

Leprosy People Association



NANDU

COOPERATIVES FORUM



PARTNERSHIP WITH KAVERI KALA MANRAM



Empowering Lives through Cooperative Societies: A Perspective

As the President of the Leprosy People Association, I am delighted to share my thoughts on how cooperative societies play a vital role in empowering and enhancing business networks for our members. For people affected by leprosy, these initiatives bring a renewed sense of purpose and opportunity, offering structured support to create meaningful changes in our lives.

One inspiring example is the Nandu Women Cooperative Society, which has taken remarkable steps to transform their community. With support from LPA and KKM, they have built a new business network, fostering financial independence and resilience. Women stepping into leadership roles within their families and communities signify this transformation, breaking barriers and inspiring change.

The society's efforts have not only increased members' incomes but also expanded their responsibilities, paving the way for further growth. With traditional jobs at its core, this cooperative is on the path to becoming a sustainable and independent force, empowering a community and setting a model for others to follow.

AGM Amarasinghe
President
Leprosy People Association

Greetings

Heartiest Congratulations

AI am very happy that the relationship between our HNB Bank and Kaveri Kala Mandra has continued for over a decade.

Among the many social works carried out by Kaveri Kala Mandra, the organization created to prevent the spread of the disease and implement rehabilitation aspects among the people affected by leprosy is to be congratulated and welcomed.

Under it, many positive developments have been made in the lives of women through the newly created loan assistance program in collaboration with our bank, which is a great success for this new initiative.

My heartiest congratulations to all of you who are now completing one year and I pray to the almighty that this project will be expanded and the lives of many more women entrepreneurs will be improved.

Our bank is always eager to work hand in hand in all your endeavours.

Mr. Mahesan Thayakaran
Regional Credit Head
Hatton National Bank, Northern Region.

Greetings



1. Introduction

Our Objectives

- Strengthened capacity of the People's Forum for Change and the leprosy-affected people who constitute its members.
- Societal inclusion through addressing all forms of discrimination and stigma.
- People's Forum for Change dedicated to eradicating leprosy stigma and discrimination in Sri Lanka.

The Leprosy People Association (LPA) was founded in 2016 by Kaveri Kala Manram (KKM) with the support of TLMBG to empower, support, and advocate for the rights of people affected by leprosy. Often overlooked and marginalized by authorities and communities, these individuals face deep-rooted stigma and discrimination. The establishment of the LPA marked a vital step in creating a dedicated platform to address their unique challenges.

Without a structured institution, the fight for rights and inclusion remains difficult. The LPA works to eliminate stigma and discrimination while fostering the capacity of its members to advocate for change. It also provides a safe, supportive space for individuals to unite and strengthen their voices against injustice.

By aligning its efforts with objectives such as advocacy, capacity development, and empowerment, the LPA continues to be a crucial force for change. Its mission emphasizes the importance of eliminating barriers and building an inclusive society where people affected by leprosy are treated with dignity and equality.

Why LPA Women cooperative?

Women are the backbone of Sri Lanka's economy, especially in vulnerable communities like farming and fishing. Despite their significant contributions, their efforts often go unrecognized, leaving them without a platform to grow or thrive. Many lack a space to build their capacity, develop business networks, and find the happiness they deserve. Recognizing this gap, the LPA Women Cooperative was established to unite these women into a single cooperative society, empowering them to strengthen their role in the economy.

The LPA's members are remarkable individuals who have pioneered various business initiatives, proving their resilience despite the odds. These women, once considered vulnerable, now stand as the resilient pillars of their communities. Through the cooperative, they gain opportunities for capacity building, economic growth, and mutual support, transforming their challenges into strengths.

The cooperative's mission is clear: to uplift women from vulnerable communities, empower them as resilient contributors, and enhance their role in the economy. By fostering unity, providing resources, and nurturing their potential, the LPA Women Cooperative ensures these women achieve their rightful place in society and the economy.

What is unique / innovative / interesting?

A unique feature of this action is that the members of the PAL Women's Cooperative are involved as activities implementers and not solely as activities beneficiaries. These activities are tailored to their needs by involving them in activity planning, design, and implementation. This process inherently results in capacity building of the LPA cooperative and its members and resonates with the identified necessity to empower women's activism in the leprosy People Association in Sri Lanka to promote self-reliant women community development. They have already shown initiatives in setting up new activities, such as promoting their agricultural production and food processing through Good Samaritan monthly marketing forum platforms.

Another unique feature of this cooperative activity is that the activities approaches empowering not only through enhancing LPA Women's Cooperative's access to livelihood opportunities, markets, and technologies, but also exposing them to business partners, cooperatives, and communities of different ethnic groups and empower them to become a empower actor in their own right. This exposure will serve as an initial footing for the members of the cooperative to enhance their communication, negotiation, and consensus building skills as well as their understanding of the overall economy development process





2. Outcomes

Outcome 1

Women affected by leprosy who are members of the Leprosy People Association increase their economic contribution through effectively accessing new market opportunities, resources and information that have opened as a result of a more peaceful environment.

