



ROLE OF KUDUMBASHREE (SELF HELP GROUPS) UNITS IN ENTREPRENEURIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN - A STUDY FOCUSED TO MUTHUTHALA GRAMA PANCHAYAT AREA, KERALA

VK Muralidharan

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce & Management Studies, Govt. Sanskrit College, Pattambi, Palakkad Dt, Kerala, India.

Abstract

The fulfillment of any development process of an economy, the participation of women with men is highly inevitable, and that will only be considered as the real and equality based social development. Kudumbasree is really a joint endeavor of Government of Kerala and NABARD structured through the community development societies of women in the lower financial strata serving with the Local Self Government in the community development activities. Women will get different dimensions of empowerment like personal empowerment, professional empowerment, social empowerment, entrepreneurial empowerment through the active participation in Kudumbasree units. Even though Kerala is a state having high literacy rate but lacking the above mentioned developmental dimensions of women and the active engagement in Kudumbasree units is the solution for different achievements. Among all dimensions the entrepreneurial empowerment is projecting and focusing here. If many women are having entrepreneurial empowerment and coming forward boldly in the field of business and industry is the result of the real social equality. This study focuses the role of Kudumbasree and its influence on the entrepreneurial empowerment on women. This study focused to the randomly selected sixty units of mixed nature from Muthuthala Grama Panchayat, Palakkad district, Kerala State. Kudumbasree is really an initiative for poverty eradication and working in the model of Self Help Group.

Key Words :*Kudumbashree, Women Empowerment, Poverty eradication, Self confidence, Self Help Group.*

Introduction

The crucial problem in all developing countries in the world is poverty. As far as India is concerned Kerala is considered one of the most successful states in poverty reduction rate. The success primarily due to the public action carrying out effective lead reforms and providing all round social infrastructures, particularly education and health. Women households are the cruelest victims of deprivation and destitution. Therefore, any program for poverty alleviation must aim at improving the living environment of the women folk. Kerala seeks to achieve a breakthrough in poverty reduction through decentralization of the state government and empowerment of women groups. It is through creating livelihood opportunities for the women that they can be empowered and the micro credit and self help groupings are a better means through which their living conditions can be improved. Planning and development policies for the eradication of poverty in rural areas have been started since the inception of five year plans. Kudumbashree was started by the government of Kerala in 1998 with the dual purpose of women empowerment and poverty alleviation. It is a women based participatory poverty eradication programme by government of Kerala with the financial support of NABARD and the central government. Meaning of 'Kudumbashree' is prosperity of family. In the world population the share of women is about half. In traditional societies women were confine to the four walls of the houses performing household activities. In modern societies women are participating in all sort of activities. Women have been performing exceedingly well in different sphere activities like education, politics, administration, space, social work and so on. Now these women entrepreneurs are generated through the



Kudumbashree units. So Kudumbashree units are motivated by these entrepreneurs. Through the active participation and involvement women will get personal empowerment, entrepreneurial empowerment, social empowerment. Among these entrepreneurial empowerment is having much important in the social dimensions of equality. This study is focused to an ideally selected rural area, Muthuthala Grama Panchayat which is located in Pattambi Taluk, Palakkad District, Kerala State.

Significance of the Study And Statement of The Problem

Government of India has declared that the year 2001 as 'Women's empowerment year' on a focus that on a social platform women are equal to men. The most common explanation of 'women's empowerment' is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. The major objective of Kudumbashree units are poverty eradication, women empowerment and achieving self sufficiency. To bring the women to the main stream of society by engaging them in various creative activities is the main aim behind forming Kudumbashree units. Kerala is a state with enormous number of educated male and female with high potential but we can see male domination in almost all segments in the social set up. The main reason for such a scenario is the social and cultural setup of our state and the reluctance from the part of educated women to undertake the risk by engaging in entrepreneurial activities. In such a situation emergence of Kudumbashree units with ample opportunities for women to come forward by engaging in entrepreneurial activities and thereby achieving overall empowerment. In view of the present circumstances it is quite necessary to conduct an object oriented study focused on an ideal area to identify and evaluate the role of Kudumbashree units providing entrepreneurial empowerment on rural women.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To identify and study the problems faced by women as an entrepreneurs.
2. To study the changes in degree of economic and social empowerment of rural women through Kudumbashree units.
3. To study and evaluate the role of Kudumbashree units in empowering the entrepreneurial skills of rural women.

