

ROLE OF KUDUMBASREE IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN KERALA

¹Starly OS, ²Dr. C. Karuppiah

¹Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

²Professor & Head, Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

The empowerment of a person is a state of him in any way he becomes powerful to face all problems belong to him. Women's Empowerment can be defined as promoting women's sense of self work, their ability to determine their own choices and their rights to influence social change for themselves and others. Kerala is a land of baffling contradictions. Economic and social anarchy existed among women in Kerala centuries ago. Although Kerala was culturally superior, women were always behind men. None of the services of women were glorified. There was a social system in which all the burdens of society were concentrated only on women and they were marginalised and kept within the household. Women have been dominated by men since ancient times. In many families female life was like slavery and more over in society women were always behind. There was universal freedom for men and social exclusion for women in general. Women empowerment also means uplifting of all women to face all problems around them and make them powerful to live them in a social secure stage. The empowerment of women is an essential factor for the sustainable growth of the society. In Kerala, a southern state of India Kudumbasree, the women's empowerment organization, has given women a social and economic equality. Kudumbasree is a group of women working under the Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission and under the jurisdiction of each local self government institutions. This paper describes how 'Kudumbasree in its nature and scope and its contributions to women's empowerment in general and describes the attempts of Kudumbasree program in the broader context of measures to empower the women's group, measures of alleviating poverty, improving financial inclusion and mainly how these things empower the women in total and also explain about how Kudumbasree helped the society in total, especially to women, by its actions and activities done through its organisational setup.

Keywords: Kudumbasree, Janakeeyasoothranam, Padheyam, Janakeeya Hotel.

KUDUMBASREE IN GENERAL

Kudumbasree was born on May 17, 1998 in the state of Kerala with the objective of alleviating poverty through women empowerment. In the first phase, the goal is to change the three conditions for women's empowerment - economic empowerment, social empowerment and self-empowerment. Kudumbasree, the Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission, was

formed as a result of the decentralization process of 'Janakiyasutranam', a people's participatory development model launched in Kerala in 1996. Kudumbasree has a three tier governance system to ensure better participation - Neighborhood Groups(NHGs), Area Development Societies(ADS) and Community Development Societies(CDS), and all these are functioning within the jurisdiction

of each local bodies in Kerala. As Kudumbasree enters its silver jubilee, there are currently 302552 NHGs, 19854 ADSs and 1070 CDSs in the state. At present the number of members in Kudumbasree are 45,85,677. Starting as single family membership, Kudumbasree reaches out to multiple family members through "auxiliary" groups.

Kudumbasree covers the following enterprises, entrepreneurs, projects, institutions and units during their 25 years of operation and are the assets and strengths of social and women's empowerment.

• Micro enterprises - 47000	• Canteens - 84
• Micro Entrepreneurs - 157848	• Building construction units - 228
• Janakeeya hotels - 1184	• Joint groups in the field of agriculture - 74776
• Palliative units - 425	• JLG members - 343271
• Nutri Mix Units - 241	• Organic Farmers - 73519
• Pravasi Security Scheme - 1872 Units	• Organic Farm - 11809
• Haritha Karma Sena - 27536	• Plant Nursery - 545
• Startup Village Entrepreneurship - 25713	• Agri Business Unit - 1190

It is noteworthy that Kudumbasree, which is an excellent model for the economic empowerment of women, has a total savings of `5586.68 crore in its core component neighborhoods.

