

# Information Support System in Rural Manipur



Dr.Th. Purnima Devi

The work is the report of the UGC Major Research Project on "Integrated Rural Development: A Model Integrated Information System for the Development of Rural Areas of Manipur". The author is the Principal Investigator of the Project.

Right information to the right people at the right time will help socio-economic development among rural masses. The scenario of rural libraries in Manipur is not very satisfactory. The Manipur Public Libraries Act, 1988 has no provision for library users and the limited amount of grants-in-aid received by the rural libraries is never sufficient enough for survival. In the rural areas it is difficult to find Information centers which can be treated as rural information research centers or rural information dissemination centers in the State of Manipur. The existing information centers are extremely inadequate in order to meet the information needs of the rural people in rural areas. In order to understand the information needs of the rural Manipur the present study is conducted. Multi-stage sampling is adopted by classifying the entire rural areas of Manipur State. Both valley and hill comprise a sample of 1650 individuals from different user community of rural areas. The required data are collected by using pre-tested semi structure questionnaire and presented in tabular form and analysis is done with Chi-Square Test and appropriate suggestions are placed.

The efforts would be considered successful only if the planners, decision maker, government agencies/developments find the document (Report) useful and try to implement at least some of the suggestions/recommendations/plan proposed Models.

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## INTRODUCTION

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*“If information and knowledge are central to democracy, they are the conditions of development”-  
Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General*

### 1.0. Introduction

Rural development has today become an objective not only of the local and regional concern, but a pragmatic objective fully backed by national government and international organizations like the United Nations, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Rural development is advocated today as a basic strategy for economic development all over the world<sup>1,2</sup>. The Government of India has formulated many programmes for Rural Development after independence particularly 1947. The mass poverty in rural areas is the unique characteristic feature of Indian economy. Since seventy percent of the ninety crores of the present population, live in rural

areas, Government of India has introduced number of rural development schemes which can help these rural people in improving standard of living. Among the various programmes launched by the government, the Community Development Programme and Integrated Rural Development programme are so designed that it would improve the standard of living of the rural mass especially Scheduled Castes (SC) and Schedule Tribes (ST) at maximum extent level <sup>3</sup>.

For effective and meaningful development of the rural area, information and communication network system is also one of the essential ingredients for the progress of civilization and society. Lack of information transfer and effective means of communication is now widely recognized as being a limiting factor in socio-economic development of the people <sup>4</sup>. Basically, it should be recognized that people require information for self-development and that the channels and mechanism that carry, store, process and supply information are traditionally weak and non-existent at the village level <sup>5</sup>.

UNESCO is convinced that "information is an essential part of nation's resources and access to it is one of the basic human rights....information is not only a national resource vital for the scientific and economic progress, but also the medium of social communication". The personal, vocational and social development of the individual depends on the quantity and accessibility of information<sup>6</sup>.

Information plays a crucial role in the development of a country. It is a basic responsibility of a welfare government to ensure that proper communication channels are built up for effective distribution of information and diffusion of knowledge. It is a stupendous task to disseminate information to the vast

population of the country, disbursed in a wide geographical area. Low literacy rate and poor communication facilities are further constraints in our country to develop facilities for transfer and absorption of useful information by common people towards improving quality of life. Being a democratic country, people's participation in nation building endeavors is of utmost importance. It is only through enlightened, informed and knowledgeable citizen that developmental process can take place successfully<sup>7</sup>.

Free flow of information to the ultimate users, has been a subject of concern to librarians, documentalists, scientists and of late to government also. Right to education and right to information; if honestly conferred and sincerely forced could bring about major social changes among rural masses. Right to information has become one of the basic human rights of the twenty first century. If people are well informed, they will be more vigilant and therefore democracy is bound to become more vibrant. Right information to right people at right time will naturally help the socio-economic development among rural masses.<sup>8</sup>

In view of inevitable role played by information in human life, it should be considered as the foremost need of the human beings for successful living as lead is provided by information to all the basic needs. The socio-economic, technological, industrial, educational and political development of any country depends upon the soundness of the information system of that country. The intensity and extension of under development or poverty is much more prevailed in the rural areas rather than urban areas of the developing countries in general and those of India in particular. In the present era information is not only to be considered as a resource and also it is a product and basic need of any country.

