

Socio-Economic Empowerment of the Vulnerable Sections through Kudumbashree Programmes in Kerala

¹Dr.P. Stanly Joseph & ²Mrs. M O Tessy

¹Rtd .Associate Professor Department of Economics ,St.Joseph's college ,Thiruchirappalli (India)

²Research scholar ,department of Economics, St.Joseph's College, Thiruchirappalli (India)

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Corresponding Author

Email: tessyroy99[at]gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The empowerment of women is crucial for the development of the country. Rural women were generally found to be least participative in social programmes. They were regarded as voiceless and defenseless. Awareness on rights and social problems still was very low among the rural women. They are to be empowered to fight against the evils faced by them. There should create respect and dignity towards the lower section of the society. They have equal rights in society and other judicial works .They should have safe and secured working location with proper privacy. The Kudumbashree in Kerala expected to provide a very effective platform for women to discuss among themselves, their problems, solutions and aspirations. This study is focused on the vulnerable section of the rural community and the activities of the Kudumbashree mission in Kerala for the socio- economic empowerment of the Vulnerable section.

1. Introduction

Since independence, both the Central and State governments have been focusing on poverty eradication through the trickling down effect of the general growth process and direct income generation programs. All income generation programs were either asset generation programs or employment generation programs. Though these helped in uplifting many from the clutches of poverty, they failed at reaching out to the poorest of the poor. Thus the economic growth of the country, many a times, did not help the destitute to escape the penury to which they have been thrown into. The Government of Kerala introduced some new project through the State Poverty Eradication Mission. Especially through Kudumbashree. The Social empowerment programmes of Kudumbashree focus on the empowerment of this vulnerable section. There are sections of the poor that are left out of the fold of development programmes including those of the Kudumbashree network. There are sections that are even too weak to be part of the community network. Social Empowerment programmes are steps towards ensuring the inclusion of such vulnerable sections. This study by the researcher aims to understand the problems faced by the vulnerable section of the rural area and the programmes introduced by the Kudumbashree mission in Kerala for the upliftment of the vulnerable section

2. Objectives

- 1) To know about the vulnerable section in the society and their problems.
- 2) To study the role of Kudumbashree programmes in Kerala for the upliftment of the vulnerable section

3. Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature .It is descriptive to the extent that the projects started its functioning for few years and its working is began to extend in all district .The necessary data concerning the present study are collected from

secondary sources of data. The secondary data collected from authentic sources like government publications, the Kudumbashree website ,kudumbashree magazine etc...

Objective 1 To know about the vulnerable section in the society and their problems.

1.1 The concept of vulnerable section

Vulnerable groups are those groups of society which would be economically and socially backward who is at disadvantageous position in the society due to physical attributes generally. They are not capable of attaining sufficient living conditions. Their resource endowment will be poor to provide sufficient income from any available sources. This section includes old aged population, children, women, disabled , transgenders etc. They can also be exploited and generally do not come into the main stream of the society. They would be vulnerable under any circumstances.

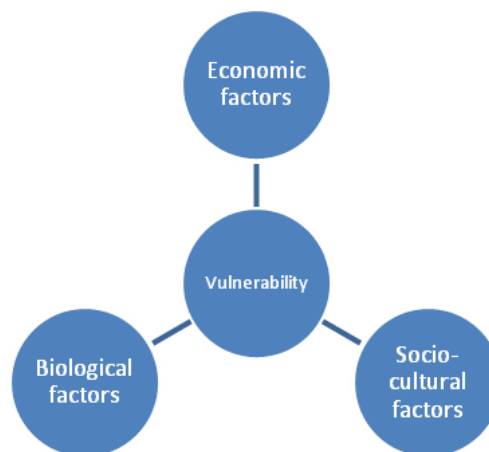


Chart 1 The reasons for vulnerability can be mainly divided in to three

1.1.1 Biological barriers:

Disabled, old aged, children, women etc are generally not strong or healthy enough to fight against their problems or even resist the attacks of their enemies..

1.1.2. Economic barriers:

These sections are not economically self sufficient they depend upon others even for to meet their basic needs. They are not in a position to have a job.

