

# Study on Attappady Tribal Special Project



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## **Introduction**

In the backdrop of the high rate of infant mortality among tribal communities in Kerala in 2013-2014, Ministry of Rural Development approved Attappady Comprehensive tribal and PVTG development project. The project was approved in 2014-2015 with an overall grant allocation of Rs 52.12 crores over seven years. It would be in two phases, the first beginning in April 2014 and ending in 2018 with a grant allocation of Rs. 30.19 crores. The project aims at mobilizing 10,000 families of Irula, Muduga and Kurumba families in four tier institutional architecture of their self-sustaining institutions and endeavours comprehensive development of these families with reduced vulnerabilities, improved socio-economic and livelihood status and maximized access to their rights and entitlements. This special project was designed to develop prototype for NRLM to work with tribal communities in Kerala and across the country.

Attappady Special Project (Attappady Comprehensive Tribal Development and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group Development Project) is the project being implemented by Kudumbashree in Attappadi block of palakkad district. It envisages formation of exclusive institutions of tribal people for bringing in sustainable development in Attappady. Kudumbashree functions through women neighbourhood groups (NHGs) aiming at their development and empowerment. Kudumbashree Mission implemented this innovative idea of formation of exclusive neighbourhood groups for the tribal families in Attappadi for bringing social development and empowerment. This project, which was launched at Attappady in 2014 with a big vision has moved much forward with many notable achievements in hand.

## **Vision**

The project aims to uplift the social and economic status of Irula, Mu duga and Kurumba tribal communities of Attappady. Sustainable livelihoods like agriculture and allied activities need to be developed where the community can be self-reliant and self sufficient in food. Women's institutions would be built up for total financial inclusion leading towards poverty alleviation and social development. Awareness generation would be enhanced on all issues for the communities to be able to access all entitlements and schemes. The institutions would enable women to access credit, engage in sustainable livelihoods, build

up entrepreneurship, marketing and negotiation capacities and capacity to assert their agency in all realms from the domestic front to the various forums like the area of work, Panchayat and various departments. The social, economic and political status is to be enhanced and they should be able to assert their cultural identity as Adivasis.

### **Objectives**

- Building up of powerful and effective exclusive institutions of women from the tribal communities who should develop negotiation power, ability to critically analyze their own situation and collectively work towards social transformation
- Institution at the Ooru (hamlet) level and Panchayath level for tribal women to enable them to access all entitlements and schemes of each department and engage in the proactive process of preparation of tribal sub-plan.
- Institutions to ensure availability of nutritious food, access to health care, education, etc.
- Institutions should have the ability to prevent social issues like child marriage, domestic violence, trafficking and other forms of violence which affect the status of women
- Skill training to youth to save them from unemployment, despondency and alcoholism.
- Livelihoods in agriculture and micro-enterprises that would lead to economic development
- Funds disbursed to the community
- Attappady will ultimately developed as the immersion site for the community resource persons and professionals working in the extremely vulnerable tribal areas of the country.

### **Process**

#### **Formation of Neighborhood Groups**

Sustainable socio-cultural and agricultural development cannot succeed without the full participation and collective action of the community as a whole. In order to develop the community kitchen into a real space and forum for community empowerment, social mobilization and information dissemination, newspapers were distributed in the hamlets.

The very first meeting for discussing community kitchen was attended by 300 women. Community kitchens became a real empowering activity for the women because they are fully managed by women who purchase all the groceries from the Maveli store on their own, manage the store, do stock-keeping, write stock-book, fill in vouchers and formats and submit to the Project Management Unit's office.

Social mobilization of the community into Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs). The focus was on the need for institutions to achieve social equity. All the 192 hamlets were accessed and all women irrespective of their status and ability were included. Neighbourhood groups were formed of women in close proximity within the hamlets and women formed NHGs comprising of 10 to 15 women. Small NHGs comprising of 5 to 10 women were formed among primitive tribal communities, elderly, infirm and mentally ill women. Today, there are 725 NHGs of women comprising of 10 to 15 women. All the NHGs are registered with the Project Management Unit (PMU) and have bank accounts.

