Feed the Future India Triangular Programme

Training Programme on Entrepreneurship Development Among Rural Women for Extension Practitioners of UGANDA

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Introduction

The Kudumbashree mission has been hailed as one of the most pioneering poverty eradication initiative sponsored by the government of Kerala that identifies empowerment of women as the best strategy for poverty alleviation. “Kudumbashree” which means prosperity of the family was conceptualized as a system to mobilize grassroot level women not only for their economic empowerment but were also seen as potential agents for community development. Launched on 17th May 1998 by then Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the mission aims to eradicate absolute poverty within a definite time frame of 10 years under the leadership of Local Self Governments formed and empowered by the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution of India. It has also been formally registered as the "State Poverty Eradication Mission" (SPEM), a society registered under the Travancore Kochi Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act 1955 and is actively supported by the Government of India and NABARD.
The Kudumbashree community network lies on the foundation of a three tier structure.

Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) are the primary units of the Kudumbashree community organisation. Ten to twenty women from a neighbourhood form a NHG. The membership, structure, and functions of the NHGs are bound by the byelaws of Kudumbashree CDS.

Membership

Membership is open to all adult women, and limited to a single membership per household. If a woman leaves the NHG, another woman from the family can be given membership. Even though membership is limited to one woman per family, other women can also participate in the discussions held at the NHG; they can also attend the training and development programmes that the NHG or ADS organises.

Special NHGs can be formed for the people with impaired speech and hearing, visually challenged persons, physically or mentally challenged persons, people who have been tested HIV positive (or AIDS affected), and destitute families. These NHGs are to be formed with the permission of the government and once formed, will enjoy the same status as any NHG. Special NHGs can be formed for Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities. If necessary, special ADS covering such special NHGs can also be formed with the permission of the State Mission. Special NHGs can also be formed for mothers of mentally-challenged children or those living with people with special needs.

Activity groups for taking up economic/business activities are formed by drawing in members from one or more NHGs; these members will continue to hold their memberships in the respective NHGs and continue to function as other members of the NHGs. The activity groups, however, can claim support under eligible programmes including subsidies.

Membership is given to any woman from the neighbourhood desiring membership in a NHG subject to agreeing to work with the NHG, accepting the byelaws. Once a woman gets membership, she signs in the Membership Register of the NHG.
The NHG general body includes all its members. NHG elects a five members Executive Committee consisting of the following positions.

- President
- Secretary
- Volunteer (Income generation)
- Volunteer (Health and Education)
- Volunteer (Infrastructure)

Every NHG elects its Executive Committee in special 'election general body meeting' in which only members can participate.

Either president or secretary of an NHG has to be compulsorily a member of a poor (BPL) family. Members from APL families can assume both the roles only in case of absence of members from BPL families. Eligibility for election to the position of president and secretary is limited to two consecutive terms.

**NHG — Functions**

- Regular weekly meetings; secretaries of NHGs are expected to keep updated minutes-books showing details of all meetings.
- Running thrift and credit scheme; NHGs decide on an amount which members should bring for weekly meetings. This money is added to a thrift account. NHGs run an internal lending programme using the money thus saved.
- Maintaining bank account: Every NHG opens a bank account operated jointly by the president and secretary of the group; NHGs can open savings accounts in nationalised, commercial or cooperative banks. All receipts including those of savings are deposited in the bank account on the next working day.
- Account keeping and records: NHG keeps minutes-book, membership register, finance register, consolidation register, passbook, documents relating to affiliation, and other files in formats prescribed by the Mission.
- Participation in Gram Sabha and general neighbourhood group meetings: NHGs take part in the Gram Sabha and related meetings.
- Working with local governments: NHGs work closely with the local governments in its general administration, planning, and plan implementation.
- Gender awareness: NHGs take up studies and awareness programmes on gender and women empowerment.
- Social audit: NHGs ensure participation in Gram Sabha to facilitate social audit.
- Social action: NHGs take initiative to organise Balasabha and similar other programmes.
- Implementation: NHGs plan and implement programmes proposed by the State government and Kudumbashree State and district Missions.
- Basic units of CDS: NHGs work as the basic units of CDSs in realising the objectives of CDSs.
- Bank linkage: NHG establish bank linkage and avail loans for onward lending to members.
- Training: NHGs organise training programmes to equip members in running thrift and credit and micro enterprises.

**Weekly meetings**

In the meeting which decided on the formation of a neighbourhood groups, decisions are taken on the day and time for weekly meetings. NHGs are expected to hold the weekly meetings at the houses of members in rotation. All members are to attend meetings regularly; even though a quorum of 75% attendance has been fixed for meetings, 100% attendance is expected.

**Thrift & credit**

In the weekly meetings, members deposit the pre-fixed thrift amount with the secretary and get the corresponding figure entered in the passbook and signed. NHG can issue small loans from the group's savings to its members as per requirement. All decisions are to be taken by consensus or through majority support. All loans are subject to decision of the NHG.

