



## **An Impact Study - Micro Credit**

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## CRUSADE - At a Glance

CRUSADE (Centre for Rural Systems and Development) was set up in 1991 with the overall aim of poverty reduction and social advancement of poor and marginalized communities in rural Tiruvallur district north of Chennai.

CRUSADE works in 130 villages in two development blocks of Minjur and Sholavarm covering around 200,000 population.

### Genesis of Micro credit programme

CRUSADE for its initial experiment in 1991, identified a cluster of village hamlets in Minjur Block, Tiruvallur district in Tamil Nadu. Minjur is a small town, located 30 kms north of Chennai.

### Minjur's Statistics

Population	Panchayat Villages	Hamlets	Type of community
154148(2001)	56	238	Around 36% are Dalits – the major landless group

In 1997, CRUSADE extended the project area to one more block at Sholavaram within the radius of another 20 kms.

### Sholavaram's Statistics

Population	Panchayat Villages	Hamlets	Type of community
117316 (2001)	39	164	Around 28% Dalits – the major landless group

### Objective

The key objective of the project is to enable poor and resource less women members to take up and sustain an economic activity to supplement family's income and improve their quality of life by gaining knowledge and raising their confidence level.

### Focus

CRUSADE chose to work with women as they are most vulnerable sections of the community. By supporting the poor, landless women to organize themselves into self-help groups, CRUSADE has been able to reduce poverty by increasing income levels, improving healthcare, children's education and nutrition, and women's empowerment.

Without these services, the poor are continually at risk of slipping back into poverty because of unforeseen circumstances.

### Process

CRUSADE targeted village hamlets inhabited by dalit community as the poorest population. The profile of the target population is characterised by landlessness, illiteracy and poor amenities and poor housing conditions.

CRUSADE knows from experience that when women are supported, they gain control over their lives and the situation in their communities. Focusing on women is not just about equity and rights. It is also about effectiveness and impact. Because when women benefit, they share the benefits with their families and invest in their communities.

CRUSADE began its micro credit services in 1993 with just five groups. Today, there are around 485 groups both in Minjur and Sholvaram blocks.

## CRUSADE - An Impact Study of Micro Credit

The initial interaction of CRUSADE was through forming women Self-help Groups (SHGs). Forming such groups needed very little external inputs was easily replicable and self-sustaining. Since these groups are organized around savings and credit, the groups also addressed one of the acute felt needs of the members-credit- at an interest fixed by the group.

CRUSADE played a different role by conducting a survey to assess the economic status of the families to ensure involving only poorer households in the group. The usefulness of such a system was seen the replication of SHGs in the following years. With just five groups in 1993, today CRUSADE has 485 groups.

Details of savings mobilized and credit generated by groups in both the blocks of Minjur and Sholavaram are shown in the table below:

Block	No. of groups	No. of members	Savings Rs in lakh ( cumulative)	Common Fund Rs in lakh(cu)	Group lending Rs in lakh ( 2010/11)
<b>Minjur</b>	270	3887	145	175	430
<b>Sholavaram</b>	215	3148	115	70	142
<b>Total</b>	485	7035	260	245	572

Details of year-wise progress:

Year	No.of villages	No. of groups	No. of members	Savings (Rs in Lakh) cumulative	Common Fund Rs Lakh (Cumulative)	Group lending ( Rs in Lakh) not cumulative
<b>1993</b>	8	8	169	0.18*	-	0.64
<b>1997</b>	20	30	538	2.34*	-	17.52
<b>2003</b>	100	257	4062	38.20	27.09	151.83
<b>2006</b>	120	505	7832	92.44	68.34	255.25
<b>2010</b>	130	522	8270	213.37	180.64	434.90
<b>2011</b>	130	512	7671	216.22	208.41	571.63
<b>2012</b>	130	488	7035	256.32	244.22	421.66

### **Cluster Development**

There are now 7000 women members affiliated to 485 women groups organized by CRUSADE. The groups are federated into cluster, Panchayat and project level for sustaining the structures and activities.