1.1.3. Social and cultural barriers:

The religious beliefs and other cultural restrictions banned them to come out of the main stream.

1.2 Identification of vulnerable section

Identify the vulnerable section or destitute is an important task of Kudumbashree mission. So that they prepare a criteria named 'vulnerable mapping' to identify the prevailing vulnerabilities in the society which are leading the community in to vulnerable situation. Vulnerability mapping is not only a tool to develop the action plan but it capacitates the people to identify their vulnerability and help them to find out the

opportunities. Kudumbashree developed a tool as vulnerability mapping to identify the issues and demand through the collective action of the community. Through this process we are trying to identify the situation and possibilities to prevent them. Vulnerability depends on social, economic and physical situation and capacity of the individual or group. Community Resource persons can be supports them to realize or to understand the vulnerability through different methodologies.

The beneficiary families are identified by the Community Development societies (CDS), the apex body of Kudumbashree's three tier system and later ratified by the local self government institutes (LSGIs) together. The CDS and LSGI together prepared project for the beneficiary families by identifying the services needed by each family and allocate fund for the same. Once the project is approved by the state government it is implemented by the CDS and LSGI together.

Table 2 Services provided to the vulnerable section through Kudumbashree programmes are as follows

Basic needs	Infrastructural needs	Developmental needs	Psychological needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food • Clothing • Health • Education • pension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land • House • House repair and renovation • Sanitary Latrine • Drinking water • Electrification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development • Employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social inclusion via Kudumbashree • Safety • Confidence building

As per the above table Kudumbashree provides the basic,infrastructural, developmental and psychological needs of the vulnerable sections of the society.

Objective 2 To study the role of Kudumbashree in Kerala for the upliftment of the vulnerable section

2.1 Major Kudumbashree programmes for the upliftment of the vulnerable section

In Kerala Kudumbashree as the poverty eradication mission has been actively involved in the process of empowering women by making them aware of their rights and entitlements. In the mission of eradicating poverty, a need assessment was performed using the deprivation criteria. It was revealed that destitution and disability are the major challenges encountered by the rural community .Kudumbashree thus initiated the following projects for the upliftment of these vulnerable sections

- Destitute or old age Rehabilitation programmes (Ashraya Programmes)
- Rehabilitation of Mentally Challenged children up to 16years(BUDs Institutions)
- Rehabilitation of disabled and mentally challenged adult person through Block level Resource Centers (BRC)
- Special NHGs for transgender and old age person.

2.1.1. Destitute Rehabilitation /Ashraya project

Ashraya is an integrated project aimed at identification and rehabilitation of destitute families. Started in 2002 as a follow up of the Kudumbashree initiative to identify the families that had been left out even from the outreach of decentralised planning and poverty alleviation programmes.The NHGs,ADS,CDS and the mission are engaged at various stages of implementation.

Table 3 Hierarchical approach of the implementation of Ashraya project

Entity	Responsibilities
NHG	Identification of destitute families, support in delivery of servicing package
ADS	Verification of identified destitute families and recommendation to CDS
CDS	Ensuring approval of the project by LSGI after discussion in evaluating committee.CDS is the implementing agency of the LSGI for Ashraya.
District Mission	Verification of the proposal and recommendation to state mission.
State Mission	Project approval and forwarding the project to government of Kerala,Fund release to LSGIs through District Mission.Monitoring and reporting.

The scheme requires every Grama Panchayat to prepare separate micro-projects for each destitute household identified. These micro projects are then integrated with the annual plans of the Grama Panchayats. The scheme is financed by

combining plan funds of the Grama Panchayats, contributions by Block and District Panchayats, centrally sponsored schemes, and State government funds.

