

Rural Information Transfer : Study in the Perspective of the Beneficiaries of Rural Development through Panchayati Raj Institutions in West Bengal

Mokbul Rahaman

Research Scholar
Department of Library and Information Science
University of Kalyani
Kalyani, Nadia, West Bengal.
e-mail: palash_lisc@yahoo.co.in

Sabuj Dasgupta

Associate Professor
Department of Library and Information Science
University of Kalyan
Kalyani, Nadia, West Bengal, PIN-741235.

ABSTRACT

This paper discussed mainly information transfer process of Rural Development (RD) through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Well structured questionnaire has been prepared and distributed among the beneficiaries for collecting the relevant data. Eight villages of different Gram Panchayat (GP) under different blocks have been selected for survey purpose. The analysis mainly cover in this article gender wise distribution, age wise distribution, frequency of meeting with local GP members, frequency of visit of different places, use of mass media of beneficiaries of eight villages respectively. Survey identified the problems of information transfer for RD like illiteracy, lack of sufficient awareness programme, information gap and so on. This paper also highlights some recommendations also.

Keywords: Beneficiary, Gram Panchayat (GP), Information Transfer, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Rural Development (RD).

Introduction:

It is well known fact that information is powerful tool and it is a valuable commodity. It requires for planning, directing, controlling and decision making for the development of society. Right information to be made available to the right person at the right time at low cost is very difficult task. So, information plays an important role in almost every human activity. This paper explores relationship between Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and RD in West Bengal. PRIs acts as an agency of RD apart from playing its political role which is spreading of democratic values at the grass root levels. As a system of local governance, GP since their inception in post independent India's rural political fabric, have taken up the issue of development through in a narrow scale. As the problem of poverty encompasses the rural Indian society as a whole, leaders of this newly emerged nation have put emphasis on RD.

India is predominantly a rural country with more than 70% of the population living in rural areas. Development of India is mostly dependent on the RD. Most of the people in rural area depend on Panchayat and other organizations. It plays a crucial role in RD. A majority of rural population in India is living in underdeveloped condition because of knowledge gap and information problem. PRIs involve a considerable number of elected representative

functionaries and they come from the cross section of the demography in respect of caste, tribe (scheduled) and gender. It also involves a reasonable number of Executives/ Departmental functionaries. But most important fact is that it involves quite a large number of beneficiaries and policies, programme of RD to be taken and implemented for them. Free and fair flow of information within the PRIs and between PRIs and its beneficiaries communities is one of the most important and crucial factors in the RD. Though different RD plans are going on, actual improvement is possible until and unless we can provide right information at right time to the right users. In this context Library and Information Centres can play a pivotal role. The survey has been conducted in eight selected villages under different selected Block under the Nadia District of West Bengal.

Review of Literature:

The Government of India launched Common Services Centres (CSC) scheme in 2006 as a part of its initiative under the National e-Governance Plan. Through this CSC, the government has committed itself to addressing the divides of different types mainly in the rural area. The primary purpose of CSC is to provide access to information and services delivered electronically. According to the scheme there must be one CSC in the villages for every 6,000 population in the rural areas. These centres are also for utilization for dissemination of information on functioning of the PRIs which may promote better participation of the beneficiaries in the developmental and other projects. In West Bengal it has been decided that one CSC will be located in every GP and PS office. (Operational CSC Status, 2014).

For dissemination of information, training and interactive monitoring the Lokshiksha Sanchar, is one of the other initiatives which plays an important role in flow of information in regard to PRIs activities. It has been initiated by through a Training and Development Communication Channel (TDCC) in the name of Lokshiksha Sanchar. All the PRIs and other institutions are brought into a satellite based two-way video and two-way audio network. (Lokshiksha Sanchar, 2014).

Mathew (2000) presented that panchayati raj systems in India since 1990s has added greater momentum to decentralize process which has also had deeper implications for the human rights situation in India. He argues that as isolation of villages is forever broken by inroads of media, technology and spatial mobility, the new panchayat system will only help weave the village into the broader social fabric.

