

KUDUMBA SHREE PROJECT EMPOWERING WOMEN IN INDIA

Dr. Hardeep kaur
Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo

ABSTRACT

In 1998 – the government of Kerala launched the Kudumbashree project with the aim to eradicate poverty through women empowerment. It focused on improving the income of poor under the leadership of Local Self Governments – formed and empowered by the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the constitution of India. Kudumbashree works through many small communities of Self Help Groups (SHG) of Women in Kerala. The strategy has been recognised as effective in bringing the women in rural as well as urban areas together from all spheres of life to fight for their rights and empowerment. Kudumbashree differs from conventional programmes in that it perceives poverty not just as the deprivation of money, but also as the deprivation of basic rights. Women – through the Kudumbashree project – has harnessed the confidence to take claim of their basic rights. The collective voice the Kudumbashree platform has given them has helped them in doing so.

Keywords: *ADSs (Area Development Societies), CDSs (Community Development Societies), Kudumbashree, NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development), NHGs (Neighbourhood Groups), Poverty Eradication, SHGs (Self Help Groups), Women Empowerment*

I. INTRODUCTION

Kudumbashree literally means prosperity of the family. The Government of Kerala launched a Kudumbashree project in 1998 with a view to evolve a practical Solution to the poverty faced by the poor, lower middle class and middle class families in the State. The intention behind the scheme was to make the people themselves take initiative to find a solution for the issue of poverty surrounding them. Another objective was to empower women to connective action to eradicate absolute poverty from the state with in a period of ten years in the state. Implemented as part of Panchayath Raj system and actively supported by the Government of India and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Kudumbashree is being implemented by the state poverty eradication mission, Government of Kerala, Since 1999. It is included in the 73rd, 74th constitutional amendments. The project also envisages women empowerment through increase in income planned social development, and self Reliance. Moreover, the project has also a focus on fellowship decentralization of power, new methods to organise the poor, ultimately leading to the upliftment of women and children.

The Novelty of the scheme is that the alleviation of poverty is based on micro-credit and self help groups to improve the standard of living of women in both rural and urban areas. The thrust is on the all-round development of people belonging to the BPL Section.

The Mission statement of the project is “ To eradicate absolute poverty in ten years through concerted community action under the leadership of Local Self Governments, by facilitating organisation of the poor for combining self-help with demand led convergence of available services and resources to tackle the multiple dimensions and manifestations of poverty holistically”.

The Kudumbashree was registered in 1998 as the State poverty Eradication Mission under the Travancore-Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act. The Stake – holders themselves design and implement, the developmental needs pertaining to the areas under the project. The most Important aspect is that barriers of beurocracy is practically done away with through the collective social action. A three tier system of implementation is a key feature of Kudumbashree. The ultimate aim is women empowerment through poverty eradication of the programme hinges on the facilitation and volunteer work of:

- a. Kudumbashree officials and
- b. Volunteers working at NHG, ADS and CDS levels along with the support of local governmental officials.

II. THE EVOLUTION OF CDS SYSTEM IN THE STATE

Government of Kerala extended the urban base services (UBS)/Urban Basic Services for the poor - to all the urban local bodies of the state. As a result of their success in Allapuzha Town and Malappuram District, through a special order. It was desired to extend UBSB style of activities by setting up urban poverty alleviation cells with a view to implement Poverty Alleviation Program with community participation. Thus Community Development Society was recognized as a legitimate body of poor women to chalk-out an implement poverty for

Eradication programe and mobilize resources including loans from lawful agencies. At the state level a special Urban Poverty Alleviation Cell was set up to co-ordinate the activities.

III. KERALA WELCOMES KUDUMBASHREE MISSION

Kudumbashree was the result of success of the participatory development and active involvement of the stakeholders in Alappuzha and Malappuram. The state UPSL, Kerala State Planning board and Regional Office of NABARD of Thiruvananthapuram prepared the master plan of Kudumbashree. The early stages its activities were limited to the urban areas and urban rural areas in Malappuram district. In June 2000 252 gramapanchayath under the kudumbashree project. The rest of the Grama Panchayath started kudumbashree project in November 2001 and March 2002.

IV. THE FOCUS

Kudumbashree Mission focuses on:

1. Training for change
2. Education
3. Share and care
4. Community health care
5. Environmental sanitation
6. The poor women's bank, and
7. Community financial Management.

V. SALIENT FEATURES OF KUDUMBASHREE PROJECT

- a. It's a democratic system which encourages full participation of volunteers, with a rotation every 2 years.
- b. The structure of the organization allows intervention at different stages at the same time allows full participation of the volunteers.
- c. The system offers every opportunity to the volunteers to tap and develop their leadership qualities.
- d. In a male dominated world, women are placed at the centre of the family. This gifts a new dimension to the project because women are more sensitive to the problems of the family and the needs of the community.
- e. All BPL families comes under this project. The organization includes almost 35% of the population.
- f. The analysis of fields' situation and the scope for regular discussion make the project through the needs and priority of the community.
- g. The structure of the organization provides very good channels for effective communication.

At the district level, District Mission Office (DMO) with district Co-ordinator and two assistant district Co-ordinators and office staff, Coordinators and control Kudumbashree Units. Regional directors extend necessary guidens to various district Teams.