During the first year of implementation, 101 Grama Panchayats in the State came up with the projects, involving rehabilitating 8233 destitute families. The Grama Panchayats had been able to ensure institutional systems for the simultaneous implementation of multiple micro plans in the field. It is implemented by the CDS of the Kudumbashree and

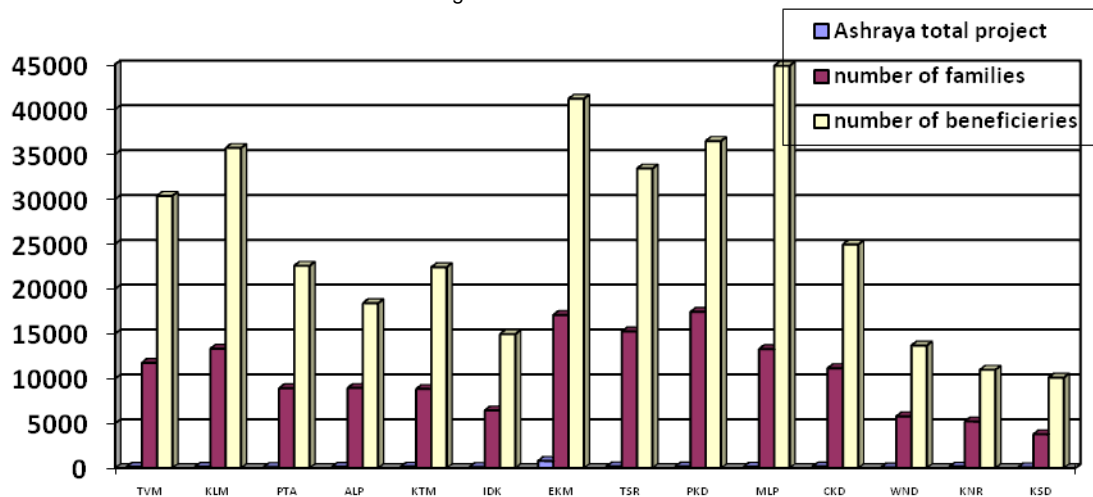
the local governments do monitoring. All Ashraya beneficiaries come under the project for three years after that if their situation improved they are removed from the list and if the households needs continuous medical facilities, food or care it is provided through special fund allotments by the Kudumbashree.

Table 3. Number of Ashraya total projects, number of benefited families and number of beneficiaries in Kerala as on 28/01/2019

Sl no	Districts	Ashraya total project	NO OF FAMILIES	NO OF BENEFICIARIES
1	Thiruvananthapuram	133	11729	30339
2	Kollam	143	13301	35681
3	Pathanamthitta	117	8894	22547
4	Alappuzha	143	8921	18372
5	Kottayam	158	8813	22388
6	Idukki	114	6418	14927
7	Ernakulam	193	17067	41161
8	Thrissur	187	15228	33392
9	Palakkad	172	17411	36456
10	Malappuram	151	13268	44833
11	Kozhikode	163	11129	24932
12	Wayanad	71	5763	13662
13	Kannur	156	5194	10956
14	Kasaragod	80	3764	10080
	TOTAL	1981	146900	359726

Source :www.Kudumbashree.org.in

Chart no:2 ASHRAYA registration in kerala state and number of beneficiaries 2017-18



The above table and chart shows that in Kerala there are 1981 Ashraya or destitute free projects initiated by the local self government for to provide various needs of the people those who have no other security in life. A total of 1,46,900 families have been identified and projects worth Rs.4107.6 million have been initiated for the project. Ernakulam district shows the first position (193) followed by Thrissur district (187). Among the other districts less in Wayanad districts (71) The Highest number of beneficiaries are in Malappuram district.

Hundreds of projects are under implementation across the state.

The funding of the project is by Kudumbashree, LSGIs and philanthropic individuals and institutions. Kudumbashree allocates fund for basic needs called the Challenge Fund (40% of the total project cost subject to a maximum of Rs 40 lakhs for general projects and Rs 50 lakhs for ST projects). The entire project is monitored at various levels starting at the bottom by the foot soldiers of Neighborhood Groups of Kudumbashree.