Maiti (2003) highlighted the necessity of a local level information system and also stresses on the role of PRIs in rendering information services in rural areas. Jacobson et.al (2005) mentioned that consulting can be strategy for transferring knowledge between researchers and decision makers and is effective at promoting 'enlightenment' and 'interactive' models of knowledge use. Dasgupta (2003) discussed about information communication barriers. He also highlighted the necessity of a model approach towards a need based rural information support system useful to the local users. He expressed in his article the role of national and international agencies for rural development. Tripathi (2003) expressed better utilization of information and effective handling of information transfer through different media. He mentioned in his paper the barriers to communication in Indian context. The role and efforts of different agencies for RD is emphasized.

Sharma (2004) presented the results of a survey conducted among the rural people of Gwalior district in Rajasthan. The objectives of the survey are to identify the information needs, the

sources of information, familiarity with the technologies, information seeking behaviour and the information sharing pattern among rural people. This study used questionnaire method for survey work. Meitei (2004) discussed the existing information infrastructure and information services provided at the village of Manipur and identified the information needs of the rural people. The use of information channels and information resources by the rural people of Manipur are examined. For this study a questionnaire was designed for the rural living in valley district of Manipur.

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of this article are as follows

- To know the frequency of meeting between beneficiaries and local GP members. .
- To identify the sources of information of the beneficiaries.
- To identify medias or channels which are used for information transfer for RD.
- To identify the problems of rural development through PRIs.
- To identify the frequency of visit to different places.

Methodology:

The study is mainly based on primary data. Primary data has been collected through structured questionnaire containing fixed-alternative and open ended question-answers by means of face to face interaction. Eight villages under different selected blocks in the district of Nadia has been selected for the survey. I have collected voter lists of eight villages for my study and I have picked up total 585 (five hundred eighty five) voters from eight different villages randomly. All the respondents were personally interviewed because most of them were not comfortable to fill-up questionnaire form. The questionnaire was written in Bengali. Questions were asked to the beneficiaries of eight different village in Bengali language and replies were recorded after translating in English. After tabulation, I have analyzed all the data.

**Analysis and Interpretation of Data:
Gender wise distribution of respondents**

2.1.Table-1 Gender wise distribution

Name of the villages	Gender		%	Total
	Male	Female		
Pitambarpur	44 (55%)	36 (45%)	100	80
Khajuri	88 (85%)	16 (15%)	100	104
Digbaria	51 (75%)	17 (25%)	100	68
Madhaya Gopalpur	42 (65%)	22 (35%)	100	64
Sutargachhi	47 (70%)	20 (30%)	100	67
Darap Pur	75 (90%)	08 (10%)	100	83
Mobarekpur	38 (60%)	25 (40%)	100	63
Alupur	45 (80%)	11 (20%)	100	56
Total	430 (74%)	155 (26%)	100	585

From the above table, it shows that 90% Male has responded from Darap Pur village of Haringhata Block and 45% Female has responded from Pitambarpur village of Chapra Block. So, any developmental work of Panchayat, Male response more than Female. Female response should do better.

