Community Information Needs and its Behaviour in Rural Sri Lanka

Wathmanel Seneviratne
Dedicated to Rural People………..
The study was initiated in 2002 and it had taken a time span around five years to complete due to the descriptive nature. Information collected for the survey was from 10 villages in rural areas in Sri Lanka and it took a longer time than expected to complete data collection due to the difficulty in approaching the locations of the sample and the difficulty in approaching rural people in the sample. Units of the survey are the rural house holds on the information demand side and organizations and individuals operated in those areas as information providers on the information supply side. The study is qualitative in nature hence reporting style of the study is basically descriptive.

Main objective of the research is to explore the ‘Community information Needs of rural communities and information behaviour in rural Sri Lanka’. The study tried to identify information needs of ordinary rural people and attempts to draw a ‘community information need frame’ for rural Sri Lanka. The research identifies nature of community information and status of information supply in the rural sector. It also attempts to find the nature of the information that flows among communities and finds why the true sense of information is deteriorated within the existing structure. The work shows that the channels appropriate to provide certain categories of information are not strong as it should be. The study also identifies certain barriers that affect information access and establishes the fact that there is an ‘information gap’ between demand and supply of information, hence the rural citizen is caught in an ‘information poverty cycle’, where a strategic measure is needed to divert him from the trap. The study recommends an appropriate information access mechanism for the situation which would bring the rural citizen of Sri Lanka to an information sphere where he does not get stuck in the process of information seeking.

This book is based on a thesis written to fulfill the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo in 2006.

Wathmanel Seneviratne
380/51 Sarana Road
Colombo 07

Nov. 2008.
Acknowledgement

This research study, though I am the author, would not have seen in this form if not for the assistance extended by many parties. Therefore it is my prime duty to acknowledge the institutions and persons who gave assistance and guidance in completing this work.

The study is affiliated to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Colombo. The National Science Foundation sponsored the research project partly. The book is fully supported for its publishing by the Sri Lanka National Library Services Board and I accept it as a great honour for my work. Therefore my foremost gratitude goes for these three institutions.

I indebted very much to the project supervisors, Professor (Mrs.) G.I.C. Gunawardene, Dean, Education, Open University of Sri Lanka and Professor K.A.P. Siddhisena, Department of Demography, University of Colombo, for their guidance, continuous and untiring support extended generously during the research process until they saw it in its correct shape. They supported me to buildup a very healthy, constructive dialogue throughout the project. Hence, I offer an exceptional note of gratitude to these well known academics.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not thank few other senior academics in the University of Colombo and few other foreign universities. I am particularly thankful to Professor Luckshman Dissanayake, Professor (Mrs.) Kusuma Karunaratne, Mrs. Sumana Jayasuriya, Librarian, University of Colombo, late Professor V.K. Samaranayake, Professor K.S. Raghavan (University of Madras), Professor Edie Rasmussen (University of Pittsburg) and Dr. Paul Solomon(University of North Carolina).

There are special group of people, I should admire for their generosity, and unexpected support given to me when I was attending to the survey. The Divisional Secretaries, Medical Officers of Health, Agrarian Services Officers, Directors of Agriculture, other divisional level officers and Grama Niladharis, who went out of their way to support my survey, are to be thanked immensely. Some of the officers spared not only their time but their staff and vehicles to reach difficult locations.

A special thank is also due to Mr. S. Gamage (Development Officer, Gangapalatha DS Division) and Mr. K.D. Wickramaratne (Library, University of Colombo) for data collection and editing of data.

While I am grateful to all the others who helped me in numerous ways in bringing this work to a completion, I should thank both my husband Cyril and daughter Indrachapa for tolerating the hardship when they accompanied me to distant, remote places and for the time I have taken away from them to dedicate for this research.
Table of Contents

Forward
Acknowledgement
Table of Contents
List of Tables
List of Figures
List of Abbreviations

Chapter 1.0 - Introduction

1.0 Introduction 1

Chapter 2.0 - Background of the Study

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Information Society 6
2.3 Citizenship and Community Information 9
2.4 Rural Community 11
2.5 Information Needs 15
2.6 Information and Information Behavior 18

Chapter 3.0 - Literature Review

3.1 Introduction 21
3.2 Theoretical Works 24
  3.2.1 Research on Information Users 25
  3.2.2 Information Needs and Need Models 30
  3.2.3 Rural Information Needs 36
  3.2.4 Information Seeking Behaviour and Models 38
3.3 Empirical Studies 44
  3.3.1 Rural Information Needs 46
  3.3.2 Information Seeking Behaviour 53
  3.3.3 Rural Information Provision 55
  3.3.4 Rural Sector Studies : Sri Lanka 62
  3.3.5 Intervening Factors of Information Behaviour 65
3.4 Discussion 66

Chapter 4.0 - Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction 69
### 4.2 Research Design and Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Research Design</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3 The Population and the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 The Population</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1.1 Population 1</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1.2 Population 2</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 Sampling Method</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3 Sample Selection Criteria</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.4 Rate of Response | 86 |

### 4.5 Community Types Selected for the Sample | 88 |

### 4.6 Data Collection Methodology | 89 |

### 4.7 Pilot Study | 95 |

### 4.8 Summary | 96 |

### 4.9 Limitation of the Study | 97 |

### Chapter 5.0 Community Information Needs of Rural Sri Lanka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Characteristics of the Sample and Rate of Response</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.2 Categorization of Information Needs | 101 |

#### 5.2.1 Information Needs Common to All | 103 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.1 Government Information</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.2 Educational Information</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.3 Information on Occupation Training</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.4 Health and Nutrition Information</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.5 Agriculture related Information</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.6 Financial Information</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.7 Infrastructure related Information</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.8 Political related Information</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1.9 Local Government Information</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.2.2 Other Information Need Categories | 145 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2.1 Labour Issues and Employment Information</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.2.2 Industrial and related Information 149
5.2.2.3 Market Information 153
5.2.2.4 Legal Information 156
5.2.2.5 Weather and Natural Disaster related Information 159
5.2.2.6 Recreational and Miscellaneous Information 161

