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# WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR- A NEW HOPE

## INTRODUCTION

Construction industry is considered as the second largest and one of the fast growing sectors. Many multinational companies are competing in this sector from the mid 1990's engaging in large public sector and industrial projects. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO) construction jobs in most countries are undertaken exclusively by men. In South Asian countries women often perform important but unskilled tasks for low pay. Though women play a significant proportion in construction works, they are usually seen as secondary / temporary workers with seldom opportunities for training, upward mobility, wage guarantees, fringe benefits and social protection. More they are usually integrated to the bottom end of the industry that is by digging earth, mixing cement and carrying bricks. They are rarely found in skill trades such as Masonry, carpentry, plumbing, electrical wiring works. Majority of women who join as unskilled workers will continue to remain as unskilled workers for their life period.

## GENDER INEQUALITY IN WAGE AND DISCRIMINATION

In Kerala, the wages paid to the semiskilled / skilled labourers are highest when compared to other states in the country, forcing the migration of workers from other State, grabbing the majority of work opportunities in this sector. More the industry is always dominated by men and penetrating to this dominated market is always a major concern. These poor women even if qualified when work in this industry will be forced as casual labourers with limited payments

## INVOLVING KUDUMBASHREE WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR - A NEW RISE

Kudumbashree Mission as part of self – employment and empowering women in self employment, identified

construction as a potential area for meeting the desired objectives. A study was conducted by kudumbashree mission at SEWA NIRMAN, Gujarat, for implementing the concept suitable to strategies of Kudumbashree.

During August 2013, Kudumbashree Mission along with HUDCO (Housing and Urban Development Corporation) initiated a project for Skill up gradation of women in Construction sector. This project was first implemented at Ernakulam, under the supervision of District Mission – Ernakulam. They have identified 130 women consisting of 40 civil engineering graduates, 30 civil diploma holders and ITI holders and around 60 masons. The training was provided through reputed agencies such as KITCO (Kerala Industrial and Technical consultancy organisation Ltd.)- provided engineers and supervisors for training, and Archana Women Centre provided masons for guiding the trainees.

After successful completion of training, these women

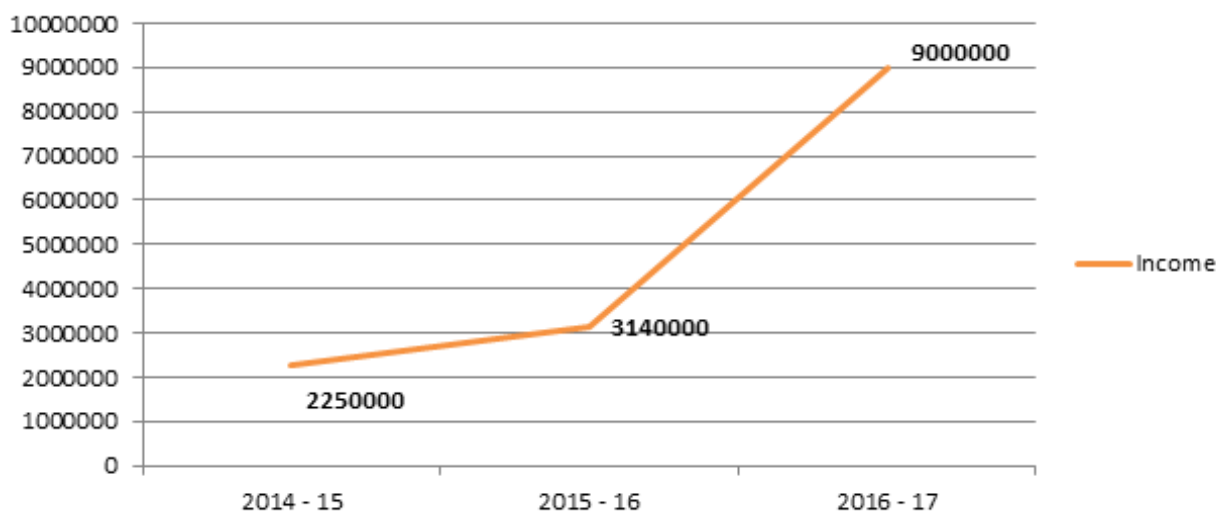
were engaged with various construction activities. Among these members, a group of 8 women formed a collective named as “Kudumbashree Constructions” on 01.01.2014, comprising of engineer and supervisors. These members gained the technical competency to take up construction activities such as building plans, estimates, supervision and overall technical consultancy services. They employ trained masons of kudumbashree in their projects as and when required.

