Best of the best- Case Studies of successful Micro Enterprise Units in urban areas

The Poverty Eradication Programme has made its beginning in urban areas with special focus on establishing a strong community network and building a platform for micro finance and bank linkage. The Mission alongside gave focus on encouraging the poor women to get engaged in income generation activities be it wage or self employment. The biggest challenge the Mission faced at the initial stages is finding out right opportunities for women for employment that ensures good returns, as the women that comes forward for employment are extremely poor and who does not have sufficient technical or educational qualification for wage/ self employment.

As stated earlier 'integrating the beneficiaries with right opportunities and at right time' became the saga of success of Kudumbashree Mission in urban self employment. The unique and diverse micro enterprises in production and service sector in urban areas support this fact.

Micro Enterprises in urban areas

Strategy

The micro enterprises in urban areas are promoted assessing the need of the community, government departments and addressing the social issues. These opportunities at various levels are assessed and converted it into employment opportunities to the poor people. At the same time, the beneficiaries may find out viable opportunities based on their aptitude.

The Mission based on the requirement will find out interested persons with the support of Kudumbashree community network. Awareness creation about the enterprise, Entrepreneurship Development training and skill training will be provided to the selected persons to provide sufficient skill and awareness to run the business.

The Mission as part of handholding will provide field level monitoring support to the entrepreneurs and skill up gradation trainings and additional financial support will be provided assessing their specific requirements.

In addition to the traditional sectors preferred by women like tailoring, food processing, animal husbandry and allied sectors more than 20 variety enterprise sectors can be seen in urban areas.

ME in Urban Local Bodies- A glance

1. IT units
2. Women Wellness centers (fitness clubs)
3. Women Construction Teams
4. Reverse Osmosis Plants (Water treatment)
5. Geriatric care
6. Housekeeping units
7. Urban Service Team
8. Day care centres
9. Mother kitchen & Take away counters
10. Keralashree– Mini Employment exchange
11. Cafe Kudumbashree– Canteen & catering service
12. Mini Super market
13. Book stall
14. Bird cage making
15. Clinical laboratory
16. Flour Mill
17. Tea/ coffee stalls
18. Sanitary ware shops
19. Brush making (for lathes)
20. Chappathi Making
21. Beauty Parlour

The MEs in urban local bodies is depicted in table-1

As mentioned before, the origin and the rationale behind the promotion of each sector is based on the need assessment made by the Mission. The concept of women construction teams in urban areas was conceived by observing the growth of construction sector and the situation of the unskilled women labour with low wages. The scope of housing schemes of Government departments/ programmes and the integration with skilled women labour resulted in the 'All Women Construction teams'. All enterprise sectors like housekeeping, day care, geriatric care etc has great significance as the scenario of work culture among families in urban areas created a demand in the sectors where the Mission explored the potential and promoted women to set up groups.

The brand name of Kudumbashree and the reliability in the services offered by Kudumbashree groups slowly generated demand for more and more services from the community and departments and this again created more innovative enterprises. The Kudumbashree Taxi service (Kudumbashree Travels), & Kudumbashree auto service is the result of the demand from the community.

IT & ITES Units- Case study

Genesis

Transformation of Government departments to IT savvy and the shortage of agencies to provide service made the Mission to think of IT units among Kudumbashree network. The idea was conceived by the then Executive Director of Kudumbashree when he saw that the Panchayath Directorate is unable to complete the data entry works of Provident fund details and issue of Provident

Fund credit cards. The result is the establishment of Kudumbashree's first IT unit in Thiruvananananthapuram in 1999. The unit was promoted under the DWCUA component of SJSRY. The first unit was started with 10 women having +2 qualification and age below 40 years.

Kudumbashree IT & ITES- Setting up

Intervention of Kudumbashree Mission

The Mission to make the unit sustainable and to establish in the field convinced the Panchayath Director and captured the order of entry of Provident fund details. The successful completion of the work in a time bound manner brought confidence in the system and the Mission thought of starting similar units to all urban and peri urban areas in the state.

The participation of Kudumbashree Mission in the tendering process and capturing the work of Election Commission to computerize the electoral list was a significant achievement and this established the Kudumbashree IT units in the field competing with similar agencies/ units. The data entry of BPL census, ration card works etc are other major data entry works Kudumbashree undertook in the initial stages.

The IT & ITES units of Kudumbashree are now engaged in hardware assembly, sales and maintenance, computer training, data entry, desk top publishing, copying, development of simple software applications etc. Though the Mission initiated and negotiated with Government agencies to get data entry works and monitored its completion on time, today, the units are self sustainable and are capable of getting orders on its own.