HISTORY

Kudumbasree, the State Poverty Eradication Mission, is an organisation established at the State level under the auspices of the Kerala State Local Self Government Department, registered under the 12th Travancore-Kochi Literary and Scientific Charities Act, 1955.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Social development requires the upliftment of women in all walks of life. The empowerment of women is an essential factor for the sustainable growth of the society. Women have been dominated by men since ancient times. Although Kerala was culturally superior, women were always behind men. None of the services of women were glorified. In many families female life was like slavery and in public society men were always behind. But Kudumbasree, a women's empowerment organization, has given women social and economic equality. For the empowerment, it is very essential that For the empowerment of

women, it was necessary to transform them into social beings and lead them to the forefront of society. Economic and social anarchy existed among women in Kerala centuries ago. Kerala is a land of baffling contradictions. There was a social system in which all the burdens of society were concentrated only on women and they were marginalised and kept within the household. There was universal freedom for men and social exclusion for women in general. To resolve this problem, various schemes have been planned under the leadership of various State Governments in Kerala since the 1980s. Although various schemes were initiated as part of various government and non-government level discussions and concept formulations, Kudumbasree announced in 1997-98 was successful.

Kudumbasree is an innovative poverty alleviation and women empowerment program initiated by the State Government of Kerala. In Kerala, the launch of poverty alleviation programs through women empowerment as part of the decentralisation process in 1996 was discussed. The recommendation for the event was made by a three-member committee appointed by the state government to explore such innovative ways. The Government approved the recommendation of this Committee, which included poverty alleviation

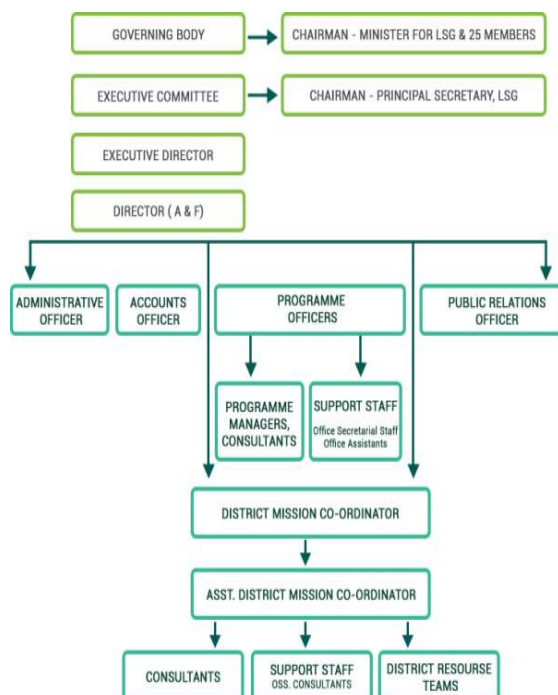
for women's empowerment. As a result, the Kudumbasree scheme was announced in the 1997-98 state budget as part of the State Poverty Mission.

Among the programs in Kerala for the above purposes, kudumbasree takes many attempts to understand the social setup of women in kerala and also how it can be solved in nature and scope and gave its contribution to women's welfare and the financial empowerment of them . The women's group "kudumbasree" took the lead in nurturing them as a social force that gained social support. Through Kudumbasree, several schemes for women empowerment and poverty alleviation have been implemented in Kerala.

Here it is an attempt to understand the kudumbasree program in its nature and scope and its contributions to women's welfare in particular and social welfare in general.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

At the state level, the Kudumbasree Mission is governed by a Governing Body consisting of the Minister of Local Self Government as the Chairman, the Secretary as the Vice Chairman, the Government-appointed IAS Officer as the Mission Director, the Secretaries of the various Departments, the people's representatives and eminent persons.



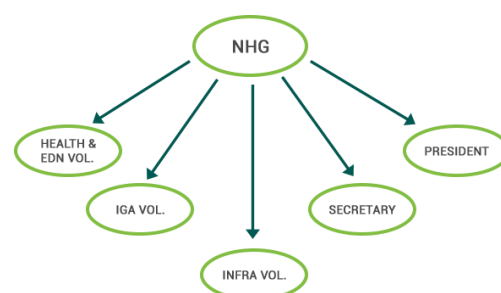
LOCAL ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

