Community Information Centres at the Villages in Murshidabad District and Information Dissemination on NSAP

[1]Mrs. Niti Mollah, [2]Dr. J. K. Sarkhel

[1]Research Scholar, DLIS, University of Kalyani, Kalyani, Nadia (WB)
[2]DLIS, Professor, DLIS, University of Kalyani, Kalyani, Nadia (WB)

Abstract: In the changed environment of 21st century, the role of knowledge and information as input to development have been recognized and accepted beyond debate. In the age of Information Technology (IT) Revolution, information centres could prove to be the propellers of development in IT powered knowledge centres in which fruits of development may take shape. In the district of Murshidabad, in spite of having as high as 156 public libraries out of which 149 are rural libraries play very little role in dissemination of information. They could have played the function of a womb of developmental activities. It's otherwise expected that trickledown effect may certainly start from these information centres. It is thus quite obvious that rural libraries may play vital role to boost development by disseminating information related to schemes of NSAP, agriculture, marketing, and health and hygiene etc. The rural libraries in West Bengal particularly in Murshidabad that are lying almost defunct in many cases may be reshaped as village information centre to meet the need of country men in west Bengal and other parts of India too. A survey of eight villages shows that the role of rural libraries is almost nil.

Keywords: Information Service Centre, Rural Library, Public Library, IT Revolution, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), and Trainers' Training Centers (TTC).

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE WIND STUDY

In the contemporary age we live in a radically changed world where a profoundly significant paradigm shift has commenced in almost every sphere of life, though quite late in India. Following the invention of computer, the old views faced with a tremendous jolt that necessitated an unprecedented knowledge movement towards a revolution worldwide. While recognizing importance of knowledge in the new millennium it's rightly said "In the 21st century, a new society is emerging where knowledge is primary production resource instead of capital and labour"... Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam (India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium). There emerged the challenge of mighty tide of information defining an era. India has responded to it, though recently. Unfortunately for the people of Independent India, the rule of the country has pursued an inequitable path of development which has awarded the gulf of economic gap, leaving the staggering millions of indigent masses far behind the march and the nation faces the bare faced dichotomy that needs an urgent redress. The Mahatma recognizes the unique means to rescue when he says "Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it" (Mahatma quoted by Jack, 1956, p. 133). Villages of farmers make India; without empowering those lots we cannot make a progress. They have got lands and labour to till them. They want the innovative knowledge, for old ideas work no longer. Consequently the rural community has shown interest in using information centres for development of their skill, to know the about inputs to their produces and also prices and marketing of productions. Of late in the years 1995 National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) was launched by the union govt. of India to address the economic problem of the most vulnerable section of the society such as old age, widow, disable and the family shattered by death of the bread earner.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Access to information in rural communities may be affected by a number of barriers, such as basic infrastructures, (electricity, telecommunication, utilities, roads and transportation), low level of literacy, lack of proper information services, technical competencies etc. Lack of CIC and defunct CIC in the district of Murshidabad is point of contention. **Bell (1979)** describes, "The changing pattern of the new information age, the dependence upon information to create innovation and change; places a high premium on the ability of nations to access and use of information to create advances in the society". Therefore, to produce a desire to change in human development, information deserves utmost attention. The above mentioned barriers in smooth flow of information result in creating several impediments which sometimes have cascading effect too. This situation breeds information gap among the communities and thus get adversely affected by loosing ample opportunity to harness the benefit of govt. sponsored schemes in general and NSAP in particular.

Barron and Curran (1980) report the Community Information Needs/Library Services (CIN/LS) project which was undertaken to address a series of problems related to the public library's role in the release of information to rural people. They state that according to the requirement of the information of rural people the libraries should acquire and disseminate information in their service localities.

Issa, Omopupa and Salman (2012) in their article set the objective of identifying the rural peoples' need of information and point out the way of meeting them. They find that the development in agrarian sector is the key to the national progress. The article elaborates the significance of the role information and ICTs play in this direction. They focus on the establishment of the community information centres across the countryside of Nigeria. They advocate the free access to information to this effect.