5.3 Level of Fulfillment of the Information Needs 165

5.4 Summary 170

Chapter 6.0 Information Provision in Rural Sri Lanka: Status and Barriers

6.1 Introduction 170

6.2 Rate of Response 170

6.3 Information Providers and Categories Handled 173

6.3.1 Government Offices 173
6.3.1.1 Divisional Secretary’s Office 175
6.3.1.2 Divisional Agricultural Office / Agrarian Services Office 180
6.3.1.3 Medical Officer of Health 182
6.3.1.4 Public Library 185
6.3.1.5 Post Office 187
6.3.1.6 Pradesheeya Sabha 188

6.3.2 Other Organization / Agencies 190
6.3.1.7 Financial / Savings Institutions 190
6.3.1.8 Non – Governmental Organizations 193
6.3.2.1 Government Officers 195
6.3.2.2 Other Individuals 196

6.4 Collection, Organization and Delivery of Information 200
6.4.1 Basis of Collecting Information 200
6.4.2 Mode of Collection 203
6.4.3 Organization of Information 205
6.4.4  Information Delivery:
     Formats and Methods  206
  6.4.4.1  Formats Delivered  206
  6.4.4.2  Delivery Methods  208
     6.4.4.2.1  One to one Method  209
     6.4.4.2.2  Provider to a Group Method  210
     6.4.4.2.3  Print and Mass Media  211
  6.5  Barriers to the Information Flow  215
  6.5.1  Geographical Barriers  217
  6.5.2  Structural Barriers  218
     6.5.2.1  Infrastructure Facilities and Services.  218
     6.5.2.2  Institutional Barriers  224
     6.5.2.3  Cultural Barriers  226
     6.5.2.4  Socio-economic Barriers  228
  6.5.3  Personal and Attitudinal Barriers  230
     6.5.3.1  Personal Barriers  230
     6.5.3.2  Attitudinal Barriers  232
  6.6  Nature of Community Information  235
  6.7  Summary  236

Chapter 7.0  Conclusion and Implications for the Policy

  7.1  Recapitulation of Findings  240
  7.2  Implications for Policy  247
  7.3  Suggestions for Future Research  250

List of References  252

Appendices:

Appendix I - Locations Map of Selected Divisional Secretaries Division 266

List of Tables

Table 4.1  Stratification of Institutional Providers - Sample 2
Table 4.2  Individual Information Providers Considered in the Sample
Table 4.3  Information Providers - Sample Stratification and Collection of Status
Table 5.1  Characteristics of the Sample by Community Type
Table 5.2  Responses Received for Main Information Need Categories
Table 5.3  Responses for Information Need Categories by Community Type
Table 5.4  Gender Cross Tabulation for All Information Categories
Table 5.5  Gender Responses for Government Need Categories
Table 5.6  Rate of Response Received for Educational Information Need Categories
Table 5.7  Need for Education Information and Status of Having Children
Table 5.8  Nature of Training Received by Respondents
Table 5.9  Occupational Training by Age Groups
Table 5.10 Information Need Categories - Health & Nutrition
Table 5.11 Demand for Health and Nutrition Information by Gender
Table 5.12 Agricultural Needs by Community Types, Geographical Zones and DS Divisions
Table 5.13 Agricultural Information Needs by Economic Activities
Table 5.14 Financial Information Need Categories
Table 5.15 Financial Categories by Gender (Multiple Responses)
Table 5.16 Financial Need Categories by Economic Activities
Table 5.17 Financial Information Needs by Employment Categories
Table 5.18 Infrastructure Information Needs by Community Type
Table 5.19 Political Information by Community Type
Table 5.20 Local Government Information Need Categories
Table 5.21 Labour Issues and Employment Information by Community Type
Table 5.22 Labour and Employment Needs by Level of Education
Table 5.23 Industrial Needs by Community Type
Table 5.24 Industrial Need Categories
Table 5.25 Market Information Need by Community Type
Table 5.26 Market Categories by Economic Activities
Table 5.27  Legal Information by Community Type
Table 5.28  Multiple Responses Legal Information Need Categories
Table 5.29  Weather and Natural Disaster by Community Type
Table 5.30  Weather and Natural Disaster Information Needs
Table 5.31  Recreational Information Categories by Age Group
Table 5.32  Rate of Fulfillment of Information Need Categories
Table 6.1  Channels Consulted for Government Information
Table 6.2  Information Channels in Agricultural Information Provision
Table 6.3  Channel Dependency Rate (CDR) for Health Information
Table 6.4  Channel Dependency Rate over Pradesheeya Sabha
Table 6.5  Channel Dependency Rate on Financial Information
Table 6.6  Basis of Information Collected by Providers
Table 6.7  Format of Information Collected
Table 6.8  Organization of Information Collected
Table 6.9  Usage Distributions of Newspapers by Community Type
Table 6.10 Barriers Faced by Respondents is Obtaining Information
Table 6.11 Availability of Infrastructure Facilities in Village clusters surveyed
Table 6.12 Distances to Points of Information Access
Table 6.13 Usage of Power Sources to Access Communication Services
Table 6.14 Access Points used to Read Newspapers
Table 6.15 Usage of Communication Media