#### **NHGs to Oorusabhas and Panchayat Samithies**

Following the formation of NHGs, they were consolidated at the ooru or hamlet level to form the "Oorusamithi" (Hamlet Level Group) and the Oorusamithies were consolidated to form the PanchayatSamithies (Panchayat Level Group). The Oorusamithi formation takes place after all the women in a hamlet have joined.

An Oorusamithi comprises of 5 to 10 NHGs. If a hamlet has a small population and only 2 to 3 NHGs, then two adjacent hamlets come together to form the Oorusamithi.

#### **Funds to the community**

Corpus fund of Rs 10000 has been given to the 507 groups. Start-up- Costs of Rs 63 lakhs has been given to 63 Oorusamithies and 63 lakhs Vulnerability Reduction Fund to 63 Oorusamithies. The Oorusamithies disburse the funds to the NHGs which are most vulnerable. VRF in Attappady is considered as a revolving fund and repaid to the Oorusamithi by the NHGs.

It is seen that corpus funds are being used for health and education needs. VRF is used similarly for health and education needs and livelihood needs like purchase of goats, cow and agriculture and the amount is being repaid to the Oorusamithi. The disbursement is based on micro-plan and vulnerability indicators developed by the Oorusamithies.

## **Kudumbashree Special Activities in Attappady**

### **Community Kitchen and Nutritional enhancement**

Community Kitchen is the social kitchen run by the tribal mothers in every hamlets of Attappady. Kudumbashree team is entrusted with the co-ordination of the Community Kitchens functioning in these hamlets. The aim of the community kitchen is to provide nutritious food to Pregnant women and lactating mothers from tribal community, and beneficiaries from 192 hamlets of Attappady are having the food prepared at the respective community kitchens functioning under the leadership of respective tribal neighborhood groups.

In addition to this, old aged people, persons with disabilities and children are also the beneficiaries of this initiative. In other words, the 'Ooru Aduppu' practice, which prevailed in the hamlets during the olden times is brought back through the concept of Community Kitchen.

The fund for running the community kitchens in Attappady is provided to Kudumbashree Misson jointly by Social Justice Department and Scheduled Tribes Development Department. Rice and pulses for the community kitchens are being bought from supplyco.

The responsibility of cooking is taken up by the Kudumbashree groups in the Oorusamithi on rotation basis. 13,894 tribal persons are having food from these Community Kitchens every day.

### **Social Mobilization**

The project succeeded in universal social mobilization by building neighborhood groups in 192 hamlets which is spread in 745 sqkms and in the local self -governments of Agali, Pudhur and Sholayur. Elderly women, differentially abled women have been included as part of NHGs. The social mobilization succeeded due to the initiation of community kitchens in the hamlets as malnourishment and infant mortality were serious issues of the community.

### **Bridge course**

Bridge Course is the supplementary educational programme implemented in the tribal hamlets of ATTAPPADY as a part of Attappady Special Project (Attappady Comprehensive Tribal Development and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group Development Project).

Educated youth from the hamlets were identified and were appointed as teachers for 'Bridge Course' in their respective hamlets. Every teacher act as a guardian to each children as parents may not have time to give support in education to their children. 'Bridge Course' also aims to make the students embrace social education and good habits along with their education. So, priority is being given for food, hygiene, education, co-operation, self knowledge etc. in the 'Bridge Courses'. As of now, 1600 students are studying in the 100 'Bridge Course' Centres (Centres are either public halls in each hamlet or any houses in the hamlet; and there is no special building for this). The 100 Bridge Course teachers are training each student personally and are helping them revise the school lessons with dedication. They are also trying to motivate the children identify their inherent talents and provide lead to them giving right guidance.

