

## **Environmental Health and Sanitation: An exploration into Kerala's experience**

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Though Kerala has made significant improvements in the sphere of public health, the last few years has witnessed an increase in prevalence and incidence of communicable and non-communicable diseases in the state. The morbidity analysis of the state shows a high prevalence of diarrheal diseases, hepatitis, pulmonary tuberculosis, malaria, dengue, Japanese encephalitis etc which are increasing year by year. The outbreaks of communicable diseases continue to pose a major challenge for public health in Kerala. The attack of Chikun guinea in the state revealed the unpreparedness and inefficiency of the health service system to tackle the issue. The major reasons pointed out are poor sanitation and lack of hygiene, environmental pollution and unsafe drinking water. The Millennium Development Goal states that the aim is to halve the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation facilities by 2015. In this background, the present paper makes an attempt to understand the trend in magnitude of environment related diseases owing to problems of sanitation in Kerala since last decade and trying to examine the responses of the State and various civil society organizations to deal with it. The study explores into various initiatives by the state and community in order to address the sanitation issue and identify the challenges. The study is mainly based on secondary data. The various sources include Health Information of India, Directorate of Health Services, Human Development Report, Census, published and unpublished documents including theses, journals, books, occasional publications of ministry of health and family welfare, legislative assembly proceedings, news papers and popular magazines, souvenirs and annual publications of social development organizations. The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of environmental sanitation and its linkage with health and the need for strengthening the availability and utilization of sanitation programmes in the state in order to achieve health for all.