

INTERNSHIP REPORT

KUDUMBASHREE

Study of the Impact of kudumbashree Through Value Addition units



Submitted to: State Mission Kudumbashree

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INTRODUCTION

The term “Kudumbashree” in Malayalam means the prosperity of the family. The State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM) of the Government of Kerala implemented Kudumbashree with the aim of poverty eradication and women empowerment. It supports the concept of community development through integrated family, which combines women of all caste and class. Kudumbashree works on a unique three-tier structure; Neighbourhood Groups(NHG) at the primary level, Area Development Societies(ADS) at the ward level and Community Development Societies(CDS) at the Local Government level. Membership is available to all women; but one woman per family. Members of the family also can avail, the benefits through Kudumbashree. The mission aims at eradicating poverty through women empowerment. The mission works on the economic empowerment projects like collective farming, livestock farming and market development, social empowerment projects like such as destitute identification and rehabilitation, and rehabilitation of mentally challenged persons and women empowerment consisting of educational programmes and programmes for the elimination of violence against women.

BACKGROUND

During 1973-74, 59.79 per cent of the population in Kerala lived under poverty while the parallel national level rate was 54.88 per cent. Even though the poverty level came down to 25.43 per cent in 1993-94, well below the national average of 35.97 per cent, poverty was a serious issue among many. So, the E K Nayanar government appointed a special task force in 1997 and they recommended the establishment of a State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM) with the purpose of completely eradicating poverty in Kerala within next ten years. It was the first project

in the country and was inaugurated by then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Malappuram on May 17, 1998. Kudumbasree - State Poverty Alleviation Mission was launched on April 1, 1999. Kudumbashree works under the Local Self Government and State government of Kerala.

The mission statement of Kudumbashree is -

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

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Ever faced a situation where you are standing in your own house and you say there is no one in the house! (I have witnessed this throughout my fieldwork in Rural Maharashtra)The person who keeps the very existence of others; a woman, when it comes to her status and stand, it's very vague. This is the situation of women in many parts of India. Maybe somewhere in history, at the moment some saint or holy book described that women are subordinate to males and this notion continued till today. It's just the structure and way of doing so have changed. Even being in the 21st century also when it comes to deciding for herself, she needs to think about how the society members will take it or how her family will react to this. Many Indian states have SHGs but they perform the function of maintaining savings accounts only. Wage disparity is a serious issue in India. Both men and women doing the same work are paid different wages. Women in politics in a patriarchal nation is very rare. But due to the constitution where it considers every citizen

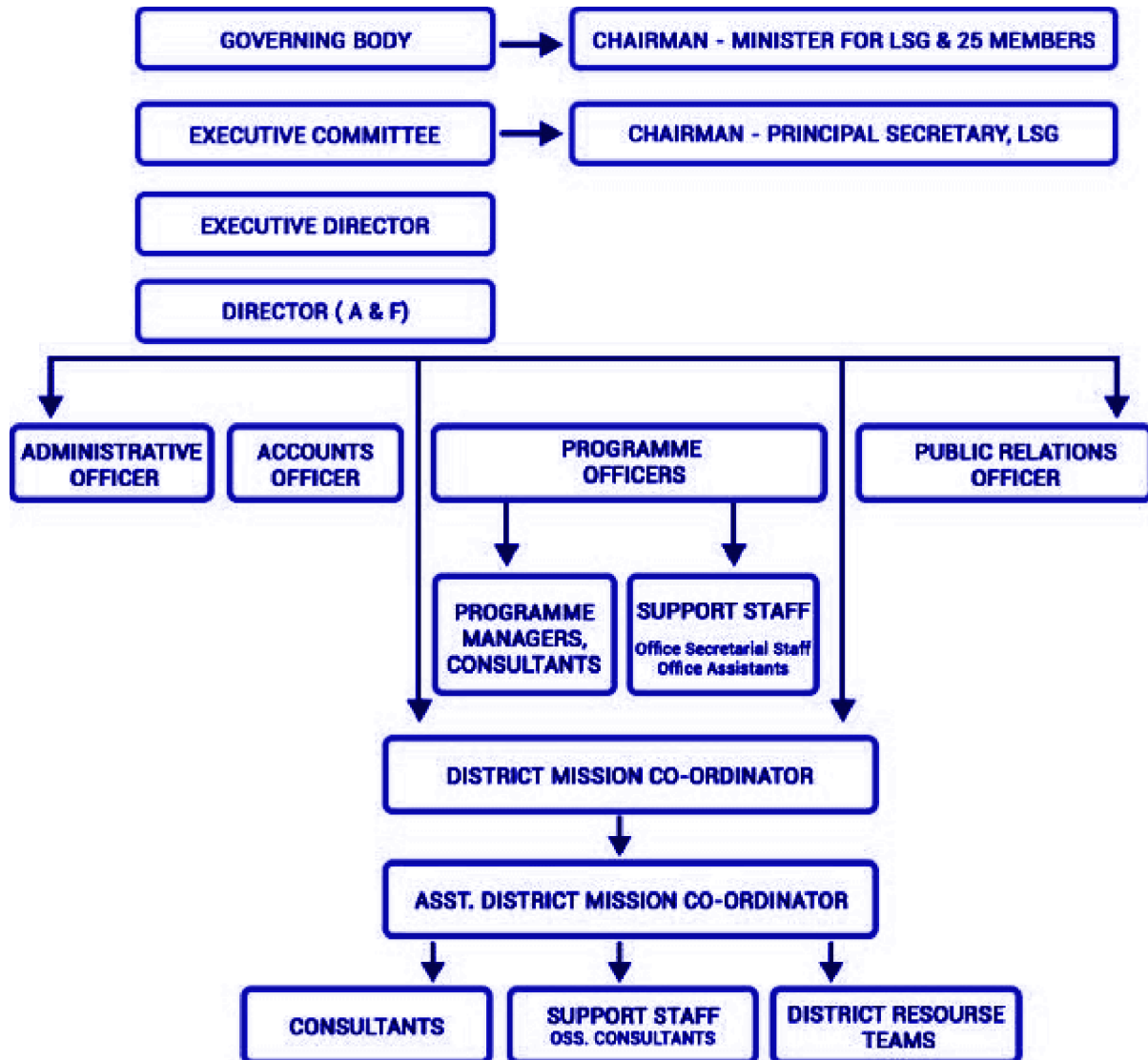
equal, under the Panchayati raj, 33% of seats are reserved for women. Even though they occupy the position of Sarpanch, it would be ruled by male members of the family.