Table NO: 4 District wise Ashraya Expenditure report as on 28/01/2019

DISTRICT	PROJECT COST(in Lakhs)	CHALLENGE FUND ALLOCATED(in Lakhs)	CHALLENGE FUND RELEASED (in Lakhs)	TOTAL EXPENDITURE (in Lakhs)	CHALLENGE FUND EXPENDITURE (in Lakhs)
Alappuzha	12,713.73	1,938.36	958.16	1,403.30	763.94
Ernakulam	12,940.97	3,182.19	1,476.36	2,794.03	2,551.97
Idukki	7,241.64	1,949.21	739.73	1,171.28	635.5
Kannur	4,454.99	970.06	520.23	573.3	254.71
Kasargode	5,244.80	990.85	371.73	665.63	285.94
Kollam	10,233.21	2,566.48	946.52	1,016.09	665.47
Kottayam	8,154.56	2,068.79	791.68	666.58	364.73
Kozhikkode	8,651.71	1,835.55	651.66	559.97	357.12
Malappuram	8,925.48	2,884.56	582.86	498.17	302.25
Palakkad	11,162.58	2,441.03	791.23	654.99	283.68
Pathanamthitta	6,032.11	1,602.67	615.15	338.67	204.8
Thiruvananthapuram	10,344.30	1,767.57	540.12	213.52	138.33
Thrissur	14,519.93	2,308.52	876.26	1,228.32	397.01
Wayanad	6,281.78	1,305.06	478.33	238.7	193.91
TOTAL	126,901.79	27,810.89	10,340.02	12,022.54	7,399.35

Source:www.kudumbashree.org.in

The above table shows the total expenditure for Ashraya project in different districts of Kerala as on January 2019. The total Project cost is Rs 126,901.79 lakhs and the total expenditure is only Rs.12,022.54 lakhs. The challenge fund for to meet the basic needs of Ashraya families allocated is Rs 27,810.89. But the total challenge fund expenditure is only Rs 7,399.35 lakhs. This shows the actual implementation of this project is very slow and not much effective. The highest amount of Expenditure is in Ernakulam district (2551.97 lakhs) followed by Alappuzha district (763.94 lakhs). All other district spent only a small percentage of their allocated fund. Ashraya seems to be a unique scheme if government takes more importance to its implementation at Local Self Government level. Allocation of fund and release of fund without delay may inspire the Kudumbashree workers to do the activity without any delay. Introducing new technology for the smooth implementation of the project is very much required.

Agathirahitha keralam (Destitute Free Kerala) is one of the important aims of Kudumbashree. If the programme is equipped with better technology in beneficiary identification (via mobile app) and project preparation rendering the project more cost effective and timely. There is a provision for appeal submission and appeals are verified by LSGIs. For monitoring of the projects after implementation, Monitoring Committees will be formed at State and District level. The families who do not have enough criteria to become beneficiaries under the project but have no job for even 10 days a month will be treated as Special Cases and given a helping hand. It also has an anytime inclusion provision.

As Kudumbashree Mission is going ahead with the implementation of Ashraya as per the revised norms, the scheme is faced with challenges in terms of its proper functioning. The excessive burden of responsibilities falling on the community network may force them to step back from the project. The state government had to intervene and make it

sure that the gramapanchayath include Ashraya project in their plans. The government with the help of Kudumbashree Mission try to issue various orders, circulars and guidelines for the timely help of kudumbashree NHGs and give incentive to them for their work.

2.1.2. Rehabilitation of disabled or Mentally Challenged children through BUDS institutions

The physical and mental challenges faced by the disabled children heighten the hardship of poverty in the families and in society. The members of the family feel terribly depressed and pessimistic. Consequently their creativity is lost. Poverty denies the children opportunity for medical treatment and education. Disability is when a loss or reduction in any physical or psychological function results in a partial or total inability to perform any bodily or mental functions in a manner or within the range considered normal for a human being

Within the range of disabilities, mental challenges are felt as one of the serious problems affecting the family economically and emotionally. The mentally retarded children are the person who need more care and security but because of the poor economic situation of the family they are neglected and they did not receive adequate health care. In this situation the valuable service from the part of Kudumbashree is mostly appreciable.

To rehabilitate mentally retarded children Government of Kerala decided to make programme through Kudumbashree. One of the important such programme is BUDS school. It was launched in Venganoor panchayath of Thiruvananthapuram district in 2004 inaugurated by the then chief minister A K Antony.