As SHGs proliferated, the need arose for restricting of groups and close monitoring. At the initial stages SHGs formed in two or three Panchayats were combined into a cluster. About 50 to 75 SHGS in a contiguous area formed a cluster.

Each cluster is managed by a female organizer, who is often recruited from among the SHG leaders to ensure continuity and sustainability.

### **Association of SHGs & Pudumai Pengal Trust ( PPI)**

Each block has an Association of SHGs which comprise of around 30 members each who are SHG leaders from villages. Both associations are represented in the registered Trust – PPI. The Trust represents all the groups in the project area. The Trust has nine members which takes all major decisions. The SHGs joining the association have to pay an annual fee of Rs 100 as administration cost to get the services of the Trust.

### **Accountability and Credibility**

CRUSADE introduced a central monitoring system from April 2009 to get updates on group savings, common fund, group lending and bank loans. Through this monitoring system, we are able to follow up on inactive groups. Field staff gathers the information on monthly basis for each SHG and formulate the data Panchayat wise. Monthly information is consolidated and Panchayat wise abstract is prepared at block and project level.

The groups are linked to local banks and Government for their external credit needs and to avail Government grants.



At this meeting members give details of accounts and unsettled loan details. Request for loan by members is considered and if appropriate, granted.

Once the groups are formed, stabilized and showed sustenance, CRUSADE provided loans to enhance the group's fund which

was repayable. Analysis showed that the loans were availed for pressing problems such as medical, education of children, social functions, marriages, ceremonies and to redeem pledged articles. CRUSADE learnt that very little money was used for productive purposes.

## **Income Generation Activities for women**

For many women across the two blocks, every day is a struggle for income. The option of self-employment has its own pitfalls for rural women. Those looking to start their own businesses often lack the necessary training and experience, and there are no support centers in rural areas to provide advice on technology, finance, administration, production planning, marketing, and other aspects of business management.

CRUSADE understands that the fight against poverty should pay special attention to the needs of women, especially women in the rural areas. Therefore, CRUSADE provides vocational & entrepreneurship development training and motivate women to take up income generating activity. Now a majority of the women are engaged in either any economic activity or go out for employment

CRUSADE also addresses issues such as providing health education , literacy, upgrading skills for economic activity, housing and capacity building for addressing women's and common village issues.

CRUSADE carried out a sample survey in 2009 to find out how women members of SHGs are involved in economic activities. A simple questionnaire was administered to around 1500 members in 100 groups. The findings are:

- Around 18.5 % (1218) women are fully employed, half of them self employed.
- Nearly 10% (649) are in part time self-employment.
- About 47.5% (3120) do agri labor work or in National Employment programme
- Around 24% (1571) are not engaged in work, but look after the house. The reasons are aged, having small children or sick.

CRUSADE has collected more information from some women who are self-employed, either fulltime or part time. The stories in the following pages reveal their struggles, uphill tasks that they had to take and the success now they have, thanks to the support of the self-help groups.

Hope the varied nature of enterprises women are involved make an interesting reading.

## Sweets and cosmetics to generate income



Positive changes of this kind for Santhi and other families in the community have come about through the efforts of self-help group, established with the support of CRUSADE.

Santhi's shop attracts small children and young girls in the small village of Nandiambakam in Minjur block of Tamil Nadu.

Her shop displays a variety of colourful sweets, packets of biscuits, fresh and ripe bananas, juicy tomatoe sauce sachets and the factory packed potatoe chips. For the teenage girls, Santhi has the bright and different shaped 'bindhis' and the array of cosmetic, a girl would dream of.

Santhi loves selling goods, a business through which she gets her daily source of livelihood. Santhi, 27 years, is a member of Malligai SHG since its inception in April, 2009. There are 20 members in the group. She invested Rs 20,000 for this business, with a loan of Rs 8000 from the group. The sale proceeds is around Rs 300 per ay (Rs 9000 per month) and earns a gross profit of Rs 60 per day (Rs 1800 per month). After expenses of Rs 400 per month (Rent 300 +Electricity 50+other expenses 50). She earns a net profit of Rs 1400 per month.

