



INTERVIEW

Dignity, Respect and Income

The Interview with **S.Harikishore**, Executive Director Kudumbashree, Director IASRD



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Kudumbashree, the State Government's poverty alleviation and women empowerment movement which has turned out to be the hope of hundreds of thousands of women from the marginalised sections are making giant leaps. The crises like floods and Covid pandemic have in fact invigorated its efforts to cross over the challenges through innovations and experiments. Kudumbashree is not only empowering its over 40 lakh members, but it is also turning out to be the guardian for sustaining their dignity. Kudumbashree's Executive Director S. Harikishore IAS speaks about the silent revolution in an interview given to N.V. Ravindranathan Nair for Kerala Calling.



Excerpts of the interview
You have been leading probably the world's largest women organisation meant

for women empowerment for over four years. How do you evaluate this experience?

My four years' stint with the Kudumbashree has been a fulfilling experience. Being a vast system, maintaining its

momentum was important. We have 3 lakh neighbourhood clusters, 61 lakh members, over 1000 CLS chairpersons, 20,000 APL chairpersons and 2 lakh Neighbourhood presidents. Kudumbashree got the opportunity to be part of the operation of Kochi Metro, go hold the only metro being run by women in the world. Our steps in waste management, efforts to rehabilitate destitute families, finding jobs in Trade Schools, Ape and Annual holiday camps were all challenging tasks.

Now we are training women to 20 states. We went to Azerbaijan, Tajikistan & Uganda to train women. Some African countries have sent their people to get trained here. We are the Model agency for UN Central Government projects. We are also into Geriatric care. Our members constitute the Haritha Karma Sena. Management of railway packing, KRTC ticket booking - our first projects can be seen in several sectors. Kudumbashree is contributing to the hopes of thousands. It makes us happy.

Kudumbashree has been part of the poverty alleviation programmes for over two decades. How do you see this journey?

We have succeeded in attaining many of our goals. Our network is our strength. Our connect with the local bodies has been mutually beneficial. If a purchaser decides to become fellow fund from their municipality resolution is entrusting the task with the Kudumbashree.

The 827 'Janaseva Kendras' we started during lockdown are providing meals at Rs. 25. Here 5000 people find work. As part of women empowerment initiatives like 'Sudhakar centres' are focusing on the protection of women in

distress with giving them counselling and short - stay facility. Being the National Women's Organisation, Kudumbashree women go to other states to train the people there.

The part of enabling - an organisation which can deal with future challenges, we are converging with UN Government departments.

During the Covid pandemic, the role played by Kudumbashree has widely been appreciated. Could you explain the activities you have undertaken these days?

When there was a scarcity for masks, 70 lakh cloth masks were arranged through 350 tailoring units. Out of the 100 community Kitchens opened during the lockdown, we were running 1100 of them.

Under the Government's 100 day programme, Kudumbashree is finding job for 15000 people. In association with the SGLL, we plan to bring laptops at Rs.15,000 to each family.

Under the Chief Minister's 'Sahakarashree' scheme 21 lakh women have availed the loan of Rs.80,000 each. Under the Subsidised Kerala Initiative also we could avail Rs.20 crore for rehabilitation. During the flood we implemented the 1000 crore loan scheme 'Matsarakashree' as

another scheme to bring money to the beneficiary's door steps to help save women from partner money lender's exploitation. Rs.300 crore was disbursed and loan.

Kudumbashree's own Plan fund has grown to the size of Rs.600 crore. Since the outbreak of Covid, we started 100 Bala schools, 9000 monthly challenged children study there.

Kudumbashree is also a neighbourhood bank. What

is its net worth? What is the percentage of repayment on the loans?

For us, women empowerment includes economic empowerment. Our Neighbourhood savings banks amount to Rs.1000 crore. We have Rs.12,000 crore worth internal lending. The bank linkage is Rs.500 crore. Rs.2000 crore has been sanctioned during Covid time at 4 per cent interest or for no interest has economically empowered the women to a certain extent. The repayment on bank loans is 98 per cent.

Adding to one's dignity is integral to the real empowerment. How do you plan to empower self-employed women?

While finding local jobs through self-employment, many jobs of the profession are for wage jobs. For them, we plan 150 job-oriented courses under Central OREG - OREG. Already we have funds for setting 20,000 more people. Already 1 lakh members have enrolled for these courses.

Political empowerment happened among Kudumbashree members these years is remarkable. 7000 of the 20,000 elected local body members are from Kudumbashree. 20 Local body chairpersons out of 1000 are Kudumbashree members.

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'Dignity, Respect and Income' - That's Kudumbashree

Kudumbashree, the poverty alleviation and women empowerment mission of Kerala is the hope of lakhs of women from the marginalised sections, assisting them to make giant leaps. The crises like the unprecedented floods and covid pandemic have in fact invigorated Kudumbashree's efforts to cross over the challenges through innovations and experiments. Kudumbashree is not only empowering over 40 lakh NHG members, but it is also turning out to be the guardian for sustaining their dignity. In today's article in 'Making an Impact' Series, let

me present the interview conducted by Shri. N.V Raveendran Nair, Senior Journalist, and published in Kerala Calling magazine. This interview, which is a snapshot of Kudumbashree, which is acting as a prominent force in Kerala's developmental sector.

Hope you all will read this and will let us know your insights and suggestions. This article is also given in the page -<https://www.kudumbashree.org/pages/183> under articles/ interview section.