Methodology Adopted

Major part of this study is based on primary data but for some analysis and explanations secondary data also used. Primary data collected from a randomly selected sixty respondents, from the members of selected Kudumbashree units, ADS and CDS members in the Panchayat on a random basis. The whole analysis has been made based on the primary data collected through a well structured questionnaire and secondary data has collected from books, articles, Journals and websites. Appropriate tools have been used for data analysis.

review of literature

Umadevi, R (2013) conducted an intensive study on the role of self help groups in empowering women in India. Economic empowerment of women led to the empowerment of women in several dimensions such as socio- economic opportunity, property rights, political representation, social equality, personal rights, family development, and community development and at last the nation development.

Puhazhendhi and Satyasai (2001) in their study attempted to evaluate the performance of SHGs with special reference to social and economic empowerment. This study reveals that the SHGs as institutional arrangement could positively contribute to the economic and social empowerment of rural poor. The impact on the later is more pronounced than on the former.



Gurumoorthy (2000) proclaims that empowering women results social and economic progress and which is quite inevitable in any country. The self-help group disburses micro-credit to the rural women for the purpose of making them enterprising women and encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities. Credit needs of the rural women are fulfilled totally through the self-help groups.

Jaya S. Anand (2002), has opined in her paper titled “Self-Help Groups in Empowering Women: Case Study of Selected SHGs and NHGs”, gives a review of progress of Self Help Groups. She has attempted to examine the performance of selected SHGs and NHGs and to assess its impact, especially the impact of micro credit programme on empowering women. It has been clearly established that delivering credit alone may not produce the desired impact.

Minimol M.C and Makesh KG (2012): This study identified that Intellectual empowerment is considered more important, or at least equally important to social, economic or financial empowerment. The concept of personal empowerment often fails to encompass intellectual empowerment.

Meenakshi Malhotra (2004): This work entitled, “Empowerment of Women” deals with the issues leading to empowerment of women with particular reference to rural women. Volume one deals with issues like gender inequalities in labour market and in entrepreneurship.

Sanjay Kanti Das (2012): This study indicated that SHG-Bank Linkage of micro finance programme has a profound influence on the economic status, decision making power, knowledge and self worthiness of women participants of SHG linkage programme in Assam.

Working Structure of Kudumbasree

Kudumbashree, the poverty eradication mission of Kerala state, is a community based self help initiative involving poor women. It was launched by government of Kerala in 1998 with the active support of government of India and NABARD for wiping out absolute poverty within a period of 10 years. The project is implemented through local self governments empowered by some constitutional amendments. The structure of Kudumbashree is a three tiers Community Based Organization for its decentralized effective administration. The lowest tier is the Neighborhood Group (NHG) consisting of some women members from poor families conducting meeting on a weekly basis in the house of any of the members. Second tier is the Area Development Society (ADS) which is in the ward level consisting a convenient group of NHGs. The third tier is Community Development Society (CDS) is the higher one and which is the union of all the ADSs in the Local Self Government body. The selected area of study, Muthuthala Grama Panchayat is located in Pattambi Taluk, Palakkad District, Kerala State and which is purely a rural area. This Panchayat consists of 15 wards and total population of this Grama Panchayath is 24,451 and the number of men and women are respectively 12129 and 12322. There are 175 Kudumbashree units are working in this Panchayat. Majority of the Kudumbashree units are entering in to the micro investment projects and these units are investing different projects like Tailoring unit, Bakery, Flour mill, Pappad manufacturing, Bamboo works, Dairy farm, Food products making.

Discussions on Data Analysis

Normal working (Conducting Meetings, Participation of Members, Way of participation & Contribution in day to day affairs : All units conduct meetings regularly as per rules and the average participation is 80% out of this 70% actively participating and involving in the day to day activities. members of 60% units provide fruitful contribution for the effective of units.

