

Relevance of Social Marketing in Kudumbashree

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential for social marketing application for community mobilization. For this purpose, Kudubhashree, a poverty eradication programme initiated by Govt of Kerala is used as a case study. The discussion in the paper focuses on the problems and challenges related to the scaling up of Kudumbashree throughout the State. The resolution of various issues related to scaling up process is detailed with the potential application of social marketing, using the consumer orientation and marketing mix as the basis for discussion.

Introduction

Marketing process is value neutral. A commercial marketer can manipulate this process for promoting consumerism leading to excessive levels materialistic values in the society. The same tools can be also used for promoting a larger social good in the society and this application is generally termed as social marketing. The potential for such a positive application of marketing is explored in this paper.

There is a growing trend towards accepting marketing concepts and process for managing various social change programs. Its application is readily identified with health care services in promoting a range of healthy behaviors, disease control and prevention, food and nutrition programs for women infant and children and family planning. Social marketing can be also used in social mobilization for community development activities. The application of marketing for poverty eradication among the women falling in the below poverty line in Kerala, labeled as Kudumbashree is the topic of this paper. The paper draws information from the available literature and the qualitative data collected by us through our interaction with Kudubhashree officials, CDS (community development society) and NHG (Neighborhood group) members. Specifically, the paper discusses potential use of social marketing in the scaling up process of Kudumbashree throughout the state. The first part of the paper gives a brief description of Kudumbashree , followed by a discussion of the problems and challenges related to the scaling up of Kudumbashree. The Last section focuses on the potential for social marketing, applying the consumer orientation and marketing mix framework in the case of Kudumbashree.

About Kudumbashree (Kudumbashree, 2007)

Kudumbashree, is the name of the State Poverty Eradication Mission, launched by Government of Kerala for wiping out absolute poverty from the State within a period of 10 years. It is a holistic, participatory, women oriented innovative poverty reduction approach. This process is implemented through Local Self Governments formed and empowered by the 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendments. Government of Kerala launched the State Poverty Eradication Mission, on 1st April 1999 as a partnership of the State Government, Central Government, Local Governments and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

Government of Kerala through Kudumbashree seeks to achieve a breakthrough in poverty eradication, riding on the wave of decentralization process implemented in the state, as part of Panchayat raj. The recent policy initiatives, including participatory planning, decision-making, and implementation, combined with fiscal devolution, are the primary components of this new approach. The principal objective of Kudumbashree is the eradication of absolute poverty from the State of Kerala and the strategy slogan of the Mission is reaching families through women and reaching the community through families. Women empowerment initiatives, micro finance operations, micro enterprise promotion and convergent community action constitute the core activities of Kudumbashree carried out through organizations of women below the poverty line.

The following is The Kudumbashree Mission Statement:

To eradicate absolute poverty in 10 years through concerted community action under the leadership of local governments, by facilitating organization of the poor for combining self-help with demand-led convergence of available services and resources to tackle the multiple dimensions and manifestations of poverty, holistically.

Families identified as poor were organized into neighborhood groups (NHG). Each NHG consisted of 20-45 BPL (Below poverty line) families. Each NHG member elected a five-member committee called the NHG committee (NHGC). The NHGs were federated at ward level as ADS (Area development society). The ADSs are then federated at the municipal level as CDSs. NHG members prepare a micro plan for their area, based on their needs. The ADS governing committee received all the NHG micro plans, integrated them, and prepared the mini plan. The mini plans were consolidated at the CDS level to convert it into action plans.

Kudumbashree sets multiple objectives as part of the broader objective of achieving poverty eradication. This final objective to eradicate poverty encompasses more qualitative goals such as women empowerment in the social, economic and political domains. Especially when the participatory mode of people campaign got under way, with the wave of decentralization, the architects of this program developed it as demand driven. This departed clearly from the earlier approaches to poverty eradication programs in the past which was mostly supply driven and therefore found less effective.

The peculiar socioeconomic conditions which the Kerala faced and as depicted in the famous Kerala model was observed by the experts as less and less sustainable. And in this respect, the drive towards decentralization, and the Kudumbashree model of participatory development approaches is interpreted as a facet of new Kerala model needed to sustain and grow further from the human development achievements achieved through the Kerala model development. Started with a holistic approach towards women empowerment, the growth momentum was achieved mainly due to the micro enterprise and thrift and credit societies started along with it. Clearly this was a correct assessment as depicted in the UNICEF's triple A approach which gives emphasis to the needs of economically disadvantaged poor as part of developing the community development programs. In the case of Kudumbashree, income generation and saving activities are used as a route to empowerment of poor women, making them independent and come out of the vicious cycle of the poverty. This way, even nutritional status, maternal and child care issues can be also improved.

