

## **An Analysis of the Nature of Community Information and Information Poverty Existing Among Rural People**

Dr. Wathmanel Seneviratne  
Librarian, Open University of Sri Lanka  
Nawala, Nugegoda  
[wsene@ou.ac.lk](mailto:wsene@ou.ac.lk)

---

### **ABSTRACT**

Main objective of the research study is to explore the Community Information Needs and information behavior of rural communities in Sri Lanka. Research design is a deductive approach as the study deals with information needs (demand) and provision (supply) in broader sense and goes into micro level of those two main aspects in analysis of data. Data collected was of primary nature and was tried to give fair representation in data collection by community type and geographical locations where the population scattered. The theoretical framework selected was, Wilson's model on user needs and information behaviour (1999), Kempson's community approach. The research process was a two phase approach. The study was based on a sample survey where 10 Divisional Secretaries divisions and 10 villages were selected using 'Multistage Cluster Sampling' method. Data collection tool used was 'structured interview' and in addition, focus group discussions were also carried out to recognize common problems for information access, collective suggestions to improve conditions etc

It was found through the study that the type of information provided by different agencies and persons to the community was basically 'Service-Oriented'. This type of information was also not recorded or indexed in any national documentation publication. Therefore the Community Information in this study was seen as highly 'Non-Bibliographic' in nature and falls into basic two types; 'Survival' and 'Specific' as analysed in the study. It was found that unlike the bibliographic information, community targeted information have no definite form of collection or dissemination, but vary according to the nature of information and upon nature and literacy level of the target groups. It was also established that this category of information was targeted mostly the citizens scattered all over the country and the information users who do not belong or attached to any particular information system.

As was seen through the study, the existing information behaviour indicates how a citizen could be trapped in a cycle of information poverty from which he has no escape without a diversion strategy. Therefore the success in obtaining correct information is not certain. The barriers identified too support this adverse situation. Hence the low level of 'attainment of information' creates a stagnated low knowledge level. Low knowledge level again causes non-attainment of information due to personal and other barriers, which leads to low fulfillment level of information needs and the citizen is trapped in an 'information poverty cycle'. The situation demands some kind of strategic approach to divert the citizen from the so called vicious cycle of information poverty, to a more efficient and comfortable information line to obtain desired information in a systematic and in an authenticated way.

Based on the situations emerged through the study, it was able to build an 'ideal information flow' model for the rural communities in Sri Lanka as an outcome of the research. The model integrates the information user, information demand and information supply to overcome prevailing information poverty by introducing a strategic information provision model. Prime objective of the model is to uplift the citizen to a higher level in the knowledge scale and thereby enable him to divert from the information poverty cycle he caught in at present.