List of Figures

Figure 3.1  Flow of Development Information
Figure 4.1  Theoretical Framework: Wilson's Model of Information Behavior
Figure 4.2  Conceptual Framework
Figure 4.3  Sample Selection Process 1: Selection Topology
Figure 4.4  Sample Selection Process 2: Selection of Communities and Providers
Figure 4.5  Villages Selected Through the Sampling Process
Figure 4.6  Distribution of the Sample
Figure 4.7  Villages Represented by Community type
Figure 5.1  Need Categories - Main Divisions
Figure 5.2  Government Information Categories and Multiple Responses Received
Figure 5.3  Distribution of Government Needs Among Age Groups
Figure 5.4  Training Status of the Respondents
Figure 5.5  Responses for Information Need Categories - Occupational Training
Figure 5.6  Agricultural Need Categories
Figure 5.7  Agricultural Information Needs by Age Groups
Figure 5.8  Infrastructure Need Categories
Figure 5.9  Political Need Categories
Figure 5.10  Responses Received for Labour Need Categories
Figure 5.11  Labour and Employment Issues by Employment Category
Figure 5.12  Multiple Responses Received for Market Information Categories
Figure 5.13  Responses Received for Recreational Information
Figure 5.14  Measurement Frame for Satisfaction / Frustration Level
Figure 6.1  Provision and Government Information Categories
Figure 6.2  Main Information Need Categories Handled by Agrarian Services Office
Figure 6.3  Channel Dependency Rate for Public Libraries
Figure 6.4  Channel Dependency Rate for the Post Offices
Figure 6.5  Selection of the Banks by Community
Figure 6.6  NGO's Surveyed and their Scope of Activities
Figure 6.7  Information Provision Status by Other Individuals
Figure 6.8  Channel Dependency Rate over Government Offices
Figure 6.9  Channel Dependency Rate Over on Other Individuals
Figure 6.10  Other Channels Operated in Providing Information
Figure 6.11  Delivery Formats of Community Information
Figure 6.12  Method of Delivery of Information
Figure 6.13  Distribution of the Village Selected Among Geographical Zones
Figure 6.14  Usage Computers and IT in Government and Other Officers
Figure 6.15  Attitudes on "Information Provision is Essential Rural Development"
Figure 6.16  Attitudes on "Willingness to use ICT's in Information Organization and Provision"
Figure 6.17  The Model - Ideal Information Flow Proposed
Chapter 01

Background of the Research

1.0 Introduction

No society can aspire to greater heights without adequate and necessary information provided upon information needs of the citizens. In the modern society people of any origin are users of information. They perceive that it is essential to ‘know’ before attempting any sort of personal and social activity. Many studies have confirmed that, rural dwellers are enthusiastic equally, in obtaining information for their day today lives as urbanites are (Uhegbu 1997; Moyo, 1994). In many developing countries including Sri Lanka however, development efforts exercised for rural upgrading had not recognized emphasized or had disregarded the importance of ‘Information Component’. Though the importance was recognized, a due accommodation was not given to the information factor in the socio-economic development plans made for rural communities.

In Sri Lanka, it is observed that dissemination of necessary information to ordinary citizens, be it urban or rural, operates at a very low key. However, rural citizenship is much more disadvantaged, much more poverty stricken and hence prone to suffer from the widening information gap or information poverty. Politicians have also forgotten the rough, narrow, dusty or wet slippery paths they strolled during their election campaigns or have had no opportunity to accommodate their proposals into the national plans. There is also no well established community information service for both rural and urban sectors.
However there is no study conducted at grass roots level on the information needs, pattern of information seeking of rural citizens and information provision in those areas in Sri Lanka. Therefore a need emerges for a research study to explore community information needs and information provision in the rural sector in the country.

The present study therefore is planned to explore community information needs of rural communities in Sri Lanka and to find out the status of information behaviour and the provision of the same. When considering the other studies performed, community information needs were rarely investigated in terms of users of information (user genera) but in terms of information systems in operation (system genera) in many cases.

Problem area for the present research was, the widening information gap that exists within rural sector in Sri Lanka due to non-identification of the information needs of rural citizens and the inappropriate supply of information that does not cater to the exact demand of ordinary citizens. Many research studies conducted in other countries in the same area have shown the significance to investigate what actual information is needed by the citizen. It is also crucial to understand that initiation of any citizen-based services will not be effective unless studies of the situations existing at grass roots level are conducted.

Without such a firm base, implementation of society based services will be unsuccessful or inappropriate. Therefore a research study at village level to explore information needs of rural citizens and information behaviour in the rural areas is extremely necessary and the aim of the present study is to serve this purpose.
1.1 Objectives of the Study

Main objectives of the present research are;

- to investigate the community information needs of rural communities in Sri Lanka and
- to explore the information access and information provision status within those communities.

The specific objectives identified for the study are as follows;

- identify categories of information needs of rural communities by type
- explore how information needs differ according to geographical and socio-economic characteristics of the rural communities
- explore the information access methods or channels they consult to obtain information and,
- investigate the existing flows and the provision of information within the rural communities.

Aspects mentioned in the specific objectives are then interpreted as research questions, as given below to conduct the research in a systematic manner.

- What are the types of information needs of rural communities? i.e. commonly sought information needs and specific information needs?
- Is there any relationship between information needs and community categories identified?
- Is there any relationship between information needs and geographical location of the communities?
- How do these needs differ by social characteristics of the groups of people within the communities as categorized by family position, gender, age groups, education level, economic activities, occupation and ethnicity etc.?
- Are the information needs adequately fulfilled by the available information?
- How do rural people behave when an information need arises?
• What are the channels they consult in obtaining this information?
• What are the problems or barriers encountered when obtaining information?
• Who are the information providers available in Sri Lanka?
• What sort of information do they provide to the rural citizens?
• What is the status of information delivery to the communities? (availability of information, format, method delivered etc.)

Findings of studies such as the present research is necessary and useful to plan many societal services such as community information services, public library services, health services, agricultural, industrial and technological extension services, counseling services, e-governance based services and planning and utilizing ICT in rural areas etc.

