

# PERSPECTIVES OF MICROFINANCE & **WOMEN** EMPOWERMENT



DR. AFTAB ANWAR SHAIKH,  
DR. M. SHAHID JAMAL ANSARI,  
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# **PERSPECTIVES OF MICROFINANCE & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

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## PREFACE

Microfinance and micro-credit practices has seen tremendous growth in India, for expansion of underprivileged especially rural women. Women are encouraged to construct self-help-groups in order to have a social basis for raising collateral and for receiving financial services through micro credit. Microfinance has been perceived by the public as inducing strong positive effects on women's empowerment and in strengthening the democratic fiber in the country. Community-based women centric microfinance institutions play a very significant role in enabling women realize their own inner strengths and potential by leveraging the power of aggregation. In India, microfinance, dominated by Self Help Groups (SHGs), has provided an effective mechanism for providing financial services to the "unreached poor", and also in strengthening underprivileged and discriminated women in the society and thus significantly contributing to gender equality and women empowerment. The present book attempts to analyze the concept of women empowerment and explores the linkage between the role of microfinance and the empowerment of women in rural and urban India. The various chapters reveal that micro finance provides an effective tool for financial and social upliftment of the poorer sections of the society, particularly women. But its penetration depends on a multifaceted and integrated network and so both the self-help bank model and the MFI model may have achieved some positive growth, but their performances are not quite deterministic when compared with other countries of the world. From these standpoints, it has been evaluated and analyzed whether microfinance can empower women and if empowered women can make a difference in societal issues.

This book attempts to bring to the forefront the work of micro-finance organisations that have been working for empowering women for over a quarter century. They have helped to transform the social and cultural landscape in the areas where they operate, by enabling their members get access to formal sources of finance and credit, as well by providing them with the necessary capacity building inputs. The microfinance space will also see changes which will have a greater component of electronic usage: in the delivery and management of client portfolios. Hopefully those changes will have a positive impact in simplifying the lives of poor particularly women and facilitate the process of financial inclusion in practice rather than in just high spirit.

Nevertheless ensuring that the micro-finance sector continues to move forward in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment will require a long-term



strategic process. The various chapters in the book describes the impact of knowledge management practices on organizational innovation performance which is a case of microfinance beneficiaries, role of financial inclusion and micro finance in re-vitalizing rural economy: evidence from India, A Study of housing microfinance in India, financial performance analysis of selected micro finance institutions in India. Chapters also discuss the performance of self-help groups in micro finance, Women Empowerment of SHGs through Co-Operative. Few chapters describe the Perception Towards Financial Inclusions through the Study on Kudumbashree Workers in Kerala Model,

The aim of the book is to highlight the problems and challenges in agricultural marketing in rural areas along with government policies for women entrepreneurship development. Growth of microfinance institutions in rural India and its role for women empowerment has also been discussed in detail to help institutions frame effective policies. Analysis of women entrepreneurship and the role of self-help groups through the micro finance system has been elaborated in detail. The assessment of the efficiency of social capital in microfinance has been provided with structural and theoretical learning.

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# KUDUMBASREE: A KERALA MODEL OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Women empowerment alludes to making women stunning to build them equipped for choosing for themselves. Women have endured a great deal in the past due to the malicious concussions of patriarchy structure.in prior hundreds of years, they were treated as practically non-existent. As the society developed, women understood their force. There on started the unrest for women empowerment. There are different routes by the way one can encourage women. The people and government must both meet up to get it going. Kudumbasree, the State poverty Eradication Mission of Government of Kerala, is such an expedition which focuses on women enhancement through Neighbourhood Groups of women especially in rural area. It aims at capacity building of women through micro finance to start their business or any kind of economic activity and makes them stand in their own foot. This paper examines the structure, goals and functioning of Kudumbasree Units and how far it is capable in women empowerment.