Kerala state is located on the south-west of the Indian subcontinent. Kerala has a unique history of poverty alleviation and women empowerment when compared to rest of India. Kerala government used the 73rd and 74th amendment of Indian Constitution very effectively, which imparted decentralisation and development. It sought to make the participation of people in day to day governance and planning. But Keralite women are entirely different from the women of other states to a certain extent. They are educated (at least basic education) and self-reliable. Kudumbashree played a crucial role in moulding women strongly. This network helps the women to familiarise with the importance of local governance and gram sabha and helps them bring the needs of the poor to the attention of the local governments. Indira Gandhi said, “To be liberated, women must feel free to be herself, not in rivalry to man but in the context of her own capacity and her personality”. This internship was an attempt to understand the role played by Kudumbashree on the empowerment of women.

OBJECTIVES

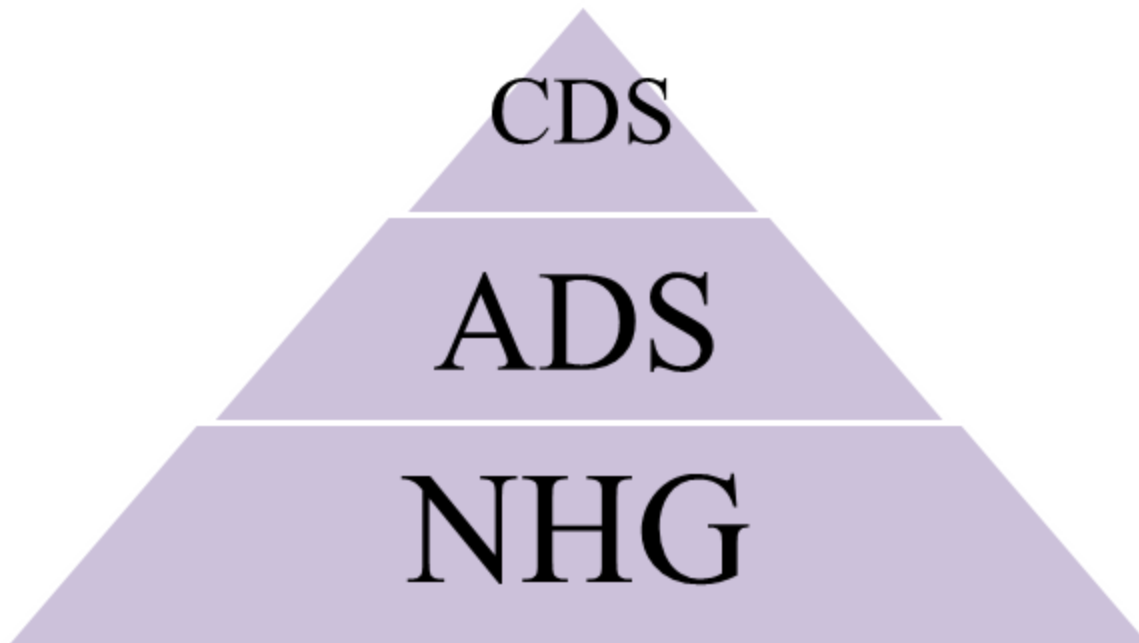
- To study the structure of the organisation
- To understand the role played by Kudumbashree for the empowerment of rural women.
- To study the value addition of agricultural products and marketing.
- Suggestions

STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANISATION



Kudumbashree was initially registered as the "State Poverty Eradication Mission" (SPEM), a society registered under the Travancore Kochi Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act 1955. It has a Governing Body chaired by the state minister of LSG and an Executive Committee chaired by Principal Secretary, Department of Local Self Government. The Governing Body does the governance of the Mission.

Three-Tier Framework



The Kudumbashree works on a three-tier structure at the Panchayath/Municipality level, which has democratically elected governance systems under the new Panchayath Raj. At the primary level, there are the Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) with 10 to 204 members, where eligible women can enrol themselves as members. These NHGs are then affiliated to an Area Development Society (ADS) at the ward level. All the ADSs in a Panchayat/Municipality are then affiliated to a Community Development Society (CDS). The membership of Kudumbashree is through its NHG and opens to women belonging to both 'poor' and 'non-poor' households, commonly referred to as BPL and APL households.

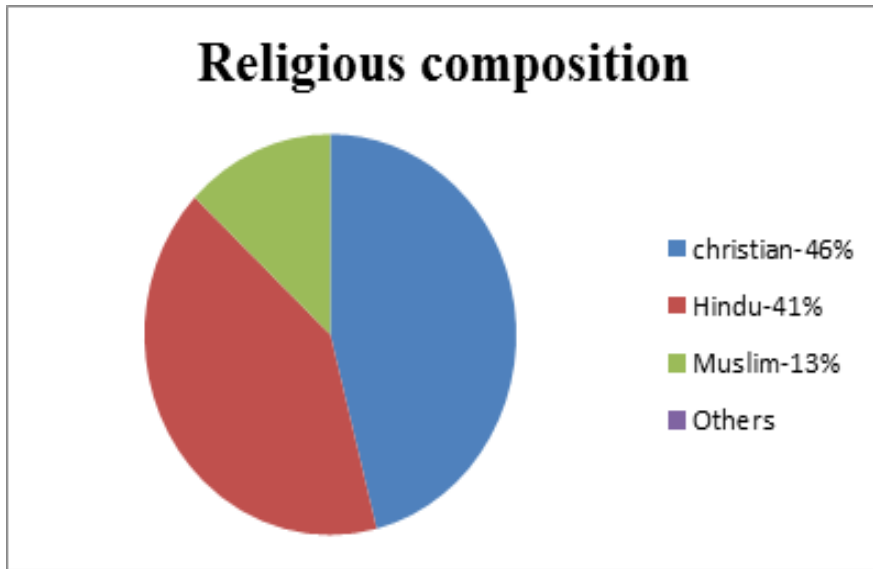
METHODOLOGY

Since this research is centred around women empowerment and poverty alleviation, both of which are multidimensional concepts. The study is descriptive in nature, to find the impact of collective organic farming on women. Hence the study is required to be both quantitative and qualitative.

The respondents in this study were mostly women from who is a part of value addition enterprises. Semi-Structured Interviews were conducted with the member's groups in order to gain insight toward the livelihood that they have built and understand the structural and economic changes that have been brought.

