

# **Information Support for Indian Rural Community**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper made an attempt to explore and describe the information support in Indian rural community, where the work culture is mechanized. The dimension of trained manpower in information communication technology, manpower development, distribution of information communication role has been discussed.*

**KEYWORDS:** ICT, manpower, information, rural community.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Libraries and education is partner since time of ancient civilization. This has been growing from time to time and has reached a stage inseparable in the age of modernization industrialization. The bonds between education and libraries have been further reinforced with the realization of the value of information as an important component. The role of libraries and information centers were regarded as important institutions for transformation of individual society to information society is predicted by the end of this century.

## **Rural Development**

Development is being ascribed with newer meanings in these days. The new emphasis on development is more towards achieving improvements in the quality of life leading to higher human development, equity and empowerment especially of the rural poor, which can play a major role in national development. The focus was mainly on raising knowledge of the rural people Successive governments at the center and in different states those are Karnataka i.e bhoomi project have made efforts to improve the situation through introduction of various development schemes, which are being implemented by Panchayati Raj institutions and non-governmental organizations, besides other government agencies. But the picture is still not at all rosy, which proves that the efforts so far made have yielded only limited results. One of the major reasons for this is possibly lack of sufficient information support to rural people for their development.

### **The meaning of Information and Knowledge in the Context of Development**

- Scholars define information as a set of data, facts, and figures that have been processed in such a way that they are meaningful. They make sense. When information is applied to doing something and is globally applicable, it is said to have become knowledge. People naturally use information and knowledge to organize their view of history and culture.
- When Information Resource Centres (IRCs) become a tool for human development, community users of information are urged to cultivate and adopt a critical attitude towards the information.
- In other words, the development of knowledge becomes a process. It is different from the finished product, which is ready to be taught, used and applied globally or under any situation

### **Role of Information towards rural community**

There is a relationship between information and community development. The rural community has limited knowledge to the information that allows them to make decisions and to support the process of rural transformation and development. Limited access to information and knowledge prevents the full use and potential growth of intelligence in rural people. Therefore, we have to identify the information needs of rural peoples and to assess the best means of having those needs fulfilled for the benefit of community development.

### **Information infrastructure**

- Information products and services
- Information dissemination mechanism

### **Information products and services**

Information dissemination is solely dependent on the availability of information products and services (i.e. secondary information sources). In India rural people lack such products and services. Little efforts are made to collect the scattered primary information which is of vital importance for rural community for their development and prepare value added secondary Information products and services rural people still have to depend on age-old products and sources of the second kind.

### **Information dissemination mechanism**

Even if required information products and services are available, these cannot reach the end users unless there is a good mechanism for disseminating such information. As a result, the available information often does not reach the end-users at proper time.

### **Current scenario in Indian rural people for providing information**

- Information infrastructures, especially suitable dissemination mechanism, utilizing information and communication technologies (ICT). Some instances of such efforts to create, collect and host information of interest to the rural community to improve the rural livelihood are briefly described here:
- C-DAC developed an Internet enabled Mobile Digital Library (DDGS) for common citizen, for promoting literacy and for remote areas using Mobile Van with satellite connection for connectivity to Internet and fitted with printer, scorer, cutter and binding machine point

- ITC one of India's largest exporters of agricultural commodities has launched e-choupal in June 2000. "ITC's e-choupal has already reached 3.1 million farmers and is expanding into 30 new villages a day-making it Corporate India's most ambitious rural initiative ever" E-choupal is infact Internet based agricultural information service through which villager can access agricultural information of their concern, buy seeds, fertilizers etc, and sell their agriculture produce.
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- Many State governments also stepped into and launched their programmes for e-readiness.
- Kerala Government is setting up information kiosks, named as Akshay Kendras in different villages. These information kiosks have been launched to leverage more on the benefit of IT for more transparent and people friendly governance and to digitize the rural land revenue a record.
- Bhoomi Project was launched by the Karnataka Government to bring the area closer to the national mainstream.

### **New Concepts**

- Besides the above initiatives, two new concepts have been initiated
- Electronic doorway Library
- Kiosk-on-wheel

### **Proposed Electronic doorway Library**

DELNET (Delhi library network) has floated a new concept of Electronic doorway Library, which envisages a more comprehensive coverage. It has proposed to the Planning Commission and the Department of Culture that such libraries be set in a phased manner. According to the proposal, each EDL is to be attached to the existing facility like school, gram panchayat, cooperative society, youth and voluntary organization, etc. Special attention is to be given to the requirements of children, women and physically handicapped. As it is essential to offer such information to the people of rural India which they need and can use in improving their life.