Rao (2004) discuss the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for rural communities and highlighted the factors preventing rural communities from reaping the benefits of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and technological innovations to access them. He also defines community information systems and listed selected successful models outside India. The study also gives a description of selected community projects in India and identified the bottlenecks in, possible solutions for and observations of the initiatives of rural projects. He mentions that creating information-rich societies is a key element of poverty reduction and sustainable development and community network centres can play a key role in meeting the socio-economic aspirations of rural communities by successfully addressing the "eight Cs" of success in the digital age: connectivity, content, community, commerce, capacity, culture, co-operation and capital.

Senevira (2007) make a survey among the rural population of Sri Lanka with the objective of investigating the community information needs, information provision, information channels used and difficulties encountered, etc. The author also deals with the information seeking behaviour and indicates about the information flow in institution and community level. In the study the author identifies different categories and subcategories of information providers at institutional and individual level. In the context of how ordinary people consult various channels for getting information he observes that ordinary people have been consulting formal as well as informal channels, which were more at ease, suitable and reliable to them.

It has been noticed throughout the under developed and developing world that rural communities constitutes the larger share of the population whose information and developmental needs are not adequately met and consequently they have not been able to productively participate in the development process and enjoy the benefits progress made in the society in terms of development in science and technology **(Kamba, 2009, p. 2)**. The importance of information is so much that Kamba (2009) opined "In addition to this, utilisation of information in a coherent form can raise aspiration, through arousing people from fatalism, fear of change, desire for a better life and the determination to work for it. This creates an intellectual climate, which stimulates people to take another look at their own current practices and future perspectives. Ideally, information brings about knowledge, and a knowledgeable community is also an informed community. This signifies that no community can develop without knowledge, and a community can only become knowledgeable if they recognize and use information as their tool for development" **(Kamba, 2009, p. 3)**. Similarly, importance and relivance of information centres for agricultural and rural development has been studied by any scholars. In India M S Swaminathan Foundation, Chennai has made several such experiments. An examination of the importance of the social and cultural

context in analysing the meaning and relevance of information for the individual and society, it explores the interaction between communications technology, human information processing, the representation of information and the attendant problems of storage and transmission. The social implications of knowledge engineering are also discussed, together with the ethics of information and its relevance to the information professional of the next century **(Mcgarry, 1993)**.

The Rural Information Center (RIC) established by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) were so designed to act as a rural assistance information clearinghouse and they were assigned to act as a nationwide information provider to rural officials and communities. The center's goal is to meet rural information requirements by placing the best and most timely information available in the hands of public officials and community leaders responsible for making informed decisions and implementing community programs **(Nakazawa & John, 1993, pp. 62-65)**.

While in India Kalam visualized that the rural folks equipped with knowledge would "Transforming the nation into a developed country, five areas in combination have been identified based on India's core competence, natural resources and talented manpower for integrated action to double the growth rate of GDP and realize the Vision of Developed India (Kalam,)." In this context the rural libraries acting as rural information service centres may play some key role. The five areas in which information service centre may proved to be useful as identified by Dr. Kalam are:

- Agriculture and food processing,
- Infrastructure with reliable electric power,
- Education and Healthcare,
- Information and Communication Technology, and
- Critical technologies and strategic industries.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

a) To examine the role of public libraries to disseminate information on NSAP among the beneficiaries and prospecting beneficiaries in Murshidabad.

b) To evaluate the role of CIC to disseminate information on NSAP among the beneficiaries and prospecting beneficiaries in Murshidabad.

c) To examine how far it is possible to convert public libraries into CIC.

4. THE STUDY AREA

The present study is carried in Murshidabad in west Bengal. The district is having 26 C D Blocks out of which four C D Blocks have been chosen using appropriate sampling technique (details of sampling technique has been discussed in methodology). Two Gram Panchayats have been selected from each sampled C D Block and one Mouza (villages) from each sampled G P have been selected for conducting survey. Thus 8 mouzas (villages) in Murshidabad district form the base of study of the problem under investigation.