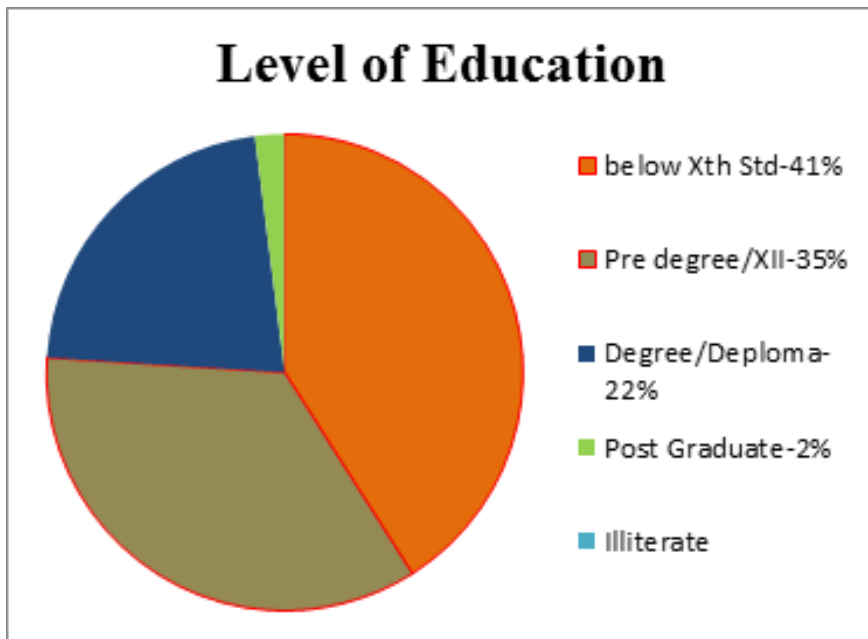
The Locale selected was Kavalangad and Pothanikkad block in the Ernakulam district. The primary data was collected from workers and officials of Kudumbashree. Also used secondary data from office records brochures etc. The accuracy and success of research depend on the sample's selection. If the sample is going to be more target-based covering the focused group, the research will be more clear and specific. Purposive sampling adopted here; members of value addition units and marketing. The main objective of a purposive sample is to produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population.

RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF MEMBERS



From the pie chart, it is clear that its clear that majority of the members are belonging to the Christain community and Participation from Muslim is comparatively less.

EDUCATION LEVEL OF MEMBERS



41% of the respondents have attained a level of education from primary to secondary schooling.

And followed by those who have studied till class XII or obtained pre-degree. While there are a significant number of graduates in arts subjects and postgraduates are very few.

But whatever be the education qualification, they could feel a difference after joining Kudumbashree; they became self-reliant. Initially, they depended on the male head of the family, and now they became an earning member of the family and are capable of looking after the family. This made them self confident.

AGRICULTURE AND VALUE ADDITION

Agriculture is the most uncertain livelihood source and a significant sector for sustainable growth of the Indian Economy. Temporal growth of Indian population has led to a reduction in per capita share of land and water resources. The productivity and profitability of agriculture have been significantly declining due to shrinking size of landholding, lack of critical support in the agro-value chain and this is leading to a vicious cycle of debt and disguised unemployment in rural India. Value addition in agriculture means enhancing economic value or consumer interest of an agricultural product. Surplus production sometimes leads to a fall in price and value addition is sufficient to cope up with this situation.

Kudumbashree: Agriculture and Value Addition

The Kudumbashree In Kerala acts in several systems while engaging with the women covering different aspects before reaching the final stages of livelihood. The steps adopted by Kudumbashree involve the gathering of the women firstly into the neighbourhood groups or Joint Liability Groups (JLG) as is the case in the case collective farming under the MKSP, the

beneficiaries here are selected then for the programme under cultivation and are divided into different groups (in an agricultural village there will be more than ten groups in an average, depending on the fertility of the land, the land availability, the group willingness to engage specifically in organic farming etc). They are given the necessary training depending on the crops that they are willing to undertake, after which the required inputs are released again depending on the selected crops, as well as the publishing of the incentives.

For this study the women who were engaged in value addition and micro-enterprise related to agriculture were selected, they were women who were already involved in agriculture, but Kudumbashree gave these women a platform to work on beginning a career of their own. Through the interviews, women were very clear of the roles kudumbashree has in their livelihood. Kudumbashree here starts as an agency, that through subsidies in engaging the women in different livelihoods, once they become a part of an SHG or JLG are given the training to work on the required fields, the practice is completely cost-free and is conducted by experts of the genre. After, the training women are linked to the banks in which they have opened a joint account to apply for loans at subsidised rates to start their enterprise. Once this is done, the subsequent activities are done by the women, in some further marketing of the product is also done with assistance from Kudumbashree.

Kudumbashree has the understanding that produce gains value by going through the processing of the produce. The idea is to collect the agro-products by procuring them, making them go through, and through proper marketing, they are brought to the right market. This helps to facilitate the women further to venture into newer pastures, thus expanding the production capacity as well as increasing the values of each of the products.