Her husband Ganesan is employed in a lorry booking company and the couple have two children, Lokesh (8 years), studying 3<sup>rd</sup> std and Akshaya (3 years) in LKG.

Today, Shanthi is able to send her children to school regularly and save for the future too. She says "I am convinced that with CRUSADE, my story would be different."

## Micro loan adds colours to saree business

In times of mounting economic woes and rising food prices, microfinance is helping poor families keep their livelihood going, their self-esteem intact, and their hopes alive.

Padma Devi, 38, is a housewife living with her daughter (11 years) mother-in-law and husband. She is a member of Malligai SHG in Neithavoyal since its inception in January 2005. There are 18 members in the group.

Her husband is a driver. But it has become an uphill battle for him to make both ends meet. While his income remained where it has been for many years now, everything else seems to have changed - in fact jumped up - be it the cost of food, medical bills, or needs of his daughter going to school.



**Padma's neighbours show interest in buying sarees from her.**

Padma, sensing the bumps in the road ahead, decided to chip in with her own little effort to support the family. She has a few years' experience in selling sarees. She availed a bank loan of Rs 15,000 through group Revolving fund and invested in the business. She

procures sarees in Chennai during peak season for sales (between July and January). She sells the sarees in nearby villages. She makes a total profit of Rs 6500 in the season and expenses are in the range of Rs 2000. So she makes a net profit of Rs 4500.

Padma's decision to invest in saree business and the subsequent success of her initiative has had a major positive impact on her family's life. She now earns nearly as much as her husband does and is in a position to share the burden of running the household. She is setting aside a small part of her income for the education of her daughter. **"I have not been lucky enough to have education, but I would do all I can to help my children go to school and then to college,"** she says with a firm resolve in her voice.

## Side by side, husband and wife light up lives with mud lamps



Income generation activities such as making mud lamps give women the tools to make a sustainable living.

Pattammal, a member of Bharatha Thai group focuses on getting the shape of lamps to accuracy. She together with her husband makes 800-1000 mud lamps a day.

Bharatha Thai Group began in October 2005. There are 12 members in the group.

Pattammal used group loan, Bank Revolving Fund and Direct loan for the business

She sells around 40,000 lamps at 0.35 per lamp and thus makes Rs.14,000. She spends Rs.5000 towards raw material cost and fire wood. Thus she makes a net profit of Rs.9000.

She also makes 1000 mud stoves and sells at the rate of Rs.15 /= per stove. She spends Rs.6500 towards raw materials and transport expenses. Thus makes a profit of Rs. 8500 for 1000 stoves.

Her husband Krishnan, aged 50 who is involved in this business has studied up to 5<sup>th</sup> Std. Her son Arul, 28, studied up to 8<sup>th</sup> is running a meat shop. He is married and his wife is also involved in this business. Her son has two children Jennifer (daughter) studying 4<sup>th</sup> Std and Prithviraj (son) studying 5<sup>th</sup> Std.

## Crafting hope; weaving dreams



Poor education and a lack of skills and obligations at home are the obvious obstacles that prevent women from work. They also face a struggle to access information that may help them set up a small business or get the training that would improve their employment prospects.

Gowri, aged 24, came to the village from Andhra Pradesh after her marriage. As a young bride, she dreamt of a bright future. With five years' experience in saree embroidery, she wanted to get into business right away. When she heard of the work of the SHG in her village and benefits, she quickly became a member of Neithal SHG six months back. There are 16 members in the group.

She has invested Rs 4,000 for the cot used in embroidery. She charges from Rs 400 to 4000 for embroidery design on one saree.

Gowri has a good sale during wedding and festive season. Apart from this she trains other women in the village charging Rs 300 for one month training. She earns Rs 4500 /month. She has 5 yrs of experience in the business.