Loan lending process, Purpose & Utility: Majority of the units are providing loans to the members and some units of the units do not provide loan because these units started recently and the lending capacity is less. Majority (36%) availing loan for meeting family expenses, some for treatment



purposes, some for some production purposes and minute category for miscellaneous purposes. Majority (96%) have effectively utilised and some have the opinion that the amount is insufficient.

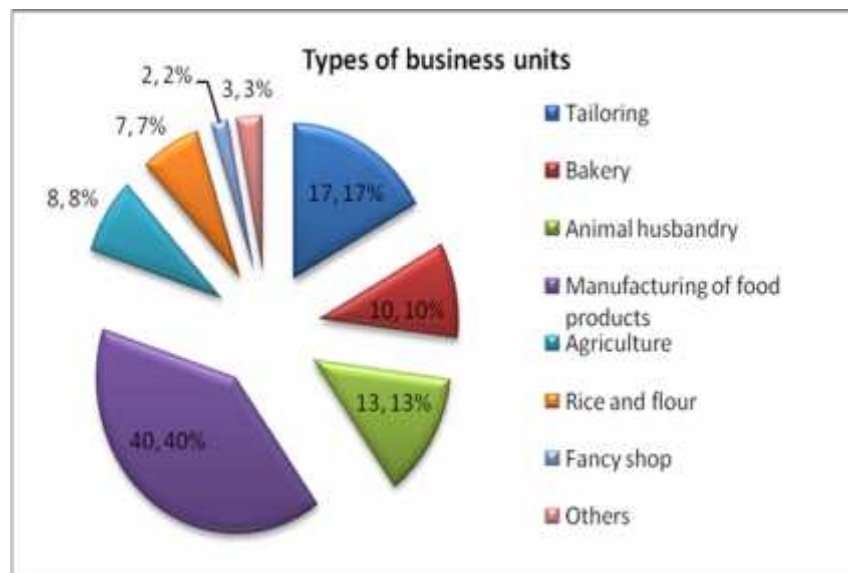
Activities conducted (Income generated, Non income generated & Service oriented activities) : From the above Table it is clear that 90% of units are engaged in income generating activities. That is they are engaged in small scale production oriented activities. Only 10% are engaged in non income generating activities. This means that units are interested in those activities which generate income to the members. The active participation in the service oriented activities is comparatively less.

Establishment of Small business unit & Nature of ownership: Majority units (66%) started small separate production oriented small business units most of them concentrated in manufacturing of food items. The details are given in the given table and this shows the real process of entrepreneurial empowerment of women.

Types of business units

Sl. No	Nature of business unit	Percentage
1	Tailoring	17
2	Bakery	10
3	Animal husbandry	13
4	Manufacturing of food products	40
5	Agriculture	8
6	Rice and flour	7
7	Fancy shop	2
8	Others	3
9	Total	100

Source : Primary data





Capital requirement & Sources: Majority (35%) of the units have a capital investment less than 50000 and the lowest investment is above 2,00,000 which is by only 5%. 25% of the units fall under the range 50000-100000.15% of the units had invested capital of 100000- 150000. About 20% units fall under the category of 150000-200000. Majority has a mix of source that is own capital and borrowed capital from banks and other financial institutions. Meeting the capital requirement is really a problem.

Nature of workers in the unit & Training requirement: The study reveals that majority of work are performed by unit members and only a small percentage of units render the service of outsiders to do work, which requires skilled persons. The availability of the trained workers is rally a problem.

Problems in marketing: The marketing problems have categories in to eight as per the table given below and instructed to rank them all according to their choice (highest problem comes 10, then 9 etc.). The total and percentage of rank values have taken and analysed and from this it is inferred that the most serious problem is the inadequacy of capital which comes 28%, other problems and its relative percentage can also be taken from the table.