The weekly thrift amount for members is fixed as equal to the weekly savings that the poorest member of the NHG can afford to make. Even though this is the general rule, NHGs may decide to allow reasonable levels of variation in the weekly thrift amount among members. Members who do not have source for savings at all are exempted from weekly savings. However, the exemption is not applicable for membership fee.

In the case of those who have been exempted from weekly savings, their exemption does not prevent them from availing subsidies, financial assistance, and other support provided by the government and other agencies. Once an NHG is formed, it works for three months with regular meetings and savings by members before it starts internal lending. Loans are approved by consensus or majority decision by the group after examining the demands by members put forward in weekly meetings. It is the prerogative of the group to decide on priority. NHG charges interest on loans at rates decided by the group.

Members are expected to keep high level of discipline in repaying their loans in instalments as fixed by the NHG. In case of default in repayment, the NHG could resort to the following methods.

- Motivating the members to make repayment; CDS members may visit the group to discuss the matter.
- Charging penal interest from defaulters.
- Effecting repayment from the defaulting member’s savings.
- Legal steps.

In exceptional circumstances when NHGs face financial crisis due to factors beyond their control, CDS may consider steps to support the NHG.
Area Development Society (ADS)

**Bank Linkage**

NHGs initiate steps to establish bank linkage on completing six months of functioning with regular meetings and savings. The NHGs undergo grading to qualify for bank linkage. Once an NHG is linked with banks, it can avail loan and use the funds to lend to its members. For loans extended to members out of bank loans, repayment terms are fixed based on the repayment requirements of the bank.

**Funds**

NHGs have their own working fund generated from entry fee, membership fee, monthly subscription, interest on internal lending, penal interest, donations, and grants. All the funds are included in the accounts of the NHG and money is kept in the bank account.

**Membership**

All the NHGs within the operational boundary of an ADS that are affiliated to the CDS automatically become members of ADS as well. A NHG can have membership in only one ADS; in rare cases where an NHG has members from more than a ward, the NHG decides on which ADS to take membership in.

**ADS Structure**

ADS is formed if there are at least two Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) in a ward of a local government. In case a ward has only one NHG, till the time another NHG comes up there, it is affiliated to the ADS in the adjacent ward.
neighbourhood groups in its geographical area. ADS has a seven-member Executive Committee elected from its general body. There are three office bearers, elected from among the members of the Executive Committee:

- ADS chairperson
- ADS vice chairperson
- ADS secretary

An individual cannot hold any of the above three positions for more than two consecutive terms. In addition to the seven members of the Executive Committee, the following ex-officio members are part of the ADS general body and Executive Committee:

- ICDS/Anganwadi worker
- Saksharata Prerak
- Two experienced members co-opted to the Executive Committee from among the former office bearers as per the decision of the current Executive Committee
- Junior Public Health Nurse working in ward.

The size of the Executive Committee has been limited by byelaw (2008) to 15. The Executive Committee after assuming office, decides on the ex-officio members to be included in the committee in the very first meeting itself, so that the latter can start attending the second meeting onwards.

The ADS Executive Committee from among the members of the committee selects three volunteers:

1. Volunteer (Income generation)
2. Volunteer (Health and Education)
3. Volunteer (Infrastructure)

The Executive Committee also decides on the individual responsibility of members in monitoring and supervising NHGs.

**ADS — Funds**

- ADS has its own fund. ADS is entitled to 25% of the annual subscription charges that the CDS gets from the NHGs.
- Proceeds from ADS activities such as those relating to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and any other donations or contributions approved by the CDS add to the ADS’s working fund.
- ADS keeps its funds in a bank account jointly operated by the chairperson and secretary; all expenses are made subject to the approval of the Executive Committee.

**Community Development Society (CDS)**

Community Development Society (CDS) is the apex body of the three-tier Kudumbashree community organisation. It functions at the local government level, in both rural and urban areas. While typically there is a CDS per local government, there can be more CDSs for urban government institutions with relatively large number of NHGs and ADSs.

**Objectives**

- To work towards women empowerment, local economic development, and poverty eradication through the three-tier community organisation consisting of Kudumbashree Neighbourhood Groups (NHG), Area Development Societies (ADS), and Community Development Society (CDS).
- To look after the expansion of the NHG network, coordination and monitoring of NHGs and ADSs within the local government area.
- To work as a voluntary apex collective for the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual development of Kudumbashree NHGs.
- To function as a community monitoring agency in the preparation of development plans of the local governments as well as in their implementation and monitoring.
- To participate in the activities for strengthening of local self-government institutions and for good governance.
- To participate in activities relating to strengthening local level planning and for quality improvement.
- To take part and provide leadership in development planning in areas such as local economic development, poverty eradication, Women Component Plan (WCP), women empowerment, and good governance.
- To plan and implement local development activities for livelihood enhancement in general and poverty eradication and women’s welfare programmes in particular as entrusted by the local self-government institutions.
- To provide leadership to NHGs in efficient conduct of thrift and credit programme.
- To link NHGs with government departments, development agencies of the government, financial institutions and other relevant agencies, help them in availing shares of cooperative institutions, making deposits, and availing credit with the objective of improving the economic independence of the people of the area in general and the NHGs in particular.
To encourage and support NHG members in finding self-employment opportunities and managing initiatives in self-employment.