Her husband Anbu (26) has studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> std and does unskilled work. Their only daughter is 11/2 yrs old. They live in a rented house paying Rs 1500/month.

## Small loan gives more time for this mother



By giving loans to women like Porselvi, CRUSADE has contributed to their independence, financial security, and sense of self-worth.

Though Porselvi looks cheerful in the photograph, her life is not as rosy as one would imagine. These are her three children aged 12, 11 and 2. Her two elder children are mentally challenged and Porselvi has a huge task of taking care of them. These two kids are in a special school.

Porselvi has been contributing a small income to the family through selling idli and dosa batter. But, she had a small grinder of two litre capacity and she could produce only 25 packets of ½ kg each per day.

Porselvi could produce more packets if she had a grinder with a larger capacity. She approached CRUSADE for a loan to buy new grinder. CRUSADE through the Trust gave her a loan of Rs 10,000 and with her contribution of Rs 1500, she bought 5 litre capacity grinder. Now she is able to make 70 packets which increased her daily income to Rs 280 per day.

Her husband, Sivakumar is a milk distributor and also does some electrical job. Both the disabled children were referred by CRUSADE health worker to get National Identity cards which enabled the family to receive monthly allowance Rs 1000 for each child from government.

"It has made a big difference," she says. "My family's standard of living will be much better than before. And it is good to have a steady job close to home, because I have my young children and to look after. If they need me, I can go to help immediately."

## Stitching for success



The micro credit project brings financial security to women without any assets.

Maheswari makes a trip to the exporting company in Chennai to collect the cut pieces for shirts. She

has undertaken a contract from this company to put together the cut pieces and make complete shirts. She has taken two young girls to help her out and between them, they stitch around 10 to 12 shirts a day.

Maheswari, 36, is a member of Neithal SHG in Neithavoyal village since its inception in May, 2006. She studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> std. There are 16 members in the group. She obtained Rs 30,000 bank loan through the group and bought 3 sewing machines with electric motor.

Maheswari gets Rs 10 per shirt. After expenses of Rs 2 per shirt, she earns around Rs 300 per day and paying wages for two persons employed.

Her husband S.Chandran, aged 40 is employed in a textile shop. They have an own house and have two children.

## Cool drink business 'Cools' the economic condition at home



CRUSADE provided many women in rural villages with training and support for building small enterprises, thus enabling them to improve their skills, become more productive, earn higher incomes, and gain greater confidence in themselves.

Ramani, 52 and her husband, Munirathinam 62, run a shop which sells bottled cool drinks.

Ramani is a member of Thaamarai (lotus) SHG in Neithavoyal since its inception in April, 2005. There are 18 members in the group.

She is able to sell on an average 75 bottles a day and gets a gross profit of Rs 150 per day (Rs 2 per drink). Monthly gross profit is Rs 4500 and she spends Rs 2500 ( Rent –Rs 600, electricity Rs 650, one worker Rs 1000 & other expenses Rs 150) . She has taken bank loan of Rs 27,500 through group Revolving fund & DR and Group loan of Rs 10,000. The supply is done through distributors who deliver at the shop.

She has studied up to 9<sup>th</sup> std. Her second son runs a similar shop in the nearby market. Her husband Munirathinam assists her in running the shop. They live in a joint family with two sons married. Elder son is an electrician.

## Loans fuel Kaliasammal's petty shop



Income generation activities has a vital role to play in economic development. Loans can increase the growth of small businesses.

During summer, when it is hot and humid, the labourers working at the construction site, or the travelers on journey, stop at Kaliasammal's shop to quench the thirst. Kaliasammal's shop exhibits fresh tender coconuts, bananas and the locally made sweets.

For Kaliasammal, who was selling fruits, flowers and coconuts in the temple premises a few years back, selling goods worth of Rs 700 per day is indeed a transition.