Marketing problems - Ranking statement

Sl. No	Nature of problem	Rank values	Percentage
1	Inadequate capital	605	28
2	Lack of skilled staff	401	19
3	Poor customer relation	272	13
4	Negligence from public	96	4
5	Negligence from dealers	75	3
6	Quality of products	20	1
7	Lack of advertisement	390	18
8	Competition	301	14
Total		2160	00

Source : Primary data





Difficulties and Failure of SBU's : Only four units closed their businesses due to several reasons but still they are running other business units. The competition, marketing problems, capital inadequacy, lack of advertising and the perishable nature of products are the reasons which leads poor profit and shutting down. Non co-operation from members also another reason for that.

Necessity of women to be an earning member, Improvement in decision making skill and Attitude of family members: The decision making skill of the members improved a lot through joining in units. 67% of the respondents had the opinion that their decision making skill improved to great extent. Majority of the respondents have the opinion that the women must be an earning member of the family and a very negligible percent is against that. If the woman is an earning member it provide great support to the family in meeting the expenses. About 80% of the unit's members have the opinion that their families are highly supportive while the engage in business activities.

Attitude of society and success in eliminating the gender gap : Society's attitude towards an earning member is favourable with the support of 73% of the respondents remaining 27% had the opinion that even after the developments the society's attitude is not so favourable. Elimination of gender gap is one of the objective of kudumbashree units. 35% are strongly believe that Kudumbashree succeeded in eliminating the gender gap completely. 33% had the opinion that kudumbashree achieved this objective to some extent.

Increase of general awareness,Achievement of objectives and Improvement in Standard of living : Majority (67%) opined that their general awareness increased through the daily engagements and interactions in the kudumbashree units and this really made personal competency and a minute percentage claims that nothing created them internally. Majority agrees that their objective achievements are fulfilled standard of living improved a lot after joining kudumbashree unit.

Overall benefits and empowerment gained : Majority has opined that they gained the expected benefits as a result of the active involvement in Kudumbasree units. That is Social benefits, Economic benefits, Personal benefits, Psychological benefits and Entrepreneurial benefits. This really leads to the overall empowerment of women. Majority (94%) on an overall basis opined that they have certain extend empowered and have self confidence to face the challenges in the day to day life.

Findings of the Study

The members of the Units consist APL and BPL members and majority of the members belongs to BPL Category. All units are conducting meeting regularly and active participation of members. Most of the members are actively participating in the meeting by contributing ideas in discussion. Passive participation some members due to their shyness to express ideas. All most all units lending loans to its members for various purposes with a very low rate of interest and this helps the unit members to provide support to family. Most of the units are engaged in income generating or non income generating activities. Among the income generating activities majority concentrates in the production of food items. Majority of the units have small business units and the individual ownership is very few and some units have more than one units. The nature of units are Tailoring, Bakery, fancy shops, cultivation, rice and flour mills, fancy shops etc. Nobody is ready to take up the projects of huge investment because of the risk and inadequate capital. Many opted the bank loan as the source of capital since this is very cheap and easy to avail and they also get subsidy and other benefits. Business with own fund is comparatively less but some have mixed sources. The major difficulties faced by them are shortage of capital, lack of trained employees, marketing problems, personal and family problems. Majority of the



business units are run by the members themselves and only a limited number is depending outsiders. Non availability of skilled staff is really a major problem. They are also suffer some problems in the marketing of products that is lack of skilled marketing personnel, poor customer relations, negligence from dealers and public. The main reason for failure in the business is the ineffective use of capital and marketing problems. The family of majority of members are supportive. On an overall basis the active involvement in the Kudumbasree Units really brought them some capacities and benefits like personal benefit, economic benefit, social benefit, psychological benefit, professional or entrepreneurial benefits and competencies.

They also gained the enhancement of general knowledge and awareness level, communication level, interaction level, decision making level etc. In their opinion it is a must that the women much be an earning member in the family. Even though Kerala is a state having much literacy and education still the attitude towards women is not favourable. Any way the general competencies as an entrepreneur has enhanced and majority are ready to face the normal challenges in conducting small business units.