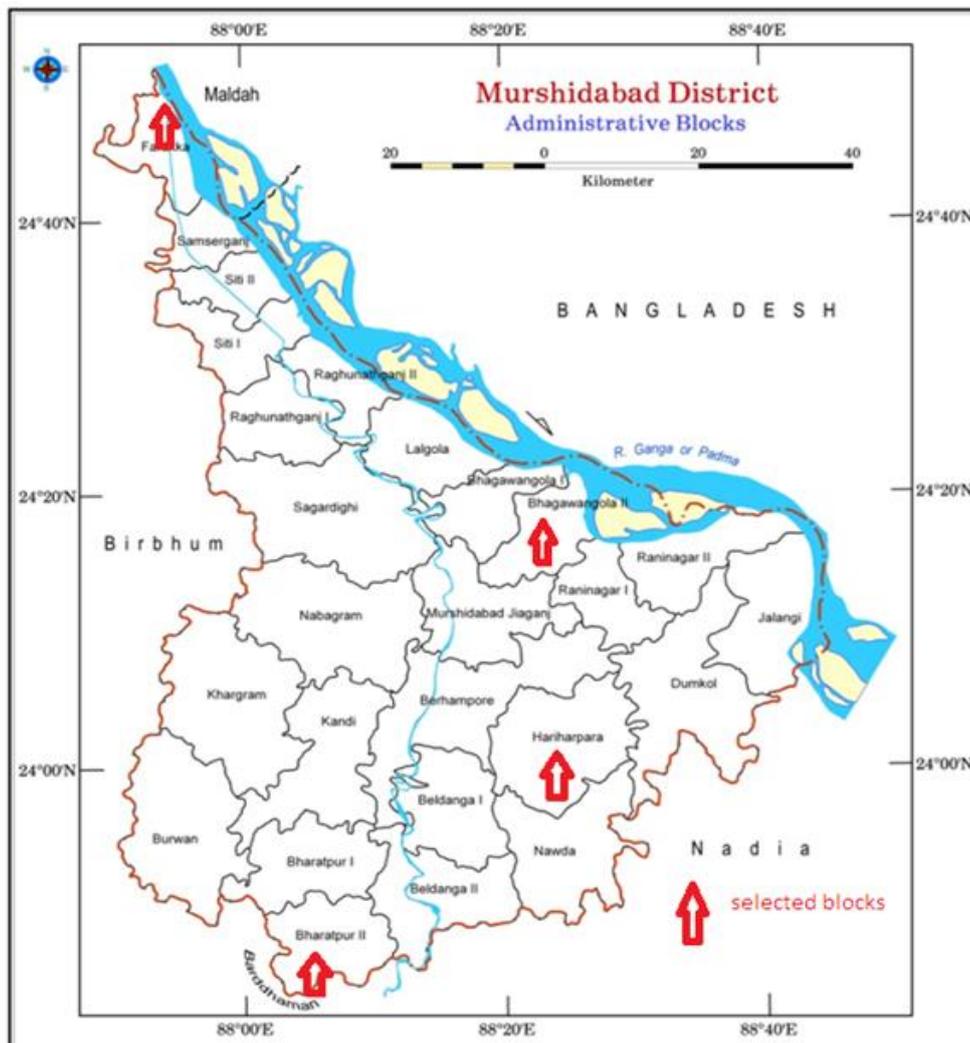## 5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:

The respondents have been selected following multi-stage Random sampling in which four C. D. Blocks are selected randomly out of total 26 C. D. Blocks in Murshidabad district in the first stage. In the second stage two Gram Panchayats (GP) area have been selected randomly from each selected C D Block numbering $2 \times 2 = 4$ GPs out of total GPs in the respective selected C. D. Blocks. In the third stage one inhabited village (mouza) has been selected randomly from each selected GP numbering $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ villages out of total villages (mouza) in the selected GPs. In the fourth stage 25 respondents have been selected randomly from each village (mouza) that has been already selected. Thus total $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 10 = 80$ respondents have been administered with pre-designed schedule (questionnaire). In each stage simple random sampling is followed to select the entity. Peoples' representatives and executives have been interviewed to have

understanding of the modus operandi of dissemination of information to the beneficiaries that is actually practiced in the field. For selection of sample beneficiaries for survey Systematic Random Sampling method has been adopted in which every second beneficiary has been selected. In the event of absence of the sample respondent even on second visit, a replacement by the next in the sequence has been taken.