Jackfruit processing

Hailed as a “miracle” fruit and loaded with nutrition, eating just 10 or 12 bulbs of this fruit is so filling and offers so much energy, it tastes like pulled pork and serves as a meat substitute. As a food, jackfruit is hugely versatile, used to make jam, juice and ice cream; dried and ground to make curry and stir fry; and for vegetarians as a meat substitute. Besides high amounts of protein, jackfruit also provides lots of fibre, vitamins C and A, potassium, calcium and iron, which relates to disease prevention and even removal of the heavy metal cadmium.

Even today, more than half of the jackfruits go waste without even harvesting. Though many love to have it at the beginning of the season, the villagers slowly develop a kind of aversion over some time, perhaps due to the large number of jackfruits produced in almost every backyard in rural areas. In Pothanikkad block, there is one successful value addition unit Haritha Kerala, which is working with the process of dried jackfruit. They procure the jackfruit from the villages at a reasonable price. After cleaning, it is dried using a drying machine at the required temperature. Jackfruit has a high demand in Kudumbashree, other state and foreign countries during off-seasons. This attempt gave employment opportunities to many homemakers. This group also sells dried tapioca and jackfruit seed. Another successful effort is virgin coconut oil. They collect coconut from farmers and convert it as Virgin coconut oil. It is extracted from fresh coconut milk and is 100 per cent natural. It is unrefined, unbleached and cold-pressed. Unlike other coconut oil that is extracted through heat, VCO does not possess that latik odour, but the fresh aroma of coconut oil. It contains a substance called lauric acid, which can maintain the immune system and heart health. Virgin coconut oil is good for body health because it contains

saturated fatty acid so it can increase the body's metabolism system. The main disadvantage of these products is they do not have a stable market

Organic rice:

The Green Revolution replaced traditional varieties with high-yielding ones. These high yielding varieties now recognised as 'high input varieties' needed tonnes of fertilisers, to achieve the target growth. The crops and varieties alien to the soil attracted new pests and diseases and also outbreaks of existing pests. To combat them, came in huge quantities of pesticides. The input of these "exotic" elements into traditional farming led to a multitude of environmental issues. Organic farming, a system with the broad principle of 'live and let live', came up which was recognised nationally and internationally. In Kavalangad block, two neighbourhood units are combined together and work for "Kudumbini java ari", which is organic rice production. They procure rough rice from their own farms and JLG farmers and after processing, convert it into the rice and then to the market. They have customers in their own block and other parts of the district. This is one of the successful groups in the block as organic rice always has a significant market reach.

OBSERVATION

- I could find self-confident, self-reliable and empowered women those were struggling with their life in the past during this internship

During my field study, I got an opportunity to meet a woman who joined Kudumbashree in 2001 with education qualification of 8th standard. Then she cleared the literacy equivalence

exam for Xth standard. She held the position of the president of NHG, ADS and CDS and visited various Indian states and the United Arab Emirates as a part of exhibitions and tours. Her standard of living has increased, and children got higher education. We could find an incredible journey from a rural poor housewife to an independent, self-reliant woman.

- Kudumbashree has less reach to the educated and upper-middle-class people.

A lion share of the educated population of Kerala is still unaware of the importance of Kudumbashree and how it plays a transformation of rural women.

- The major challenge faced by the women is the missing linkages, where she struggling to make a profit because a market is absent for the premium quality goods that she is producing.

SUGGESTIONS

- Involvement of more educated women are required
- We should find a permanent market set up for the women to sell the products of Kudumbashree Units. Most of the Kudumbashree products are always sold out through exhibitions and Kudumbashree bazars.
- Identify New Marketing Strategies for Kudumbashree Products. It is high time that we should get ISO Certification and Barcode reading in the products. A Uniform Branding exercise should be done, so that the outer public may quickly identify the products.
- A need for disaster resilience to be built into the agricultural scenario, hence protect the farmers from going into total losses during natural calamities like flood.

CONCLUSION

Empowerment has a very different perspective when we see it from Amartya Sen's perspective. Sen's theory deals more with the capability approach, but it could not be the only definition of empowerment; it requires a more holistic approach to deal with this theory. There is one more theory given to it by the World Bank, which puts forth a suggestion saying that empowerment of women should be a key feature of social development programs (World Bank, 2001). According to the Indian Express (March 4th, 2019), In Kerala, despite the high literacy rate, there exist high gender disparities among labourers and the female unemployment rate is much higher than the corresponding male one.

The programme Kudumbashree could indeed be said to be a success and empowering, because even though financially the programme could be more successful if further institutionalisation takes place. Because, this helps the women to start with the feeling of ownership and success of the production, which was something that was earlier missing, in many of the cases it was the start for the women to start diversification of their income and thereby meeting with economic success and independence.