## KEYWORDS

Empowerment, Microfinance, Neighborhood Groups, Thrift, Women

## INTRODUCTION

Pretty much every nation, regardless of how reformist has a background marked by abusing women. As such, women from everywhere the world have been defiant to arrive at the status they have today. While the western nations are as yet gaining ground, developing nations like India actually far behind in women empowerment.in India, women empowerment is required like never before. India

is among the nations which are still learning the ways to intensify women. There are different purposes behind this. Initially, women in India are at risk for honour killings. Their family thinks its entitlement to end their lives on the off chance that they carry disgrace to the standing of their heritage. Essentially, the ones who accomplish really work get compensated not exactly their male partners. There are different strategies by the way one can enable women. Kudumbasree or Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission is an innovative deprivation moderation procedure definite by the Government of Kerala for desperation easing up. The political and monetary circumstance inside the Kerala state supports to reevaluate the discernment of the destitution issue. In this sense, poverty is progressively seen as chance of choice from a monetary working than simply the predicament of profit or abundance. Again, destitution decline isn't only an issue of an all things considered money related advancement in a general public, yet also that is interconnected with various social viewpoints like women strengthening and women undertaking. All of these multi-dimensional philosophies drove the public power to shape women in rural area arranged destitution lightening program in the state and achieved the presentation of "Kudumbashree". The mission has set up the Self Help Group (SHG) model of women empowerment to stimulate a wide extent of women creative activities. The Kudumbasree project was outlined as an all-out desperation lessening endeavor with the assistance of NABARD. Kudumbasree is a neighborhood group of women across the state of Kerala. Kudumbasree aims to alleviate poverty through economic and social improvement dependent on women empowerment. Women empower themselves through the confidence obtained through the administrative and various leveled work of the autonomous women rural units that is the Neighbourhood Groups. Kudumbasree is the biggest women Self Help Group in the world working through a systematic plan. The plan, cooperation and activities of the local gatherings are as indicated by the neighborhood laws of Kudumbasree Project.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To examine the structure and functioning of Kudumbasree Programme in Kerala.
2. To evaluate the thrift and micro finance system of Kudumbasree.

### **Kudumbasree - Meaning**

Kudumbasree or Kerala State Poverty Alleviation Mission is an innovative poverty alleviation scheme formulated by the Government of Kerala for pure poverty alleviation. The Kudumbasree project was formed as a complete poverty

alleviation campaign with the assistance of NABARD. Kudumbasree means 'wealth of the family'.

Kudumbasree operates through a three-tier organizational structure such as neighborhood groups, ADS and CDS. Neighborhoods are a fundamental component of this. At the local level, neighborhood groups are made up of 10 to 20 women. ADS is an integrated form of affiliated neighborhoods in each ward of a local government area.

Similarly, CDS is the upper echelon of the three-tier organization. Kudumbasree has become a recognized social structure since the success of the three-phase pilot system implemented in Alappuzha Municipality and Malappuram district of Kerala since 1990.

### **Kudumbasree Community Network**

Kudumbasree is a community network of women spread across the state of Kerala. Kudumbasree aims to eradicate poverty through economic, social and empowerment based on women empowerment. Women empower themselves through the capacity and confidence gained through the administrative and organizational work of the Independent Women's Community Neighborhood Group. Kudumbasree is the largest women's group in the world, operating through a three-tier organizational structure such as the Neighborhood Group, ADS and CDS.

### **Neighborhood Groups (NHG)**

Neighborhood groups are a fundamental component of the Kudumbasree tripartite organizational structure. Kudumbasree Neighborhood Group is a group of 10 to 20 women in each inhabited area. Neighborhood is an important innovative tool to achieve the main objective of Kudumbasree, Poverty Alleviation and Subsequent Poverty Alleviation. The structure, membership and activities of the neighborhood groups are as per the bylaws of Kudumbasree CDS.

### **Neighborhood Groups - Membership**

Kudumbasree membership is available to all adult women. Only one woman in a family can become a member of Kudumbasree. If for some reason a member has to leave the neighborhood, another member of the same family can join the neighborhood. Although membership is limited as a member of a family, other woman in the same family can participate in neighborhood discussions. In addition, they can participate in training and development programs conducted by the neighborhood and ADS.

Women from poor families in each neighborhood should be members of the respective neighborhood. From time to time poor families are determined on the basis of criteria set by the respective governments. Although women from all families are eligible for membership, only women from poor families and those belonging to the SC/ST community are eligible for benefits and financial assistance from the scheme of the Government and other agencies. After gaining membership, those who have improved their life above the poverty line can continue their membership. Special neighborhood groups can be set up for the blind, the mentally challenged, the HIV positive and those from poor families. Such neighborhood groups must be formed with the permission of the government. Once formed, such neighborhoods will normally receive the approval of the neighborhood.

Special neighborhood groups can be formed for the Scheduled Tribes. If required, special ADSs can be set up with the permission of the State Mission. In addition, special neighborhood groups may be formed that may include mothers of children with mental disabilities or who may need other specialized assistance.