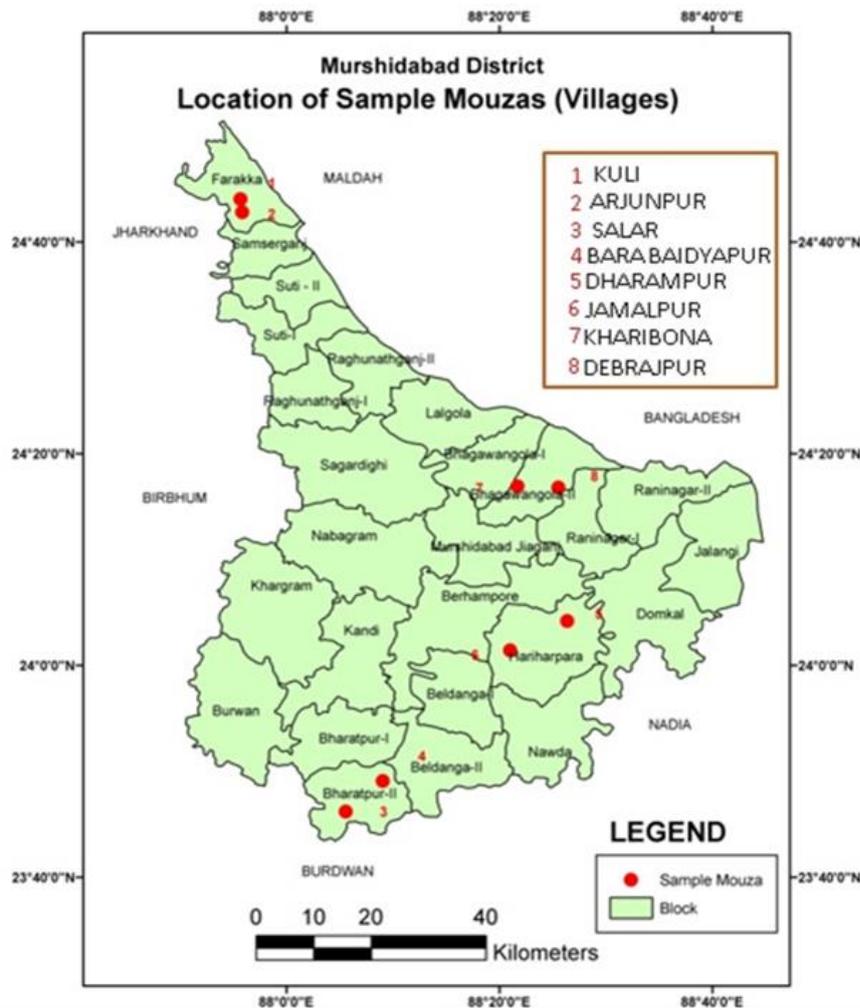**Table-1: Distribution of sample Mouzas in their respective GP and C D Blocks**

Administrative regions/units					No. of samples for survey
District	Regions	Blocks	Gram Panchayat	Mouza	Beneficiary
Murshidabad	Rarh	Farakka	NayanSukh (GP I)	Kuli (58)	10
			Arjunpur (GP II)	Arjunpur (96)	10
		Bharatpur-II	Salar (GP I)	Salar (102)	10
			Talibpur(GP II)	Bara Baidyapur (136)	10
	Bagri	Hariharpara	Dharampur (GP I)	Dharampur (46)	10
			Khidirpur (GP II)	Jamalpur (18)	10
		Bhagabangola-II	Nasipur (GP I)	Kharibona (66)	10
			Akheriganj (GP I)	Debaipur (114)	10
Total	**2**	**4**	**8**	**Eight Mouzas**	**80**

Source: Prepared by the researcher for the purpose of the present research work.

Map-1: Location of Murshidabad in West Bengal

Thus required number of respondents has been arrived. Similarly for selection of sample sample non-beneficiary respondents the procedure has been little difficult. The list of BPL has been collected from the Public Distribution System MR dealer (Ration Shop). Then the beneficiaries have been taken out of the list. The remaining entries have been given fresh serial number and then System Random sampling has been adopted to select sample respondents. Every third entry in the list has been selected as sample respondent in the category of non-beneficiary. In the event of absence of the sample respondent even on second visit, a replacement by the next in the sequence has been taken. For selection of survey of implanting agencies, elected GP member, elected Pradhan, Panchayat secretary, Job assistant and any other salaried person involved in Panchayat office have been surveyed.