As the Cooperative Marketing Society for women affected by leprosy is still in its early stages, tangible outcome-level progress has yet to be observed. Nevertheless, between January to June 2024, progress has been made to better design sustainable livelihood activities for the members of the LPA Women's Cooperative, which shall increase their annual income.

The Cooperative has undertaken a climate risk analysis to identify and examine the climate exposure levels, water availability, and soil profiles to develop a recommended list of seasonal crop cultivation that is suitable for the target region. The cooperative has also initiated discussions with potential local marketers to develop market linkages.

Roughly 92 women members of the PAL Women's Cooperative have been identified to be the first batch, to grow three varieties of fruits and vegetables in market demand.

They are also provided with technical support on production, and marketing network linkage on fishing, and agroproducts.

The cooperative has identified roughly 92 members of the LPA Women's Cooperative who own micro- and small enterprises. A needs assessment has been carried out and they will

further provided with support packages in improving business management programs along with the **Northern Province Industrial Development Authority**. Concerning water sustainability practices, the activities have already conducted an initial assessment of the needs of skills, and resource efficiency systems including wells, irrigation tools and fishing net especially crabs development tools to the first batch of beneficiaries through the initial assessment.

The empowering activities of the cooperative have also established data collection for membership registration in the LPA cooperative society within LPA administration as a wing of the LPA. The activities work on providing capacity-building training on accounts, and communication) to the management

District	Total LPA members	Women membership	LPA Women Cooperative members	Agro Products	Fishing	Total
Jaffna	160	96	34	14	20	34
Batticaloa	170	116	24	16	08	24
Polanaruv	62	28	12	12	0	12
Vavuniya	78	46	22	22	0	22
Mannar	6	4	0	0	0	0
Anurathapura	49	24	0	0	0	0
Total	525	314	92	64	28	92

of the village committee & their business and office bearers of the LPA women entrepreneurs' cooperative society. Initial discussion has taken place with the Northern Province Industrial Development Authority on the training component and joint intervention mechanism.

Outcome 2

Women affected by leprosy who are members of the Leprosy People Association leverage their increased social status to be a leading voice in the regions in all sector's contribution to the rights of women affected by leprosy.

At the beginning stage, there were roughly 92 members of the LPA Women's Cooperative. As of May 2024, the membership has expanded to roughly 519 members in LPA, which would allow the collaborative action to make greater presence, participation, and contribution to the rights of women and the socio-economic integration of the beneficiaries. The activities have initiated preparations for upcoming gender training for the LPA Women's Cooperative to enhance their leadership and negotiation skills in business settings as well as within households. The project will ensure a "gender integrated approach in agro production, business & marketing ", in which means participation and engagement are also encouraged. As such, the training will involve men within the community (e.g. male family members, potential stakeholders etc.) to enhance awareness of how men can play a role in supporting women to be more integrated in the supply and value chains.

The activities have started preparations to include the LPA Women's Cooperative in the nationwide cooperative network when LPA national level establishment in 25 districts. The participation of the cooperative in this network was encouraged by the Commissioner of the Department of Cooperative in Northern province. The network shall serve as a platform to facilitate knowledge exchange on business practices and crop cultivation, while also allowing the cooperative members to interact with those from other regions and ethnic groups, hence contributing to socio-economic integration and peacebuilding.



3. Achievements

NANDU **Cooperative achievements**

Since its inception, the Velanai Nandu Cooperative Society has achieved remarkable progress in a short time, empowering the crab-fishing community women through interest-free loans and capacity-building initiatives.

Increased Income

Our baseline and recent statistics show a significant increase in the cooperative members' income. In 2023, their annual income ranged from Rs. 45,000 to Rs. 60,000. However, within just four months of operations in 2024 (August–December), the average monthly income rose from Rs. 7,750 to Rs. 15,750—a 103.3% increase. Enhanced fishing methods and access to loans have led to income growth of 20%–50%, doubling their earnings and transforming livelihoods.

Growing Partnerships

Initially, collaborative action seemed challenging. Today, the cooperative has attracted numerous partners, including insurance firms, the Fisherman Committee, the Industrial Development Authority, and women's societies. These collaborations have boosted the cooperative's capacity and paved the way for a comprehensive action plan to further empower the community.

Improved Financial Management

With KKM covering interest payments, cooperative members have significantly improved their financial management. Members are motivated by a healthy competition to settle loan amounts promptly, showcasing their financial discipline. Small incentives for timely repayments have further enhanced their responsibility and management skills.

Collaboration with Exporters

Previously limited to local markets, cooperative members now sell directly to exporters, including Jaffna's leading Annai Seafood Exporters. The island's renowned Sri Lankan Blue Crabs are now in demand, and the cooperative's legal structure has opened doors to increased external support and market opportunities.