Investment

The project cost of the first unit was 2.90 lakhs where the unit members pooled the amount through bank loan (1.50 lakhs), Kudumbashree subsidy (1.50 lakhs) and beneficiary contribution (Rs. 15,000).   The unit members to begin with purchased five personal computers (PCs), a dot matrix printer, and a 3kVA online uninterrupted power system (UPS).

The unit used to set up the units allotted by the local Self Governments or in rented space as per the availability and convenience.

The Mission provides additional financial assistance to the units through Technology fund (for purchasing new machinery/ technology) and Technology Up gradation fund (to upgrade the existing technology or machinery) as per the requirement.   In addition to this to meet additional working capital Revolving fund and Crisis management fund (to take additional orders) is provided to the required units.

Trainings

Trainings at various stages are being provided as per the market requirement. General Orientation training (GOT) to create awareness about the scope of IT unit, the challenges/ competitions in the market are provided for the selection of right beneficiaries. Entrepreneurship Development Trainings (EDP) for interested beneficiaries and skill trainings has been provided in continuation with GOT.

Trainings in Common Service Centre (to run an organisation like Akshaya for Aadhar card registrations) has been provided to all the IT units to stay tuned to the market requirements and to sustain in the long run.

Impact/ Outcome

Today we have 64 data entry units and 3 hardware units across the state. 420 women are engaged in these units and they are providing employment to 2000 women based on the works they receive. The unit members are getting offers for data entry of departments on part time basis with a daily wage of Rs.625 per day. Each member is earning an amount of Rs. 8000-9000 and will vary according to the orders.

Civil Supplies department– Ration card
Civil Registration (Land)
Economics and Statistics office– IG registration
World Food Programme– United Nations– Food safety
Socio Economic Caste census
Regional Transport Office (Data Entry)
NORKA,
Rajiv Awas Yojana– Life Survey of Kerala Government
Comprehensive Health Insurance Agency (CHIAK–RSBY)
Kerala Medical Service Corporation
Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)
Mining & Geology Department
Directorate of Public Instruction
Kudumbashree Community Development Society Training

The major works undertaken by the Kudumbashree IT units are given in table -2

<u>**Challenges**</u>

The data entry works received by the units was huge and to complete the work in a time bound manner is one of the major challenges faced. The capturing of orders and to liaison with the departments on cost and time was difficult and the Mission to make the units self sustainable thought of forming IT consortiums wherein the all the units will have representation in the consortiums and the

representatives of consortium can liaison with the departments for works. *'Unnathi IT consortium'* was thus formed in the year 2011 with this objective.

The consortium is registered and has a byelaw for its functioning. The consortium is an independent body and is coordinating all the units to get works and to function well.

Scaling up

E-seva Kendras set up in tie up with the Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) reveals the success of Kudumbashree IT units. The demand of Motor Vehicles Department to set E-seva centres by Kudumbashree Mission to provide hassle-free service to motorists and to keep out middlemen away from its offices across the districts provides another opportunity to Kudumbashree IT units. Kudumbashree Mission with the support of MVD has started 31 E-seva centres across the state where 3 women from the IT unit are engaged in each centre to provide the desired services. The income of these three women will be based on the work they avail to the MVD customers and this again provided opportunity for more women in the IT network.

A 150-sq-ft space has been earmarked for the E-seva Kendra that is set adjacent to the RTO/SRTO by MVD. Two computer systems, printer, scanner, photo-copier, fax machine and internet connectivity should be made available in the centres and is met by the groups on loan and beneficiary contribution. The total investment for setting up an E-seva Kendra is Rs.3 lakhs.

The first E-Seva Kendra is started in the year 2015 in Trivandrum Corporation. Fresh application submission via online, DTP works and prints outs are the main source of income to the women. 93 women are engaged in the 31 E-seva Kendra's. The members are able to earn a monthly income of Rs.12,000.

The MVD intends to open more E-seva kendra's and extend the facility to all the 73 RTO and SRTO centres which will provide employment to more women.

> **At a glance**
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> Total Kudumbashree IT units – 64
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> E-seva Kendras– 31
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> No of women engaged in the sector– 513
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> Total investment :
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> IT unit– 2.90 lakhs
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> E-seva Kendra– 3 lakhs

The success of the units in urban areas and its scope made more Local Self Government in rural areas to provide space and work associated with the Panchayaths by setting new units. There is good scope to capture the works of various departments. The units or consortium should be proactive to analyse the upcoming demand of departments to get the works and to complete it in a time bound manner to compete in the market. Quality should be the mantra.