Scaling up process

Government of Kerala decided to scale up the CDS approach throughout the entire state under the name Kudumbashree in April 1998. For this purpose, the Government of Kerala created the Poverty Eradication Mission under the Department of Local Self-Government (LSG). About 19 line departments seconded their staff to Kudumbashree. At present, there are about 177520 NHGs covering urban, rural, and tribal areas of Kerala, with 1,049 CDSs at the LGB (local government body) level.

The pace at which the Kudumbashree expanded throughout the State was truly remarkable. However some studies while recording the success and achievement of Kudumbashree mission, raises some doubts about the quality of the scaling up process. This is not discounting what the innovative institutional environment of CDS/ADS/NHG in Kudumbashree has achieved for the poverty eradication through the empowerment of women. Instead the following discussion aims to focus on some of the problems related to scaling up and how social marketing can be an effective intervention tool to solve some of the problems which have cropped up in the process.

Available literature also points to the problem related to Quality of participation. For example, Anand (2002) notes continued unsatisfactory participation of women in NHGs and in gramashabas in Malappuram. Nair (2000) also observe that micro plans are a wish list of individual needs ignoring the group needs. At the same time these studies also corroborate the

fact that many CDS/ADG/NHGs are attaining higher levels of active participation in Social empowerment and are acting collectively against social problems, such as illicit alcohol brewing, promoting marital counseling and other initiatives against domestic violence.

In many NHGS the active participation of women has resulted in an increased feeling of solidarity among them, resulting in NHGs acting as social safety nets. However, As Suneeta(2004) noted, the multidimensional nature of scaling up process are far from over in terms of these dimensions. For example, Kudumbashree as a whole envisions women catalyzing social movements and grassroots political participation, which is seen as a political scaling up of Kudumbashree movement. However, individual NHGs are spread across different stages of political scaling-up, with some preparing wish lists, while others participate actively in gram sabhas, contest local elections, and initiate social movements, such as the anti-arrack movement in Alleppey.

Some of the problems identified in this study, as well as the other related studies (Nair,2000, Suneeta, 2004) as part of the scaling up process are as follows :

Shrinking Focus

With the rapid scaling up of Kudumbashree CBOs the original objective of improving nutritional status with proper health and education interventions are getting lost in significance. Rapid expansion and pressure to show results, the focus of Kudumbashree activities, has visibly narrowed to economic activities such as thrift, credit, and micro enterprise activities. The Kudumbashree staff also promotes this bias. The only data they report are the number of NHGs formed and on the thrift and credit operations and micro enterprise activities; other activities are hardly mentioned. It therefore appears that micro credit is overshadowing other vital issues of health, education, nutrition and sanitation.

Inadequate Training

Quality and frequency of training at all levels, including the LGB members and the members of the CDS structures tend to be compromised due to rapid expansion process occurred. Studies have revealed inadequate skill-building and follow-up training. Rapid expansion is a threat to the quality of trainings This, in turn, may be a threat to the sustainability of collective action as ongoing training was a critical input in mobilizing women, building capacity, and sustaining collective action .

Lack of convergence

Kudumbashree CBOs have a real potential as a delivery mechanism for various targeted poverty alleviation, health, and other programs. Effective convergence is possible only if NHG members participate actively in gram sabhas. Because of the rapid expansion therefore the real potential of Kudumbashree CBOs are not tapped. Women can influence development of their communities. However, participation of NHG members in gram sabhas seems to be uneven (Oommen, 1999). The reason for this is attributed to lack of leadership within CDS/ADS/NHG structures, and a subordinate role accorded for CDSs system by the LGBs.

The underlying problem may also relate to lack long-term vision and the consequent lack of Lack of a wider, long-term development perspective. Members joining NHGs lack a clear understanding of the Kudumbashree mission, objectives, and long-term vision. This fails to translate Kudumbashree CBOs(Community based organization) planning process based on micro plans (NHG level), mini plans (ADS level), and action plans (CDS level) as genuine planning exercise. It is obvious that members may join with the expectation of short-term gains but there must be concerted efforts within Kudumbashree to promote in members a wider development agenda for the local area with a long-term perspective.