VI. DIMENSIONS OF KUDUMBASHREE

The vision of Kudumbashree programe mentioned in its mission statement is to eradicate absolute poverty in ten years. Kudumbashree recognises the multi dimensional characteristic and causes poverty beyond the lack of income poverty means not only financial insecurity but also the absence of proper house potable water, lack of hygiene facilities, malnutrition and problems of unemployment. It also looks in to the concerns of insufficient educational facilities and lack of opportunities for expression of opinions. Convergent community action through micro-finance and micro-enterprise is aimed at women empowerment. The schemes ideas, concepts and resources of the concerned units and supporting agencies and departments assimilated by the Kudumbashree Community Based Organisations (CBo's). The thrust of the project is on shelter, self reliance and education and communication. The methodology is to utilize the collective energy of women drawn from poverty stricken families. This collective energy enables them to overcome poverty with the help of Government of India and NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development). The process is one of human approach rather than a paper approach. The opinion of the units and their members are codified on the basis of necessity, practicality, and availability of funds but the areas of concentration are housing potable water, sanitation etc.

The specific objectives of Kudumbashree are:

- Facilitating self-determination of the poor families through a transparent risk index composed of socially accept indicators of poverty through a participation survey.
- Empowering the women among the poor to improve their individual and collective capabilities by organizing them into neighbourhood groups (NHGs) at the local level, Area Development Societies (ADS) at the ward level and Community Development Societies (CDSs) at the local self-government level.
- Encouraging thrift and investment through credit by developing CDSs to work as informal banks for the poor.
- Improving incomes of the poor through up-gradation of vocational and managerial skills and creation of opportunities for self employment and wage employment.
- Ensuring better health and nutrition for all poor families.
- Ensuring access to basic amenities like safe drinking water, sanitary latrines, improved shelter and healthy living environment.
- Ensuring zero dropouts in school for all children belonging to the poor families.
- Promoting functional literacy among the poor and supporting continuing education.
- Enabling the poor to participate in the decentralization process through the CDSs as sub-systems of the local government.
- Helping the poor to fight social evil like alcoholism, smoking and drug abuse, dowry, discrimination based on gender, religion, caste, etc.
- Providing a mechanism for convergence of all resources and services meant for alleviation of poverty in the state.
- Collaborating with the government and non-government institution and agencies in all activities related to improving the quality of life the poor.

The Ambits of Kudumbashree are:

- ❖ Community-based identification of the poor on the basis of transparent criteria.
- ❖ All inclusive organisation of the poor through women;
- ❖ Linkages with panchayats
- ❖ Building confidence to access economic opportunities;
- ❖ Social security through mutual thrift and mutual help;
- ❖ Social capital building through regular meetings and interactions;
- ❖ Participatory planning for poverty reduction;
- ❖ Tackling multiple dimensions of poverty;
- ❖ Demand-based convergence of services
- ❖ Excellent outreach and feedback mechanism ; and
- ❖ Potential for expansion to cover children, youth and old.

The side effects of Kudumbashree:

1. Increase in the awareness of various programme and services resulting in more accessing of such programmes and services.
2. The improvement of the outreach of various services of the government.
3. Increase in the confidence level of the poor to articulate their demands loss of the feeling of vulnerability in times of crises as a result of group activities.
4. Generation of thrift resulting in formation of informal banks of the poor. Thrift banks initially support expenditure but and later helps in expanding existing economic development activities.
5. Enhancement of 'freedoms' and 'enlargement of capabilities'.
6. The number of women participating in Gramasabhas is significantly higher. As a group their developing into lobbies for the poor and in some cases, moving into public action against social and economic injustice.

Administration

The proactive facilitator of the Kudumbashree Program is the Government of Kerala. The administrative body consist of the minister for local self Government (chairman) Secretary to Government, local society Government (Vice Chairman) executive director Kudumbashree Mission (Convenar) this committee goes through all policy matters and takes necessary decisions. The head quarters is located in Trivandrum, The Regional Offices are located at Kasarcode, Eranakulam and Trivandrum. The Officers of the missions are drawn from Government departments, Government agencies Co-operation on the basis of merit.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Kudumbashree Mission effected exchange in the mind set of the women of Kerala and Creative a Silent Social Revolution. They come out of the four walls of their houses, sat together and raised they demands for the betterment of their houses, economy and their habited. Instead of casting their vote once in five years they have made a choice to raised their voice. The project helped them to recognise their innate but dormant talents of leadership and message of working together for a common purpose at the sametime empowering the financial and social status.

REFERENCE

1. **T.M.Thomas Issac**, Budget speech 2007-08, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 9th March 2007.
2. **T.Paranjothi, K.Ravichandran, and V.N.Babu**, "Empowerment of women and Reducing Gender Discrimination through Kudumbashree Programme"
3. **V.P.Raghavan**, "Livelihoods And Empowerment : The Kudumbashree Projects in Kerala, India – A New Paradigm of Participatory Economy" paper presented at the 13th Conference of the International Association for the Economics of Participation, At Mandragon University, 13-15 July 2006.

4. Government of India, “ Successful Government Initiatives and best Practices Experiences from India states” paper jointly prepared by planning Commission and Human Development Resource Centre, New Delhi, October 17, 2002.
5. **T.K.Jose.** “ Convergence of Basic Services for the Urban Poor: Experience of Kudumbashree, Kerala” Paper presented in the Technical sessions, April 2006
6. **Manoj Edward**, and K.A.Zakkariya., “Relevance of Social Marketing in Kudumbashree” paper presented at the International Marketing Conference on Marketing & Society, 8-10 April, 2007.
7. **Suneetha Kadayala**, “Scaling up Kudumbashree – Collective Action for Poverty Alleviation and Women’s Empowerment”, Discussion Paper No.180, Food Consumption and Nutrition Division, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, May 2004.
8. **D.Ajit, R.Sunil and K.Ravi Raman**, “ Micro-Credit and Repayment Rates: A Case study of Kudumbashree Micro-Enterprise Programme In Kerala-2006”