The kind of productive survival and basic need of information and/or developmental information is "Rural Development Information", which is crucial for socio-economic development of the country and those of rural areas of Manipur.<sup>9</sup>

### **1.1 Project Proposal**

In order to meet all the information requirement of village people, well-organized Rural Information Centre or Rural Development Information Resource Centre along with Rural Information Network System are very much essential in view of low rate of literacy and high poverty in rural areas. In a state like Manipur with agro-based rural economy, rural development Information Resource Centre can play a major role in national development. Therefore, there must be a system which will enable the rural people to quickly and easily access information of their needs which will be vital to the development of rural areas.

Hence, the establishment/development of such centers and systems in the rural areas will become as an institution of social change and can effectively contribute to the welfare of the rural people. In this background, an attempt has been made to study the basic information needs of rural community, to find out the services provided by the different information centers in connection with the rural communities needs, and to design a model information system for rural development, a research programme is designed here under the title "Integrated Rural Development: A Model Integrated Information System for the Development of Rural Areas of Manipur".

### **1.2. Literature Review/Relevance of the Study**

The vastness of the Rural Development Programme and the attention of the government towards rural development has attracted the attention of the scholars

of varied interest to study the impact of the programme. The researchers and scholars could not remain unconcerned with this area and as a result a number of studies have been conducted both by the individuals and institutions. These studies can be divided into three parts-General studies regarding Rural Development, studies on IRDP conducted at various levels<sup>10</sup>, and Information Support for Rural Community Development. Some of the important studies relating Rural Development can be cited here:

Khosla,<sup>11</sup> in the article "Research in Development Administration" (1974) pointed out that the key factor in development administration is its capability to enlist mass participation in development schemes. Sharma and Malhotra's,<sup>12</sup> in their study entitled "Integrated Rural Development" (1977) opined that integrated rural development is a liberating force, a dynamic awakening by restructuring and modernization of the local resources in man and material to ensure comprehensive development. Mathur,<sup>13</sup> in an article entitled "Rural Development in India" (1979) inferred that various programmes of employment generation in rural areas have made some impact on the vast problems of unemployment and under employment but the new approach of Integrated Rural Development Programme can be expected to provide a working base for tackling this problem. Roy et al,<sup>14</sup> in the book "Problems in Rural Development" (1985) has pointed out that Block Level Planning is essential for rural development which can provide people's active participation in shaping their own lives by improving economy and removing poverty and inequality. Maheshwari,<sup>15</sup> in the article "Rural Development in India" (1985) has pointed out that Rural Development Programmes in India suffer from a high degree of centralization as illustrated by the IRDP. Singh,<sup>16</sup> in his "Bureaucracy and Rural Development"

(1988) have noted that the rural development programme is the single most important vehicle for the purposes of socio-economic change initiated by government. Singh,<sup>17</sup> in another paper "Rural Development Administration and Anti-Poverty Programmes" (1988) have pointed out that small farmers development agency (SFDA) could not attain the desired goal due to lack of proper utilization of physical and human resources.

After review of various studies on rural development, now an attempt is made to review in brief the studies on Integrated Rural Development Programme. Joshi,<sup>18</sup> infers that the term "Integrated Rural Development Programme" is a misnomer. At no stage does the programme seek to provide for an integrated development of the rural society. Pondyal,<sup>19</sup> asserts that though the 6<sup>th</sup> five-year plan of Nepal aimed at eradication of poverty through an integrated approach to rural development, no specific programme addressing the poor people of the project areas has been implemented till now. Rao,<sup>20</sup> suggests that sufficient stress needs to be given to increase the non-farm sectors under IRDP. Sinha,<sup>21</sup> opines that things have gone wrong at a multitude of levels. Singh,<sup>22</sup> has remarked that the Integrated Rural Development Programme is showing its impact on the weaker section. The World Bank<sup>23</sup> in the article "Flaws in IRDP" (1989) found the failure of India's IRDP to its inability to ensure continued access to institutional credit for disadvantaged rural households. Bandopadhyaya,<sup>24</sup> recommends linking of these programmes with the programmes of land reforms, better planning and implementation at grass root level. Upadhyaya,<sup>25</sup> concludes that undoubtedly IRDP did help in enabling beneficiaries to cross the poverty line but its role, taking into consideration the totality of the problems, has been insignificant.