During 2015, Kudumbashree Constructions functioning at Ernakulam received a work order from State Tribal Department for constructing 70 houses at Edakattuvayal Panchayat under Tribal project. The group took this opportunity and was able to complete more than 40 houses. Along with this project the group undertook many construction projects which helped them to increase their turnover.

Sl.No	Financial year	Turnover (in Rupees )
1	2014 - 15	2250000
2	2015 - 16	3140000
3	2016 - 17	9000000

(Table 1: Turnover of Kudumbashree Construction Group)

### Income Generated in Rupees



(Graph 1: Turnover of Kudumbashree Construction Group)

Inspired with these enterprising women, and anticipating the huge shortage of labour in the near future because of determined government campaigns of mass housing (LIFE project of Government of Kerala, PMAY housing projects, also construction projects of LSGDs) kudumbashree decided to provide training in construction sector so as to form labour contract groups of women entrepreneurs who can take up construction of houses and bigger projects.

**For achieving this kudumbashree has kept the following objectives**

- Transforming SHG women from unskilled labour to skilled professionals, and strengthen them for better bargaining power.
- Challenge the existing gender stereotyping in the construction field so as to assure equal

wage, career growth, fringe benefits and social protection.

- To assure role of women in the development activities of the state.

### EQUIPPING WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

#### 1. IDENTIFICATION OF BENEFICIARY

The interested candidates having minimum qualification (10th standard) will be identified from respective Local Self Government Institutions.

#### 2. TRAINING

Training on construction activity will be provided through Government accredited agencies such as Nirmiti Kendra , Cost ford , Maithiri, Pinarayi Industrial cooperative



മാതൃകാ മിഷൻ അനുബന്ധ റീഡിംഗ് പരിപാടിയിൽ പങ്കെടുത്ത കുടുംബശ്രീ പ്രവർത്തകർ, തൃശ്ശൂർ.

## കുടുംബശ്രീ ചേച്ചിമാർ പണിയുന്നു, ശ്രീകൃഷ്ണക്കൊരു സ്വപ്നവിടം

അഞ്ച് മിന്നൂറ്റ് കഴിഞ്ഞ് കുടുംബശ്രീ പണിയുന്ന സ്വപ്നവിടം

ആലപ്പുഴ • അഞ്ച് മിന്നൂറ്റ് മാത്രം കഴിഞ്ഞു കൂടിയാണ് കുടുംബശ്രീ പണിയുന്ന സ്വപ്നവിടം അഞ്ച് മിന്നൂറ്റ് കഴിഞ്ഞ് കുടുംബശ്രീ പണിയുന്ന സ്വപ്നവിടം അഞ്ച് മിന്നൂറ്റ് കഴിഞ്ഞ് കുടുംബശ്രീ പണിയുന്ന സ്വപ്നവിടം

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Society, Thrissur Labour Contracting Society , Uralingal labour contracting society ,Kerala State Housing Board , KITCO (Kerala Industrial and Technical consultancy organisation Ltd.), Hindustan Prefab Limited . Also through empanelled agencies such as Rajagiri Social Service Society, SB Global , Synchroserve, Wayanad social service society , Centum works limited , Grameena Padana Kendram , Archana Womens Centre, EKSAT( Alappuzha ) , Socio Economic unit foundation .

### 3. TRAINING MODULE AND FUND

A comprehensive 53 days intensive training module on construction methods, approved by Govt Civil Engineer is used for this construction training. The training cost involved in this project is funded through state plan fund.