Map-2: Map showing the sample villages in Murshidabad for survey

6. PUBLIC LIBRARY IN MURSHIDABAD - PRESENT SITUATION AND SERVICES

In order to make the rural community more informed the governments, central and state, set up rural libraries along with the literacy and mass education campaign in the seventies of the last century. Many of them have become completely defunct and still we can trace some remnants of those libraries where youths, the cronies attached to the clubs or sometimes, political party office in particular are found playing cards, chessboard or the like, but nothing having to do with reading books. It is unfortunate that these days our youth welfare ministry or the Panchayat sends gift wraps to those 'meaningful addas' instead of books. Thus the dream by our political leaders and executives 'the reconstruction of villages' has met with its fate. Otherwise, a network of rural libraries could have played a significant role in reinforcing mass education, and if we kept them functioning we could materialize Kalam's vision of knowledge-building and Mahatma's dream of solution by channeling the tool of so called mass education through the rural library system.

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Table-2: Public library in the selected (Sampled) C D Blocks

Sl. No.	Name of Library	Name of the Village / Ward No.	Gram Panchayat / Ward No.	Block / PanchayatSamity / Municipality	Type of Lib.	Building Electrified or not
1	LaxmiNarayanpur Sadhana Club Pathagar	Vill. - Laxmi Narayanpur	Amdahara Gram Panchayat	Bhagabangola - 2 Panchayat Samity	Rural	Not Electrified
2	Debaipur Gramin Granthagar	Vill. - Debaipur	Saralpur Gram Panchayat	Bhagabangola - 2 Panchayat Samity	Rural	Not Electrified
10	Khargram Bandhab Pathagar	Vill. - Khargram	Khargram Gram Panchayat	Bharatpur 2 Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified
11	Tenya Y.M.A. Rural Library	Vill. - Tenya	Tenya Gram Panchayat	Bharatpur 2 Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified
12	Kagram Nabarun Sangha Pathagar Rural Library	Vill. - Kagram	Kagram Gram Panchayat	Bharatpur Panchayat Samity	Rural	Not Electrified
13	Malihati Durgadas Saralabala Chatra Samaj Library	Vill. - Malihati	Malahati Gram Panchayat	Bharatpur-2 Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified
14	Sonarundi Banwaribad Rabindra pathagar	Vill. - Sonarundi	Shimuliya Gram Panchayat	Bhatatpur 2 Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified
15	Salar Tarun Sangha Rural Library	Vill. - Salar	Salar Gram Panchayat	Bhatatpur 2 Panchayat Samity	Rural	Not Electrified
16	Mashla Netaji Sangha Gramin Granthagar	Vill. - Mashla	Alugram Gram Panchayat	Bhatatpur Panchayat Samity	Rural	Not Electrified
17	Arjunpur Friends Union Library	Vill. - Arjunpur,	Arjunpur Gram Panchayat	Farakka Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified
18	Kishore kalyan Path Mandir	Vill. - Mahadebnagar,	Mahadebnagar Gram Panchayat	Farakka Panchayat Samity	Rural	Not Electrified
19	Brahmangram Rural Library	Vill. - Brahmangram	Nayansukh Gram Panchayat	Farakka Panchaya tSamity	Rural	Electrified
20	Amtala Sadharan Pathagar	Vill. - Amtala	Amtala Gram Panchayat	Farakka Panchayat Samity	Rural	Not Electrified
21	Deona Pur Pragatishil Sangha Rural Library	Vill. - Par Deona Pur	Arjunpur Gram Panchayat	Farakka Panchayat Samity	Rural	Not Electrified
22	Rukunpur High School Rural Library	Vill. - Rukunpur	Rukunpur Gram Panchayat	Hariharpara Panchayat Samity	Rural	Not Electrified
23	Raghunath Club Govt. Sponsd. Rural Library	Vill. - Choa	Choa Gram Panchayat	Hariharpara Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified
24	Swaruppur Milani Pathagar	Vill. - Swaruppur	Hariharpara Gram Panchayat	Hariharpara PanchayatSamity	Rural	Not Electrified
25	Nabarun Sangha A. Club Gramin Granthagar	Vill. - Behariya,	Behariya Gram Panchayat	Hariharpara Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified
26	Netaji Sangha Rural Library	Vill. - Khidirpur,	Khidirpur Gram	Hariharpara Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified

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			Panchayat			
27	Sahajadpur Milan Sangha Gramin Granthagar	Vill. - Sahajadpur	Malopara Gram Panchayat	Hariharpara Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified
28	Swami Bibekananda Gramin Pathagar	Vill. - Bagdabra	Maheshpur Gram Panchayat	Farakka Panchayat Samity	Rural	Electrified

Source: Office of the District Library Officer, Berhampore, Murshidabad, 2016.

The crucial role of public libraries was recognized by international organizations. Even UNESCO brought out a Manifesto on public libraries. The role of public libraries in dissemination of information has been highly recognized by UNESCO Manifesto. Apart from dissemination of information, development of overall literacy, computer literacy as well as developing ICT facilities and enhancing accessibilities will automatically enhance the easy accessibility of information.

The district has, as per 2016 data as many as, 159 public libraries of which 146 rural libraries and rest 13 are district, sub-divisional and town libraries. Of total public library network 13 are presently not working. Apart from these the district has as many as 26 CLIC (Community Library and Information Centre) Libraries of which currently 14 are reported to be functional. This is basically rosy picture of one CLIC library in each C D Block. The district also has a large number of private libraries numbering as many as 46. This gives a large number which is supposed to have a strong network of public libraries in the district. Unfortunately the sampled Mouzas (villages) of the selected Gram Panchayats only two functional public libraries were found. More over it was found from the data available on the public library that out of 28 public libraries in the samples 4 C D Blocks only 18 are having electric supply. Remaining 10 having even no electric supply serving community need and disseminating information on NSAP is a distant dream.

6.1 PUBLIC LIBRARY NETWORK IN MURSHIDABAD AND THEIR ROLE:

This is beyond doubt that public library could be a main source of information to people about different centrally sponsored as well as state government sponsored schemes. The district has as many as 159 public libraries of which 146rural libraries and rest 13 are district, sub-divisional and town libraries. Apart from these the district has as many as 26 CLIC (Community Library and Information Centre) Libraries of which currently14 are reported to be functional. This is basically rosy picture of one CLIC library in each C D Block. The district also has a large number of private libraries numbering as many as 46. This gives a large number which is supposed to have a strong network of public libraries in the district. Unfortunately, the sampled Mouzas of the selected Gram Panchayats have only two functional public libraries that also do not provide any service related to dissemination of information.

It astonishingly poor condition of information in the rural areas in the Murshidanad district that over whelming majority (70 %) of the respondents have never heard of the public libraries of any kind. A poor 20 per cent are aware of something called public library but they have never visited the same. Another 10 per cent are aware of wanted public library as well as made visit to get information. Of all the respondents who visited the public libraries and wanted to make use of the information from the public libraries found them of no use as the libraries are often closed and even if it is open have no information of any use. Only a few story books and novels are available in the library. Regarding NSAP schemes or any other development and welfare related schemes the libraries have no information at all. Though it was found from the district library that the district is having large network of public library and CLIC libraries but in the sampled villages where field were conducted neither have any existence of CIC or CLIC library nor the respondents are having any information regarding information available from CIC centres or about the existence of the CIC centres.

6.2 HOW TO MAKE THEM OPERATIONAL IN THE FIELD?

Having surveyed the present situation and evaluation of the present role of the public libraries, now the question pertaining to this issue is how to tap these emerging potential resources in our agriculture, when it lies at the bottom of the development process in terms of infrastructure. Given the limit of the fund allocation by the government for extension of service sector, we should go in for reorientation of the existing set ups, e.g. the rural library services, the panchayets, the rural healthcare unit, the agriculture extension, and the like. Through the synergy by these tools already in operation we can make it easy to an effective extent. The panchayat can play the role of the nodal agency in extending the significant information services to the rural multitudes and the rural library services can be the main channel in the mechanism.

Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) has mandated to plan, promote and coordinate research and its application in agriculture in response to the exigency of breaking through the stagnation in the spiraling want of food and nutrition for ever exploding population of the country. The situation demands an urgently coordinated effort assuring a phenomenal change. The re-orientation of extension to an appropriate mechanism for greater channeling of knowledge and information as well as research is a must, which can be done through an integrated programmme involving information services centres functioning at village level. We can press the rural libraries into the perspective mechanism to the very consequential task of moving our innocent, yet potential masses towards the mandated millennium goal.

Internationally, we have several such illustrations of successful stories of turning public libraries in to CIC. USDA efforts in this direction, is one of the mention worthies. In view of voicing concerns of rural officials and citizens about the information gap in rural America to congressional members, USDA took special initiative to address the concerns. As a result, in April 1987, Congress proposed in House Resolution 2026 that the USDA establish a National Rural Assistance Information Clearinghouse at the National Agricultural Library (NAL) located in Beltsville, Maryland. The purpose of the clearinghouse would be to:

"provide and distribute information and data to any industry, organization, or Federal, State, or local government entity, on request, about Federal, State, and local programs and services, and programs and services operated by private nonprofit organizations or institutions, under which individuals residing in, or organizations and State and local government entities operating in, a rural area...may be eligible for any kind of assistance, including, but not limited to, job training, education, health care, economic development assistance, and emotional and financial counseling" (H. R. 2026, 1987, Title II, 202[b]).

The clearinghouse is designed to provide officials and leaders of small rural communities with rapid and direct access to current information on funding programmes. The service would link local officials with the appropriate federal program or funding source and eliminate the often difficult and time-consuming effort required to track down this information.

On May 19, 1987, the month following this congressional proposal, in testimony before the Conservation, Credit, and Rural Development Subcommittee of the House Agricultural Committee, Deputy Secretary Peter Myers announced USDA's Six-point Rural Regenerative Initiative outlining the department's new plan to address the problems of rural Main Street. Myers (1987) informed Congress that the third-point was USDA's commitment that:

"An information clearinghouse will be established at the National Agricultural Library with an 800 telephone number. Rural community officials will be able to get up-to-date information about Federal programs available to them in a single phone call and will be referred to the appropriate agency for follow-up" (Mayers, 1987, p. 9).

The Rural Information Center in USA caters to the need of providing products and services as follows -

• Provides customized information products to specific inquiries, including assistance in economic revitalization issues; local government planning projects; rural health topics; funding sources; technical assistance programs; research studies; and other related issues.

• Processes a broad array of literature and funding source information on such topics as:

  i.   Successful strategies, models, and case studies of community development projects;

  ii. Small business attraction, retention, and expansion;

  iii. Housing programs and services;

  iv. Tourism promotion and development ;

  v.   Sustainable communities and energy programs;

  vi. Community water quality;

  vii. Health programs and services; and

  viii. Rural research.

• Provides Internet access to rural information, products, and services through the RIC web site and Web 2.0 media.

• Refers users to organizations or experts in the field who can provide additional information.

• Furnishes bibliographies, *Rural Information Center Publication Series* titles, and other RIC developed information products.

Staff time is also devoted to developing new Web content and maintaining existing items on the RIC Web site. The RIC Web site provides more than 4,000 resource links covering key rural subjects, and houses 50 online rural publications. RIC also maintains a Rural Calendar area that provides information on current meetings and events covering rural topics (Reynnells, 2010, p. 3).

