation. Hence programmes can be female-oriented and majority of beneficiary members may be women for increased women participation.

Analysis has shown that higher the institutional arrangements for participation, higher will be the degree of participation. It shows the significance of organisations and their arrangements for participation. Organisations, hence, have to accommodate inbuilt institutional arrangements and make them effective so that beneficiaries can participate more meaningfully.

Attitude, perception, participation scale and socio-psychological make-up of non-beneficiary respondents like OP, DP and local leaders are relatively high, especially of OP. OP of GOs are better than that of NGOs. But in the case of
DP, NGOs are better. The performance of NGOs is better than GOs when all the four attributes are taken together. It is also observed that higher the performance of behavioural characteristics of non-beneficiary respondents, higher will be the participation of beneficiaries. It indicates that though the characteristics of OP/DP/local leaders and women participation are interrelated, satisfactory performance of the former has not resulted in the satisfactory rate of participation of the latter. It implies that the better idea and attitude of non-beneficiary respondents of the programme are neither not translated effectively into action or those attributes are only a few among the various variables influencing the rate of participation. Positive attitudes and ideas have to be not only strengthened/created, but also to be effectively converted into positive activities.

It is observed that women participation in development programmes warrants certain preconditions such as democratic commitment of organisations, monetarily beneficial, home-based/adjacent production programmes, cost sharing compulsion, institutional arrangements, positive behavioural characteristics, organisations/programmes exclusively for women etc. Certainly there can be exceptional individuals or groups who are influenced by variables other than the normally influential variables. However by considering the value and
utility of participation, measures have to be suggested to enhance and ensure participative initiatives of women in development programmes. Few suggestions in these directions are given in the following part of the chapter.

7.2 Suggestions to enhance participation

On the basis of the findings, a few tentative suggestions which may help to enhance/ensure the participation of women in development programmes are made.

All efforts to promote participation initiatives can be viewed only in the general context of the Kerala economy and its development, as a policy instrument to hasten the pace of progress. The socio-economic infrastructure of the State is quite adequate to accelerate any level of development. The society is progressive and women are educated. Bureaucracy of government organisations has ample experience in achieving successful welfare measures. At the same time, NGOs have pretty long years of service in the State, nurturing the needs of the local people. All these favourable factors can be fruitfully utilised to break the ground for effective participative initiatives of women.

Government as the most powerful organisation in the society has a primary duty to promote women participation in
development programmes. Following are some of the suggestions which can be initiated by the government.

(i) Besides the existing thrust of welfare programmes for women, separate development programmes may be chalked out to fulfil the needs of women. Projects which satisfy the felt needs of women, their monetary ambitions, proximity to the house, emphasis on individual interest rather than group interest etc. may be looked into. Within the broad frame-work of the programmes given by the Central Government, the States should be given the freedom to exclude or include programmes according to the characteristics and requirements of the State. Similarly, beneficiaries should also be given the opportunity to select the programmes suiting their interests, rather than fitting them into a programme by the concerned officers.

(ii) Government can adopt considerable reservations to women in decision-making bodies and welfare and development programmes. Women may be given equal opportunities for education, training, extension and decision making. Government can enact laws which ensure equal rights and opportunities for women with men in development programmes.
(iii) A separate cell may be constituted at the state and district levels to co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate the work of various departments and their programmes meant for women.

(iv) Government can promote exclusive organisations and programmes for women. Government can support quasi-governmental (Nehru Yuvak Kendra), pseudo-governmental (co-operatives), non-governmental and self-help groups for women. Government grants and aids may also be routed through exclusive women organisations wherever they are prevailing. Such organisations can also help those women who successfully complete the training programmes of the government viz., TRYSEM to find suitable outlets—paid or self, and solve their unrecognition to a certain extent. This will further improve the quality of the training, both from the part of the trainees and the trainers.

(v) Government may resort to development partnership with NGOs in government programmes. Government participation in the programmes of people and their grassroot level organisations are also welcome.

(vi) In all stages of a programme, viz., preplanning, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation,
inbuilt provisions may be made for the adequate representation of women. Beneficiaries may also be encouraged to participate actively in the programmes and not as mere benefit seekers. Project implementation authority or personnel may be properly trained and authorised to promote participative initiatives.

