

WOMEN'S SELF HELP GROUPS IN MUSSEL FARMING INMALABAR COASTS: A SUCCESS STORY

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Mussel farming has been proven as a profitable venture in marine fisheries sector of Kerala, India that has been successfully undertaken by women's Self Help Groups (SHGs). The practical dissemination of bivalve farming technologies in the potential maritime locations in Malabar coast was undertaken in Kadalundy of Vallikkunnu Grama Panchayat in Malappuram district of northern Kerala by training 62 women fisherfolk under Community Development Scheme (CDS) of *Kudumbasree* District Mission. These women were mobilised into 11 SHGs comprising of 60 members with a provision of credit worth Rs 1.25 lakhs and subsidy of INR 0.50 lakh with a small amount of INR 6,250/- as beneficiary contribution in each SHG. The members possess the joint responsibility through a strong internal amendment with a firm base of interpersonal trust. Assessment of the Group Dynamics Effectiveness of the SHGs was attempted by interviewing the members with standardized protocols developed and the groups with substantial effectiveness score were identified. A breakthrough harvest results were noticed in the SHGs due to the high market demand of mussel up to INR 5 per piece and INR 250 per kg of meat. The computation of harvest particulars, economic analysis, estimation of socio-psychological characteristics and yield dynamics were undertaken in the SHGs and brought out a BC ratio of 3.5:1 on an average.

The mussel farming by the women SHGs has been a source of poverty alleviation, and in turn each SHG ensures economic sustainability of five families. The local availability of green mussel and local self sufficiency of edible mussel products of diversified uses with low cost of production and moderate selling rate resulted in satisfied customers, in turn attracting consumers of other states to the enterprise. Ultimately through gender mainstreaming and women empowerment and socio-economic upliftment through the mobilised women SHG, the local economic development of Vallikkunnu was improved which in turn leads to development of fishers of Kerala state in a broader sense. Successful cases of SHG mobilization were elucidated and documented which could be used as case models for promoting group action of SHGs on a sustainable basis.