With this training these members will get an idea about constructing a house, management skills, legal and tendering procedures to be followed while undertaking construction projects. After completing the training these members will form groups and register their unit as Block, Panchayat and urban units as per their requirement.

After registering, these construction units will be engaged with construction projects of respective Local Self Governments and MGNREGA skilled works.

## EXISTING CONSTRUCTION GROUPS

Currently around 490 women had been trained from 70

house building team across 14 districts. Among 70 groups, 20 groups consisting of 163 women are operating at Block level and 46 groups consisting of 310 women are operating at Panchayat level and rest 3 units consisting of 17 members functioning at urban level.

## UPCOMING CONSTRUCTION GROUPS

Till now 253 new groups has been identified consisting of 33 urban level groups and 220 Block level groups has been identified across the state, which are undergoing the training. The groups once complete the training will be registered with respective Panchayats and will be formed House building teams, that will be equipped to undertake construction projects of LSGs and other private construction projects.

## GRABBING OPPURTUNITIES IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

### CONVERGENCE

Considering construction related projects in Government, convergence with Government departments is an important strategy which is followed under this initiative. For this ongoing and upcoming projects of respective departments will be approached through District and State level initiatives.

During 11.05.2018 a government order was issued for entrusting the construction of LIFE Houses to Kudumbashree Construction units (Annexure 1)

### Some of the projects initiated through convergence

- Construction of 70 Houses of Tribal Rehabilitation Mission
- Construction of 5 houses of Mookanur GramaPanchayat , Ernakulam
- Canteen renovation and plant extension activities at Forest Industries Travancore (FIT) Limited, Aluva.
- Painting works of Techno Lodge , Piravom, Ernakulam
- Construction of Concrete handrail and painting works at Railway Premium Parking at Ernakulam Junction and Aluva Stations
- Construction of 36 LIFE houses ( Kollam -1 House , Pathanamthitta – 1 House, Alappuzha -14 House , Kottayam – 1 House ,Idukki – 1 house , Ernakulam – 7 Houses , Malappuram – 2 Houses , Kasargod – 3 houses )
- Construction of 6 Asraya Houses ( Trivandrum – 1 House, Pathanamthitta – 3 Houses , Alappuzha – 1 House , Thrissur – 1 house )
- Construction of 44 PMAY houses (Kottayam -1 House, Kollam – 24 Houses, Palakkad – 19 Houses.)

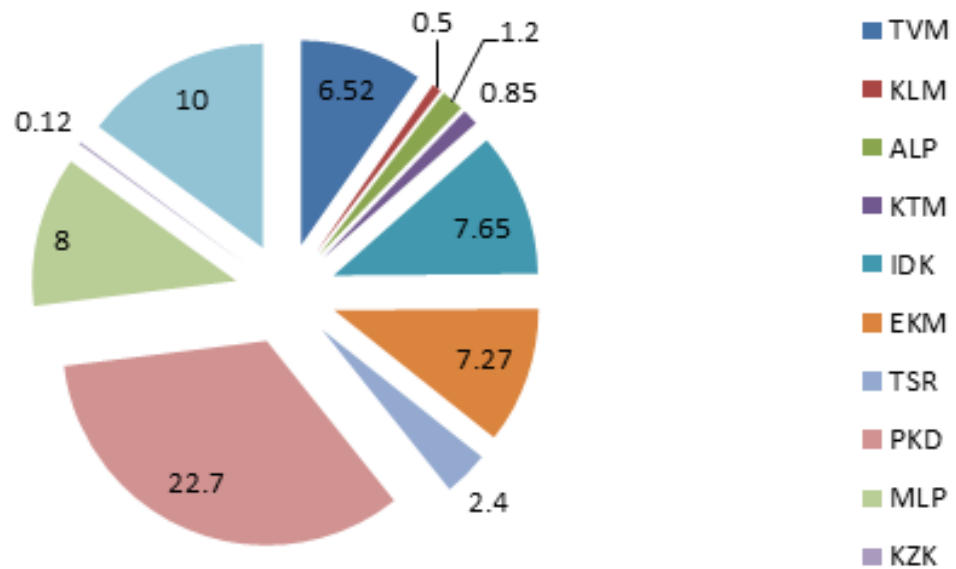
Districts	Total Revenue received till date (in Lakhs)
TVM	6.52
KLM	0.5
ALP	1.2
KTM	0.85
IDK	7.65
EKM	7.27
TSR	2.4
PKD	22.7
MLP	8
KZK	0.12
WYD	10