BUDS as a project strongly asserts that adopting the capability approach for the intellectually disabled persons and the empowerment approach with their families could help them to lead a better life. The policy focus on inclusive and

integrated education, vocational training and assistance for employment. This has provided the mentally challenged

children an opportunity for schooling in an inclusive atmosphere where they can learn up to the age of 16.

Table no:5 The detailed list of BUDS institutions in all the districts of Kerala as follows.

Sl no	Name of districts	No:of BUDS Institutions	No: of students in BUDS Institutions
1	Thiruvananthapuram	2	91
2	Kollam	2	67
3	Pathanamthitta	0	0
4	Alappuzha	7	308
5	Kottayam	0	0
6	Idukki	1	47
7	Ernakulam	17	684
8	Thrissur	2	102
9	Palakkad	2	46
10	Malappuram	8	412
11	Kozhikode	12	503
12	Wayanad	1	41
13	Kannur	14	601
14	Kasaragod	7	429
	Total	75	3331

Source www.kudumbashree.org.in

The above table shows the number of BUDS institution in Kerala. Ernakulam district shows highest number of BUDS institution and students. These institutions are really a great relief for the parents of these children and they can do their job without worrying about their children. Moreover the skill training help the children to earn money and it will create self confidence among them. At present 3331 children are studying in these 75 BUDS institutions. The children within the vicinity of respective Local Self Government Institutions are enrolled in these BUDS institutions. In recent days government of Kerala sanctioned to start 200 more BUDs school by Kudumbasree. Local self government will help Kudumbasree to find out the place and basic facilities for this. The training for teachers and other suggestions are made through Kudumbasree. The administration of the BUDs School controlled by the committee headed by the Panchayath President. The BUDs School follows a well prepared syllabus and planning which help the children to be self reliant in their life.

2.1. 3. BUDS Rehabilitation Centers(BRC)

BUDS Rehabilitation Centres (BRCs) are day care centers for mentally challenged persons(mental retardation, cerebral

palsy, autism, multiple disability) of 16 or above years of age. BRCs are a part of Kudumbashree initiative to fulfill a gap in the state's existing system for providing care to the mentally challenged that caters only to persons up to 18 years of old. BRCs unlike BUDS school, do not have special education. The centers are meant for those who have already undergone special education through BUDS school or other centers. However centers are also open to mentally challenged children who are unable to attend school. Persons enrolling in BRCs should be certified by the medical board as mentally challenged.

The BRCs with the support of LSGI organize vocational training, day care, and health care of mentally challenged persons above 18 years of age. As employment is the ultimate aim for education of mentally challenged persons, BRCs trained the persons in skills that their capacities allow. Kudumbashree will also train the mothers of children attending BUDS school in areas of their interest and provide them with jobs.

Table no:6 The number of BRCs started in Kerala as on 03 /2/2019

SI No;	Districts	No:of BRCs	no:of persons
1	Thiruvananthapuram	28	870
2	Kollam	13	339
3	Pathanamthitta	3	99
4	Alappuzha	9	212
5	Kottayam	1	63
6	Idukki	1	33
7	Ernakulam	11	245
8	Thrissur	6	182

9	Palakkad	6	203
10	Malappuram	8	193
11	Kozhikode	10	236
12	Wayanad	2	30
13	Kannur	6	97
14	Kasaragod	2	38
	Total	106	2840

