

‘KSWDC’- A Venture for the Empowerment of Women through Entrepreneurship

Thasneem S. S.

*Senior Research Fellow, University of Kerala, Research Centre: P.G. Department of commerce
and Research Centre, Iqbal College, Peringammala, Trivandrum, Kerala, India*

Abstract

Women constitute more than half of the total population in Kerala but when consider contribution of women to economic development it's very poor. Most of them are engaging in low productivity labor intensive traditional industries. So it is necessary to take steps to uplift women and increase their standard of living. The economic contribution from marginalized women is unfavorable. The Kerala State Women's Development Corporation gives priority to the betterment of economically and socially marginalized women. KSWDC conducts various programs for improving standard of living women. This corporation tries to empower women through entrepreneurship that makes women economically independent. The present study aims to understand the role of Kerala State Women's Development Corporation Ltd in empowering women through entrepreneurship and study different schemes and programs promoting and assisting women entrepreneurs.

Key Words: KSWDC, Women Empowerment, Entrepreneurship

Introduction

Women in Kerala occupy high status in every field of public activity. According to Census 2011, women in Kerala constitute more than 50% of the population. Kerala has the highest female literacy rate (92%) among other Indian states. It indicates the social cultural development achieved by women in Kerala. Women in Kerala perform better than men in terms of many developmental indicators. But in terms of economic participation the outcome is not

favorable for women. According to 68th round of NSSO, the sectoral distribution of employment shows that a larger proportion of women (31.9 per cent) are engaged in the agricultural sector, compared to men (22.8 per cent) while the percentage share of males engaged in service sector (44.8 per cent) is much higher compared to females (37.7 per cent) However, in industry the relative proportions (32.4 per cent and 30.4 per cent for men and women respectively) are not very different; but a further disaggregation would show that this is because large numbers of women are engaged in low productivity, labor intensive traditional industries like handlooms, Khadi, coir, cashew etc. Concentration of women in low remunerative industries would be clear from the membership of females in different Welfare Fund Boards in Kerala. Women's participation in traditional industries is very high in which wage/remuneration is comparatively low. All these highlights government have to take more steps for empowering and improving status of women in Kerala.

Now the traditional role of house wife is gradually changing into women entrepreneurs. Now they are important part of economic development. When there is development in women family develops, society develops and nation also. There took some time to change the attitude technological innovation and modern thinking to reduce disparity between men and women. Entrepreneurship is an important tool to empower women. Empowerment of women through entrepreneurship means access resource and markets, actual ownership and active control. In Kerala economic participation of women is low as compared to men. Kerala government took several steps to improve this status of women. The major initiative took by government is formation of Kerala State Women's Development Corporation during 1988. KSWDC seeks to bring women out of binding normative strictures by making them active participators in societal development and progress. It means the Government of Kerala's takes steps for empowering the women of the state. For KSWDC empowerment is real and yields tangible results. By encouraging women to be ambitious and confident about their success drives, KSWDC furnishes them with the required support system that makes their needs come into fulfillment. Economic dependence being a weighty hurdle in the realization of such a cause, the organization has many a scheme and policy to cater to the growing demands of the women of the state. The present study aims to understand the role of Kerala State Women's Development Corporation Ltd

in empowering women through entrepreneurship and study different schemes and programs promoting and assisting women entrepreneurs.

Objectives

- To understand the role of Kerala State Women's Development Corporation Ltd in empowering women through entrepreneurship.
- To study different schemes and programs promoting and assisting women entrepreneurs.

Methodology

This study is descriptive one based on secondary data collected from various websites, thesis and journals.

Kerala State Women's Development Corporation (KSWDC)

The Kerala State Women's Development Corporation Ltd is was established on 22-02-1988 registered as per Companies Act 1957 for the upliftment of marginalized and oppressed women in Kerala. Its Head office is at Trivandrum and has three regional offices at Calicut, Ernakulum and Trivandrum. KSWDC aims to enhance the economic social and political status of women and to make them co partners and co beneficiaries in sustainable development and progress of the society. Beneficiaries of KSWDC include women from backward classes, minority communities, scheduled castes and forward community. The Corporation has transformed the lives of many women and makes them to face the challenges of life. The success stories of the many beneficiaries of KSWDC are a perfect indication of the Corporation's commitment towards achieving an egalitarian society based on unbiased norms and values. KSWDC invests in the holistic development of women and our gender awareness programs, career grooming services, and vocational training facilities seek to address women's needs and

concerns, and also equip them with skills and attributes to handle the resources and opportunities available to them.