Our proposition is that some of the problems and challenges faced by Kudumbashree in the scaling up process can be solved by adopting social marketing approach. This doesn't mean that all the problems related to Kudumbashree can be tackled with Social Marketing.

As described in this section, the rapid expansion presents some challenges and problems. The next part of discussion will show how some of these problems can be reduced with the systematic application of Social Marketing.

In fact the main thrust of our argument is that social marketing approaches can enable further rapid expansion within CDS structures in the other dimensions of scaling up namely functional, political and organizational.

Role of Social Marketing

Social marketing is the systematic application of marketing alongside other concepts and techniques to achieve specific behavioural goals for a social good. It can be viewed as a social change campaign which is an organized effort conducted by one group (the change agent) which attempts to persuade others (the target adopters) to accept, modify, or abandon certain ideas, attitudes, practices or behavior (Kotler & Andreasen, 1996).

The concepts of social marketing initially developed from the commercial marketing techniques, has in the last decade matured into a much more integrative and inclusive discipline that draws on the full range of social sciences and social policy approaches as well as marketing. Kotler and Andreasen define social marketing as "differing from other areas of marketing only with respect to the objectives of the marketer and his or her organization. Social marketing seeks to influence social behaviors not to benefit the marketer, but to benefit the target audience and the general society."

Application of social marketing in practice is seen mostly in promotion of health care issues. The focus can be also on achieving specific behavioural goals with specific audiences in relation to different topics other than health, relevant to social good (eg: sustainability, recycling, community mobilisation etc). The focus of this discussion is on Social Marketing for community mobilisation.

Commercial marketing often aims at a comparatively simple influence over its target market, social marketing goals can be far more subtle and complex. A commercial marketer selling a product may only seek to influence a buyer to make a product purchase. Social marketers, dealing with goals such as reducing cigarette smoking or encouraging condom usage, have more difficult goals: to make potentially difficult and long-term behavioral change in target populations (Kotler & Andreasen, 1996).

Consumer orientation

Consumer orientation is the commitment to understand the consumer and design products to satisfy consumers' wants and needs. Social marketers want to know everything they can about the people whose behavior they want to change—their aspirations, values, beliefs, attitudes and current behavioral patterns. They also study the broader social and cultural factors that influence the consumer's behavior, recognizing that behavior change is influenced by a combination of environmental, as well as personal and interpersonal factors.

Social marketing's consumer orientation distinguishes it from other program planning and management approaches commonly used for improving social good. Management mindset characterized by a service orientation believe strongly in the value of their services and assume that members will seek them out because they offer superior quality. As a result, service-oriented managers focus almost exclusively on services and facilities while devoting little attention to designing, packaging, or placing services to fit consumers' needs and wants (Kotler & Andreasen, 1996).

The idea of Kudumbashree is path breaking and inherently can promote social good in the society in a phenomenal way. But a service orientations in the place of consumer orientation highlighted before may lead Kudumbashree staff to focus more on the services, facilities and programs offered ignoring the underlying needs, aspirations and beliefs of the NHG members. This could be perhaps leading to the uneven adoption of Kudumbashree throughout the State.

Kudumbashree as an effective social change program appears having more of a service orientation, which is perhaps needed in the initial phase as the architects themselves were in learning by doing mode. Now the scaling up process is almost complete quantitatively and there is a need now to scale up in other dimensions as discussed before. And this phase will demand more of a consumer orientation because many members have advanced from the economically disadvantaged positions they were initially and consequently might have different concerns, aspirations, values and beliefs. Many join NHGs looking for some immediate gains, such as retiring their existing debts by joining the thrift and credit society. But this may not lead then to real economic empowerment which KS mission aims for. Consumer orientation in this context means aligning the programs to the member's present level of needs for mobilizing them easily, and gradually as part of developing a long term and lasting empowerment, modify their aspirations, values and beliefs to suit the society's well being. This may even require repackaging and communicating the programs to inculcate in NHG members a long-term development perspective in members. Consumer orientation is willing to modify the programs based on the understanding of the marketing problem in its ramifications and rethinking how the programs can be redesigned to fulfill the NHG members' genuine needs and empower them in solving their problems on their own.