Suggestions of the Study

Participation of women in Kudumbashree units need to be increased. The Panchayath under the guidance of KDMS can take many steps like conducting awareness programs about the benefits of Kudumbashree units for attracting more members in all facets of. Active participation of the members to be ensured by making aware them about the benefits. All the units must take necessary steps to grand loan to its members at lower interest rate. Government must provide information and assistance to invest confidently in heavy projects. All units have to be encouraged to starts small business units by providing proper guidance, financial assistance and training to the members. The training facility is to be given to the members to eliminate their fear.

Government must provide much interest free or low interest loans through primary co-operative societies. Panchayat level training centers have to be set up and continues training must be given to enhance the level of confidence of members. To eliminate the serious problem of marketing, it must be provide certain basis level marketing strategies by using the experts in this field. Government should provide the services of experts for timely consultancy in every Panchayat in order to solve the timely issues. The interests of the members can be increased if they get a good profit and sharing this among the members immediately after keeping a certain amount for expansion. Administrative wing must take necessary steps to aware the women the various benefits that they can gain through Kudumbashree units.

Conclusion

Kudumbashree became the lifeline to many of the poor women in the state of Kerala. It is a massive anti poverty programme of the Government of Kerala aiming at eradicating poverty. As a conclusion we can say that Kudumbashree units in Muthuthala Panchayat play an important role in the overall development of this Panchayat. Majority of the units have work for the achievement of women empowerment objectives and to a great extend they gain the same. Through starting SBU's Kudumbashree units provide earnings to the members and results in economic empowerment and conducting the small units the Entrepreneurial empowerment is also possible to a great extend.



References

1. <http://www.kudumbashree.org>
2. Kochurani, Joseph, Women Empowerment a Conceptual Analysis (Vimala Books and Publications, Kanjirappally, 2005).
3. Government of Kerala, (1999-2000), Kudumbashree Project: State Poverty Eradication Mission, Annual Report 1999-2000, (Local Self Government Department, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India).
4. Suneetha Kadiyala, Scaling up Kudumbashree Collective Action for Poverty Alleviation and women's Empowerment, International Food Policy Research Institute, U.S.A. May 2004
5. Nidheesh K B, Rural Women's Empowerment Is the Best Strategy for Poverty Eradication in Rural Areas, International Journal of Rural studies, Vol 15 No 2 Oct 2008.
6. K. Sayulu, G. Sardar & B. Sridevi, Impact of Self-Help Groups on Women Empowerment- An Empirical Study, Management Researcher, XI No.3 & 4, January – June 2005.
7. Ruby, J A ,Microfinance and women empowerment: a study of Kudumbasree Project in Kerala, doctoral diss., MG university, Kottayam, 2013
8. R. Gurumoorthy, Self-help groups empower rural women, Kurukshetra, vol.48, no.5 (2000), 22.
9. V. Puhazhendhi and K.J.S. Satyasai, Economic and social empowerment of rural poor through SHG's., Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics, vol. 56, no.3 (2001),362.
10. Sakuntala, Narasimhan, Empowering Women, an Alternative Strategy from Rural India (New Delhi, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 1999).
11. Anand , Jaya S, Self-Help Groups in Empowering Women: A Study of selected SHGs and NHGs in Kerala, KKRPLLD, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, Kerala, India,1999.
12. Meenakshi Malhotra, Empowerment of Women (In Three Volumes (Delhi, Isha Books, 2004).
13. J. Bhagyalakashmi, Women's Empowerment - Miles to Go, Yojana, 48 No.8, August 2004, 38-41.
14. V P Raghavan, Micro-credit and Empowerment: a study of Kudumbashree Projects in Kerala, India, Journal of Rural Development, Vol. 28, No. (4), NIRD, Hyderabad.2009, Pp 478-479.
15. Minimol M. C and Makesh K. G, Empowering rural women in Kerala: A study on the role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) International
16. Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Vol. 4(9), November, 2012, 270-280,
17. Sanjay Kanti Das, Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women through SHG-Banking Linkage Programme: A Boon for Development; International Journal of Management and Business Studies; Vol. 2, Issue 1, Jan. - March 2012
18. Kenneth Kalyani, Seena P.C, Socio-economic Changes of Women through Kudumbasree– A Study from Puthenvelikkara (Gp) of
19. Kerala State, India , International Research Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. 1(2), 1-7, October (2012)