(Table 2: Income generated by Construction groups till 19.07.2018)



Photo 4: Ongoing Construction LIFE House at Akathethara Grama Panchayat – Palakkad

### Total Revenue received till date (in Lakhs)



(Pie chart 2: Graph of Income generated by Construction groups till 19.07.2018)

## CHALLENGES

Kudumbashree construction groups faced lot of challenges during its implementation of the project. Some of them are

### 1. SOURCING WORKS FOR KUDUMBASHREE CONSTRUCTION UNITS:

Finding works for the members who have completed

the training has always been a challenge, since they lack experience and new to construction field. This will be addressed in various meetings conducted through Panchayat Presidents, Block Development officers. Those who complete the training will be registered as construction units in respective Panchayats as skilled labours under MGNREGA and will be engaged with the construction projects.



*Photo 1: First LIFE Mission House Completed in 40 days at Harippad Block - Alappuzha*

## 2. FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

In construction industry, a lot of amount is required as capital investment for purchasing equipments, machineries and significant working capital for the bulk procurement of raw materials .In initial stages, this challenges can be addressed through the financial support under “startup fund” in the initial stages, Technology fund (for purchasing new technology), technology up gradation fund ( for upgrading existing technology), Crisis Management fund ( fund provided at the time of crisis). In future they have to source fund through various other strategies such as membership fees, issuing shares, renting out equipments, investing fund in various projects.

## 3. PROPER MANAGEMENT

Since majority of members who will complete the training will not have sufficient knowledge about the management and legal concepts that need to be followed in the industry. Due to this they may face many constrains, such as sourcing construction projects, timely repayment of taxes etc, which may lead to legal penalties and losses. Recruitment of professionals ( like Engineers , Accountants) having good experience in this field will be very expensive for them. Initial support can be provided through Kudumbashree, which need to be managed by the groups in the coming years.

## 4. PAYMENT DELAYS

In initial stages these members will be entrusted with works of Panchayats, for which the payment always delays to 3 to 6 months, which will not help them for income generation. These members should learn and to become professionals and become competent to take more projects.

## 5. GENDER STEREOTYPING:

There are always doubts related to quality of work and capability of women among different stakeholders. Clients usually demand for the projects completed through kudumbashree construction units. It requires lot of effort for convincing, visible results and brand creation to tackle this.

### WAY AHEAD – FUTURE PLANS

- Formation of “Micro Contracting Construction Group” under Government accreditation for under taking construction projects without tender procedures.
- Start a corporate office which will be registered under societies act.
- Provide periodic training to members through reputed construction trainers so as to make the members aware about the latest trend and changes in construction sector.
- Form as a contracting company owned by kudumbashree women group, which functions under the guidance of Director Board Members.
- Recruit engineering graduates and diploma holders (CIVIL/ARCHITECT) from kudumbashree community for sourcing works and to managing the company.
- To form labour contracting society for undertaking large public sector and industrial projects.

- Participate in State and National wide seminars for getting more clients.

- Regular follow up with Government departments and LSGIs for getting more construction projects.



*Photo 3: Ongoing Construction LIFE House at Naranamozhy Panchayat – Pathanamthitta*



*Photo 5: Ongoing Construction LIFE House at Vettathur Panchayat – Malappuram*

- Adapt to Low cost construction projects (like FRBL prefab gypwall).

**References**

[http://www.sewa.org/Sewa\\_Nirman.asp](http://www.sewa.org/Sewa_Nirman.asp)