Another important review part of this study is "Information Support for Rural Community Development. Use of information, express needs of information, gaps of information supply, type of information requirements to meet variety of users has become the focus of study today. A wide range of studies in Western and European countries at different periods of time had indicated a high demand for Community Information<sup>26</sup>.

A wide range of studies in Jamaica, Britain and United States indicate a very high level of 'Community Information Need'. The periods of time surveyed vary, but, generally speaking, between one-half and two-thirds of the people interviewed said that they had needed information for their daily lives during the preceding few months. There is good reason to believe that high levels of community information need also exist generally within both developed and developing countries such as Nigeria, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand, new Guinea, Denmark<sup>27. 28. 29</sup> etc. and a number of research projects have set out to identify the areas of greatest need for information by the communities residing in these countries<sup>30</sup>.

Besides, Rural Community Counts are present in England and Wales. There are also innovations such as mobiles for provision of information in the rural areas around Bangor in North Wales. Dorset Community Council runs a very successful scheme, which serves twenty-three centres. The Commonwealth Library Association is keen on promoting the concept of Rural Community Resource and Rural Information Center in developing countries<sup>31</sup>

The following are the literatures which are related to the study and review according to the content of thought.

Tadasad and Yallappa, <sup>32</sup> has made a literature search on LISA (CD, 1969-2004) and examined them which indicates that such similar studies have been reported from abroad and a few Indians. There is a need for exploratory studies at village level to identify the information needs and gathering habits of rural community in India to aid in utilizing the results for formulating policies for designing and planning of rural information centres at the wider perspective. Tikekar, <sup>33</sup> has explained a public library system and a formal structure of libraries available in the country. He defined the objectives of public library emphasizing the need for public libraries in rural India. He also emphasizes the strategy of developing libraries in United States to meet the Community Information Needs. Sethi, <sup>34</sup> described the concept of social transformation and also discusses the social role of information and suggests a model where the information is at the society and no activity is performed in the society without access to information. Sarada, <sup>35</sup> categorized two parts of information needs by the rural communities: firstly common needs which includes health and hygiene, childcare, employment, housing etc. Secondly special needs of people like farmer's facilities, women, labours students etc.

Jagnayak, <sup>36</sup> concluded that libraries fulfill the information needs of rural masses and contribute considerably in economic benefit and attitudinal change of people. Singh, <sup>37</sup> identified some information needs of farmers. The findings are on the new techniques in cultivation of land, sowing the harvesting of crops, fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides etc. Chakrabarti, <sup>38</sup>

in a survey on Sub-Himalayan tribal community found that an information need of any community is incumbent upon its economic conditions. In rural communities, interpersonal forms of communication are most observed. Kempson,<sup>39</sup> pointed out the community information service should be two way-that is, it should act as a channel for information from, as well as to, the local community. Mohan,<sup>40</sup> discusses the implications of the programme of Universal Availability of Information call for provision of community information sources and services for making the common man enlightened, educated and informed of matters which are crucial to his well being.

Satyanarayana,<sup>41</sup> outlined the multipurpose concept of public libraries for the community with extended benefits and therefore, he laid stress on proper planning of library services so that proper interaction between books and community shall be restored. Chatterjee,<sup>42</sup> stressed the lack of sufficient information support which hamper the rural development work in the country. He concluded the development of appropriate information products and services and a good information dissemination mechanism is very much necessary to meet the information needs of the rural people. Visakhi and Srivastava,<sup>43</sup> elaborated the information needs of farming community and classified the information needs of the community into general and specific needs. He opined that community information service is often not just a single community identified by race, caste, creed, sex, religion etc. Shnha,<sup>44</sup> discusses the needs of communities and community based services along with the community development, which is always a kind of learning that can not exist without being receptive to newness in general and concluded that a public library is capable of setting an ethnically vibrant rural communities. Kaula,<sup>45</sup> while emphasizing the needs for

setting up village libraries and various aspects like thrust on rural libraries, rural libraries and community resource centre discusses the information services at grass roots level.

