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SAPM, Gender

# VIGILANT GROUP

## INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, Kudumbashree has touched the lives of lakhs of women. At the outset, financial empowerment was identified as the first step towards the emancipation of women. Through its three-tier structure, Kudumbashree started disbursing loans to small and medium-sized enterprises and opened up venues for direct marketing of their products. Kudumbashree also focused on female safety and empowerment. Peace, safety, and security are necessary and indispensable requirements for development and the attainment of good quality of life for any human society. In the wake of rising cases of atrocities against women, Kudumbashree has decided to constitute vigilant groups at the ward level in all panchayaths, municipalities, and incorporation. The vigilante group serves the community interest in crime prevention and maintaining peace. Vigilant groups are an informal group of community members to discuss community problems face-to-face, identify their root causes and consequences, and develop local solutions and referrals. It is a participatory group that focuses to prevent gender-based violence, as well as their ideas on what should be done about it. The aim of forming such groups is to create a safe neighborhood, locality and ensure freedom of movement and protect women and children from violence and atrocities.

The aim will be to ensure child and women-friendly wards. For this, the vigilant group is keeping an eye on the suspicious activities and crime suspects among other things. The vigilant group consists of 10 to 15 female and male members of the particular ward. Most of our programs consist only female members however it's been decided to get male participation in vigilant group activities. Men have to take a stand and act as the change agents to end this social ill called gender-based violence and atrocities in the community. The role of the vigilante group is to prevent the atrocities and provide immediate assistance through Snehitha, police, and Jagrathasamithi. A vigilante group is keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties which can affect women and children of the particular ward. Kudumbashree has 17,805 vigilant groups across the state.

## FORMATIN OF VIGILANT GROUP

Kudumbashree has developed three modules on the basis of GSLP (Gender Self Learning Program). First is Women and Employment, second is Women and Health, and third is Women and Mobility. As part of GSLP third module a topic called 'Atrocities against Women and Children' was taken up. It was about the gender-based violence faced by women and children. Therefore Kudumbashree initiated different mechanism and activities to prevent gender-based violence in the community. Snehitha Gender Help Desk

is one of the preventive mechanisms of Kudumbashree to address atrocities and violence.

To make development a success, each person in the community both female and male must be included, they must take an active part in creating development in their own lives and communities. So Kudumbashree decided to develop informal groups in NHG locality and it should be vigilant to prevent gender-based violence and create a safe environment for women and children in the community. And the concept of the vigilant group came up. Unless

# സുരക്ഷയ്ക്ക് ഇനി കുടുംബശ്രീ സേന

• വാഗ്ദാനം ചെയ്യുന്നു

കൊഴിഞ്ഞുകൊടുക്കുന്ന സുരക്ഷയ്ക്ക് കുടുംബശ്രീ സേനകളാണ് ഇനി മുഖ്യസ്ഥാനം. പെരുമാറ്റം നിയന്ത്രിക്കാനും (പ്രിവെന്റ്), സുരക്ഷിതമാക്കാനും (പ്രൊട്ടെക്ട്) വേണ്ടിയുള്ള സേനകളായി മാറിയവയാണ് ഇവ. പല സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ ഇവയുടെ സേവനം നിലവിലുണ്ട്. പല സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ ഇവയുടെ സേവനം നിലവിലുണ്ട്. പല സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ ഇവയുടെ സേവനം നിലവിലുണ്ട്.



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പിൻ നിന്ന് ആശങ്കകൾ ഉൾക്കൊണ്ടാണ് പീടൽ ടോർക് മോഡീൻ നിലവിലുണ്ട്. എല്ലായിടത്തും സുരക്ഷിതമാക്കാനും (പ്രൊട്ടെക്ട്) വേണ്ടിയുള്ള സേനകളായി മാറിയവയാണ് ഇവ. പല സ്ഥലങ്ങളിൽ ഇവയുടെ സേവനം നിലവിലുണ്ട്.

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women, girls, men, and boys fully enjoy their human rights and are free from violence, then progress toward development will fall short. By staying the vigilant group, we gave the responsibility to the community people to take initiatives, precautions and necessary action to prevent atrocities.

As it's mentioned above the vigilant groups are developed to prevent gender-based violence in the particular locality, so one must be aware of what is GBV (Gender Based Violence). Gender-based violence refers to any verbal or physical act that results in bodily, psychological, sexual and economic harm to somebody just because they are female or male. GBV can be done by any intimate friend, partner, family members, a neighbor, an acquaintance or a stranger. Gender-based violence happen because one person chooses to exercise power and control over another person.

