



Role of Kudumbashree in the Gender sensitive Development in Kerala



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Reframing Gender Justice through Kudumbashree: From welfare to structural transformation



Kudumbashree shifted gender discourse in Kerala from “beneficiary women” to “economic and political actors”

Areas of Intervention



Economic empowerment as the major tool of gender Justice: Lessons since inception

- Gave women independent access to credit
- Reduced dependence on male earners
- Increased intra-household bargaining power
- Enhanced decision-making in education, health, and asset purchase

Poverty alleviation directly led to redistribution of power

Collective Identity and Social capital

- Neighbourhood groups created safe deliberative spaces
- Women began discussing domestic violence, alcoholism, mobility, and discrimination
- Peer networks reduced isolation
- Women recognized as a political constituency

Justice as a public concern and the psychological safety

Decentralising Gender Justice-By Institutionalising Gender within Local Governance



Improvements in the system:

- Real empowerment: Women NHG members later becoming ward members/panchayat presidents
- Gender-sensitive local projects (toilets, drinking water access, street lighting)

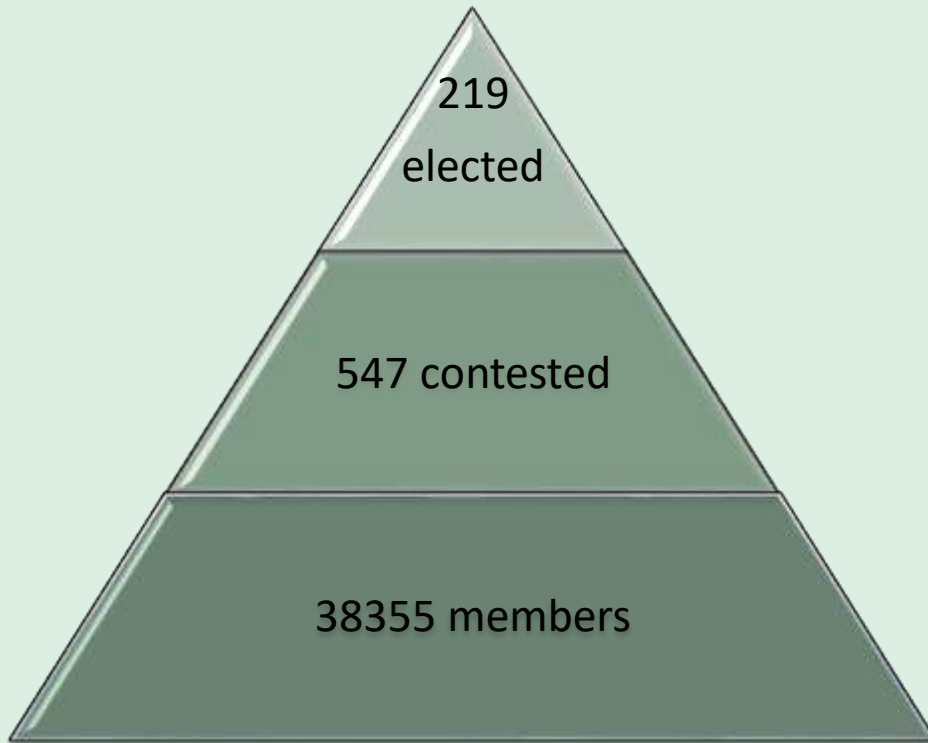
Kudumbashree operationalised gender justice at ward level, not just at policy level

The case study of Harithakarmasena...





2025 LOCAL BODY ELECTIONS



The need of direct gender interventions by Kudumbashree

- Economic Empowerment does not fully and Automatically translate into Gender Justice
- Patriarchy is Structural, Not Just Economic
- Silence and Stigma Need Institutional Platforms
- Collective Power Needs Consciousness
- Targetting the Most Marginalized Women
- Addressing community resistance also collectively

“Women’s development” must translate into “rights-based engagement” if it needs to sustain and influence society

Gender Interventions



Art & Theatre groups

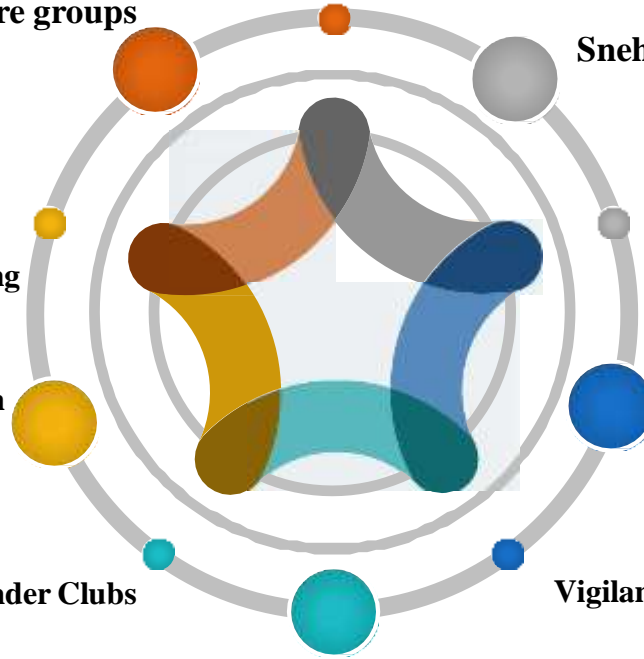
Vulnerability Mapping

Gender self learning program



Gender Clubs

Crime Mapping



Snehitha Help Desk



Gender Resource Centre

Community Counselling



Gender justice through inclusion

- SC/ST women collectives
- Migrant women engagement
- Coastal and tribal women livelihood models
- Support for elderly women and destitute households
- BUDS
- Destitute Free Kerala

True justice is served only when intersectionalities are also addressed

Changing Times – New Gender Challenges

- Educated Unemployment & Aspirational Mismatch
- Digital divide and Online harassment
- Care burden in ageing households
- The continuing gender based violence and the need to accelerate the response
- Gender auditing required at grass root level
- Weak participation in politics beyond LSG level

The Way Forward: Deepening Gender Justice

I. Economic Repositioning

- Shift from microcredit to asset & wealth creation
- Deliberate efforts towards increasing work participation; wage employment
- Enable entry into high-value, digital & green sectors
- Recognize and formalize the care economy

II. Institutional Deepening

- Institutional autonomy, accountability
- Integrate gender priorities into LSG plans & budgets
- Build leadership pipeline for elected governance

The Way Forward: Deepening Gender Justice

III. Intersectional & Generational Inclusion

- Differentiated strategies for marginalised women
- Bridge generational divide within collectives
- Align enterprise models with youth aspirations
- Focus on youth and children

IV. Norm Change & Social support

- Transform gender norms at neighbourhood level
- Expand mental health & community support systems



THANKS