(vii) Beneficiary associations may be promoted and they may be encouraged as a venue for interaction between personnel and participants. Conscientisation camps, training to improve skills and counselling to improve family atmosphere may be arranged as a part of development programmes. Extension/conscientisation/counselling programmes should be given to both male and female members of beneficiary's family so that the inhibition on women participation can be removed without male resistance.

Measures to increase women participation to be adopted by NGOs are the following.

(i) NGOs being less bureaucratic and more close to people should not only introduce inbuilt institutional arrangements for participation at all stages of a
programme but also ensure their effective utilisation by beneficiaries.

(ii) NGOs should act only as catalyst to enable people for self development and self reliance. Programmes should be in tune with the felt need of the people and project management may be viewed in such a way that NGOs can withdraw gradually from the area without harming the success and continuity of the programmes. Resources and leadership should be mobilised from the target group right from the beginning of the programme, at least to a certain extent, which can be increased subsequently. Participants may be trained to improve skill and to develop positive attitudes.

(iii) Personnel, participants and the public may be conscientised for women equality and dignity so that women can participate more liberally and effectively in the development process.

(iv) NGOs can promote beneficiary association, encourage exclusive self-help groups for women development, coordinate NGO initiatives, solicit partnership with GOS/other NGOs/self-help groups etc.

(v) By accepting GOS and NGOs as third party organisations for development and considering self-help as the best
help, the correct method for improving women participation is formation of exclusive women groups to satisfy their felt needs. Beneficiaries may mobilise money, manage their programmes and share the benefits. Women self-help groups should be self-reliant in resources and should manage without external control. They can resort to participation of government or NGOs in their programmes. They can also hire the services of technical institutions/experts and avail credit or other facilities or inputs which will facilitate their objectives. But none of these affairs should infringe their autonomy.

More concrete and objective suggestions can be made only if the nature of the programme, participants and organisation are known. An understanding of the values and culture of the society in which the development organisations and beneficiaries are existing makes the suggestions more specific and realistic. However certain measures can be generally adopted by all organisations and in all programmes to enhance and ensure the participation of women beneficiaries. Suggestions made here are indicative in these directions.
7.3 Scope for further research

By formulating a theoretical framework for people's participation and analysing the problem with empirical evidences, a few areas are noticed as interesting for further research.

(i) Though participation is accepted as a value and a means, no attempt was made to measure the impact of participation on the performance of the project. A proper methodology developed to iterate the impact of participation can objectively establish the economic implications of participation.

(ii) The thrust of the present research was degree and determinants of women participation, of which male-female comparison was incidental only. However, a detailed study can be conducted on the gender dimensions of people's participation in development programmes.

(iii) Different dimensions of participation in GOs and NGOs have been analysed so far. The same type of analysis can be extended to organised and informal self help groups of people involved in development activities.
(iv) Studies on participation are generally concentrated on micro-economic experience such as women participation in the development programmes of GOs or NGOs. Studies can also be initiated on macro areas like organised participative initiatives in the society to get control or influence regulatory institutions and resources. These are the attempts to evaluate participation as a means to transfer power to people who are the ultimate source and masters of power.

(v) Grassroot level participative initiatives to improve living conditions and surroundings like people's movement for environmental protection, pollution-free atmosphere, prohibitions of liquor and narcotic drugs, dowry and drudgery etc. have to be seriously considered and studied as organisational innovations or collective wisdom to solve the problems of the people by the people themselves. The issues of refugees and rehabilitation also come under group endeavour for social problems and hence deserve academic consideration.

Participation is not merely an ideology. It has developed as a social technology to accelerate development in the society. Effective utilisation of participation as a strategy demands better perception about the idea and the
methodology. The study has attempted to introduce a theoretical framework - degree, type, stage and method of participation, various variables involved and their potential relations. A scientific methodology is also applied to objectively estimate different concepts of participation, various determinants and causal relations. The study is pioneering in this sense. By undertaking new studies with respect to various participative initiatives, both the conceptual framework and operational methodology can be improved. More studies in this area can enrich the idea of participation and perfect it as an effective tool of democratic transformation of a developing society.