Kaliasammal, 35 years, has studied up to 7<sup>th</sup> std. She joined the Saradha SHG, Devadanam which was started in 1997, thirteen years back. There are 18 members in the group.

She invested Rs 10,000 in the business, borrowing initially Rs 5000 from the group. She sells goods worth Rs 700 per day and earns a net profit of Rs 200 per day. With her long standing and good business, she was able to save and constructed house and her shop at a cost of Rs 60,000 on a house plot worth Rs 50,000. Before joining the group, she was only engaged in daily wages and lived in a rented house.

Her husband Vengatesh (39) is a machine operator and they have one son aged 16 who is helping in running the shop. Their daughter, aged 14 is studying 10<sup>th</sup> std.

## Roping for better avenues



Lakshmi's strong work ethic is the driving force behind her transformation into a prosperous entrepreneur, with the help of microcredit loans.

Lakshmi, aged 35 years has permanent buyers from her neighbouring villages to buy ropes, fiber and brushes. With her educational background up to 9<sup>th</sup> standard, she is able to handle her customers and keep accounts too.

Lakshmi is a member of Sakthi SHG in Karanodai since its inception in March,2009. There are 12 members in the group. She procures ropes, fibre, brushes from far off places such as Orissa, Andhra (other states) and Salem. At a time she procures goods worth of Rs 40,000 and the sale proceeds is Rs 50,000 , thus making a profit of Rs 10,000 over a period of three months ( around Rs 3300 per month) .

Her husband, Kumar (40) is an illiterate and does unskilled work. They have three children – daughter Prema (20) doing B.com, and two sons (Murali & Surya) studying +2 & 10 respectively. They live in their own house.

## Soft idlis and tasty snacks pave the way for education



CRUSADE's micro credit programme seeks to ensure women are fully included in income-generating activities, given their crucial role in rural communities in India, particularly in small landholding families.

Radha swiftly ladles the batter into the idly maker to make a quick business of breakfast to the construction workers in nearby villages. She has cheerful attitude to welcome her customers which adds value to her business. Yet she is an illiterate and widow, making efforts to meet both ends. She is a member of Selva Vinayakar SHG in Kalpakkam since its inception in April, 2004.

She sells daily 200 idlies @ Rs 2 each from 5 Kg rice. The production expenses including side dishes are Rs 260 and thus make a profit of Rs 160 from the sale and another Rs 20 from the sale of other snack items.

She has two grown up daughters – 25&21 – who are helping in her business and the son (19) is doing 2<sup>nd</sup> yr engineering. They live in their own thatch house on temple land. She has taken education loan for from the Trust for her son's higher education.

Recently she had been allotted a house under govt housing scheme. As the money given by Govt was not sufficient, she borrowed Rs 40,000 from the housing company ( ARH) promoted by CRUSADE which enabled to complete the construction.

## Fishing for a bright future in Naalur village



CRUSADE provides members with vital business, leadership and life skills training. This collaborative approach helps build self-esteem and status, empowering these entrepreneurs to develop expertise, make bold decisions and pursue dreams.

Villagers throng Geeta's fish stall to get the glimpse of different variety of fishes. Geeta's makeshift stall at the village market 'springs' up every day with local fish - rain or shine.

Geetha is a member of Vanjiamman group since its inception in February, 2005. She has taken loans from the group on different occasions. She has been engaged in selling fish in the village and procures fish from Pulicat, the coastal village. She procures Rs 2600 worth fish each day which she is able to sell at Rs 3400, thus making a gross profit of Rs 800 and net profit of Rs 500 after meeting processing and transport expenses.

Geeta lives in Naalur village in Minjur Block.

Her husband, Selvam (50) is employed in laying thatch roofs. Their son, Janakiraman (21), studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> and is a contract labourer.

## Decoration skill generate income



Many women in rural Tamil Nadu find it hard to make the money they need. Poor education and lack of skills are the obvious obstacles, while obligations at home may prevent women traveling to find work.. CRUSADE's micro credit programmes have enabled these women to generate income and gain confidence.

