

## **Report: Scott Kloeck-Jenson International Internship Fellowship, 2023**

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I spent my summer interning with Kudumbashree National Resource Organisation in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. This is a team housed within the Kudumbashree Community Network. Kudumbashree (“welfare of the family”) is a community organisation that was set up in Kerala, India in 1998. Today, it has more than 4 million members who administer thrift and credit societies, run small businesses, and formulate plans for local government. I arrived just after Kudumbashree had celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and my project was to help update the history of the organisation on their website, [The Kudumbashree Story](#).

Over the ten weeks that I spent in Trivandrum, I compiled a report drawn from Kudumbashree’s own publications and pamphlets, archival material at the Kudumbashree State Mission and the Centre for Development Studies and various government orders and circulars. Through this, I learned how Kudumbashree began as an organisation to provide Thrift and Credit services to women in Kerala but gradually evolved into an organisation with a role in local government, providing government services. Kudumbashree even consults with other states in India and with governments abroad to set up similar community organisations.

My favourite part of the internship was being able to build relationships within Kudumbashree and outside it. I had several long conversations with Sri Sajith Sukumaran, the Chief Operating Officer of Kudumbashree NRO, who was able to tell me about the beginnings of the organisation and how it evolved. I also had the chance to learn more about all the different programmes that Kudumbashree implements. As part of my internship, I also attended a national workshop for convergence between local governments and community organisations around the country. Besides learning about programmes like Kudumbashree in other states, I also learned about various specific Kudumbashree initiatives, such as the BUDS schools for children with disabilities and a programme to manufacture Nutrimix, a nutritional supplement for children from ages 6 months to 3 years that is distributed by the State.

I am very grateful to IRIS and the Scott Kloeck-Jenson fellowship. The internship with Kudumbashree was a deeply rewarding experience to have had at this stage of my studies. It gave me a chance to learn more about my state and to think about my potential research topic

in a more holistic and complete way. I had started out with the aim of learning a little more about an organisation that is a big part of life and community in my home state. By the end of my two months there, however, I found myself asking what I could offer to Kudumbashree instead. As I progress through my PhD, I hope that I can spend some time each year working with Kudumbashree and thinking more about poverty, gender, and local government in Kerala.