KSWDC conducting Gender Awareness programs among women and girls in the state. They arrange various seminars and workshops in colleges and offices for creating gender awareness. Another ongoing project of corporation is women cell which aims to make aware the youth issues involved in their society and to equip them with necessary skills to handle day to day affairs. Now activities of women cell are active in 80 colleges in Kerala. Moreover that corporation provides scholarship for girls who are excellent in academics. KSWDC pays up to Rs 5000 for two students from each college whose family income shall not exceed Rs. 100000. Self defense training program and Internal Complaint Cells in work place are organized by them. After the successful completion of the ICC workshop across Kerala, the corporation provided an official communication regarding the formation of ICC to 1096 organizations across Kerala. Another successful program organized by corporation is REACH (Resource Enhancement Academy for Career Heights) a finishing school initiative of the Kerala State Women's Development Corporation was launched on 29th December 2009 with a view to bridge the gap between acquired skills and required skills, for professionally qualified women. REACH is a pioneer among institutes aimed at empowering women with the required life-skills to ensure success in life. It is a Professional grooming academy which works towards the social, economic and educational advancement of women, from across all cross sections of society. The Government of Kerala has been supporting this project since 2009. First started this as an institute at Trivandrum later on spread to the Malabar region with a branch at Payannur in Kannur district. REACH has conducted different courses at these centers and have successfully placed hundreds of women in reputed firms with decent pay packages. The institute focuses on moulding competent personnel as per the current industry trends.

KSWDC provides public utility services also. Mithra Women Helpline 181, a 24/7 information and emergency helpline for women in Kerala on the basis of the framework proposed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. A toll free 24 hour's telephone service is working for handling problems women affected by violence. She

Toilets is established by the corporation for the upliftment women with hygienic facilities. There are 57 she toilets established across Kerala. Automatic toilets contains sanitary napkin vending machines and incinerators to burn the used napkins, along with self- washing and sterilization functions. Another important program is She Pad creates awareness on menstrual hygiene. Under this scheme corporation distributes sanitary napkins to girls studying in Govt. or aided schools and established vending machines to dispose these. Working Women's Hostels are also constituted by the corporation with better and safe accommodation for women who working away from home. All these highlight the role of KSWDC in empowering and enabling the women to realize their full potential. Besides these KSWDC take active role in empowering women through entrepreneurship through different financial and skill development schemes. KSWDC helps women to seek their income though establishing business units and also give assistance to existing women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship Development programs, different kinds of micro credits, term loans, Skill development programs etc helps women to start and run small business units and thereby they can attain a better standard of living.

Schemes and Programs by KSWDC for Promoting and Assisting Entrepreneurship

Major activities of the corporation like Entrepreneurship development programs, project financing and promotional support to women entrepreneurs aimed to focus on women development and empowerment through entrepreneurship. KSWDC is the state channelizing agency for providing credit to women for starting viable income generating enterprises by implementing various development programs of the national agencies such as National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC), National Minority Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC), National Scheduled Caste Finance & Development Corporation (NSFDC), National Scheduled Tribe Finance & Development Corporation (NSTFDC) and National Handicapped Development & Finance Corporation (NBCFDC). Following are schemes and programs by the corporation for promoting entrepreneurship

❖ Self Employment Program

For starting viable ventures KSWDC provides credit to women belongs to below poverty line. Income generating and self sustaining projects by women are encouraged by the corporation. Loans are made available at lower rate of interest. A detailed project report should be submitted with the loan application. The basic qualification need for this is SSLC. Self employment loan to backward community channelized from NMDFC, NBCFDC and NSFDC to KSWDC for women.

➤ ***Term Loan Scheme from NMDFC***

It financed through two credit lines one for persons having annual family income of up to Rs.98000/annum in rural areas and 1.20 lakhs/annum in urban areas. Then the second line for persons having an additional household income of Rs.6lakhs /annum. Self employment loan is given up to a maximum of Rs. 20,00,000 for credit line 1 and 30,00,000 for credit line 2. This will be get to only women belongs to minority community as notified by the central or state government from time to time. The rate of interest is 6% for this loan.