To provide training to member families for social and economic empowerment.

To take up and implement programmes for local economic development.

To engage in activities for ensuring the rights of persons with mental or physical disabilities, marginalised sections, and children, and work towards ensuring social justice for them.

**Membership**

In the case of CDS, members are NHGs, and mode of membership is affiliation of the NHG with the CDS. The NHG seeking affiliation fills up an ‘affiliation form’ and submits it to CDS through ADS. The NHG is liable to pay an affiliation fee and annual subscription at rates fixed by the State government. NHG gets an ‘affiliation certificate’ on completing the process for affiliation. Each NHG has a unique ‘affiliation number’, which is recorded in the ‘affiliation certificate’. CDS keeps an ‘affiliation register’ with details of affiliated NGOs.

Only the Kudumbashree women NHGs working under the auspices of the local government are eligible for affiliation. Other women Self-Help Groups promoted by any government agency or local self-government institutions should be brought into the Kudumbashree CDS structure before affiliating them.

**CDS— Structure**

The CDS general body is composed of all the members of the seven-member Executive Committees of all the ADSs within the local government area (or the operational area of the CDS if there are more CDSs).

CDS Executive Committee consists of one representative of every ADS within its area. The number of members in the Executive Committee is equal to the number of ADSs.

Executive Committees of the all the ADSs hold special meetings to elect their representative to the CDS Executive Committee. The Executive Committee of the CDS selects two office bearers – Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. An individual can hold either of these positions only for a maximum of two consecutive terms of three years each.

Ex-officio members of the CDS Executive Committee and general body are:

- Five women ward members / councillors nominated by the local government.
- Two experience former office bearers of the CDS, selected by the current Executive Committee.

In addition to the two ex-officio members typically selected by the Executive Committee in its first meeting after election, CDS can bring in appropriate officials as invitees to the committee. Each member of the Executive Committee gets the responsibility of an ADS; this is allotted in the first meeting of the committee. Volunteers (for income generation, health and education, and infrastructure) are also selected in the first meeting.

**CDS— Funds**

Kudumbashree CDS has a working fund of its own. Entry fee/ affiliation fee, annual subscription, donations, grant received from government, the three-tier local government, other organisations, individuals, and financial institutions, earnings from economic activities, and incomes from regular activities are added to the working fund.

CDS keeps its savings account in a nationalised, commercial, or cooperative bank. The account is jointly operated by the chairperson and member secretary subject to approvals and decisions by the Executive Committee.

Kudumbashree community is arguably one of the largest women’s networks in the world covering more than 42 lakh women, 261,000 NHGs, 19,773 ADS, and 1,072 CDS. Kudumbashree was also recognized as a National Resource Organization (KS-NRO) in the year 2012 by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India. While the community network is formed around the central themes of poverty eradication and women empowerment, its main features include democratic leadership, autonomy, accountability and collectivism.

The Mission has been focusing mainly on three domains through its programmes- Economic Empowerment of the poor and contribution to the local economic development, Social Empowerment for the inclusion of the most destitute and disadvantaged and Women Empowerment for their mass mobilization to achieve the larger goal of development and poverty eradication. A number of schemes and programs have been launched under each domain promoting micro credit, micro enterprises, local economic development, social equity, skill development programs as well as specific schemes for vulnerable sections of the society.
Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment for the members has been realised through numerous intervention, which facilitate income generation for the members.

The major domains of the economic empowerment activity:-
1. Micro enterprises activity
2. Agriculture activity
3. Collective and consortiums
4. Skilling and wage employment

Micro enterprises activity

Kudumbashree focus on livelihood generation among the rural poor women has led to the formation of more than 31,000 micro enterprises which is being operated and managed by groups of women.

Micro Enterprise promotion and development is one of the significant strategies of Kudumbashree Mission to facilitate economic empowerment of the poor. The Mission develops specific strategies based on careful analysis of the requirements of enterprises and provides support in the form of training programs, partial financial aid, marketing as well as hand holding support to the enterprises. ME’s have been considered as a logical supplement of the thrift and credit programme that could generate income, lead to better performance in thrift, and bring about an overall improvement.

The Mission gives priority on the concept of Local Economic Development (LED)—local production, catering to local consumption to increase the economic activity within the local areas for micro enterprise development. In order to facilitate this concept, the involvement of the community are ensured, appropriate analysis of the market demand is carried out and products are developed accordingly.

Kudumbashree defines micro enterprises based on the following four parameters.

1. Investment ranging from Rs 5,000 to Rs 2.5 lakhs
2. Enterprise should have a potential to generate at least Rs 1,500 per member per month either by way of wage or profit or both together.
3. Enterprise fully owned, managed and operated by members themselves, preferably, women below poverty line families as entrepreneurs.
4. Minimums turnover of Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakhs (ie., 2-10 times of the capital investment).

Under the microenterprise model focus has been kept on improving the entrepreneurial skill of the women and reduce the risk through a group approach.

Enterprises that Kudumbashree has promoted broadly fall in four sub-sectors.