### PROCESS

At the initial stage, vigilant groups were formed at the panchayath level across the state. And then it was formed in all the wards of panchayath. Vigilant group formation was a foresight or say pre-work of Neetham campaign to prevent gender-based violence. Vigilant group formation opened a way for women to use public space and other services. There are few districts where after the formation of vigilant group women in that locality started to use the public library and playground for reading, cycling and evening walk. Art groups were also formed on the basis of dance and music. Changing harmful beliefs, attitudes, practices, and behaviors is a process that takes place over a long period of time. Working through the vigilant group in a particular locality, we're able to organize outreach activities that give communities new information.

Our Vigilant group members, with support from Snehitha and home department, carry out discussions, campaigns that educate people about the roots of GBV,

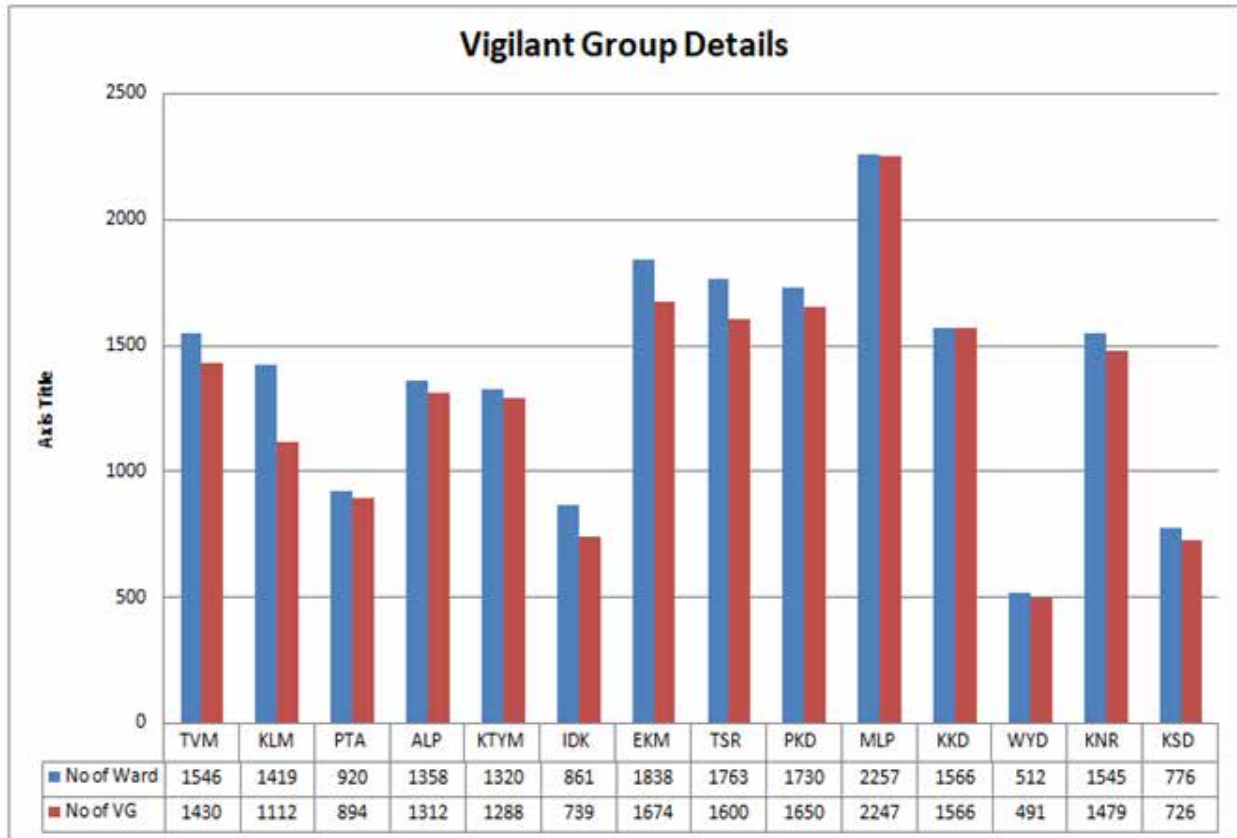
its harmful consequences and about women and children's rights. Vigilant group also recognizes the crucial role that men play in preventing GBV.

### STATUS OF VIGILANT GROUP

At the initial stage, District mission was asked to form a vigilant group at the Grama Panchayath level. After the Panchayath level formation, vigilant groups were formed in each ward of a Grama Panchayath. Viigilant group members are providing voluntary services for the community. This itself explains that how people are taking initiatives to prevent violence to create their locality women and child-friendly. Today we have total 18,204 vigilant groups in 19,411 wards across the state. Here is a chart which shows the number of the total wards and igilant group in each district of Kerala.