Literature on information needs, information seeking patterns and specific behaviours, information provision and methods etc was also reviewed. These studies were on conceptual as well as on empirical grounds. The theories and models reviewed under the theoretical framework were of information skills, information retrieval /searching process and theories of information behaviour. Among the empirical studies reviewed relating to rural information sector, African and Asian studies were seen as prominent.

The data collection was based on the sample survey and two categories of populations were selected, to obtain the samples. The survey was conducted in 10 villages selected through mixture of systematic and non-systematic samples.
1.2 Background of the Study

As the present study is on rural communities, it is necessary to attempt a brief discussion on; the characteristics of the rural society and their information needs, their information seeking behaviour and information provision status that exists in these areas.

1.2.1 Information Society

Modern society is said to be highly information dependent and almost all social activities nowadays are information, knowledge and learning oriented. Information Society is a term used for a society in which the creation, distribution, and manipulation of information has become the most significant economic and cultural activity. An Information Society may be contrasted with societies in which the economic underpinning is primarily industrial or agrarian. The information society is not only affecting the way people interact but it is also requiring the traditional organizational structures to be more flexible, more participatory and more decentralized (Ministerial Conference on Information Society, 1995; Comilla, 1984)

The lifestyle of people in the present information society, wherever they are, has turned at many sharp corners, making the life sophisticated in urban areas and complicated in rural areas. The social man cannot avoid this revolution but needs to survive the situation. Thus information is indispensable in the development of any society, be it economic, social, political or cultural development (Hughes, 1991). As pointed out by Uhegbu (1997) and Khan (2001), people in the modern society regardless of their geographical, racial, educational and social differences are in need of a variety of information and rural dwellers are equally enthusiastic in obtaining information for their day to day lives, as are the urbanites.
Information is also treated as a factor of production and obtaining of which, whenever necessary, is a right of a citizen of any social status (Mchombu, 1996). It is also a right of a citizen of any social status to obtain the information he/she needs to adapt to the modern lifestyle (FAO/ICRISAT/Commonwealth of Learning, 2002; Thangamani, 2004; Viro, 1986; Voigt, 1984). On the other hand, it is the duty of the government to plan necessary infrastructure to provide information to all communities scattered all over the country including rural areas (Melody, 1995; Schuften, 1996; Tennakoon, 2003; Thangamani, 2004). The scope of the study evolves around rural society, making rural community information scenario at the focus.

The advent of ICT as a fast developing enabling tool for delivery of products and services has now redefined the information access, mechanisms of delivery and also deliverables (Fountain, et al. 2003; Samaranayake, 2004b; Susman, 2001; Ulrich, 2003; UNDP, 2004 & 2003). It continues to affect social, political and economic landscapes around the world. This information age paradigm shift is characterized by an integration of service providers, means of access and a prepared citizenry to obtain services through it. In this context the governments and its services had not gone unaffected and statesmanship became more and more obligatory to the general public (British Council, 1999; United Nations, 2001 & 2003; Wimmer and Traunmuller, 2002; W’O Okot-Uma, 2000).

It is also understood that right to communicate and right to access information are fundamental to any democratic and equitable society (Schleihagen, 1996). Information is identified as a necessary link in the development effort (Narayan, 2000; Dissanayake, 2001), and also a compulsory means to maintain standard lifestyle according to modern terms (Mchombu, 1996). Importance of information is seen
also as a catalyst in capacity building and empowering communities. (Samaranayake, 2004; Leach, 1999). Information is recognized as one of the social needs of the citizen. Samaranayake (2004), Thorpe (1986) and Narayan (2000) identified the importance of information delivery in alleviating poverty and Narayan further found that lack of information is a vicious factor in poverty cycle.

It was seen that in Sri Lanka poverty is mostly associated with rural communities. More than one third of the population of Sri Lanka is under poverty line when we consider income as an indicator, out of which a higher number of low income households are recorded in the rural sector. Nevertheless research reveals that income cannot be treated as the only indicator of poverty and the phenomenon is multifaceted (Siddhisena and Jayatilleke, 2004). One such facet is ‘information poverty’ and is much attributed to non identification of information needs of the general public (community information), specifically in relation to rural, remote communities. It was also argued by policy makers and researchers, that information asymmetry prevailing in the rural areas is a fundamental issue that needs to be remedied to upgrade the rural economy (Wattegama, 2004).

1.2.2 Citizenship and Community Information

According to modern citizenship rights, access to information is a basic right of a citizen (Marcella & Baxter, 2000). Citizenship information is also attributed to the community information which is needed by the general public and produced by national or local government, government departments and public sector organizations (Marcella and Baxter, 2000; Yu, 1999). Community information was described by Pienaar (1994) as, information needed for living and information needed to participate in social activity.
Information delivery by the governments had also become indispensable with the concept of Freedom of Information (FOI) (Susman, 2001). Regardless of the type of government, be it socialist, democratic etc., the role of the government has changed in less than a decade as a mere service provider (Seneviratne, 2001). It was seen that conventional methods of service delivery by the governments are fast becoming inadequate to match the proliferating information needs of the modern citizenry.

As have been observed by many researchers, either information provision is not productive or is under utilized among many communities in low and middle income earning countries, especially in remote rural areas (Ahsanullah, 1995; Moores, 1981; Lipton, 1977). The case is no better in case of the Sri Lankan rural sector. The impact of the modern information access systems had not been all that favourable to these backward communities but had widened the gap between information rich and information poor. Some arguments try to match the situation with the digital divide; nevertheless the information gap still exists within communities even where modern information access systems are in operation. It was seen that information needs of these communities, in most cases were not studied as a national planning effort. Though many researchers endeavored to do so with regard to specific communities or as relating to specific, professions, occupations or conditions, an integrated approach to rural community information needs was not attempted in Sri Lanka. Studies conducted in other countries within the same scope had not come out with a clearly defined rural community information need frame. It is also observed by many researchers that community information deals with a different kind of information flow, which may not be attained through the present public library system as the scope of public library service is different and not adequate in providing information for a vast array of day to day information needs (Dattari, 1997; Ochogwu, 1990).
Sturges and Chimseu (1996), in their study had found out the same situation, in support of this view indicating the inadequacy of the scope of activities of the public libraries. In Sri Lanka there are more than 800 public libraries, but it is seen that there is no ‘community approach’ in the system.