Das and Khan,<sup>46</sup> highlighted the major role of information needs of rural people and the role of panchayats, co-operatives and non-government organization for rural development programme in the state of West Bengal. Sharma,<sup>47</sup> explored in detail the role of information resource centres in rural development and to strengthen community participation and empowerment, by providing access to a basic stock of knowledge and information for the rural community. Mukhopadhyay,<sup>48</sup> opined that the rural people are not properly made aware of the different development programmes under taken by the government. Building up of an information network with the help of modern technologies has been advocated here for supporting rural development. Hussain,<sup>49</sup> have analyzed the information needs of the rural areas by conducting different studies. He pointed out the different information needs of the rural areas as economical, health & nutrition, career opportunities, education, transactions with government, financial and general needs. Sharma and Fatima,<sup>50</sup> in a study found that Government or local authorities have not paid attention to the establishment, maintenance and development of community resource center from where people can get required information. Sen,<sup>51</sup> outlined the information needs of rural women community to improve their quality of life in terms of health, education, family planning, childcare etc.

Uddin,<sup>52</sup> described the general categories of rural community and their information needs as well as

assistance for better health, water supply and sanitation of rural communities as very necessary. He explored the interlinkages between libraries and rural development in the developing country with special reference to Bangladesh. Samanta,<sup>53</sup> have evaluated the basic needs of the tribal communities which is one of the long term objectives of the tribal development programme in India that has been started for the improvement of the quality of life in tribal areas. Chatterjee and Khan,<sup>54</sup> expressed the concept of life long learning and the goal of a learning community, in the context of a rural village; with the conditions for continuous learning for improving his/her lot. Mchombu,<sup>55</sup> emphasizes the aspect of rural information environment as a combination of two interacting forces, first, the existing socio-economic conditions and second, the reactions of the rural people to train and survive under these conditions which have been termed as behavioral aspects.

Ferguson,<sup>56</sup> observed that the resources required in support of Rural Community Resource Centers much be done in the context of the characteristics of the rural environment which vary from one developing country to the other in the Common Wealth Countries and the needs of the population in this setting. Kumaresan and Chitra,<sup>57</sup> revealed that there is a need for rural Information centre in villages of Tamil Nadu from where people can obtain information of interest and use to them. Raju,<sup>58</sup> has described resource sharing and networking as important aspects of practical librarianship. He developed the Rural Development Information System in India and Integrated Rural Development as a holistic approach is a national commitment. Rama Devi,<sup>59</sup> emphasize the need for Internet based information sources and information about development for rural development.

Mukhopadhyay, <sup>60</sup> examined that, information support system for integrated rural development is very must necessary for bringing the all round development of the rural population. Raju, <sup>61</sup> analyzed various databases available with Computerized Library and Clearinghouse of information for rural development and also discusses how these databases serve as a virtual library on rural development at NIRD. Kumar, <sup>62</sup> examined that; an integrated information system should be developed with the help of libraries, NGOs and the State government with Gram Panchayat as its hub. Venkatappaiah, <sup>63</sup> explained that, according to IFLA standards on public libraries, there should be one public library for every 3,000 people. Biradar, <sup>64</sup> discusses the sources of information for farmers in Karnataka. Also suggests strategy to develop the collection of rural libraries and to make use of them. Kumber and Biradar, <sup>65</sup> studied the use pattern and extent of utilization of mass media particularly newspaper, radio, television and public library by the rural community. Musib, <sup>66</sup> examined the major information needs and the sources of information of the persons engaged in the cottage industries of wooden and bamboo products in the rural areas of Burdwan district.

In order to understand the needs of information by the communities at the village level, a detailed case study was undertaken by the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) on the existing library system in the rural areas as well as the user community residing in those areas such as Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa etc <sup>67</sup>.

Beside these, some of the State like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu etc. has established Rural Information Resource Centre/ Rural Community Information Resource Centre for mobilizing local

resources to meet their community information needs<sup>68, 69</sup>.