Pink task force



## IMPACT OF VIGILANT GROUP FORMATION

In every situation of violence and human suffering, no matter how deep and seemingly entrenched, there are people working for peace and that made vigilant group successful to move ahead. By forming vigilant group in locality we came to know that how communities within situations of violence and atrocities can find creative ways to prevent it and how they are or pro-actively advancing child and women-friendly localities. By forming the vigilant groups, the number of anti-social activities and social evils has been reduced to an extent. People became more vigilant and have started to address the violence and atrocities happening around. At the grass root level, people don't walk to the police station directly to report the issues. They either tolerate the violence or share with their very close relatives only. Since the survivor hesitates to complain the atrocities, the abuser carries over with the same nature of abuse. Vigilant group came up as the voice of the oppressed, group members keen an eye over to the families where the chances of atrocities are high. The group pays individual attention as well to create peaceful surrounding.

As the impact of vigilant group, districts have started new initiatives as part of vigilant group activities. Thrissur district mission's "NATTUKOOTAM" and "TWO WHEELER ARMY" Kozhikode District's "PINK TASK FORCE", and Kollam District's "NIRBHAYA" are the best



*Nattukoottam*

practices of vigilant group formation in

**1. NATTUKOOTAM-** Nattukuttam is a best practice of Thrissur district mission and an initiative to create women and child-friendly families in the localities. Nattukootam has been started with the support of Vigilant group activities or we can say that NATTUKOOTAM is next level of a vigilant group in Thrissur district. This group finds out the social issues of each and every family, whether these families are women and child-friendly, any violence or atrocities happening in it etc. This group gather together at any common public place and discuss the issues and problem of the locality and take necessary action and

steps to resolve it. Natukkootam has two families in each ward which are totally women and child-friendly. Therefore the Nattukkootam aims to create all family inward to be child and women-friendly.

**2. TWO WHEELER ARMY-** It is also a best practice of Thrissur district mission. Two-wheeler army is a group of female members of vigilant group. Two-wheeler army aims to give immediate support to the women and child who are in trouble. Member of these group reaches at the crime spot by riding their two-wheeler as soon as they get the information of violence. They give all support and refer the case to police and to Snehitha for the further actions.

**3. PINK TASK FORCE** – Pink task force is the best practice of vigilant group by Kozhikode district mission. ‘Pink Task Force’ comprising 164 members (two from each panchayat). The members of this group are selected from vigilant group’s female members. Members of the Pink Task Force were trained in self-defense and had trained other members. They also coordinate with law and order officials and collect information regarding violence against women. The objective is not only to create safe neighborhoods but



*Pink Task Force*

also ensure the freedom of movement of women in CDS level and protect their rights as well. The group would voluntarily take up various issues concerning women and children without even receiving any complaints in that regard. The group also strives to create women and child-friendly atmosphere in the society. The pink task force also extends every possible help and assistance to the women and children who are subjected to suffering at their homes and workplaces due to alcohol and other substances abuse. Kozhikode Kudumbashree district mission conducted 3 days training for PTF team with the help of police department, KELSA, Mental health team. Under the leadership of PTF and gender core team have formed a blood donor’s group as well with the collaboration of District Blood Donation Forum. Anyone who approaches the district forum for the blood, PTF get information about it. Pink task force’s blood donor group has members with the rare group as well.

**4. NIRBHAYA VOLUNTEERS** – Seeking to prevent atrocities against women and children, Kerala government has drawn up a plan to form “Nirbhaya” women volunteer groups at Panchayath level. The State Police Department was reviving the project which got a lease of life after State Police Chief Loknath Behera ordered using the services of Nirbhaya volunteers via fresh appointment to ensure women safety. In Kollam district, 156 vigilant group members have received training from the Police department and became “Nirbhaya” volunteers. Police department invited applications from Kudumbashree. Kollam District mission used the vigilant group members to be a Nirbhaya Volunteers. These volunteers were selected on the basis of interview. Volunteers have been provided with self-defense and capacity building training by the department itself. Now each Nirbhaya volunteers are getting 1750/- per month by the Kerala Police department. The volunteers’ were primarily tasked with making women aware of the circumstances under which a crime may be committed against them and also with organizing campaigns. They are required to help women to undergo self-defense training and help Janamaithri beat police officers. They also made use of Snehitha counselors to reduce the stress of survivors.

## TRAINING

A training program for vigilant group allowed strengthening those skills that each member needed to improve. Aim of vigilant group training was to improve their performance, find out the weakness and get it sort, and to make them aware about the law and order. Kudumbashree has given state-level training to vigilant group members of each district. Apart from this district missions are also conducting capacity building training for vigilant group members. We have transgender members as well in vigilant group. One of the TG from Wayanad district participated in state-level training and shared experience that how they are been honored by Kudumbashree by getting membership in a vigilant group. Below mentioned is the module prepared for vigilant group training

- Communication skills
- Gender sensitization
- Self Defense training
- Training for rescue process
- Counseling and mentoring
- Legal awareness
- Human rights
- Child rights

## FUTURE PLAN

- Create women and child-friendly wards across the state.
- Prevention of all social evil
- Act as a task force at the time of emergency