1. Production
2. Services
3. Trading
4. Sales and Marketing

Across the four sub-sectors, the enterprises can be classified into five categories.

1. Food products
2. Apparels and accessories
3. Handmade toiletries
4. Handicrafts
5. Café and catering services
Nutrimix Consortium

Amrutham Nutrimix is an innovative programme that was launched in the year 2006 with an aim of engaging in the production and distribution of nutritious food. It is an attempt to ensure the supply of healthy food supplement to all Anganwadis of Kerala under the "Take Home Ration Scheme". Implemented by the state government's Social Welfare Department, the strategy is to strengthen the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) for nutritional support to children in 6 months to 3 years of age group.

The story of Nutrimix began in April 2006 when a group of Kudumbashree members came together and expressed their interest in the idea. These women were then sent to CPCRI (Central Plantation Crops Research Institute), Kasargod for the initial training program. Out of the 23 groups that received training during March 2006 to 2008, 11 groups began functioning in 2006, while the remaining 12 groups began functioning in 2007-08. Further training programs were conducted in batches in different districts so as to give them an opportunity to mutually exchange ideas and experiences.

Nutrimix business has been considered as an important enterprise activity of Kudumbashree. Around 369 Nutrimix microenterprise units have been functioning which is fully owned, managed and operated by more than 200 women across the length and breadth of Kerala. The average sales per annum for each group is 28.79 lakhs. The total sales in a year from all the 369 Nutrimix units in Kerala is thus estimated to be around Rs11.5 million. It is expected that the major corporates who have been enjoying a good market share in the area of baby food supplements in the state, will be forced to cut exorbitant prices charged by them in order to withstand competition. These units have shown exceptional capacity to produce food supplements with sufficient care and hygiene and have been trained and governed by the production protocol of CPCRI.

Nutrimix units have been reported as the most favoured enterprise due to their relative profitability, assured supply of wheat at subsidized rates, sustained demand for the product as well as stable income for the members. All the units are equipped with modern machineries to fry, grind, mix and pack the product to reduce the drudgery of the members. The nutrimix production and supply program involves and interacts with various institutions dealing with raw material procurement, developing a centralized distribution channel, developing value added products, diversifying the products, preparing the units to face competition from the market specially the multinational corporates associated with the production of food supplements.

Nutrimix Formula and Product

The Nutrimix Formula is a cereal based powder mix developed by the CPCRI, Kasargod, Kerala. The ingredients are Wheat, Groundnut, Bengal gram, soya flour and sugar which provides essential multi-vitamins, minerals and proteins essential for the growth of the children. The target of the mission was to supply the Food Mix to all the ICDS blocks in three phases: 49 ICDS blocks in Phase-1, 35 in Phase-2, & 79 in Phase-3. In this manner, the supply to 163 ICDS blocks was completed and since 2007 the supply has been ensured to all the 33,115 anganwadis across the state.

Currently each child is being provided with 3.37 kg of Amrutham Nutrimix a month, at the rate of 135 grams per day for 25 days. The current price of 56 per kg is paid to Nutrimix production group by the Social Justice Department.

Supply Chain

A specific process is adopted for maintaining smooth supply of the product which includes the following:

- The ICDS supervisor will give the supply order to the Kudumbashree units after finalizing the project with LSG.
- The Nutrimix units supply the required quantity of Nutrimix to the allocated Anganwadis (child centers) as per the order from ICDS supervisor.
- The supply to the ICDS Block should be made within 15 days of the date of receipt of supply order.
- The local government in turn will make the payment on receipt of the bill.
- The CDPO, block wise will monitor the supply chain.

Districts | Units
---|---
Thiruvananthapuram | 18
Kollam | 10
Pathanamthitta | 08
Alappuzha | 14
Kottayam | 10
Idukki | 14
Ernakulam | 10
Trissur | 20
Palakkad | 22
Kozhikode | 27
Malappuram | 42
Waynad | 10
Kannur | 28
**Total** | **248**

Total sales in a year from all the 369 Nutrimix units in Kerala is thus estimated to be around Rs 11.5 million.
Establishment of Nutrimix Unit

Local government institution especially gram panchayats extend necessary help and guidance to their respective Nutrimix groups of their locality including the facilitation of necessary buildings. Establishment of Nutrimix production unit starts with the identification of appropriate and suitable location. Once the group is identified, along with the location, Kudumbashree mission plans of their capacity development training. Each unit in turn is expected to get the following certificates before starting the production of the same: Kudumbashree certificate, legal metrology, SSI registration certificate, municipal certificate, central sales tax registration, state commercial taxes registration and FSSAI.

Marketing of Nutrimix and other products

Nutrimix production groups are involved in not only producing Nutrimix food supplement supplied to all anganwadis as per the allotment by SJD but also producing few other products. Majority of the groups in palakkad district are supported by Kudumbashree with another food supplement called Sabala to supply to all adolescent girls in their respective panchayats. Sabala program is limited to palakkad, Malappuram, Kollam and Idukki only. However, Kudumbashree also provides support to these products and groups by encouraging them to participate in regional and state level exhibitions for marketing their products. Further, Kudumbashree has also introduced a new approach to market different products of these groups under “Home Shop” where members of these groups are involved in door to door delivery of these products within the local areas and markets.