### **Nyayasamithis of Attappady**

Nyayasamithis is another innovative idea being implemented by Kudumbashree Mission in Attappady as part of Attappady Special Project (Attappady Comprehensive Tribal Development and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group Development Project). Nyayasamithis are committees chaired by tribal women, formed for settling the disputes of the tribal community. In other words, Nyayasamithi is a social development committee of tribal women formed in ward level to identify the issues in the hamlets, to discuss, analyse and thereby resolve the same through conciliation.

This official grievance redressal committee formed as part of Attappady Special Project has 5 members. Monthly Adalats are being organised, complaints are received during adalats and the disputes are solved. The unsolved issues from the Adalats are handed over to the Gender Resource Centres or other relevant forums for addressing the issue. In addition to this core function, the Nyayasamithis also take initiative to create awareness about the rights, to provide information about various governmental schemes etc to the tribal women and family members.

As of now, 36 Nyayasamithis had already been formed in Attappady. 18 Nyayasamithis have started organising Adalats. 86 cases were reported until now and out of this, 17 cases were handed over to Gender Resource Centres and others are solved. As the issues in the hamlets are resolved in the hamlets itself and are closely watched, the new issue arising in the

hamlets is now comparatively very low. This has in turn led to the social development of the tribal women community and raised the status of women in the society.

### **Balagothra Sabha**

Balagothra Sabhas are institutions of children started as part of the Attappady Special Project (Attappady Comprehensive Tribal Development and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group Development Project). The aim of Balagothra Sabha is sustainable development of children. Balagothra Sabha is the children's club/ association envisaged at the hamlet level. Balagothra Sabhas aims at identifying the talents of each children, motivating them to follow their passion. Also, this institution of children envisages providing support to ensure their rights, nurture social awareness and mutual co-operation and help them grasp knowledge regarding health, art, culture, history etc. As of now, 110 Balagothra Sabhas are formed and are functioning in Attappady.

### **Block Resource Centre and Youth Resource Centre**

Activities of Youth Resource Centre are:-

1. Youth Clubs- 47 hamlet level Youth clubs were formed focusing on the development of social, cultural, educational, financial and health needs of the youth. These clubs have a total membership of 975 youngsters as of now.
2. Community Theatre was formed for promoting the traditional art forms and instrumental music. Dramas were created in tribal language and we arranged venues for their performance.
3. Labour Banks of youth were formed for arranging job opportunities. This detailed list of youth who are willing to work as a part of labour bank was handed over to different departments and thereby we could assist them get jobs (mostly unskilled manual labour jobs) in various sectors. In addition to that, youth were given training through DDUGKY programme (skill training project) in trades of their choice viz., electrician, plumbing, front office, driving etc. 225 people have completed skill training so far. Also, 69 youth were given assistance to launch their own enterprises through Kudumbashree a micro enterprise promotion program.

### **Skill Development**

In order to solve the acute problem of unemployment among the youth in Attappady Skill Development trainings were undertaken with support of Netto Technical Training

Foundation. The major trainings were on CNC Lathe, fitting and turner in Dharwar, Bangalore and Thalassery. 90 youngsters have undergone training but the youth are finding it difficult to take up placements in cosmopolitan cities like Bangalore.

### **MIS and Social Audit**

MIS is being submitted by the Oorusamithi. As the Adivasi women in some of the Oorusamithis do not have the confidence to collate data and audit their accounts, an auditing team was developed to audit and present all data using the Management Information System for the past two years. At present the off-line data entry has been made in excel. Some of the Animators trained in the methodology of Social Audit are helping in this transparent process of ensuring accountability.

### **Livelihood Interventions**

The women were divided into producer groups in agriculture, cattle-rearing and non-timber forest produce. Varieties of local seeds of ragi, foxtail millet, little millet and varieties of vegetables were provided as inputs to women farmers under MKSP. Kambalam is one of the main interventions done in the agricultural sector of Attappady under the leadership of Kudumbashree. As part of the Attappady Comprehensive Tribal Development and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group Development Project, we are focusing on bringing back the conventional agricultural techniques and for increasing the participation in agricultural sector. Kambalam is the traditional agricultural festival of the tribal communities of Attappady.

