

Uniqueness of 'Kudumbashree' SHG in Kerala

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- The 'Kudumbashree' women in Kerala played a significant role in the relief operations after the recent floods.

\n

- It is essential in this backdrop to understand how 'Kudumbashree' is effective and different from other Self Help Groups (SHGs).

\n

\n\n

What is 'Kudumbashree'?

\n\n

\n

- The 'Kudumbashree' SHG was started in 1998 by the CPI (M)-led government in Kerala.

\n

- The Kudumbashree groups are, however, not affiliated to any political party.

\n

- It was envisioned as a part of the People's Plan Campaign and local self-governance, with women at the centre of it.

\n

- In its conceptualisation, it was markedly different from the self-help group (SHG) movements in many parts of India.

\n

- The thrift and credit activities at the grassroots level through the formations of saving groups is a common feature.

\n

- However, the structure and functioning of the Kudumbashree model largely differed.

\n

\n\n

What is the governance structure?

\n\n

- \n
- Kudumbashree has a three-tier structure.
- \n
- The first is the basic unit which is the neighbourhood groups (NGs).
- \n
- There could be several such units within a ward and they are networked through the area development societies (ADS).
- \n
- All ADSs are federated through the community development societies (CDS).
- \n
- There are core committees of elected coordinators at all three levels.
- \n
- There are at least five in each NG, seven or more at the ADS level and around 21 at the CDS level.
- \n
- Unlike in other States, all the coordinators are elected in Kerala.
- \n
- Each Kudumbashree member has a vote, and direct elections for the NG coordinators are held every three years.
- \n
- These people, in turn, elect the coordinators of the ADS who elect the members of the CDS.
- \n
- A majority of members of the coordinator groups have to belong to women below the poverty line or from comparatively poorer sections.
- \n
- Besides, there is reservation for Dalit and Adivasi women.
- \n
- At the district and State levels, employees/officers of the government are appointed on deputation to help the Kudumbashree groups.
- \n

\n\n

What are the other features?

\n\n

- \n
- The micro-enterprises undertaken by the women NGs in Kerala strengthen the community bonds.
- \n
- The firms include that for organic vegetable growing, poultry and dairy, catering and tailoring.
- \n
- The community farms run by Kudumbashree groups are now acknowledged

as a critical avenue for the rejuvenation of agricultural production in Kerala.

\n

- Kudumbashree training courses are also quite comprehensive, and include

\n

\n\n

\n

i. women's rights

\n

ii. knowledge of constitutional and legal provisions

\n

iii. training in banking practices

\n

iv. training in skills to set up micro-enterprises

\n

\n\n

\n

- It has thus made a huge contribution in socially empowering the women of Kerala.

\n

\n\n

How is it a unique model?

\n\n

\n

- In other States, SHGs came to be dominated by women from better-off families or from powerful castes.

\n

- This led to unhealthy hierarchies in which poorer women and Dalit women were denied decision-making powers.

\n

- Over the years, women dropped out from these sections for a number of reasons.

\n

- Eventually, the social potential of the SHGs to challenge dominant structures of gender bias at the local level weakened.

\n

- But, the Kudumbashree model works with a socially representative leadership.

\n

- This secular composition acts as a facilitator for the secularisation of public spaces.

\n

- This 'Made in Kerala' model can be implemented across India, if it is done with the same secular and gender-sensitive spirit.
- \n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

