

# **Field Visit Report on Kudumbashree Organisational Structure**

Submitted by,

Manjary Asok  
Communication Specialist  
Kudumbashree State Mission

Kudumbashree is essentially a community network that covers the entire State of Kerala. It consists of a three tier structure with Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) as primary level units, Area Development Societies (ADS) at the ward level, and Community Development Societies (CDS) at the local government level. It is one of the largest women's networks in the world. While the community network is formed around the central themes of poverty eradication and women empowerment, its main features include democratic leadership, and support structures formed from the 'Kudumbashree family'.

NHGs are the base of this Programme where women meet together for some reasons, works on some particular agendas and take decisions collectively. It was in early 90's that the Community structure of Kudumbashree was evolved. Shri D. Pankajakshakurup, a gandhian from Kanjippadom Village from Kuttanad, Alappuzha had put forward the idea of setting up Ayalkoottams, Tharakkootams and Gramakoottams which later paved way for Neighbourhood Groups, Area Development Societies and Community Development Societies.

As a new member of Kudumbashree Mission, a study was conducted by us for understanding Kudumbashree more.

Ayalkoottams are held on every Sundays or any other convenient day for all the members in the group. They start with a prayer and NHG president welcomes the gathering. New ideas are evolved during this session.

As told by Smt. Sheela, the NHG President of 'Kudumbavilakk' NHG of North Aryad Panchayath, Alappuzha, for were conduct discussions for the past few years on - 'Sthree Padhavi Swayam Padana Charcha'. The women of the group said that they feels much empowered compared to their previous dates. By conducting meeting consecutively on each member's home, the group can therefore identify the problems, if any and thereby help them to get rid off it. Recently, during the Monsoon they inspected the surroundings of every home in the ward to make sure that the surroundings are kept clean to take precautions against Dengue Fever.

Meeting a CDS Chairperson was the next task. So we met Smt. Bindu. R, Chairperson of Kudumbashree CDS Office, Venganoor, Thiruvananthapuram. She was a CDS member for the last 2 years and few months back she became the CDS Chairperson. She had been associating with Kudumbashree for the past 9 years. She is a Nursing graduate who didn't get job and end up being a house wife. According to her, women here who run Micro Enterprises and Joint Liability Groups are not getting enough market to sell out their products. She made a suggestion of setting up an exclusive supermarket or selling point.

During 2012- 13 Venganoor CDS has received an award from District Mission for setting up maximum number of Micro Enterprises. On visiting 'Thanima and Winner' Nutrimix unit, we could feel the positive attitude of women to run an organization with optimism. Smt. Usha Kumari, member of this unit described in detail how Nutrimix-Amrutham powder is made. They are getting an average order of 6000 Kg per month. Presently they collect Wheat from FCI. They also face a problem of not getting enough market for their products.

Then we visited 'Classic Palmcraft' and also the members of Pioneer Paper Bag making unit, situated on ward no 1 of Venganoor Panchayath. They are selling out their products by exhibiting in resorts. Pioneer paper bag unit also helps them and give them all the mental support. Pioneer Paper bag unit had been in the field for about 14 years. Kudumbashree had helped them by giving orders. Presently they are selling out their products through their shop at Kraft Village, Kovalam. But now they say that some are trying to expell them out for giving the outlets to private parties. LSD department may help them on this case.

On Visiting Navajyothi JLG situated in Ambedkar Gramam, Venganoor, I was astonished about the will power of these women. They cultivate Vegetables like Pumpkin, Bringal, Tapioca, Banana, etc in large scale. And presently sell through HortiCorp outlets. They also suggested about a selling point for their products. They does farming on taking 2 acres of land on lease from a St. George Malankara Church, Kalluvettankuzhy.

We also met Smt. K. Shobhana, an asraya beneficiary. She is a widow and she is getting help from Asraya for the last 4 years. She had been associating with Kudumbashree for the last 15 years. She was running a small teashop of her own. She receives a kit worth 200 rupees which contains pulses, sugar, tea powder and cooking oil. Her daughter had completed post graduation and her son completed plus two.

The women we met shared about the changes that Kudumbashree had brought about in them. Most of them feels like they are empowered and their self esteem has increased very much.

### **My Views and Suggestions**

1. We should find a permanent market set up for the women to sell the products of Kudumbashree Units.
2. Identify the beneficiaries for DDUGKY from NHG level itself .It should be conducted as a monthly exercise.
3. Mentoring Classes for MEs by members of successful MEs.
4. A column Motivational bits through our magazine by eminent psychologists.
5. Identify the educated women within the groups and make use of them in CDS level.  
For Example, A group for giving First aid can be set up.
6. Make use of Kraft Village, that it is a wonderful selling point .
7. Think of selling points like craft village to sell out the products of Kudumbashree women, at least in District Level.
8. In the case of Nutrimix Units, we may procure the raw materials for all the Nutrimix Outlets altogether (Just like corporate like KFC and Chicking do). So that we could get Amritham Powder of same quality from all over the state. And this could be of a financial help to the Unit members.

9. Identify New Marketing Strategies for Kudumbashree Products. . It is high time that we should get ISO Certification and Barcode reading in our products.

10. A Uniform Branding Exercise should be done, so that the outer public may could easily identify which are our products.

These are the few ideas that came to my mind on visiting the various units and offices of Kudumbashree. More focus should be given to each and every nook of the projects we have launched. These women are expecting more and more help from our side and we should also take care about the quality of the products we launch to the market and we must make sure that they are of best quality.