

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

Title : **The Role of Kudumbashree in Promoting Women Empowerment in Kerala**

Reference : F No. MRP (H)-1443/10-11/KLMG048/UGC- SWRO; dated 10 February 2011

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Kudumbashree (KDMS), a holistic, participatory, women oriented, innovative poverty reduction approach launched by government of Kerala for wiping out absolute poverty from the state within a period of 10 years. This project was launched on 17th May 1998 and implemented through 'Local Self Government' and followed a process approach rather than a project approach. It strives to tackle poverty in an integrated manner through an effective convergence of resources and actions. It also acts as a nodal agency for anti-poverty programmes sponsored by central, state and local governments with focus on 'Micro Enterprise Development'. Convergence of various government programs and resources at the Community Development society (CDS) level, participatory antipoverty planning and implementation and development and nurture of microenterprises are the key strategies of kudumbashree. Thus kudumbashree became the lifeline to many of the poor women in the state of Kerala. Resultantly the women of the state became active participants in the planning and implementation process of various women empowerment and antipoverty programmes. From primarily a pilot to improve nutritional status of mothers and children, it evolved into a multisectoral poverty alleviation programme scaling up functionally.

The results of the project show that the women who were regarded as voiceless and powerless started identifying their inner power, their strength, opportunities for growth and their role in re- shaping their own destiny through kudumbashree. There is agreement among women that participation in kudumbashree made them courageous to enter the public decision making forums and lobby for women friendly policies. In addition the control over finance had given them a greater say in household decision making. There was wide spread agreement among the respondents that women's participation in public life, involvement in social campaigns, participation in festivals and social events, attending gramapanchayath meetings etc. have won them respect among the village elders, male Panchayath leaders and family members and they are now regularly consulted on many family matters and village activities. The analysis of women empowerment in different districts understudy also shows that the members of their family are the highest beneficiaries of kudumbashree.