Leadership Development

Once limited to supporting their husbands, women in the community now play leadership roles in the cooperative and beyond. Capacity-building programs have fostered teamwork, shared responsibilities, and greater social engagement. The women's enhanced leadership and organizational skills are transforming their society into a model of empowerment and collaboration.

The Velanai Nandu Cooperative Society stands as a testament to the power of community-driven initiatives, creating sustainable change and uplifting the lives of the most vulnerable.

Members Name	Total amount of Loan	years	Repayment			Total Repayment amount	Baseline income	Current Income	Percentage
K.Arunthathi	100000.00	2	4200.00	4200.00	4200.00	12600.00	62000.00	75950.00	22.50%
M.Vanthani	100000.00	2	4200.00	4200.00	4200.00	12600.00	45000.00	71300.00	58.44%
S.Susiladevi	100000.00	2	4200.00	4200.00	4200.00	12600.00	66000.00	86800.00	31.52%
N.amirthakalai	70000.00	2	2900.00	2900.00	2900.00	8700.00	49000.00	90750.00	85.20%
S.Santhirakasan	70000.00	2	2900.00	2900.00	2900.00	8700.00	56000.00	85300.00	52.32%
S.Thevakumari	100000.00	2	4200.00	4200.00	4200.00	12600.00	72000.00	88900.00	23.47%
T.Vijayaluxmi	70000.00	2	2900.00	2900.00	2900.00	8700.00	48000.00	94200.00	96.25%
S.Nagakumari	75000.00	2	3125.00	3125.00	3125.00	9375.00	59000.00	104,150.00	76.53%

4. Best LP Cooperative members of the year 2025 Jaffna region.

1. Fish industry

I am Nagakumari, from Velanai-Chettipulam village. In 2015, I was diagnosed with leprosy, which brought immense challenges and hardships into my life. For years, I struggled, facing stigma and isolation. However, with the support of KKM, I was identified as a person affected by leprosy and was guided to start treatment. After undergoing treatment and being cured, I joined the Leprosy People Association (LPA), where I became an active member. This involvement gave me a sense of belonging and purpose, and it motivated me to rebuild my life.

Recently, through the Nandu (Sea Crab) Cooperative Society, I had the privilege of receiving a loan to expand my fishing work. Before this, I spent most of my time at home, unable to contribute financially to my household. However, the cooperative gave



me a new lease on life, enabling me to work independently and create a sustainable livelihood. Since joining the cooperative, I have been able to save money, significantly increase my income, and even repay the loan I received. This transformation has given me a new perspective on life and a clearer vision of where I can go in the future.

I am also incredibly grateful to KKM for their continuous support. Their monthly capacity development programs and business development orientations, organized in collaboration with the Industrial Development Authority, have been invaluable. These sessions have not only enhanced my skills but also boosted my confidence in pursuing a brighter future in the crab fishing industry. I now look forward to growing further in this field and making my life more stable and prosperous.

Our cooperative society members with the Provincial Director of the northern province industrial development department.





2. Agro business

S. Parameshwary, a 55-year-old farmer from Kaddupulum, Jaffna, faced an unexpected turn in life when she was diagnosed with leprosy in 2015. Her husband and grandson, Abisha, were also diagnosed the same year. Thankfully, early detection meant none of them developed any disabilities. Despite the challenges, Parameshwary remained resilient.



As a mother of six, with her eldest son aged 38 and her youngest still living at home at 22, she worked tirelessly to sustain her family. The support from TLMEW through KKM was a lifeline, providing her with a well, a water pump, 30 coconut seedlings, and some land. Abisha, meanwhile, was enrolled in KKM's 'Catch Them Young' scholarship program and has now become a volunteer with the Leprosy People's Association in Jaffna and supporting the field-level works that we carry out.

Parameshwary's farm is her pride. She cultivates onions, long beans, cassava,

pumpkins, and leafy vegetables, and tends to 30 thriving coconut trees. In 2024, she was honoured by the Divisional Secretariat for her success in agriculture despite being affected by leprosy and has since become a resilient figure in the community. Her earnings reach lakhs, with a net income of Rs. 200,000 to 500,000 per season. KKM attributes her improved well-being to empowerment in agriculture.

Notably, she pioneered pearl millet production in Jaffna, attracting market demand for her natural produce.

An active and early member of the Leprosy People Association, Parameshwary inspires others through her experiences and resilience. Despite losses due to climate change, she remains steadfast, saying, "Last year I lost a lot of money. This year, I won't grow onions but will cultivate pumpkins and cashew nuts instead." Her story embodies strength, adaptation, and hope in adversity.

Partners of Nandu Women Cooperative Society

HNB Bank

HNB Assurance

Industrial Development Authority

Fisherman Association - Velanai

Settipulam Govement Tamil Mixed School

Thamizhiyal Aayvu Naduvakam