The agricultural activities are being implemented by forming Joint Liability Groups(JLGs) comprising of 4 to 10 tribal women farmers of Attappady. 717 farming groups were formed in Attappady under the leadership of Kudumbashree, which has 3305 women as members. There are 297 farming groups under Agali Panchayath Samithi which has 1347 members. There are 206 farming groups under Sholayur Panchayath Samithi, 143 groups under Puthoor Grama Panchayath and 71 groups under Kurumba Community.

### **Trainings/Capacity Building Programmes**

Capacity building programs have been facilitated for NHGs, Oorusamithis and Panchayat office-bearers and members. Trainings have been held to explain the non-negotiable principles and various activities like community kitchen and health interventions. Women



were trained in topics related to Oorusamithi and Panchayat Samithi formation, roles and responsibilities of these social organizations, management of corpus funds to the community and book-keeping. Women have been trained in social development and livelihood aspects. Trainings have been held with respect to natural resources and agriculture with focus on organic farming without lethal pesticides and chemical fertilizers and other agro-chemicals.

Exposure visit was undertaken to Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, Kovel Foundation and Jattu Trust in Vishakapatnam to understand the institutions of women from Animators and Co-ordinators. The number of trainings on various subjects which the Animators, CRPs, NHG, Oorusamithi and Panchayath Samithi members, farmers, mothers, adolescent groups received are numerous and comprehensive, holistic and educative.

### **Achievements**

- As of now, 752 special tribal NHGs are functioning in Attappady under the broad umbrella of Kudumbashree. 7848 women have become members of the tribal NHGs of Attappady. 98% of the families of Attappady has become part of the Kudumbashree organization.
- Oorusamithi, the federation of NHGs were formed focusing on these hamlets. As of now, there are 135 Oorusamithis. In some areas, two where there are nearby hamlets with small population, Oorusamithis were formed clubbing two hamlets. This is why there are only 135 Oorusamithis for 192 hamlets. Panchayath samithis were formed in panchayath level as the federation of Oorusamithis. As of now, there are 4 Panchayath Samithis functioning as part of this special project.
- As part of Kamblam, farming was done in 18.5 acres of land.
- 13,894 tribal persons are having food from Community Kitchens every day.
- 110 Balagothra Sabhas are formed and are functioning in Attappady

### **Methodology**

#### Source of Data

The present study is based upon Primary and Secondary data

a) Primary Source of data- The respondents are Kudumbashree Tribal Management Team, Attapadi Team, District Mission etc. Information collected through the personal interaction with respondents.

b) Secondary source of data-Data from various books, Articles, Magazines, Journals, Kudumbashree Websites etc..

### **Impacts of the Project**

- Set up an organisational system at Attapady for intervening in the issues of the tribal people.
- Through community kitchen, serving nutritious food to the needy, Kudumbashree started providing inputs to tribal families about the need for eating nutritious and balanced diet
- New NHGs were formed and it increased the participation of tribal women in social activities.
- Micro Enterprises were formed in new sectors and it helped them to getting a sustainable income.
- The programmes like Bridge Course, Youth Resource Centers etc.. had paved way to increase the self confidence as well among tribal youths.
- As part of farm livelihood, many tribal women farmers had come forward taking up farming as their main source of livelihood, as they could produce needed food grains for every families and find better markets for their products.
- Through the intervention of Kudumbumbasree in various fields, the living standards of the tribal people of Attappady were improved
- Reduced Infant Mortality rate among tribal population
- Extended the special tribal project to other 6 districts

### **Suggestions**

- Formation of Nyayasamithis in all wards, would bring in a solution to the dispute settlements within the hamlets and would lead to the social development of the tribal community.
- To plan more activities for sustainable growth and empowerment of tribal youths.

- Required an intervention to start more non-farm livelihood enterprises
- To promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the tribal people, and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation

### **Testimonials**

- Study report of Attapadi Special Project
- Guidelines and Circulars