Working groups interested in undertaking economic / industrial activities can be selected and formed from one or more neighborhood groups. Such members may retain membership in their respective neighborhood groups as well as serve as members of other neighborhood groups. Funds such as subsidies can be sought to organize activities that the working group is entitled to. Kudumbasree membership can be given to any woman who is willing to work in neighborhood groups as per Kudumbasree bylaw. Once one has received the membership, one has to sign the membership register of the neighborhood.

### **Neighborhood Groups - Structure**

The Neighborhood General Body consists of all members. The neighborhood group elects a five-member executive committee. The Executive Committee will consist of the President, Secretary, Income Volunteer, Health Volunteer and Infrastructure Volunteer. The Executive Committee is elected by the General Body Meeting, an election attended only by members. The secretary or president of the neighborhood must be a member of the family below the poverty line. Members of families above the poverty line can become secretary and president only in the absence of a member below the poverty line. No one can be secretary or president more than twice.

## **Neighborhood Groups - Activities**

Like the SHGs, all the activities in the neighborhoods include regular meetings, thrift collection and proper keeping of records and account books. They also participate in development activities with the local government, gram sabha meetings and other development related meetings. They also conduct social surveys at the gram sabha level.

## **Neighborhood Groups - Weekly meetings**

The day and time for the weekly meeting will be decided in the neighborhood formation itself. Meetings are held alternately in each member's home. All members are required to attend meetings regularly. 75% attendance is allowed for a member but 100% attendance must be ensured by the members.

## **Neighborhood Groups - Thrift, credit**

Thrift is an amount that even the financially backward member of a neighborhood group can easily invest. Neighborhood members are required to attend weekly neighborhood meetings. At the neighborhood meeting, each member must submit their thrift amount directly to the neighborhood secretary. The thrift amount should be credited to the member's passbook immediately upon receipt by the neighborhood secretary. All members are required to add their weekly savings to the passbook and write their thrift amount in the respective weekly column in the financial register. The signature of the member who attended the meeting in the minutes will appear in the member's passbook. The thrift amount of the member on the same date is also seen in the financial register.

Neighbors have full authority to determine the amount of the thrift. Neighbors can discuss and decide the amount of the thrift. The thrift amount should be seen as the equivalent of the thrift of the lowest income member in the neighborhood.

Internal loans can only be obtained after three months of forming a neighborhood group and ensuring proper meetings and savings. The loan should be sanctioned by majority opinion as per the requirement raised by the members at the weekly meeting. The interest on the loan is charged at a fixed amount determined by the neighborhood. The fixed amount is to be paid by the members without interruption. The following methods are used to recover from members who do not repay properly.

- 1) CDS members will visit the neighborhood groups to discuss matters and encourage the member who has defaulted on the loan to repay.
- 2) Penalty is levied on the member who does not repay the loan.

3) The loan repayment is taken from the member's savings.

4) Legal action.

### Neighborhood Groups - Bank Linkage

Neighborhood groups will take the initiative to provide bank linkages to those who complete six months of regular weekly meetings and savings. Neighboring groups are subjected to grading to qualify for bank linkage. Once the neighborhood groups start working closely with the banks, they will be able to borrow and lend to members through funds.

### Neighborhood Groups - Funds

Neighborhoods receive their own funds from entry fees, membership fees, monthly subscriptions, internal loans, penalty interest, donations, and grants. The above funds are included in the neighborhood account. The money is also kept in a bank account.

### Area Development Society (ADS)

The ADS, the central body of Kudumbasree, is formed at the ward level of local governments. Correspondence between ADSs and other wards except for Adivasi/ST ADSs, this may be constituted with the special permission of the Government. ADS is not a legally registered entity. All neighborhood groups covered by the ADS will be affiliated with the CDS and will be members of the ADS. A neighborhood group gets membership in an ADS. An ADS is formed when at least two neighborhood groups come together in a ward under a local government. If there is only one neighborhood in a ward, the existing neighborhood will be able to join the adjoining ward until a new neighborhood is formed.

### ADS - Activities

ADS activities include monitoring neighborhoods and supporting the establishment and operation of micro-enterprises. In addition, ADS plays a key role in mediating the social structure and disseminating information. They also act as part of development activities as directed by the Government and the local government. At the ward level, the ADSs work closest to the local government.