www.kudumbasree.org.in

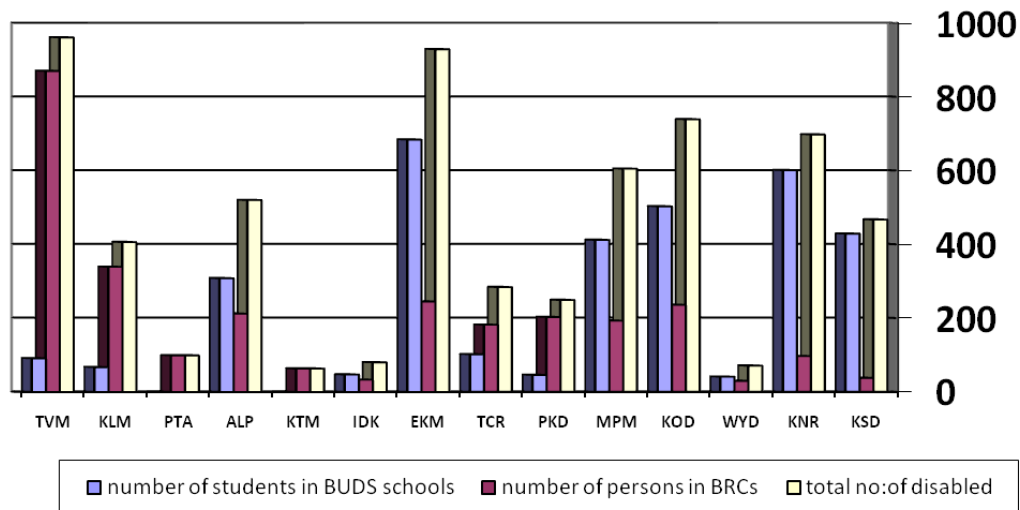


Chart no.:3 Number of children and elders in BUDs and BRCs under kudumbashree in Kerala

At present 2840 persons are studying in these 106 BRC institutions. By march 2015, Kudumbashree Mission had given Rs 2 lakh each as grant to willing LSGI for starting BRCs. A total of 119 LSGs have availed this grant, 80 have already started BRCs, others are in the process. Many mentally challenged persons can meaningfully engage in supportive commercial work, however teasing by incentive persons at work places typically affect their mainstreaming into such roles. They have special teachers for teaching. There were 372 BUDS/BRC teachers appointed in all the districts. 309 teachers were qualified and received RCI registration. 292 teachers attend SCERT training courses

The BUDs institutions in Kerala is in its initial stage. Their needs and importance of BUDs and BRC institutions are spreading in Kerala especially in the rural areas. Most of the beneficiaries are belongs to economically backward areas. The handicapped persons and mentally challenged persons can improve their social and economic situations through the active participation in BUDs school and BRCs. Their families can enjoy a great relief from these because these people become self sufficient and do their work themselves. In almost all districts of Kerala BRC centers started their work. The highest number of BRC centers are in Trivandrum district 870 beneficiaries were registered here followed by Kollam (339). The lowest number of BRCs were in Idukki district. The highest number of Buds school is reported in Ernakulam

District (17) The number of beneficiaries in Ernakulam district is 245. There are no Buds schools in Pathanamthitta and Kottayam districts till now.

2.1.4. Special Neighbor Hood Groups for Old age and Transgenders

Special NHGs under Kudumbasree become popular in recent years. According to Kudumbasree poverty is not merely a financial deficiency but also many other things such as gender discrimination, isolation and powerlessness, vulnerability, chronic disease etc.. The special NHGs mainly for these groups.

In Kerala about 3749 special NHGs have been approved till now. About 47865 members are joined in these groups. These NHGs mainly meant for transgender and also those who are mentally, physically and emotionally ill in the society. The aim of Kudumbasree is to include all disabled people of Kerala to be a part of these special NHGs. It offers social welfare, protection of health, rehabilitation, and employment opportunity of its members. The membership of this special NHG is given to those who are above 18 years old.

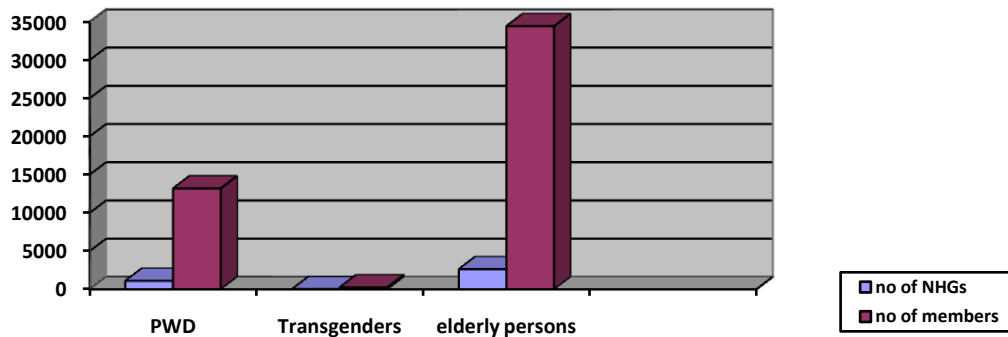
In Kerala about 13192 disabled people are members of the 1102 special NHGs. The total number of transgender NHGs formed in Kerala is 19 which include 249 members.