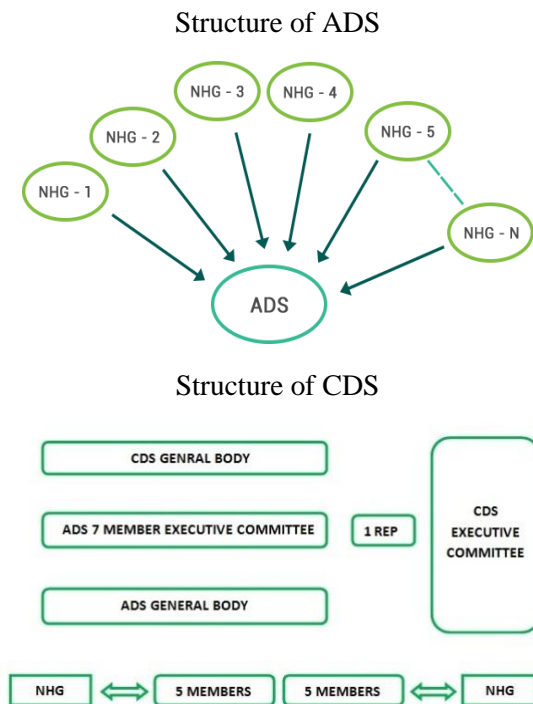
Kudumbasree activities are spearheaded by the Community Development Societies (CDS) in the respective rural and urban areas. Each of these is a group with a specific register as per the Charitable Societies Act. It has a chairperson and 5 board members each. In addition, the executive members elected from each ward are part of the CDS. Area development societies function at each ward level below the CDS. Below this, the Neighbourhood Hood Group acts as the most basic component. The neighbourhood Groups consists of 10-20 women per group.

And the above are the three tier community based organisation work as the community wings of the local self governments. They are residing in the concerned grama panchayat or municipal area and have a restriction to the member of the concerned kudumbasree NHGs irrespective of the fact that they belongs to a Below Poverty Line family.

Although members of the APL family are members of Kudumbasree, the office bearers will always be members of the BPL family. It also contributes to the financial and social empowerment of women to some extent. At the local body level, the upper echelons of such a Kudumbasree three-tier organisational structure are the CDS. The basic component is the NHGs. The ADSs are the intermediate link between them. It is the neighbourhood groups that, from the poorer side, enable those who deserve it more quickly and transparently to overcome their limitations. In addition to the social and economic growth of neighbourhood members, they have also been successful in their efforts to empower women, gender equality and poverty alleviation.

Structure of NHG





JANAKEYYASOOTHANAM

"Janakeeyasoothranam" is Kerala's world-renowned regional development planning process. The essence of populist planning is to ensure the participation and support of the people interested in local development issues and to make development touch at all levels. This historic regional planning process is not only about power but also about transferring one-third of the state budget to the lower echelons. This was made possible by the Government of Kerala in the Ninth Five Year Plan. Public interest has played a significant role in the planning and implementation of development projects. Thus, in 1997, the people were given the opportunity to be a part of the development process by involving the people in this process of decentralisation. The people co-operated greatly when it came to ensuring public participation in the planning and implementation of public planning. Kudumbasree activities became more dynamic with the imposition of 10% of the available plan outlay on the women component scheme. Gramasabhas and ward sabhas in panchayat raj and municipal corporations have become the deciding factors. The Kudumbasrees acted as a support system for the gram sabhas to exercise this power, which was widely available in the administrative structure. Kudumbasree workers

have been instrumental in increasing participation in the Gram Sabhas and in convincing the common man of local needs. They also paid special attention to the inclusion of local resources in the project.

Kudumbasree has played an invaluable role in the success of Kerala's infrastructure development, poverty alleviation, women empowerment and gender equality projects through public mobilisation. In Kerala today, 45 lakh families are members of 2.9 lakh neighbourhood groups, which are entirely women. There are 19489 ADSs and 1064 CDSs. They are the successful architects of the people's planning process.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Convey the messages of women's status, rights, equality and justice
- Enhance the platform for participation in local development
- Initiate women to have access and control over assets
- Equip women against domestic violence and to strengthen the network beyond collectivization.
- To form a community level resolving mechanism to prevent and address atrocities against women and children
- To ensure the participation of women in social and cultural space

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES OF KUDUMBASREE

- Gender resource centre

To organize and implement programs and projects to address gender issues and to build gender equality in governance by promoting leadership, decision making abilities and challenging power relations

- Snehitha – Gender Help Desk

Snehitha is a 24 hours working gender help desk under kudumbasree mission. It works to avail support and help to the shield less women in society.