➤ ***Term Loan Scheme from NBCFDC***

Under this scheme women belong to the backward classes as notified by the central or state government from time to time are provided with the loan for opening or developing of a venture. Any viable projects are considered under this scheme. The maximum loan that can be disbursed under this scheme is 85% of the project cost or 10 lakhs whichever is lower with 6% interest. The applicant must belong any one of the notified backward classes of the state, with annual family income below 300000 in both urban and rural area. Age of the applicants must be between 18 and 55.

➤ ***Term Loan Scheme from NSFDC***

This loan is granted to women belong to scheduled caste as notified by the central government from time to time. The family income of the applicant must be below

3lakhs per annum in both rural and urban areas. The maximum loan amount is 300000 with 6% interest rate. Applicant must be in the age group of 18-55 years.

➤ ***Micro Financing through SHGs***

In order to cater to the Micro Finance needs of small entrepreneurs belonging to the target group, the corporation has introduced a scheme for micro financing through nominated channelizing agencies. It is desirable to disburse loans through self help groups by SCAs under micro finance scheme. This scheme is carried out through legally registered SHGs which consist of up to 20 persons. The annual family income of the applicant must be below Rs.1,20,000/- in urban areas and Rs.98,000/- in rural areas. In a SHG/ NGO 75% of the members can be from backward classes and remaining 25% members may be from other weaker section including SC/ST/handicapped etc. The maximum amount of loan that can be extended is Rs.10, 00,000/- to an NGO. In this scheme 90% loan should be contributed by NBCFDC, 5% KSWDC and 5% by the beneficiary. Rate of interest is 6%. Loan is to be repaid in quarterly installments within 48 months (including the moratorium period of six months on the recovery of principal)

➤ ***Term Loan Scheme for Forward Classes***

Loans are granted to economically weaker women of general/ forward communities for self employment. The loan shall be granted to women members of general category Income of the applicant's family should be below double the poverty line i.e. Rs. 1,03,000/ p.a. in urban and Rs.81,000/- p.a. in rural areas. The age in between 18 and 55 years. Any income generating projects is eligible for loan. Maximum loan amount is Rs 3,00,000/. The entire loan amount for women of general communities has to be met from the fund provided by the State Government. 95% is proposed to be channelized under the

plan scheme of the State Government and the balance 5% as beneficiary contribution. Loans are extended at 6% interest p.a. to be repaid in 60 monthly installments.

❖ Job Oriented Training Program

This program organized for making fit women for getting job or doing their own business. KSWDC conduct skill development programs in various technical and traditional trades like

- Garment Designing and pattern making
- Repairmen and maintenance of bio medical equipment
- Handloom weaving and designing
- Gold crafting and jewelry designing
- Bamboo mat making
- Mobile phone servicing etc.

❖ Marketing Facilities for Women Entrepreneurs

The major challenge facing by women entrepreneurs in Kerala is related to marketing of their products. Even the products have the good quality they are struggling with inadequate marketing and sales promotion facilities. As a remedy for this KSWDC had set up open marketing fairs to demonstrate and sell their products. Corporation conducts Trade Fairs in various districts like Trivandrum, Kochi and Kozhikode further organizes Onam Metro Fair in every year for women entrepreneurs.

❖ Entrepreneurship Development Program

KSWDC organizes camps and training programs for giving entrepreneurship awareness to both beneficiary and non beneficiary women to increase their entrepreneurial capabilities. That helps to impart knowledge regarding market, financing, different schemes of banks, government rules and regulations for starting and doing business organization etc.

Conclusion

Kerala State Women's Development Corporation is working for the advancement of women in the state. As per economic Census 2011 Kerala is the model state in terms of health, education, employment and political participation and decision making. Even then the state is trailing behind in gender related matters. Economic dependency of women is the main reason for leaving women as no voice in households. So KSWDC provides financial support for marginalized and downtrodden women to start their own ventures. The corporation plays a crucial role for the upliftment of women through entrepreneurship by providing several term loans, micro credits, skill development and EDP programs. Existing women entrepreneurs also get assistance for marketing their products. Various seminars, conferences and workshops organized by KSWDC impart knowledge to overcome challenges in business and carry out their venture successfully

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