The Manipal Industrial Trust's Village Information Centres Project is one such venture to provide village level community information as well as to support information for rural development in the state of Karnataka<sup>70</sup>.

Whereas, in the contexts of Manipur State, so far no attempts has been made by the Government agencies, cooperatives & private firms, NGOs to facilitate the various information needs by the rural communities in the rural areas<sup>71</sup>.

### **1.3. Objective of the Study**

The present work is taken up with the following objectives:

- \* To infuse awareness among the rural people in the use of the information sources.
- \* To identify the information needs of the rural people and various information-communication in between the information providers (rural libraries, community information centre, information centre etc.) and target groups (rural people).
- \* To examine the programme adopted by various government agencies for the development of rural areas.
- \* To indicate the future possibilities and emerging ICT trends for the development of the rural people of Manipur.
- \* To find out some means through which the information can be disseminated to the rural people.
- \* To draw a plan proposal to develop the Information Support System in the rural areas and setting up

of Rural Development Information Network at the village level.

- \* To support the rural development programme of the government through such study.

#### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

The scope of the present study will be limited to the

- \* Information needs of the rural people (i.e. the target group of the study);
- \* People living in the rural areas of Manipur;
- \* The time period of study is fixed to the period 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2006 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2008 (i.e., for two years);
- \* Study of various information centres situated in the rural areas of Manipur; and
- \* Study of various programmes initiated by different governmental organization for the rural development.

#### **1.5. Hypothesis**

Based on the present study in the rural areas of Manipur the following hypotheses are drawn:

- [i] The majority of the rural people are illiterate and economically backward.
- [ii] Are not aware of “Information”, “Information Needs”, and “Information Literacy”. Majority of the rural people are not aware about the modern technology/development.
- [iii] Numbers of information service centre in the rural areas are very few and not functional.
- [iv] The gap is wider in between the rural people and government departments meant for rural development.
- [v] The total change in the attitude of rural people is highly required to develop the rural economy as well as the total growth of the state.

## 1.6. Research Methodology

Research methodology is a systematic way to solve the research problem. The research methodologies followed for collection of data during the course of study are:

- \* pre-tested semi- structural questionnaire tools have been used for collection of data;
- \* physical survey with oral interview have been conducted;
- \* scanning of literatures/documents related to the topic have been conducted; and
- \* data have been analyzed by using statistical techniques.

### 1.6.1. Data Collection

The approach of the present study comprises of primary data collection and informal discussion. The required data for the present study is mainly based on the primary data. Primary data are collected from different levels of communities, government officials, information centres, libraries, voluntary/non-governmental organizations etc. by using different methods-Interview cum Questionnaire method. The interview cum questionnaire method is chosen because free interaction and discussion is possible so that additional information can be accessed.

### 1.6.2. Sampling

The sampling use in the present study of Rural Development Information Need is **Multi-Stage Sampling**.

### 1.6.3. Analysis of Data

Data is processed and analyzed through **Minitab-software** with well known statistical formula like **chi-**

**square test** along with the interpretation as a way to highlight the information needs of the various sections of the communities.

### **1.7. Tentative Chapterisation**

The present study has been designed in the following chapters:

#### **CHAPTER-I**

**Introduction:** Definition; research proposal; objectives; literature review; scope; hypothesis; methodology etc.

#### **CHAPTER-II**

**Concept of Information and Information System:** Concept of information; definition; information needs; information system; types of information; factors affecting information needs; barriers to information communication; channel of information communication.

#### **CHAPTER-III**

**Rural Development and Community Information Needs:** Definition; objectives; agencies working for rural development; integrated rural development programme; needs of information by different communities; community information sources; categories of communities.

#### **CHAPTER-IV**

**Rural Development Information System in Manipur:** Rural Development; Integrated Rural Development; rural community information environment; rural development information system; importance of ICT in rural development; information support system for rural development; integrated rural development information system and services; rural development information networks.

## CHAPTER-V

**Rural Development Information Needs: An Analysis:** Analysis of various information needs by rural communities; channel of information uses, information sources, difficulties and problems faced by rural community, needs of rural development information system etc.

## CHAPTER-VI

General Findings, Suggestions and Conclusions

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