There are some examples in India too of some efforts are being made to establish such clearinghouses in rural areas. In the ICAR document 'Vision 2030' mentions 6th focus of the document as "Improve knowledge management system to act as an efficient clearing-house of technology, knowledge and information in agriculture and allied sectors" (Vision 2030, ICAR, p. 10). Village Information Centres set up by the Tamail Nadu Vetnry and Animal Sciences University in villages of the state. Aimed at providing "…newer, faster, cost effective, easy to understand methods and efficient ways of dissemination of technologies and its related information for the economic benefits for the rural farmers and stakeholders" (TANUVAS), Village Information Centres were established by the University on research mode. Three multimedia Village Information Centres were established in Tamil Nadu at Chitteri, Kuzhumani and Pudhuthamaraipatti villages at Vellore, Tiruchirapalli and Madurai districts, respectively. The District University Centres were established as Hub Centres. A Senior Research Fellow and an Information Specialist were appointed in each Village Information Centre. Day-to-day activities of these staff were to provide basic computer knowledge, needed information, organising, conducting committee meetings, revenue accounting, collecting survey details and micro planning at Village Information Centres. These hub and village centres were equipped with computer, printer and other accessories, telephone, Internet connectivity either by dial up or by WLL technology, audio and video equipments, library with printed books, newspapers, educational audio and video compact discs containing Animal Husbandry practices and related technologies. Based on the need of these communities, technological information were posted on exclusive web pages and hosted in the university website. The impact of this experiment was highly encouraging. A study carried out by an NGO 'Information for Development found that the aim of VIC were fulfilled in all most all the sectors stating from disease control to production enhancement together with women's empowerment and improvement in general literacy as well as computer literacy.

Gujarat is also ahead of many states in terms of establishing village information services centre though in different name. The Project Village Information System (VIS) which is Implemented by Gujarat Informatics Ltd in100 villages of Patan and Mehsana district in Gujarat are aimed at achieving the followings (http://www.nisg.org/docs/Project_VIS.pdf).

1. Enable prompt servicing of citizen requests and reduce time, effort and cost for availing the services,

2. Bring the world's knowledge at the doorstep of villagers through the Internet,

3. Enable access to various Government applications by providing communication facilities at the booths to link villagers to the local intranets,

4. Capacity Building of Village officials and entrepreneurs,

5. Awareness and Publicity regarding the benefits of IT and e-Governance,

6. Provide information on health care systems,

7. Provide Information on educational facilities in the nearby towns and in the State Capital,

8. Provide information on various job opportunities which are suitable for the local people,

9. Provide information about various government and NGO supported programmes which will enhance their livelihood options, and

10. Provide IT enabled education to rural masses.

Rural libraries in Murshidabad may be pressed to cater to the need of rural community in many ways. These public libraries may be equipped with internet connections to provide information related to different aspects of agriculture such

as soil, irrigation, fertilizer and pesticides etc. including NSAP and other social security schemes. Information related to weather and climatic hazards and forecasting are immense significance to the farmers. Marketing of surplus production of farmers is another area in which information centres may play a vital role by providing information on current prices of agricultural goods. Similarly, information related to different rural development, anti-poverty and social security schemes may be made available through these centres. Crop calendar as well as calendar of events related to agriculture and rural development may be of great use to the rural folks. The schedule of proposed events that may help agriculturalists and others may serve a great deal.

Public library-cum-community information centres may facilitate accelerated dissemination of improved technologies, knowledge and information.

– Develop and pilot effective delivery systems and evolve institutional models to link research and development system with farmers and other stakeholders in the value-chain for accelerated adoption, cost-effective post-harvest management, value-addition and processing and efficient marketing through information and communication technology and e-extension;

– Provide state-of-the-art scientific facilities in laboratories and infrastructure;

–Establish institutional mechanisms and governance structure for linking technology generation and dissemination system with back-end service providers; and

– Link research and development system with society by improving science communication. Awareness and sensitization programmes would be developed addressing benefits of science and food safety concerns of the society.

7. CONCLUSION

In the eight villages that were surveyed for in the district of Murshidabad only two villages were having public libraries but unfortunately none of them played any role to disseminate information related to NSAP. It is thus obvious from the above discussion that in the age of rapid growth it is almost mandatory to furnish rural libraries to provide the required type of information to a particular group of users with a view to accelerating the exploitation of fruits of information through retrieval and dissemination and catering to the needs of the country people with regard to their farming, health and hygiene and other community concerns. The NSAP and other govt sponsored social security and social assistance programme related information can be disseminated from these centres. Many countries, under the aegis of the UNESCO Manifesto of Public Library, have already set up such centres to provide information services to the people of different livelihoods/pursuits. The people of Murshidabad must not lag behind in this respect to avail the advantages of development in information science. Now we have to pull in the advantages offered by the global agencies with a view to meet our people's destiny.

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