Five subject areas have been identified, viz., health and welfare, agriculture, education, general information and small scale industries on which appropriate resources need to be selected or developed a new. In each state at least one library will be selected for creation of databases of bibliographic records. Each EDL will be provided with a computer system with Internet connectivity and it will offer access to government generated information, information relating to courses and continuing education, local level information, information specially created for this project and e-mail and database access facilities.

### **Kiosk-on-wheel**

The Indian institute of Technology, Kanpur has developed a mobile information Kiosk for rural India. It is dust proof unit on board a cycle rickshaw, called Info tell. It will connect to the web through wireless system. It has

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battery bank that will be charged as the entrepreneur pedals from street to street, village to village to provide information and e-mail services.

### **Role of rural sector information Resource Centre**

Information resource centre can play major role supporting community development and the transformation of the rural sector.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- ✓ The objective of Information Resource Centre should be to speed up the rate of community development and rural transformation, to capture indigenous knowledge, and to strengthen community participation and empowerment, by providing access to a basic stock of knowledge and information for the rural community.
- ✓ To achieve this mission, Information Resource Centre has to take additional roles and responsibilities from the traditional roles, patterns and nature of providing information support, information services and literature to the rural community.

### **Community Information Seeking Patterns and Use**

Each of the groups needs slightly different communication strategies. The main groups that need special attention are -

- Semi-literate and New Literate Community Members
- Women Members
- Young Community Members

### **Reading Groups**

Reading groups help the semi-literate people increase and strengthen their reading skills. They will involve reading newspapers, literacy primers, and novels. Sharing new ideas and holding discussion forums to discuss social issues. The Information Resource Centre may invite a speaker to talk about a topic that the group members have read about. In this way, Group members can share and contribute their own thinking on the topic.

### **Radio and Audio-Cassette Listening Forums**

The Information Resource Centre may organize listening forums around radio programmes with interesting development content. For example, health, extension programmes, and drama with community development themes are good topics. After the programme is finished, the participants will discuss the issues and develop action plans, whenever possible.

### **For Women Members**

Finding space and time, when the workload of women allows them to participate in the activities of the Information Resource Centre. They may have some free time on Sundays or in the evenings. Women can hold meetings. During the meetings, they may read useful materials together and hold discussions.

### **For young community members**

- As information resource centre may introduce young people to their own cultural heritage through folklore, songs, poetry, handicrafts, and traditional agricultural and health practices.
- Many young people may still be students, continuing their education. They need educational materials of all types well as a quiet place to study,

### **To Strengthen Community Participation**

- ✓ To identifying information needs
- ✓ To create awareness
- ✓ To identify the information gaps that exists in the minds of community members about their social problems and development issues.
- ✓ To provide platform to members to discuss problems facing their community and the information needed to support action to solve the problems.
- ✓ To involve the community the following actions are suggested:
- ✓ Public meetings/consultations
- ✓ Focus group meetings
- ✓ Focus group meetings (discussion rather than rigid interviews)
- ✓ Listening survey

### **To Integrate Information Needs into the Community development Process**

- Problem identification and learning (knowledge processing) are linked. Together they make up one process.
- The community must identify and discuss their development problems, so that they express the need for further information. Then the group sets up an action programme.
- The information resource centre may provide information content coming from two sources: internal sources within the community and external sources, such as books, newspapers, audio-visual materials, and the advice of health and extension workers.

### **External Information and Knowledge Content**

Sources include materials from:

- Government agencies
- Educational institutions
- Development organizations (both national and international)
- United Nations (UN) agencies

### **CONCLUSION**

Enhanced rural library programmes should be introduced to empower information services. The libraries given the necessary attention will play a great role in advancing the level of awareness of the people in developing countries. Indian and other developing countries must begin to use Information and Communication (ICTs) to address the multidimensional problems of the rural communities. The way to democratize access to ICTs is to give priority to education generally and literacy and mass education to growing adult population, especially in rural areas. Indian

cannot escape globalization. The success of globalization in Indian and other developing countries depends largely on the development of the rural population.

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