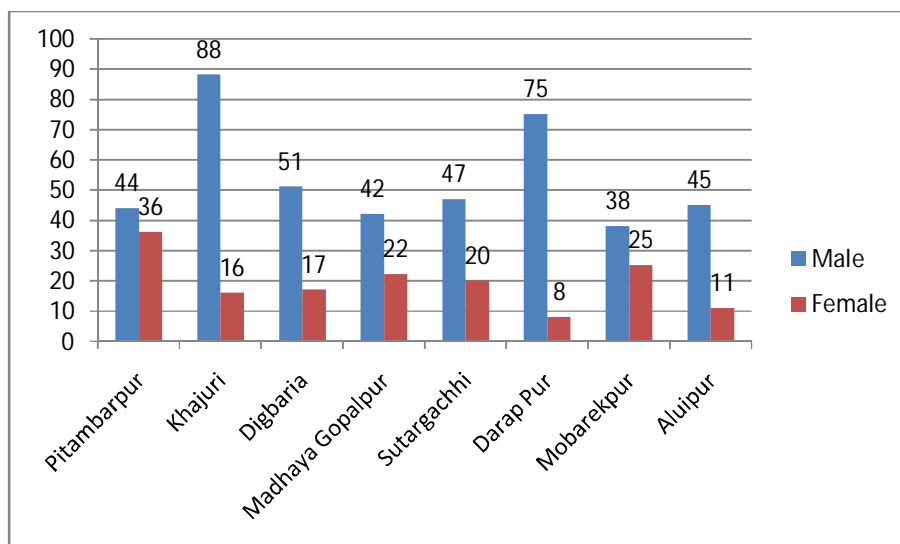


Fig.1: Diagrammatic representation of Gender Respondents

Distribution of Age Group

Table-2 Age wise distribution

Name of the village	18-27	28-37	38-47	48 and above	Total
Pitambarpur	32 (40%)	28 (35%)	12 (15%)	8 (10%)	80
Khajuri	36 (35%)	42 (40%)	16 (15%)	10 (10%)	104
Digbaria	17 (25%)	20 (30%)	17 (25%)	14 (20%)	68
Madhaya Gopalpur	19 (30%)	22 (35%)	13 (20%)	10 (15%)	64
Sutargachhi	23 (35%)	27 (40%)	10 (15%)	7 (10%)	67
Darap Pur	25 (30%)	29 (35%)	12 (15%)	17 (20%)	83
Mobarekpur	22 (35%)	28 (44%)	6 (10%)	7 (11%)	63
Aluipur	23 (41%)	14 (25%)	8 (14%)	11 (20%)	56
Total	197 (34%)	210 (36%)	94 (16%)	84 (14%)	585 (100%)

From the above table, majority of beneficiaries (out of five hundred eighty five) belong to the age group 28-37 i.e. 36%. These age group beneficiaries collect maximum information. Next order of age group is 18-27 i.e.34%. Minimum information collect age group 48 and above, i.e. 14 only.

Distribution of respondent according to their frequency of meeting with their local GP members

Table-3 Frequency of meeting with their local GP members

Frequency of contact	Pitambarpur	Khajuri	Digbaria	Madhaya Gopalpur	Sutargachhi	Darappur	Mobarekpur	Aluipur	Total respondents
Every day	31 (14%)	25 (12%)	34 (16%)	21 (10%)	34 (16%)	21 (10%)	21 (10%)	25 (12%)	212 (36%)
When the respondent approach to Panchayat office	18 (14%)	18 (14%)	15 (12%)	18 (14%)	18 (14%)	15 (12%)	11 (8%)	15 (12%)	128 (22%)
When GP member come to our locality	40 (13%)	37 (12%)	40 (13%)	35 (11%)	35 (11%)	47 (15%)	40 (13%)	37 (12%)	311 (53%)
At hut / market	07 (10%)	7 (10%)	15 (22%)	11 (16%)	04 (6%)	07 (10%)	07 (10%)	11 (16%)	69 (12%)
At party office	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
At party meeting	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
No scope to meet as he/she is very busy	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Not available as he/she resides elsewhere	06 (40%)	00	04 (20%)	04 (20%)	04 (20%)	00	00	00	18 (3%)
Don't meet because he/she belongs to other party	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00

This table indicate that 311 respondents out of 585 respondents (53%) said that when Gram Panchayat member come to the locality that time contact with beneficiaries. This is not enough to visit the locality. Only 36% beneficiaries told that GP Member come to the locality everyday. Every GP Member should contact with beneficiaries everyday. Panchayat is an important Govt. office for rural people. Only 22% beneficiaries said ‘when go to the Panchayat office’ contact with GP Member.