Hence the rationale to explore community information needs and information behaviour of rural sector is the absence of such an integrated approach at the grass roots level.

1.2.3 Rural Community

Out of nearly one billion poor identified in 58 poverty profiles completed by the World Bank, 72% live in rural areas (World Bank 1997). The rural areas in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America etc., indicate significant differences in characteristics of their poverty profiles and these characteristics differ both among and within regions and the countries. There are differences in climatic, geographical, economical, agronomic conditions, population density and social structures. Most of all there are complex differences in land tenure and commercialization of production, in occupational structure and income distribution, in public service provision and accessibility to the same, in the orientation of political regimes and government policies. (Milton and Uphoff, 1974).

In Sri Lanka, a significant change of the status from being poor to being not-poor has not been clearly effected for several reasons such as management inefficiency, ineffective targeting of poor and due to shortcomings in planning such programmes according to a study conducted in Sri Lanka. It is also observed in this study that most of the Sri Lankan poor belong to rural areas (Siddhisena and Jayatilaka, 2004). Any concrete measures to facilitate rural development have to take into account the distinctive features of the society in focus.
Service delivery or information delivery especially comes into this purview.

Another significant general statement is that the population of rural areas continues to increase in absolute numbers despite massive migration to urban areas. Eventhough a part of both rural elite and rural poor migrated to suburban areas the greatest concentrations of severe poverty remain in rural areas (Milton & Uphoff 1982). A World Bank survey also asserts that despite rapid urban growth, the majority of the poor will continue to live in the countryside until about 2020 (World Bank 1997). The situation creates a need to measure and assess the needs of rural communities and build a suitable platform to plan rural community services.

Eventhough the situation is known to national planners, the point seems to have been neglected for years by prioritization of services, like provision of government services, investments of public funds, developing the infrastructure, incentives for private investments etc. for the urbanites (Lipton, 1977). Even the more substantial landed farmers must often struggle for policies which meet their economic needs. Small and marginal farmers, tenants at will landless workers and such weak and disadvantaged groups as female headed households, who together comprise the majorities in most rural areas, have limited access to public services and tend to be overlooked by governments (Esman, 1978; Tennakoon, 2003; Thangamani, 2004).

Also many development efforts exercised for rural upgrading had neglected the importance of information provision for the rural communities. Deepa Narayan of World Bank, links "Lack of Information" to the poverty cycle modeled relating to the developing counties (Narayan, 2000).

In Sri Lanka 85.5 percent population live in rural and estate areas even though urban migration has occurred constantly
over the years (Department of Census and Statistics, 2004). Working population in these areas both male and female accounts for 49.6 percent of the total rural working population. The main occupation of these rural and estate areas is predominantly agricultural and informal. Educational attainment index in three sectors (urban, rural, estate) shows an increasing trend and is not very low when compared with the urban index. The literacy level of the rural sector is close to the level in the urban sector.

According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2005) general literacy rate of the country is 92.5 percent. As sectoral calculations show, literacy rate is 87.1 in the urban sector and 66.1 in the rural sector (Department of Census & Statistics, 2001). These indicators show that there is a significant social and cultural awakening among the rural and estate sector, though the social amenities are not provided equally for them as for the urban sector. When compared with other rural societies Sri Lankan rural sector is in fairly a better position in social development. According to African village surveys that had been conducted the African village is impoverished, neglected and frequently isolated by geography, language and culture (Sturges and Chimseu 1996; Aboyade 1984). Government propaganda in the nature of social and industrial development projects and involvement of non-governmental organizations had opened the Lankan rural societies to the outside world and one impact of this change is the increasing need for information. Damatob (1997) remarks that the essence of any development whether national or rural is to enhance the quality of life of the people and that no society can aspire to greater heights without adequate and relevant information.

These research studies suggest that the rural areas too need adequate information for meaningful development. Hence an unavoidable need emanates through this situation that is to analyze and study information needs and information seeking
behaviour of rural communities and to find out the true
information provision to the rural communities in remote
areas in particular. The research on these aspects will be
essential to plan any society based services such as public
library services, community information services, health
services, industrial and technological extension services,
counseling services etc.

These information needs are to be measured regardless of
geographical, socio-economic, political and cultural
circumstances and infrastructural discrimination. But the
information needs of rural communities can be diverse,
depending on the kinds of discrimination mentioned
(Aboyade, 1984).

1.2.4 Information Needs

A number of studies and surveys have been carried out on
information needs of the communities in different countries
and localities (Kaniki, 1992; Mudannayake, 1989;
Weerasinghe, 2002; Marcella and Baxter, 2000). The modern
information needs studies shows an independency from
system centered approach, as evident in earlier studies. Some
studies have been library centered, placing the library in the
center of information provision, for instance, studies
conducted by Aboyade, (1987), Schliehagen (1996), Evans
(1992) etc. Focus of some of the studies were on special user
groups or information areas like researchers, farmers,
industrialists, financiers, women etc. (Kaniki, 1992;Line,
1974; University of Bath,1971; Zijp,1994;
Weerasinghe,2002; Fernando,1990; Nwagha,2001) and
subject areas like agriculture, science and technology, health
and nutrition etc. Some researchers like Dervin and Nilan
(1986) and Dervin, (1983, 1999, 2003) pointed out about the
need for a paradigm shift in thinking about information need
fulfillment through a diversion from the library bias.
Mchombu (1996), Pettigrew (2000), Vakkari (1998), Wilson (2000) etc. had carried the idea forward and launched lot of studies about the information needs and information behavior diverting from the system bias.