Nagammal, aged 45 who is an illiterate and a member of Sakthi SHG in Karanodai, Munivel Nagar makes a gross profit of Rs 1300. She earns this through selling decoration powder.

Nagammal is a member of the group since its inception in March, 2009. There are 12 members in the group. She procures decoration powder from Salem @ Rs 1500/ton (5 tons at a time). She sells 50 kilo bags at Rs 190 /bag. She thus makes a gross profit of Rs 1300.

Her husband, Anjaneyar aged 55 looks after the petty shop wherein they have invested Rs 20,000 and daily sales is Rs 1000-1500 and the net profit is Rs 250 –Rs 300.

They live in their own house and have a son –Ganapathy aged 23 has studied up to 9<sup>th</sup> std who is an electrician and earns Rs 400 /day when he has work.

## Weddings bring income to Danakotty



Micro credit programmes have targeted women in order to contribute to poverty alleviation, and promote women's empowerment. It has a positive impact on the women and their households, as their living conditions - such as access to housing, sanitary facilities, health services, education and nutritional food - improve.



The bride's mother looks for jewels that would adorn her daughter, while many relatives; all women add their wisdom in helping her to choose. The venue is Danakotty's house at SIRRARASUR village.

Danakotty, aged 39 yrs is a member of Mannadiyan SHG since its inception in January, 2004. There are 13 members in the group. She rents out imitation jewellery to weddings and other functions. She has invested Rs 20,000 from her own source and obtained group credit of Rs 5000 and secured RF of Rs 2000. She began this business in 2006.. She rents these articles 12 times on an average per year and charge Rs 250 per day. She spends Rs. 500 per year on polishing. There are no other expenses. She therefore get a net income of Rs 2500/annum.

Her husband Pandurangan, aged 45 studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> std and is a driver. They have two sons - Vignesh, 19, studying engineering (ECE) and Shanthosh, 16, is in 11<sup>th</sup> standard.

## Growing greens for better future



To Ellammal's neighbours, she is a model of success, but she values her sense of empowerment more than the money she earns.

The greens look fresh and Ellammal with a big smile, carefully bundles them to take it to the local market.

Ellammal is a member of Arul Jothi group since its inception. There are 12 members in the group. She has taken 10 cents of land on lease basis ,paying Rs. 800/= per year. In one month she grows 150 bundles of greens fetching Rs.450/=. Per annum it's about Rs.5400/=. Towards ploughing, fertilizer, weeding and irrigation she spends Rs. 1050/= Thus she earns a net profit of Rs.3550/= (5400-1850).

Her husband Mr. Suresh (40yrs) studied up to 5<sup>th</sup> Std is helping in marketing greens. They have one daughter Kavya, 6yrs old studying in first std and son Ramachandran , 31/2 yrs is in preschool.

## Harvesting for a green future



We are very happy now as my children can go to school, we have nutritious meals, and I am looking for an extra lot to produce other vegetables too”.

There is a brisk sale at the local market. Chellammal, carefully weighs the ladies fingers and gives them to the woman in the market.

She tells her that they are fresh, just plugged from the garden.

Chellammal is a member of Samandhipoo SHG since its inception in July 2000. There are 16 members in the group. She has taken 15 cents of land on lease basis and the annual lease amount Rs.1000/= She grows ladies finger in the land thrice a year. She can harvest 30 days and get 20 kg per day. And the average price of the vegetable is Rs. 8 per kg. The sale proceeds comes Rs. 14,400 in one year. She has to spend Rs.1800 towards ploughing, seeds, planting, weeding, irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides. The total expenses 3 times come to Rs.5400+1000 for lease. Therefore she makes a net profit of Rs.8000/per annum.

Her husband Kuppan, (48) is an illiterate and is engaged in agriculture labour. They have one son Ajay (13) studying 9<sup>th</sup> Std.

## Flowering the future

Micro credit means a lot to poor women. Their status both in their home and in society improves when they earn and contribute to the family income.