Distribution of respondents according to their frequency of visit to different places like offices, club, market and party office

Table-4 Frequency of visit to different places

Frequency	Panchayat Office	BDO Office	Club	Party Office	Market/ Hut
Reg.	18 (3%)	40 (7%)	165 (28%)	00	373 (64%)
Med.	278 (48%)	274 (47%)	73 (12%)	164 (28%)	165 (28%)
Few	245 (42%)	209 (36%)	51 (9%)	110 (19%)	47 (8%)
Nev.	44 (7%)	62 (10%)	296 (51%)	311 (53%)	00
Total	585 (100%)	585 (100%)	585 (100%)	585 (100%)	585 (100%)

This table shows that out of 585 beneficiaries, ‘Reg.’ goes to Market/Hut 64%. But ‘Regular’ basis Panchayat office goes only 3%. ‘Med. & Few’ beneficiaries goes to Panchayat office 48% & 42% respectively. This is not enough. Out of 585 beneficiaries, 274 beneficiaries (i.e. 47%) goes to BDO office as ‘Med.’ basis and 36% beneficiaries as ‘Few’ goes to BDO office. These two percentage indicate that beneficiaries would like to also collect information

from Government Employee. Maximum beneficiaries i.e. 53% not like to go 'Party office' to collect information. This is also important side. ('Reg.'-Regular; 'Med.'-Medium, 'Nev.'-Never)

Use of Mass Media of beneficiary of eight villages

Table-5 Use of mass media

Name of the village	TV	Radio	Newspaper	Total
Pitambarpur	56 (70%)	24 (30%)	16 (20%)	96
Khajuri	62 (60%)	31 (30%)	26 (25%)	119
Digbaria	51 (75%)	24 (35%)	20 (30%)	95
Madhaya Gopalpur	54 (85%)	22 (35%)	16 (25%)	92
Sutargachhi	47 (70%)	27 (40%)	13 (20%)	87
Darap Pur	46 (55%)	21 (25%)	33 (40%)	100
Mobarekpur	38 (60%)	13 (20%)	22 (35%)	73
Aluipur	42 (75%)	08 (15%)	22 (40%)	72

From the above table, clearly shows that 85% beneficiary use 'TV' of Madhaya Gopalpur and 55% beneficiary of Darap Pur village use 'TV'. 40% beneficiary of Sutargachhi village use 'Radio' and 15% beneficiary of Aluipur village use 'Radio'. 40% beneficiary of Darap Pur and Aluipur village read 'Newspaper' respectively and 20% beneficiary of Pitambarpur and Sutargachhi village respectively read 'Newspaper' for information collection.

Use of information collection channel of beneficiaries

Table-6 Information collection channel of beneficiaries

Name of the channels	No. of respondents	%
Panchayat member	357	61
Village Development meeting	76	13
Gram Samsad meeting	181	31
Family member	187	32
Neighbours	246	42
Political Party member / workers	47	8
Leaflet / Poster	35	6
Government employee	188	27
Co-operative	18	3
Club	105	18
NGOs	64	11
Others	00	00

This table indicate that 61% beneficiaries collect information through 'Panchayat member'. This channel is more effective to collect information for the beneficiaries. 42% beneficiaries use the channel of discussion with 'Neighbours' for collecting the information. 31% beneficiaries collect information from 'Gram samsad meeting'. The attendance of 'Gram samsad meeting' should be more. The response of 'Village development meeting' is very poor. Only 13% beneficiaries use this channel. It would be developed. Only 8% beneficiaries collect information from 'Political party member/workers'. This table indicate that maximum beneficiaries would like to avoid the any political party member/ worker to collect

information or party member/ worker not play role actively to disseminate information to the beneficiaries. 27% beneficiary collect information from 'Government Employee'.