- **Sthree Sakthi Portal**

Developed with the support of the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) and the Department of Information Technology, Government of India, the Sthreesakthi web portal has been put up to help make the GSLP a productive and successful initiative.

- **Padheyam-Food Parcel Distribution Project**

Padheyam is a project started and implemented by Thiruvananthapuram district panchayat at first in kerala as a part of janakeeyasoothranam and this project aims to distribute food parcels to all hungered persons in daily. The kudumbasree has a major role to implement this project and they are the backbone of this project. As per the list distributed by Grama, District Panchayath the kudumbasree members prepare quality food and distribute it to the concerned beneficiaries.

- **The Amrutham Nutrimix Consortium**

From 2006 onwards Kudumbashree collaborates with the Social Welfare Department for the supply of Take Home Ration for Supplementary Nutrition in the Anganwadies in the State.

- **Janakeeya Hotel**

The "Janakeeya Hotel" is a food distribution system implemented by the State Government through local bodies with the objective of providing low cost food to all as part of the Covid control program. The scheme is fully implemented through Kudumbasree.

RESULTS

As a result of Kudumbasree's women empowerment activities, the following changes have taken place in the society, especially in the women community. Women who used to work in traditional occupations started earning high fixed income through various skill development programs. With the emergence of high income streams, the marginalized began to come into the mainstream of society.

Convincing women of their health, rights and needs and transforming them into the kind of people they want them to be. Women were empowered to ask for and buy rights including awareness of workplace rights and gender equality. They were taught that their abilities were the same as everyone else in the community and that any of the activities to achieve sustainable success were possible. Various activities were implemented to increase the work capacity and strengthen the self economy.

Prevention of violence against women, raising the age of marriage for women and increasing nutrition are essential conditions for social upliftment. Kudumbasree is able to make all-out interventions for the holistic advancement of women, all of the above. Under the leadership of local governments, Kudumbasree's three-tiered governing body, the NHG, ADS and CDS, play a leading role. As a result of this work, Kudumbasree has won numerous national and international awards, setting an example not only in other states but also in other countries. In this way, Kudumbasree continues its great social empowerment work as a model for the Universe.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

A recent survey of the performance of Kudumbasree units in selected panchayaths has brought out certain factors, which have come in the way of realising the objectives of the mission. The government's decision to limit the activities to women belonging to below poverty line has made its reach to very small in relation.

Kudumbasree has been implementing a number of initiatives in Kerala for the empowerment of women in their own community. Today, women in Kerala have been socially and economically empowered through the Kudumbasree Community. This empowerment process can continue as a model in the country and in the world.

The state poverty eradication mission achieved social empowerment of women and the

empowerment of society through different programs. This community based organisation of Kerala is now going through different innovative programs to empower the society especially the women and the poor.

Kudumbasree the poverty eradication mission has evolved as a strategic tool for poverty eradication and women empowerment in Kerala. The standard of living of women along with the society started to increase after the implementation of various schemes under the Kudumbasree. "Kudumbasree" continues to be instrumental in the complete success of the people's planning process of decentralization implemented by the Government of Kerala through local bodies. The participation of women in the process of decentralization has led to social empowerment.

References

- [1] Kudumbasree-
<https://www.kudumbashree.org/>
- [2] Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research (IJIR) Issue-2 2017
- [3] Lsgd Kerala - <https://lsgkerala.gov.in/>
- [4] India's Women: The Mixed Truth by Amartya Sen published in the New York review of Books (2013)
- [5] <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/now-kudumbashree-mission-forms-auxiliary-groups-to-empower-young-women/article37737349.ece>