### Community Development Society (CDS)

CDS is the highest component of Kudumbasree's three-tier organization. CDS operates at the local government level in urban and rural areas. Although there is



usually one CDS under a local government, there are more than one CDS under a municipality. Here the number of neighbors and the number of ADS will be higher.

### **CDS - Activities**

As the third tier of the community network, CDS is responsible for monitoring the activities of the NHGs and ADS associated with it. In addition, CDS acts as a local government-level body, collaborating with local governments on development programs. The role of CDS in the planning and implementation processes of local governments has been institutionalized. CDSs have roles to play in capacity building and awareness rising. They also have a definite role to play in women's empowerment.

### **Thrift and credit**

Thrift and credit programs are Kudumbasree's first level entry point. Poor women are organized into neighborhood groups. NHGs start lending to members using the group's savings. Then, once each NHG is graded and qualified, they are eligible for bank linkage. Kudumbasree Mission provides token matching grants to NHGs for loans obtained through bank linkages for lending in groups.

Poor families need money regularly for various needs. General needs can be categorized into consumption requirements, contingency requirements, festive needs and required for revenue generating activities.

Thrift and credit mean encouraging the poor to save some money from using it for their normal expenses and to help them get small loans out of their savings. Each member brings a pre-determined amount (this amount is decided by the group) to the weekly group meetings. The money raised is deposited in a bank account held jointly by the President and Secretary of the Group. As the worm passes, this savings gradually increase in relatively large quantities. Once a neighborhood group completes six months of activities with regular meetings and savings, the group can start an internal loan. This means lending to members who need smaller amounts as decided at the group meeting. The team decided who would get the loan and how much. The advantage here is that everyone knows everyone else in the group. Therefore, loans are usually decided in a reasonable manner. NABARD developed a 15-point grading system for NHGs; it is transparent, so NHGs can work to qualify for bank linkages. At the NHG, the volunteer is responsible for the activities related to microfinance, including the management of savings and loans, and the preparation of the bank linkage, and the subsequent maintenance of the relationship with the bank.

## **Role in microfinance**

- NHG: Management of savings and credit programs, including internal credit and account keeping, grading and bank linkage
- ADS: Monitors NHG savings and credit programs, facilitates bank linkages
- CDS: Monitoring of austerity and credit; Bank facilitates linkages; Matching grant payments to bank-linked NHGs; Updates the Management Information System.

## **State Mission Plans**

- Adjustment Grant: This is an incentive scheme for NHGs who qualify for the grading system and establish bank linkages. The amount of the grant is related to the total mobilization of NHGs. Incentives are calculated for each NHG at Rs. 5000 or 10% of the total savings, whichever is less.
- Interest Subsidy: Under this scheme supported by the Government of Kerala, State Mission provides NHGs with 5% interest subsidy on bank loans; Enterprises run by Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) are also eligible for interest subsidy.
- Education and Campaigns: In 2009, the Mission launched an Accounting and Audit Campaign to improve microfinance systems across the state. It also conducts educational programs to improve financial literacy and management of NHGs.

## **CONCLUSION**

Kudumbashree turned into the lifesaver to substantial numbers of incompetent women in the state of Kerala. It expected the situation with a helpline to several women in the different parts of Kerala, especially rural women. It is a massive poverty eradication programme of the Government of Kerala targeting killing destitution and rescuing the destitute from the knaves of outrageous hardship. The thrift and microfinance method of the Kudumbashree project transformed vulnerable women into competitive and vibrant micro-business entrepreneurs. The powerless women of the state have become dynamic members in the planning and execution process of various poverty alleviation programs. By taking part in different income creating cum developmental activities, the resolve and certainty of women become exceptionally outstanding. The capability of the helpless women of the state in a few regions has gone up significantly, the status of women in families and the local area has additionally improved. Kudumbashree has acquired public and worldwide recognition as an ideal and useful model of

participatory advancement for annihilating poverty. Kudumbasree, the State Poverty Eradication Mission, introduced by the Government of Kerala State in India is an outstanding poverty eradication program in contemporary history. It has been demonstrated undoubtedly that strengthening women is the best technique for poverty alleviation. Women who were viewed as voiceless and feeble began distinguishing their internal force, their solidarity, development openings, and their role in reshaping their future. The course of strengthening turns into the guiding light to their youngsters, their families and the society at large. It opens other vistas in the development history. Another worldview of participatory financial matters has been found arising in "God's Own Country". Kudumbashree presents a special model of participatory turn of events, which can be imitated by other states of India.

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