Information needs do not arise out of a void, but out of a desire to meet one or more of the three basic human needs; physiological needs (need for food, shelter etc.), psychological needs (domination, security, self confidence etc.) and cognitive needs (need to plan, learning, training etc.) (Nicholas, 1996). Arising form this study, information needs have three main categories: Expressed needs (information need expressed clearly), Unexpressed needs (an individual aware about the need but not expressed due to many reasons), and Dormant needs (the needs about the existence of which an individual does not know). This chapter hopes to analyze all the information needs that fall under these main categories. Especially the unexpressed and dormant needs are attempted to be traced through this survey.

Information needs are identified by a person himself depending upon the level of knowledge. Some of these needs are ‘expressed’ by people, while some people do not know what their needs are. They do not know that they have an information gap because they are not aware about the information available out there that could help them in their activities. Only by being exposed to the information do they become conscious of its worth. This type of needs is called ‘dormant’ needs. There is another category of needs called ‘unexpressed’ which had gone unmet due to many obstacles, even though the user is aware about the need (Nicholas, 1996).

The aspect ‘Information Need’ is the underlying concept or root of the problem for many research concepts such as information seeking behaviour, information retrieval, information literacy, usage patterns of information,
information exchange, coping behaviour, media effects, user interface/ portal models etc. The concept information need originates with a psychological base since it refers to a mental state. Burnkrant (1976), affirms that information need is a cognitive representation of a future goal that is desired. As Belkin puts forth, an information need arises when a person recognizes a gap in his state of knowledge and wishes to resolve that anomaly (Belkin 1989). Thus information need refers to an anomalous state of knowledge.

Thus a need emerges in a person’s mind and is not directly observable by another person but is inferred from a series of actions. According to Wilson (1981, 1997) the experience of need can only be discovered by deduction from behaviour or through the reporting of the person in need. It is also a subjective expression and this nature lead to identify need types through deduction and reporting. Morgan and King, (1971; http://informationr.net, 2005), propose that the information needs emerge through three motives; physiological motives, unlearned motives and social motives. As Nicholas (1996) points out, information needs arise out of a desire to meet one or more of three basic human needs; physiological, psychological and cognitive needs. This does not indicate that information needs are of less importance, but the basic human needs (primary needs) and the information needs are inter-dependent. This interdependency is such that, the success in meeting the primary need is dependent on meeting the relevant information need and information need cannot be emerged if there are no primary needs. It proves the fact that information needs do not arise from a void. It needs a base to spring up.

In information science research, a great deal of attention is given to the concept especially in information system design (Cain,1988; Amt,1987; Fernando,1990; Galimidi,2005; Maletzki,2000 etc.), user categories (Leckie et al.,1996; Weight, et al., 1993; Leach, 1999; Ikojo-Odongo,2001;
Ahmed and Iman, 1989; Kleiber et.al., 1995 etc.) and needs under special situations (Duggan and Banwell, 2004; Moores, 1981; Pettigrew, 2000). Nevertheless research approaches toward information needs relating to communities have been attempted regardless of the socio – economic, cultural, ethnic, political or geographical differences of those communities. Outcomes of such community information research seem to vary from community to community depending on the specific characteristics of the society they belong to. The present study focuses on information needs of rural communities in Sri Lanka.

1.2.5 Information Provision and Information Behaviour

Any society has its own embedded system of information provision since its origin. The people in society grasp information by different means, access of which tends to take different routes from time to time according to the socio-technological changes in the society. Information obtained thus is transferred and exchanged through the communication systems established within a society. Communication systems also have their own history and developments parallel to the information provision. The principle is common to all categories of societies, be it remote, rural, suburban, urban and all people in the society need some kind of information at every instance for their survival. People belonging to traditional and conventional societies have a traditional flow of information provision; while modern information societies in fast transformation have information provision equipped with modern access systems. Rural people were seen as good depositories and safe keepers of information (Voigt,1984; Zijp,1994), but in the modern perspective information is worth only when it is flowing rather than deposited somewhere and exposed only to a few people.

Traditional information provision system operated through the verbal information transfer system. Information provision
in modern perspective is about approaching information and knowledge that make people, organizations and society more productive and more creative by using the same. Information provision contains knowledge or information base (Riemenschneider and Bonnen, 1979), delivery channels of information and means of information delivery (IHAC, 1997). According to the literature (Correa et.al.1997: Esmen and Uphoff, 1982: Khan, 2000) modern information provision hopes to use; processed information using more sophisticated information processing and storing systems, established organizational frames or individuals as information providers and more flexible delivery methods. The present study explores these measures regarding the rural information scenario in Sri Lanka.

It was seen that, in Sri Lankan rural society there are information streams that was established externally as a compulsory requirement of the government administrative and related service structure (e.g. Divisional Secretary’s Office, Medical Officer of Health etc.). On the other hand, information provision to a person at the village level was also seen as information streams embedded in the rural society structure for a long time including the traditional belief systems. These leaders of thought were recognized by many similar studies conducted in Africa and in Sri Lanka (Aboyade, 1981; Ambatalawa, 1994; Mchombu, 1993; Correa et.al., 1997; Seneviratne, 2005). As revealed thus in different countries and relating to specific communities, there are factors that operate as barriers to information flow (Galimidi, 2005; Van-Zuurau and Wolf, 1991; Wilson, 1996;).