Table no:5 Number of special NHGs in Kerala

s/ino	Special NHG	No:of NHG	No; of members
1	Persons with Disability (PWD)	1102	13192
2	Transgenders	19	249
3	Elderly person	2628	34424
	Total	3749	47865

Source www.kudumbashree.org.in

Chart no: 4 Total number of special NHGs in 2018-19



4. Findings

Socio-economic conditions of women is the key for overall growth and development of the country .Kudumbashree as a comprehensive programme aims at women empowerment through convergence of resources and community action . The vulnerable section are always vulnerable because of the social, economic and biological barriers .They can not come out from their family without the help of others Kudumbashree help them to empower, to fight against their disabilities and evils faced by them.

Social development activities of the mission include Ashraya project for the rehabilitation of destitute families, BUDS special schools and BRCs for differently abled children and adults etc.gives opportunity to the vulnerable section to come out from their miseries and frustrations.Today they are confident to speak out and voice their opinions.They earn income and save money for their families, they participate in the decision making process within their families and in the community. Loving care and encouragement will boost self esteem and capacities of the disabled persons .Their happiness leads to the happiness of their family and there by the happiness of the community itself.

5. Suggestions

- 1) The knowledge or awareness about these programmes must be spread more among the backward section of the people especially in the rural area.
- 2) Government need to give more care to help these vulnerable sections by giving easy loan facilities for self employment activities.
- 3) The allocation of fund for the projects must be time being otherwise the local self government will not take initiative for its proper functioning.
- 4) Proper monitoring is also needed for these projects for the proper functioning of it.

6. Conclusion

Kudumbashree addresses the multiple deprivations faced by the poor family which consists of food, health, education basic amenities such as shelter, drinking water, safe latrines, employment etc..The motto of Kudumbashree is based on women empowerment through community based organisation. Main aim of Kudumbashree is to reach out the family through women and reach out the society through family. The recent social empowerment programmes especially the programmes for the vulnerable section in the society helps the mission to achieve it 's aim. Local self governments provide infrastructure facilities and Kudumbashree co-ordinate the activities and manage the running of the rehabilitation centers.Kudumbashree gender resource persons and community councillors managed the center and facilitate the programme.

These programmes aim to capacitate women in different levels. prevent and address the atrocities against women and children in the area. It also aims the participatory preparation of social protection plan at the NHG level. There is no better example of community involvement through Kudumbashree community Organisation helps in uplifting the poor than the destitute rehabilitation .It's success also lies in the fact that it has a decentralized approach to poverty eradication. The destitute and vulnerable sections rehabilitation experience teaches us that income generation scheme alone cannot adequately address the issue of rural poverty .We also need to incorporate elements that will eliminate the factors that undermine the creativity of the community.

The total development has a strong bearing on poverty alleviation initiatives. Kudumbashree has evolved a project to build model in selected Panchayaths on total development concept. The project focuses on the self sufficiency, self reliance and sustainability (S3) of gramapanchayaths. The project envisages addressing the problems related to the following sectors. Child development, Geriatric care, Mentally and physically challenged education, Adolescent care, Women

empowerment, Enterprise development, Employment Opportunities for educated youth, agriculture, basic minimum needs, Destitute identification and rehabilitation. As Kudumbashree mission is going ahead with the implementation of these projects, The scheme is faced with

challenges in terms of buy-in by the local governments, excessive burden of responsibilities falling on the community net work and the need to maintain high levels of diligence to prevent deviations from the core principles.

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