Analysis

The Amrutham Nutrimix business enterprise can be called a successful business model as most of the units are able to sustain the business themselves as profitable ventures since 2008-09. It is observed that several factors have led to the success of these enterprises namely:

- Role of Kudumbashree mission in creating such social capital among all these women who are associated with various enterprise activities including Nutrimix
- The idea of Nutrimix food supplement has been timely and has established a perfect link between the sourcing of the obligation and meeting the needs of the young children.
- Identification of different stakeholders ensuring proper flow and sourcing of raw material in the delivery of finished product.
- Recognition of opportunity that not only meets the quality standards but also generates profits as well as employability.
- Enhancement of capacities of rural women to emerge as successful entrepreneurs.
- Role played by the Consortium of Nutrimix production units at the district level has been immense which is like the anchor in the entire business chain.
- Women associated with this business have been the pillars of this venture. Their inbuilt capacities, confidence levels, entrepreneurial and leadership qualities, democratic norms and the social capital are some of the highlights.
Agriculture activity

Kudumbashree, entered into the field of agriculture in 2004 when it first started to motivate the members of NHGs in all the districts of Kerala to take up lease land farming either as individuals or in groups. Through this programme the women agriculture laborers were targets and capacitated to undertake lease land farming as a group such that farming can be undertaken and they can progress from farm labourers to farm owners.

In order to achieve the objective Joint Liability Groups (JLG) of women were formed and agriculture activity was undertaken as a group activity. Since the groups were formed by women who came from same or neighbouring NHGs, the emotional connect among the women led to the sharing of responsibilities of the agricultural tasks. It also fostered consensus building among the women regarding the decisions related to farming. The group based farming nurtured the idea of peer learning in respect to farming. The group based farming activity was facilitated by the community based organization.

The success of the programme depends on the various support structures and favorable eco system which has been created by Kudumbashree. Availability of land on lease is facilitated by the community based organization. Presently more than 42000 Ha of land is cultivated by the joint liability groups of women from Kudumbashree.

Presently more than 42000 Ha of land is cultivated by the joint liability groups of women from Kudumbashree. This activity has helped women to have their own identity as farmers as opposed to farm laborers.

The success of the programme depends on the various support structures and favorable eco system which has been created by Kudumbashree. Availability of land on lease is facilitated by the community based organization. Institutional credit in the form of bank loans are provided at a reduced and affordable rate, which are timely repaid by the income generated through the activity. Continuous training and handholding support are provided in order to inculcate scientific methods of crops productions to ensure optimum productivity. Local markets and supply chain system has been established to provide the maximum price realization for the produce. The women grew in their understanding of paddy cultivation. Slow and steady, the women in the neighbourhood to form these groups, the common response was how they felt the pinch while they would serve food to their children, her husband and other members of her household. This was not the case for Usha only. Many households lost their income due to the strategies of landowners. The women discussed this issue at the meeting of their Neighbourhood Group (NHG) called “Lavanya”, along with the issue of food security that the women were facing at the household level. “When I approached women in the neighbourhood to form these groups, the women were skeptical. The common response was how the women, who have never come out of the confines of their homes, would be ready to join such initiatives.

Testimonials

Usha Rao Krishnan (name changed) was working as an agricultural labourer on a nearby farm in her gram panchayat called Thirunelli in Wayanad district in Kerala. She described her situation in the earlier times by saying that she was not landless but she could not cultivate as the land available for cultivation was insufficient even for subsistence. She was then forced to leave the agriculture work and was soon joined by her husband. The wage rate at that time was Rs 200- 250 per head per day which was seasonal in nature, making their income irregular. Moreover, they were at the mercy of the landowners for their wages, the decision of the kind of crops to be grown and availability of work. After a year of such irregular and dependency of work faced by Usha, the landowner suddenly moved to Kottayam district to work as a clerk, after selling off his land at a good market rate to a cash crop producer. At the same time, other landowners who did not find the cultivable land remunerative enough preferred leaving their lands fallow. Having come across this situation, Usha says, the landowners then did not need labourers on a regular basis to work on the land, making her household deprived of their livelihood. With no cultivable land of their own, no alternate sources of income in Thirunelli and no skills to engage in a new work, the household was struggling. To add to these woes, food grains like paddy were not available to the household at cheap rates as Kerala had been facing the issue of food security. Usha describes how she felt the pinch while she would serve food to her children, her husband and other members of her household.

The women were highly motivated to produce paddy and with the help of Kudumbashree, various methods for irrigation and better paddy cultivation were initiated. In words of Usha about her current situation, “While having food at home, I proudly remind my husband of the fact that the rice that we are eating are the fruits of my efforts. It is Kudumbashree that gave me the confidence to voice my opinion in front of my husband. I have also developed confidence to run collective farming and vegetable cultivation.”
Not undermining the significance of land and labour, out of the previous experiences of Kudumbashree’s intervention in agriculture, it was found that the main constraint for the groups was access to agricultural credit. If they did manage to procure credit, it was at very high interest rate, charged by the money lenders (where the interest rate went up to 20%).