Problems of Rural Information Transfer :

Some problems of rural information transfer are given below-

- Illiteracy and ignorance are the main obstacles of the rural people for RD.
- Lack of sufficient awareness programme create a problem for the beneficiaries to know the RD schemes properly.
- Formal training are insufficient which cause barrier for RD.
- Information gap is one of the important problems between communicator and receiver. As a result, proper information is not provided at the right time to the right person.
- Lack of sound knowledge about Information Technology (IT) is one of the important problem.
- Political barrier is the vital problem for the RD.

Recommendations :

Few recommendations are highlighted below-

- Literacy programme should be introduced more to the illiterate persons.
- Workshop / Training should be organised abundantly for agents and beneficiaries and also awareness programme should be introduced more to the beneficiaries.
- Beneficiaries should go spontaneously in Gram Samsad meeting.
- Government should give more effort for monitoring for the implementation of the RD scheme through PRIs to the beneficiaries.
- IT based programme should be introduced more.
- Right information should be reached to the right person at the shortest possible time.
- Beneficiary should go to the Panchayat Office more at regular basis.

Conclusion:

Information is considered as the most valuable resources which contributes to quality and speed of development in every sphere of human activity including RD. Success of RD process and activities through PRIs can not be justified by the numbers of RD programmes and projects implemented to the beneficiaries. The success should be measured by the degree of changes of standard of living of its target audience. Though, the implementation of the RD program through PRIs has changed the socio-economic conditions of the rural people drastically. In spite of, panchayat system should be more stronger and monitoring system should be introduced properly. Library and information professionals can not ignore their responsibilities. They should come forward and work together in order to maintain the smooth and steady flow of information for RD.

References :

1. Das, B. B., & Khan, S. C. (2003). Role of librarians of public libraries as one of the grass-root functionaries in rural development : the scenarion in West Bengal. *Knowledge management in special libraries in digital environment* (pp. 347-356). Dehradun: Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres.

2. Dasgupta, A. (2003). Rural information : the proper dissemination. In M. Goutam, & S. Sett (Ed.), *Information strategies for rural India* (pp. 79-86). Medinipur: Department of Library and Information Science, Vidyasagar University.
3. Jacobson, N., Butterill, D., & Goering, P. (2005). Consulting as a strategy for knowledge transfer. *The Milbank Quarterly*. 83(2), 299-321.
4. Lokshiksha Sanchar/Roopkala Kendra / Department of Information & Cultural Affairs, Government of West Bengal, Retrieved from www.kendroonline.org/roopkala-lokshiksha-sanchar/
5. Maiti, P (2003). Information support for rural planning. In M. Goutam, & S. Sett (Ed.), *Information strategies for rural India*. Medinipur: Department of Library and Information Science, Vidyasagar University.
6. Mathew, G. (Ed.) (2002). *Status of panchayati raj in the states and union territories of India*. New Delhi: Institute of Social Science.
7. Meitei, L.S. & Devi, T.P. (2004). Information needs of the rural people in Manipur : a case study. Kolkata: Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres.
8. Operational CSC Status Across India as on (March 2014) / Common Services Centres Scheme, Department of Information Technology, Government of India, Retrieved from <http://csc.gov.in/cscstatus/cscstatus.html>
9. Seal, D.K., Raihanuzzaman & Nath, N. (2003). Role of panchayats in fulfilment of information needs of rural masses : a case in West Bengal. *Knowledge management in special libraries in digital environment* (pp. 381-383). Dehradun: Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres.
10. Sharma, A. & Fatima, N. (2004). Information seeking behaviour pattern among the rural people of Gwalior district Of Madhya Pradesh. Kolkata: Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres.
11. Singh, K. (1999). *Rural development ; principles, policies and management*. New Delhi: Sage pub.
12. Tripathi, T. (2003). Information transfer : problems and remedies. In M. Goutam, & S. Sett (Ed.), *Information strategies for rural India* (pp. 420-431). Medinipur: Department of Library and Information Science, Vidyasagar University.