It was observed with regard to the information behaviour in any society that the information provision is highly connected with the service delivery (may be through the central government, provincial government, local authorities, private/public corporations etc.) and the relevant institutional infrastructure established. This is especially true in the case
of community information. Even though there are other stakeholders in the information provision like private organizations, non-governmental organizations, government and NGO sponsored projects, individuals, community participation programmes etc., the service delivery organizations play a crucial role in information behaviour. When the service delivery is not correctly operating in a country the delivery of community information will be at a stake. The scenario is complex than it looks; thus in developing countries, service delivery to the communities was made using alternative arrangements and especially passing of state responsibility to other channels was seen remarkably (World Development Report, 2004), i.e. outsourced contracts, selling concessions to the private sector, transferring responsibilities to lower tiers of the government, to the communities and to the house holds. This had affected the information delivery with mixed results in both constructive and mostly an unconstructive way.

Even though the governments draw plans continuously to fix the information access issues in coping up with the paradigm shift in the information society, information gap between those who have information and those who do not have the same is widening, so that minimizing the information gap is being treated as the prime objective of the information policy of any country. To achieve this objective, it is important to explore and identify the information needs of people and its categories. The present research is conducted in this premise and will identify the information behavior in rural communities, which will include information provision status and its flow. The outcomes of the study will hoped be of value in providing a solid platform to plan community based services.
Chapter 02

Theoretical and Empirical Base of the Community Information

2.0 Introduction

Scope of the present study is the rural information flow and it hopes to approach the rural community at the grass root level to follow the tracks of the rural information flows, to and fro. It was observed that no research focusing directly on the information needs of the rural communities in Sri Lanka, has been attempted even though there were sector specific research studies, that have been conducted on rural poverty alleviation, matching opportunities for industrial development and self employment schemes, gender development, agro-based development information etc.

As many studies reveal information plays an extremely important role in development efforts. Rural communities are also members of public and cannot be overlooked in the development process. Therefore rural development is considered as one of the crucial blocks in the national development grid. In the management and implementation of any development effort, well-researched and surveyed knowledge established on baseline data is essential.

Research conducted on rural needs have included the requirement for creating awareness among citizens, but have dealt from sociological and economics points of view.
Scientists such as Fernando (1980) emphasized need of a survey to be conducted at village level and suggests that information bases should be strengthen by means of closer dialogue with villagers to identify real problems. Thus there is a need to review the studies conducted on information needs of rural citizens, their information seeking habits, information provision to them and information behaviour itself among rural communities, from library and information science angle also. Some studies in Sri Lanka deal with information needs of different target groups or with specific subject areas such as information needs of academics and researchers, financiers, information on agriculture etc. (Mudannayake, 1989; Illeperuma 2000; Weerasinghe, 2002) but not specifically with rural community information needs. Hence in this chapter, both general studies as well as specific studies on information users and information needs are discussed.

The study also accommodates aspects such as information transfer, information provision and channels consulted in information seeking and barriers to access information. This chapter thus reviews previous studies on the same focus, relating to different research studies and projects conducted in other countries as well as locally, which hopefully will be useful in planning and obtaining the base data for the present study.

Related studies are examined broadly under two main aspects, i.e. a) Theoretical approaches to the subject researched and b) Empirical studies conducted within the theme of the present study. Of these two major aspects, literature that have a direct impact on the present study was reviewed under sub aspects viz., research methodology, sectoral studies on rural development, information users, information needs and need models, rural information needs, rural information behaviour models and information provision. The review was useful in formulating the research design and the research questions.
2.1 Theoretical Approaches

Information needs of users, information seeking habits of various categories of users including ordinary citizens, information provision, behaviour of information itself within different information environments were conceptually discussed by many information scientists from diverse perspectives. The conceptual approaches that are suitable and that have relevance to the present study were selected for reviewing and are discussed under sub topics.

The study focuses on rural communities, which are scattered countrywide. Research methodology planned in the study is survey method. Survey research planning involves deductive approach generalizations derived from discrete data on characteristics of the population, requirements, behavioural aspects, skills, beliefs, attitudes, opinions etc. Few studies were selected for the review to prepare the necessary foundation to identify survey criteria. To collect the detailed information regarding the scope of the study, it is necessary to build up a picture of:

- the community to be served
- the primary information providers of the community.
- the information needs of people in the community

Kempson (1990) formats guidelines for researchers in researching rural information needs, setting up services and evaluation of performance in her project report forwarded to International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). The report identifies the profiles to be drawn out in a rural research endeavor, i.e. Community Profile, Information Needs Profile and Information Providers Profile (Kempson, 1990). Her study asserts that in establishing community information service, a thorough study has to be done on community
information needs. It is also essential to analyse whether the rural information needs vary from community to community. Kempson agrees that there are differences in information needs from one community to other and thus, points out the importance of conducting research of this nature pertaining to each society. She adds that the task is not easy as many responses from the ordinary people are not accurate, hence using factors in the community profile is an ‘other way round approach’ to tackle the problem to identify information needs. She also identifies three basic types of information needs i.e. perceived needs, actual needs and hypothesized needs. The study provides the present research a firm base in planning the study.

2.1.1 Research on Information Users

Definitions and descriptions on information users may be found in library and communication contexts, but have to be distinguished to clarify the user category. In many cases information user is studied in the context of a particular information system established but not in terms of the perception of user.

When studying information needs origin of the same is to be understood to obtain firm realization about the nature of the need. Any need is an expectation to obtain the requirement, so as an information need. Moores (1981) brings out some important aspects about the origin of an information need and their expectations. He says that information is not a mere existence but an outcome produced to match somebody else’s demand. According to Moores,

“Information does not exist in a void, it is not itself an end but only a means to an end, so the value and nature of the information need is determined by the pressures that originate the need.” (Moores, p.83)
The idea clarifies the demarcation and the connection between information user, information, information need and the information provision. Origin of the information need is the user. Information user in the context of library science, is an individual who communicates with the purpose of obtaining information or knowledge, through any given information service. He identifies that information need does not emerge through a void but within an information user and says that these needs determined by the pressures that originate the need. But he fails to mention clearly that information needs are secondary to basic human needs and that is the base where information needs emerge. But Wilson (2000) identified these base needs clearly in his study, which will be reviewed below.