They even procured internal loan from NHG at the rate of 12%. By 2008, it was crucial for Kudumbashree to enable the farming groups to access credit at a low interest rate. This ultimately led to an institutional innovation in due course of the intervention thereby initiating the formation of Joint Liability Groups (JLGs). Based on the guidelines of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), a policy was formulated during 2010 to organize and register groups of women farmers as JLGs. The concept of individual farming was withdrawn by the introduction of JLGs and henceforth only group based farming was promoted.

A JLG consists of around 4 to 10 members with a President and a Secretary formed by women who were members of same or different NHGs. The JLGs were registered in CDS with an affiliation number known as Unique Identification Number (UID). JLGs maintained a register on their farm activities, economics and calendar of operations. The groups in turn produced the documents as and when necessary to the organisations like ADS, CDS and Panchayat etc. UID along with a Management and Information System (MIS) solved the purpose of tracking the performance of the JLGs. For each JLG formed and linked, NABARD encouraged the formation of JLGs by providing a promotional incentive of Rs 2000 per JLG to the facilitating agency.

In the course of the intervention, CDS was made the facilitating agency which was eligible for the promotional incentive. With constant efforts of Kudumbashree, JLGs were also brought under the purview of interest subsidy scheme (5% subsidy on 7% interest agricultural loan) facilitated by the Government of Kerala.

Meetings were conducted with banks for having a common set of banking procedures for Kudumbashree JLGs across the state, especially for the documents to be produced by the groups while opening the savings and loan accounts which could reduce the complexity for both the banks and the groups. In the course of the intervention, insurance was also provided to the JLGs through the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme, promoted by banks and State Agricultural Insurance promoted by the agricultural department.

Joint liability groups (JLG) – institutional interface for collective farming

NABARD encouraged the formation of JLGs by providing a promotional incentive of Rs 2000 per JLG

Livelihood generation in kudumbashree is primarily focussed on micro enterprises and lease land farming. Even though these activities were providing sustainable income for the women, the potential for scaling and enhancing the income generated were always there. Due small size of the unit and isolated production procedures, economy of scale was not leveraged leading in creation of inefficiencies. In order to overcome this difficulties a coordinated scaling up approach and stragey called Samagra was introduced. The word Samagra roughly translates to “Comprehensive”

The Samagra approach has been a part of a new strategy in enterprise promotion and is an integrated approach to enterprises. Since the year 2008, eighteen projects have been initiated under Samagra across the 14 districts of the State. These projects envisage an integrated approach covering the entire value chain, bringing in technical support of professional agencies and experts, and convergence of the three-tier PRIs.

Samagra projects are mostly exclusive in nature that have been developed taking into consideration the local situation in each region and leveraging on the strengths of traditional agriculture, industry, and markets. The portfolio of projects has been quite diverse.
### Types of support provided by Kudumbashree to Micro Enterprises

- Financial Assistance Services like analyzing the specific financial requirements as well as providing financial assistance to the entrepreneurs as and when required.
- Subsidy support to Individual and group enterprises.
- Revolving fund to meet the urgent requirement of working capital.
- Innovation Fund to support innovative micro enterprises.
- Technology Fund to procure advanced and innovative technologies for setting up micro enterprises.
- Technology upgradation fund to update the technology already acquired by the MEs.
- Second Dose Assistance to help units that have fallen on hard times to revive and develop strategies to become viable again.
- Crisis Management Fund for responding to an unpredictable negative event to prevent it from escalating into an even bigger problem related to enterprise activities.
- Training support services like GOT (General Orientation Training) which gives and insight into various livelihood opportunities available in the locality, Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) for people who have opted for entrepreneurship as a means of livelihood, performance Improvement Programme for people to improve their capabilities as entrepreneurs, Project planning and skill training as well as accounting training.
- Marketing and clustering support .
- Home shops aimed at development of a local value chain-linking local producers with local consumers through local marketing system.
- Convergence with departments, agencies for technical and technological support.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Number of Groups</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thiruvananthapuram</td>
<td>Banana cultivation (Nendran)</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>2600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cow rearing</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kollam</td>
<td>Apparel unit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathanamthitta</td>
<td>Apiculture and honey processing</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alappuzha</td>
<td>Spawn and mushroom cultivation</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kottayam</td>
<td>Ornamental fish culture</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idukki</td>
<td>Cow rearing and value addition</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poultry and egg nursery</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>1360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernakulam</td>
<td>Pineapple cultivation and processing</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>3115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrissur</td>
<td>Pooja kadali cultivation and processing</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palakkad</td>
<td>Crispy fries</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kozhikkode</td>
<td>Manufacturing of foot wear uppers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetable cultivation</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kannur</td>
<td>Goat rearing</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasaragod</td>
<td>Cashew processing</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>6119</strong></td>
<td><strong>32121</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**The Kannur Samagra Project**