An important strategic change reported by women and men was that men's view of women and their status in the family had improved because men valued the extra income that women contributed to the household. Both needed to work together to ensure repayment of the loan.

Sivasankari, aged 40, is a member of Kalaimagal group started in August.2003. There are 13 members in the group. Sivasankari wanted to provide better educational facilities to her children avail medical facilities and enhance their living standard.

Both she and her husband, sell flower garlands in Minjur market. They procure Rs.1800 worth of flowers and other materials from Chennai wholesale market. They spend Rs. 1200 a month towards rent, tax and other expenses and another Rs. 200/day for transport. They sell 40 garlands per day @ Rs.40 / garland. They make a net profit of Rs.6000 per month. During festival seasons there will be more business.

They have one daughter, Yamini - 15, studying 10<sup>th</sup> std and two sons, Saikumar - 13, studying 8<sup>th</sup> and Kubesh Kumar - 12, studying 7<sup>th</sup>.

## Paving the way to prosperity



Hope is one of the intangible benefits of the programme. Another is confidence. "Because of the support of my SHG, I can stand on my own feet now," Mariammal explained.

Her main source of income comes from selling Idli, Vada, Bonda and "Sundal" baked gram - a local delicacy. Each morning she

would make Idlis, keep the basket on her head, walk around the village and sell them. This business would be over by 10 am.

She then sells snacks to workers of a Brick Chamber and evening snacks to workers of MGREGP (Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Programme). Her income steeped, enabling her to have a better living condition. She makes Rs 500 per day. She gives snacks on credit to the workers and collects the money later.

While the family lives humbly, today they earn enough money to pay for food and children's school fees. Mariammal is even able to tuck away a little money each month, and aspires to buy some jewellery for her daughters.

"With the extra money I can buy all of the supplies I need to produce larger amounts of snacks. I can sell more snacks, and since I can buy in bulk the cost is less," Mariammal says.

Mariammal is a member of Kottiamman Group II in Poonthoppu colony village. She is an illiterate. She has three sons and three daughters. She lives in a government provided house.

## Style, design and innovation brings in hope for Kokila



Micro credit facilities, has brought both security and hope. Two words the women use often in describing the project are "Nimmathi" and "Muneattram"— meaning peace of mind and progress.

CRUSADE's tailoring centre has shown Kokila her how to adapt her skills to suit the contemporary market. This will have a significant impact on her family finances.

Kokila, aged 27 yrs is a member of Mahalakshmi Group in Velur village in Minjur block. She studied up to 12<sup>th</sup> standard. Kokila lives with her husband and two children who are studying.

Before marriage, she learnt tailoring from sister and sister in law who had formal training in tailoring. After marriage when she came to Velur village, to support her husband in running the family, she bought a small old sewing machine and was able to cater to simple orders from the neighbours. She is earning now Rs 150 per day.

After CRUSADE started a tailoring training in her village, she enrolled in the centre and started formally learning the skill so that in future she can stitch all cloths and earn more income.

"Since CRUSADE's tailoring center came to teach me, I have been able to use more colors and do different designs," she said. "In the past, I stitched without any designs. But with better design and color, I can charge a better price, and that really makes a difference to daily life. The extra money means I can help my children and anything else they need."

## **Conclusion**

Our programme provides a range of financial services to the poor, thereby broadening the scope of financial inclusion of those not served by the conventional banking system. Our borrowers, most of whom are women, use the loans to better manage their household finances and engage in various income generating activities to build a livelihood for themselves and their families.

CRUSADE's micro credit programme has done much to improve the status of women in the villages. Women never used to go out of the house in these villages. Now there is a chairwoman of the local Panchayat - an elected representative.

For the members of the SHGs, the project has also brought financial security. For the first time in generations, women from the poorest section of society—those without any assets—have money. The savings might seem meager to an outsider, but in rural Tamil Nadu this money is the only insurance poor families have against illness or accident.