Applying the Marketing mix framework

Product: This P refers to a continuum of products, ranging from tangible, physical products (e.g., condoms), to services (e.g., medical exams), practices (e.g., breastfeeding, or eating a heart-healthy diet) and finally, more intangible ideas (e.g., environmental protection). Product is different here as it is mainly the concept with associated services and programs rooted in the idea of poverty alleviation and women empowerment. The inherent appeal of the idea is high and that is evidently the very reason for less marketing needed for its widespread expansion throughout the State to gain it acceptance. But in the light of the shifting focus it is pertinent to analyze whether the real spirit, mission and objectives of Kudumbashree programmes are reaching the women. Here the product can be conceptualized at different levels of augmentation. Even if the product is a combination of idea, concept, programs and services offered, the product is viewed by the beneficiaries mostly in terms of its benefits.

Price: the concept of price is the cost, the sacrifice in terms of effort and risk the members have to take to avail the complete benefits from the services provided. There is some monetary cost as in the case of savings and making monthly contributions. The time to be set apart, the resistance to be overcome from the family needs to be properly communicated in language and style they can easily understand and relate to. But the real cost in the long run is the social and emotional and monetary risk to be exchanged for getting the real benefits the KS offers to its members. As seen now, even to encourage low to moderate risk taking in members for starting micro enterprises involves sustained efforts in providing motivating and awareness building sessions. The perceived value concept is very useful here. There should be a clear understanding of the perceived value they associate to what they get and what they give. Such perceptions of costs and benefits can be determined through research, and used in positioning of the idea and programs.

Place: This aspect refers how to reach members and where the members should come to get the services, the places where training programs and activities are conducted, how far they have to go to get are all part of the place mix of the social marketing programme. In setting up nodal offices in each district, a standardized approach was followed in the layout, furniture and the office equipment selected to communicate a certain image for the mission. The Panchayat or the

Municipal office is the connecting place for this program and for many women members in BPL this is a place they frequently visit to get other services. At the bottom level, NHGs meet at each member's house in rotation and this in turn increases the rapport and solidarity among the NHG members. The Place to hold ADS and CDS are shared in the premises of LGB offices. But this unique three tier structure linking NHG ADS and CDS is identified as the real strength of The Kudumbashree program which enables easy access and expansion of movement throughout the State.

Promotion: Often the whole of Social Marketing program is mistaken for this P. this is because many Social Marketing programmes focus only on this P. But this is only one the elements of the Social Marketing program. Promotion consists of the integrated use of advertising, public relations, promotions, media advocacy, and personal selling. Referring to this P, in the case of Kudumbashree, we saw only negligible efforts in promoting the program and this is understandable given the inherent appeal of the program and the self evident benefits it conveys to the target members. It is more of a word of mouth promotion similar to how network marketing expands. The Kudumbashree mission trained their district level officers to spread the idea effectively at the Panchayat and Municipality levels. And it is in Panchayat level through the ward members the real concept reached the target audience. It is a training based promotion followed but as the problems uncovered in the scaling up process reveals, there are many more uses of this tool and can be applied at different levels of marketing. For example, this tool can be used in gaining the acceptance and support of other stake holders, whose support is vital to the success of Kudumbashree movement.

The marketing mix elements designed as part of achieving the social good will only effective if the enabling conditions are set. There is a role of social marketing in this context. In the context of Kudumbashree , gaining the acceptance of the programs by various institutions and agencies, such as NABARD, linkage banks, LGBs, NGOs, and various government departments is vital. This is because many of Kudumbashree programs and services are implemented with the support and the cooperation of these entities which are referred as **Publics**. Many social marketing programs therefore needs to be planned to develop and nurture various **Partnerships** formed with such internal and external groups.

Conclusions

Kudumbashree movement is first of its kind with many distinguishing features: it is an organizational innovation overcoming the barriers of government bureaucracy to reach the benefits of various government programs and resources to the poor; it is a Multisectoral, women centered participatory poverty eradication movement which simultaneously aims for the economic empowerment of poor through the development and nurture of thrift and credit societies and micro enterprises; it aims for social and political empowerment of socio economic disadvantaged section of the society by acting as collective social action domain and by creating avenues for the political participation. To enhance the quality of impact of this movement the important role of social marketing is highlighted in this paper. Particularly, with reference to the scaling up of Kudumbashree at different levels on various dimensions the need to embrace a new social change strategy grounded in social marketing principles is proposed. The consumer orientation and the marketing mix framework discussed in this paper can certainly enable Kudumbashree to achieve its mission in an efficient and effective manner.

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