Kannur Samagra Project also known as the ‘Goat village project’ has been an attempt to approach homestead based goat rearing as an enterprise through an integrated approach combining traditional knowledge and scientific rearing practices. This has been an initiative by the Kudumbashree Mission Kannur in association with local bodies, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and Krishi Vijnan Kendra Kannur (KVK). Initially started in a handful of Panchayaths has been now extended to 56 of the total 81 pachayaths with in the district and it has become an ideal model for the entire state. The project has adopted an integrated approach covering backward and forward linkages, keeping homestead level goat rearing unit at its centre. It has also attempted collaboration of various agencies and institutions characteristic of Samagra projects. Open grazing and large scale commercial farms have been widely prevalent practices across the country, either of which is not practical in the context of Kerala mainly because the state does not have grazing lands covering large areas. Moreover, large scale commercial farms are also not practical in the State as it does not have suitable areas for such ventures. Therefore, a need for evolving a goat rearing model appropriate to the State’s context was felt. This led to the culmination of the Kannur Samagra Project in the year 2008-2009. During the first phase 40 panchayaths were selected for implementation. The project mainly uses the strengths of traditional rearing systems like rearing of the Malabari breed, which is indigenous to the region as well as the use of knowledge of people who have been rearing goats traditionally.

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**Main objectives of Samagra Goat Village**

- To create a self employment and additional income opportunities for rural women
- To create an enlarged network of production, distribution and marketing of products related to goats.
- To provide financial supports through subsidies to initiate the goat rearing.
- To make avail the maximum income to the beneficiaries by developing an agent free local goat fare.
Steps involved in the implementation of the project

- Discussion of project concept at local bodies; those interested in the project join the initiative.
- Women from NHGs with interest in the project are offered a one day general orientation training at the panchayat level.
- A second orientation training was offered to women expressing interest in taking up the project after the first orientation training. This was for two days and was more detailed.
- Formation of joint liability groups (JLGs).
- Skill development training (Conducted once ten JLGs were formed; Department of animal husbandry of the State government, NABARD, and Centre for Environment Education (CEE) were the resource agencies that led the training programme).
- Distribution of cage plan to farmers.
- Building of cages using locally available materials by farmer families.
- Formation of purchase committee for buying goats with president of the gram panchayat as chairperson, and CDS chairperson, veterinary surgeon, and representatives of farmers as members.
- Discussions and decision on breed and place and time of purchase.
- Procurement of goats.
- Distribution of goats to farmers.
- Follow up training programmes that includes visits to best-performing units and comprehensive coverage of topics like scientific rearing practices, diseases and veterinary care, and insurance claim settlement.

MECs (Micro enterprises consultant) of Kudumbashree mission have been associating with the project in the preparation of project proposals, training of entrepreneurs and formation of JLGs. A comprehensive monitoring has also been in place, functioning at two levels of the project.

- Panchayat level monitoring committees are chaired by the presidents of the respective gram panchayats. Veterinary extension team (VET) provides feedback to the committee after weekly visits to the units.
- Committee at the district level with president of the district panchayat as chairperson; district mission coordinator of Kudumbashree, district animal husbandry officer, and experts are members of the committee. The committee examines consolidated reports of panchayat level monitoring committee every month.

Achievements

Significant achievements were made during the period between 2008 - 2014 in terms of growth in the spread and performance of goat rearing units. 898 units consisting of 4565 farmers were formed, a total of 9.5 crore worth loans were availed. Another major achievement was made when Kannur District Goat Farmers Company Ltd. was incorporated as Producer Company on 23rd January 2015 comprising of 800 farmers. The company has been engaging in the production, procurement, marketing of different products, fodder materials as well as other value added products. The company is purely aimed at bringing an institutional model to integrate farmers with the value chain, which enable farmers to organize themselves as collectives. Generating revenue with the sale of good breed goats’ and thereby providing better economic benefits to farmers has also been an important goal of the project. Apart from goat markets, the company has also been focusing on income generation activities through marketing of goat milk and feed supply to the farmers. The company also trains goat farmers and make them aware about insurance and other related activities.

Main objectives of the company:

- To provide an institutional mechanism of the integration of farmers with the value chains and thereby get a better price for their produce.
- To provide a backward linkage to the farmers to save them from their crisis period and to be renowned for ethical business.
- To accelerate sustainable growth by the continuous supply of quality products at affordable price and build socio-economic identity to the farmers involved.
- To build satisfied loyal customers for the company.

Activities conducted by the Kannur District Goat Farmers Company

- 39 clusters and 5 federations formed in 5 blocks.
- 800 share holders made and Rs. 4,00,000 capital collected through issue of shares.
- Cluster leaders training for leadership conducted for two days.
- Workshops and training programs for directors and board members conducted at CUSAT, Cochin.
- Identified best goat breed for farmers and started 20 breeding units.
- Conducted Goat Markets.
- Purchase of Goat feeds at wholesale rates and sells it to farmers at fewer rates.
- Goat fodder cultivation.
- Distribution of feed.
- Training for farmers.
- Manufacturing and sale of organic fertilizer by processing goat manure.
The Safalam Project is a cashew business being promoted by the Kasaragod district Kudumbashree mission under the Samagra scheme. It is also being called Vanitha Kasuvandi Samrakshana Samiti and is registered as a charitable society. The project was launched with an aim of capitalizing the district’s strength as the producer of the best cashew nuts in the State.

