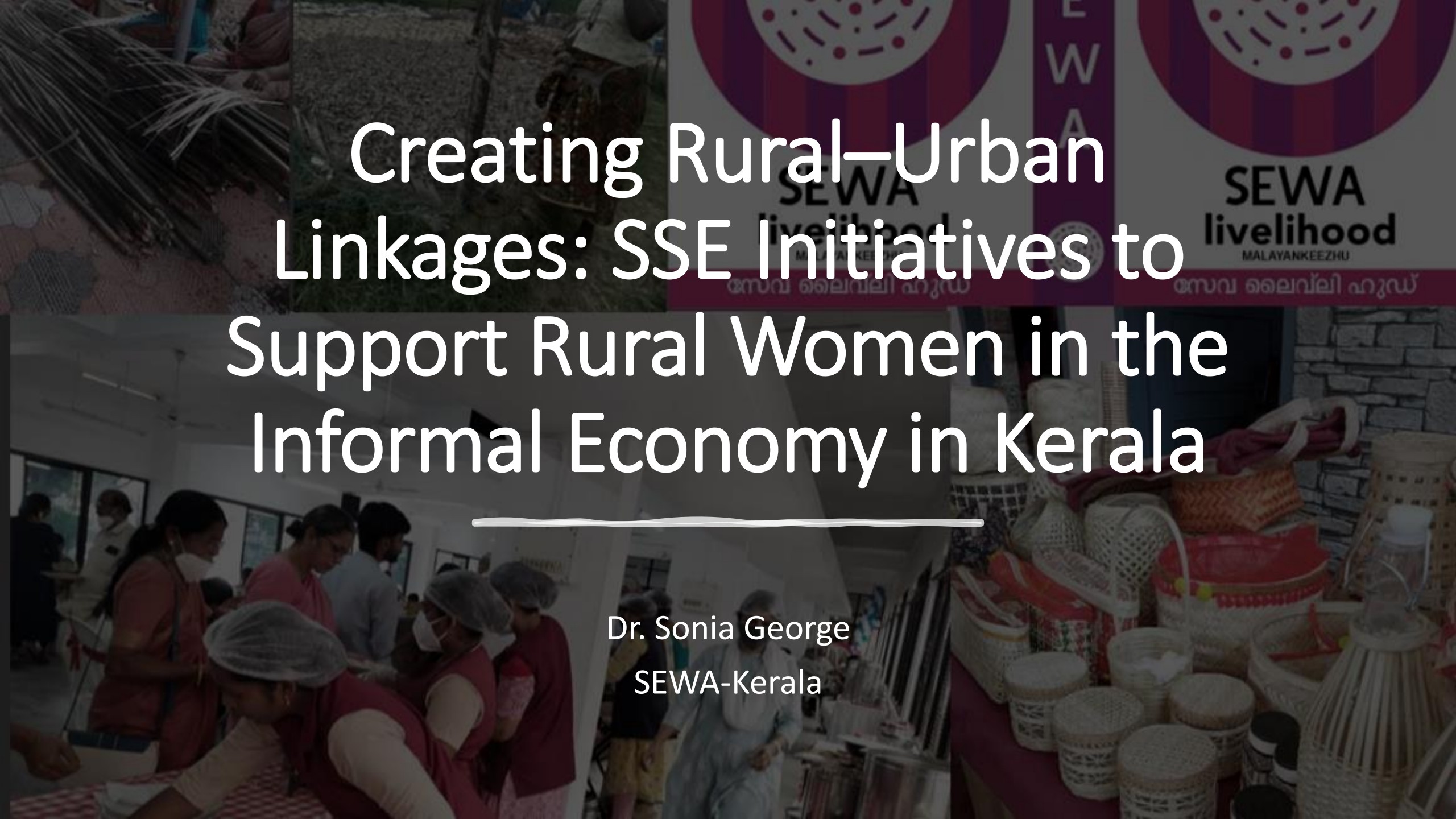




Creating Rural–Urban Linkages: SSE Initiatives to Support Rural Women in the Informal Economy in Kerala

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SEWA-Kerala

Key challenges faced by rural women in the informal economy in Kerala

Economic and Financial Challenges

- Achieving the minimum income target
- Micro finance loans and financial burdens on women
- Increasing cost of infrastructure – space rent, electricity, maintenance
- Decreasing access to direct and cheap access of raw materials

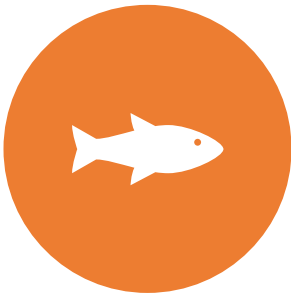
Social, Cultural and Organizational Challenges

- Increasing burden of women within the families
- Prevailing gender norms
- Threat to collectivization
- Mushrooming individual business enterprises

Environmental Challenges

- Climate changes and its consequences

SEWA Kerala



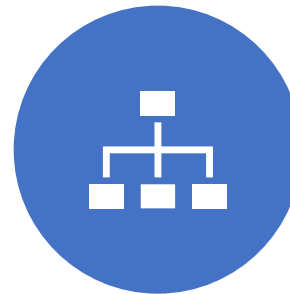
Started in 1983 through organising Fish workers, Reed Workers, other Rural economy workers



Job and income losses in the traditional sectors were the biggest challenges faced in the beginning



Apart from trying to find alternate income generating opportunities for the women workers, sustained efforts to address the issues of the traditional economy workers were made



This led to many combinations of collectives and interlinkages within the organisational structure



Reed Federation

- A federation of women workers who are traditional reed workers
- Product diversification trainings and skill trainings were given to around 1000 women workers
- Utility products are developed to find a common market
- Food baskets, Cloth bins, Pen stands, Rice strainers etc. have got regular customers
- Products are sold through exhibitions and SEWA Livelihood outlets

FISH WORKERS COLLECTIVE

- While men fish, fisher women takes the responsibility of selling the fish
- They buy fish directly from the shore and reach housing areas, streets or markets to sell their fish
- COVID disturbed this system as many men from other communities started selling fish using their two or three wheelers
- SEWA Fresh fish collective was formed to bring women fish workers together to sell the fish through whatsapp groups
- Both older women's and young women's experience intertwined to sustain the collective





Agricultural Collectives

- Collective Farming-Vegetables
- Mushroom cultivation – skill training, distribution of seeds
- Seasonal value-added products like Jack fruit, Banana, Mango, star fruit etc.
- Product selling through rural markets in residential areas,
- Regular follow-ups and also diversified cultivation guidelines discussed with the local groups



Value added products

- Paper products made from wastepaper by a group of women
- Jackfruit processing –Making pappads, chips, Halwa etc.





SEWA Livelihood

- SEWA Livelihood is a brand developed to support women as a marketing avenue for their products and also a means to generate income through food
- It has developed 6 outlets in different districts of Kerala to sell the products prepared by the members
- Each such centers are managed by 5-6 women under the federation SMSS Annam



Organic Bazar



- Another initiative to connect the collectives is organizing monthly organic bazars
- Products from all the units including fish, vegetables, milk products, reed etc. are brought under one platform
- Participate in state and district level exhibitions conducted by government departments
- Large quantity of sales during festival times like Onam, Christmas etc.



Challenges towards Sustainability

Corporate dominance in business and eroding social networks

Gender/Community-based economic and social marginalisation,

Depleting natural resource base

Lack of access to technical skills and digital literacy

Limited policy support and loopholes in the governance process .



THANK YOU