The cashew industry of Kasaragod has been large and is primarily dominated by private traders from the adjacent Karnataka State. The intervention tried to design and implement a business project covering procurement, processing, and marketing of cashew. It was launched as a joint initiative of the district panchayat, four block panchayats, and twelve gram panchayats of Kasaragod. The total project outlay was Rs 1.16 crore of which district panchayat’s share was Rs 90 lakhs whereas grama panchayats contributed in the range of Rs 2-3 lakh. Twelve groups of women were formed across 12 gram panchayats with the major responsibility of procurement and processing of cashews. An apex group has also been formed for grading and marketing of the products.

Each of the twelve groups responsible for procurement and processing of cashews installed driers with a capacity of 25kg.

The grading and marketing unit installed a 100 kg drier in addition to the 25kg drier. The Kasaragod district panchayat provided a vehicle for the Safalam Project and Chemmanad Gramapanchayat provided a building for setting up the grading cum marketing facility. As per the operational procedures, the twelve groups of women procure cashew nuts during the season, which mainly falls between March to May, dry them and store for its usage throughout the year.

The production group also undertakes the task of de-husking and peeling of cashews. The weight loss due to this process is calculated in the range of 8-10% of the weight at the time of procurement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safalam has fixed rates of wages for each level of operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De-husking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peeling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pathanamthitta district is known for its hilly terrain and extensive rubber cultivation. The project aimed at using the rubber flowers for producing honey by setting up homestead level beehives maintained by women. The project in apiculture and honey marketing was formulated with an outlay of Rs 31.35 crore with the three-tier PRIs participating in investment. It envisages the production of 20 lakh litres of honey by setting up 2 lakh beehives providing income generating self-employment to 10,000 women, participation of 25,000 rubber growers of the region in the programme, setting up of processing units for honey as well as setting up of extensive retail network for selling honey with quality certification.

It is a joint venture of Kudumbashree Mission and District Panchayat Pathanamthitta and is being implemented in 26 gramapanchayaths of the District. Through this project, 210 groups have been formed in the district. During the initial stages of the project, the farmers solely concentrated on honey production but gradually these farmers ventured into other areas preparing value added products from honey. This strategy has immensely helped the farmers as most of them have been getting good returns from the enterprise.

The main objective of the company has been the formation of a centralized honey collection centre in the district so that the farmers get good returns from the centre. The centre will process the collected honey for marketing.

20 lakhs litres of honey by setting up 2 lakh beehives providing income generating self-employment to 10,000 women
The Ksheerasagaram project is a cow rearing initiative being implemented in Idukki district and has been instrumental in addressing some of the critical problems that the dairy farmers of the state have been facing a long time. Issues like low productivity, low price realisation for the milk sold, inadequate availability of green fodder, and various diseases affecting the cows were significantly linked to poor livestock farming. The reasons for these problems can be traced to a few fundamental flaws in the way livestock farming has been managed in the State like lack of integration of programmes (various departments implemented their schemes independently without taking a sector perspective) and lack of effectiveness in knowledge dissemination through training programmes. This further led the need to address areas like availability of green fodder, prevention and timely treatment of diseases, adoption of best practices as well as creating systems for healthy maintenance of animals (scientifically designed cowsheds and clean surroundings).

With the above issues in mind, the project was first initiated in the Nedunkandam Block with the formation of Imashree Milk Producer Company Ltd. It got incorporated as a producer company on 24th August 2015 and is being owned by Kudumbashree women dairy farmers. The main objective of the company is to provide good quality dairy products at competitive rates. Initially the project started at Nedungandam block with forty nine groups of five families each (one member each per family) across seven Gram Panchayats covering around 245 entrepreneur-farmers. Support was given for the construction of 245 cow sheds, scientifically designed in the ‘Nature Fresh’ model. Each cowshed had a biogas plant attached to it. While cow rearing was in 245 cowsheds at individual households, other activities were carried out in groups. Each group of five families were also given the responsibility to cultivate fodder grass in an acre of land. Prior to this, all the 245 entrepreneurs were given five-day residential training at the Mattuppetty training centre of Kerala Livestock Development Board. Cows were bought from outside the State and two cows were provided to each member. In the second stage 88 groups were formed with a total of 440 members. A total of 685 members were selected as shareholders of this producer company. The initial training programmes for the beneficiaries with the formation of producer companies were given through ATMA (Agricultural Technology Management Agency).

Significant gains have been made under the project with an additional income of Rs. 100 per day for each family as well an additional 3224 litres production of milk at the block level. Inspite of these gains, there are areas where problems are being faced like reluctance to accept scientific design in the construction of modern cow sheds, marketing issues like low price of milk, high expenditure on the purchase of cows, corruption at the inter-state check post, cows getting affected by diseases as well as difficulties in realising claim against insurance under Gosuraksha scheme.

**Highlights of the project**

- Land, water and biodiversity improvement through fodder grass cultivation
- New model for convergence and cooperation

The gallery
The gallery