Moores recognize two factors that will influence user’s expectations; a) the nature of the information need and b) the impact of the technology. Present study do not expect to explore impact of technology as there should be a usage of technology to study the impact and in rural Sri Lanka usage of technology for information seeking is seem as minimum. Nevertheless, studying the ‘nature of information’ has much relevance to the present study as the information demand is sometimes influenced by ‘nature’.

Information scientists adopted definitions of psychologists in defining information needs and causes to emerge such a special need. Wilson (2000) explores needs of the users and how information needs emanate and how those are connected with the human needs, giving a clear base to the conception of information needs. He adopts psychologists’ categorization of basic human needs and divides those into three types as psychological needs, emotional needs and cognitive needs. Wilson emphasizes that information needs arise in satisfying these three needs partly or fully. He accommodates the user in
different environments to which he belongs in his user model. His model is given in chapter 3 (Research methodology).

Though the need surfaced at instances to treat the user in terms of ‘user genera’, it was not until Dervin’s (1986) analysis which is reviewed below, regarding the information user, a systematic conceptual approach emerged. Later Wilson also approached the problem in the same ‘user genera’ way as well as in ‘system genera’ way. His discussion about the user, expresses some inward qualities and characteristics of a person when he acts as an information user. At the work-role level it will be clear that the performance of particular tasks and the processes of planning and decision-making will be the principal generators of cognitive needs; while the nature of the organization coupled with the individual’s personality structure will create affective needs such as the need for achievement, for self-expression, and self-actualization (Wilson, 2000).

The model includes how the user performing within an organizational frame, though Wilson looks at the user from the side of the user’s point of view, explaining how the organizational climate drives him to perform a particular information seeking behaviour. This explanation is very clear and clarifies the definite route where the information need come form and the users’ position in an organizational climate though present study focuses on an information user who belongs not to any particular organizational structure. The user in the present study lives anywhere in the rural sector hence living at large. But what Wilson suggests as factors to originate information needs are still valid even to the user type in the present study.

Information user sometimes referred in different roles by media researchers (Maletzki, 2000) in mass media
Wilson also adopts the argument and asserts that that information user has different faces as a ‘Communicator’, as an ‘Information Seeker’, as a ‘Recipient of information systems’ and as a ‘User’ of information systems. According to him the concept of “information need” is central to the study of the “user” in any of the above contexts. His paper on user studies and research methods focus around principal aspects to be considered in user based research and the idea of different roles an information user plays in looking for information.

Many authors have researched on information needs of different clientele attached to an information service, recognizing their needs and making plans to serve them better. But a common conceptualization for all categories of needs has rarely been attempted. Dervin and Nilan (1986) fulfill a long-standing need for a conceptual analysis on information user, their needs assessment and how they behave when an information need has arisen. The authors identify 6 necessities for conceptualization. The study asserts that most of the studies so far done on needs and users of information were based in terms of systems while a few studies observe users in terms of users. These typical studies examine the user in ‘system oriented-genera’ such as which respondent used one or more information systems, used one or more different kinds of services and materials, barriers to use information systems etc. This kind of research is more structured and allows the respondent to act within a frame. Many research questions are not asked and viewed from the user’s side.

Another manifestation of the system-oriented research emphasis on system rather than user needs is how the studies identify systems as they presently exist. Respondents are usually offered a menu of options that originate in system words. As Dervin (1983) suggests, the results can reinforce
system stereotypes. When respondents are asked about words with which they are unfamiliar, they respond from contexts, of fleeting images rather than from experiential realities (Dervin, 1986).

According to the authors the third manifestation is, even when the work addresses aspects of user words outside the system intersection, it still does so in ways that are not compatible with user needs. Thus, it is assumed that if we know who people are, what groups they belong to, or what their activities and interests are, we know what their needs are.

Conceptual approaches made in ‘User Genera’ were as follows;
- System /Resource approach
- Awareness approach
- Likes and Dislikes approach
- Priorities approach
- Community Profile approach
- Interests, activities and group membership approach

The approaches indicate the bases where user steps upon in attempting to fulfill an information need. Shifting paradigms in the information premise where both information provision and information usage meet is the most modest objective of many operational projects in information field. The six paradigmatic intersects and their impact on information communication are highly recognized in behavioural sciences in information needs, as a shift from the traditional paradigm and the study diverted old thought of treating and defining the ‘user in system or institutional term of reference’. The User-Genera approach proposed by Dervin was taken as the base for other research that focus user as the center of services.
2.1.2 Information Needs and Need models

The nature of an information need was studied in different angles by information scientists as well as other scientists. It is a general understanding that information needs do not stand on its own, instead it stands as a result of a basic need. Wilson identifies (1999) these basic needs as reviewed in an earlier section, that cause information need by building up a ‘context of information need’ model. He identifies factors that affect the information needs as; environment a person belongs, the social role he/she play and personal needs i.e. physiological need, affective need and cognitive status. These facts lead a person to attempt into the information seeking behaviour. Wilson in this model amalgamate Ellis’s (1989) stepped model of information retrieval process into his.

Identification of information needs is treated as identification of a base issue for many situations like information behaviour, information retrieval process, information provision and flow etc. Wilson (1981) argues that ‘need’ is a subjective experience which occurs in the mind of the person in need of information. This need can be discovered through a deductive approach from the bahaviour of a person or through some kind of reporting by the person. The cognitive status of the ‘information need’ was noted by other scientists as well such as, Burnkrant(1976), Morgan and King (1971), Veryard(1988), Weights et al. (1993) etc.

Wilson outlines common information needs viz. information on, raw materials, energy, product safety, occupational safety and hygiene, market developments, consumer legislation, packaging, distribution and retailing and technology monitoring. Though his outline emphasizes industry or self-employment based information needs only, the conceptual approach to information needs and its emanation analysed by
Moores (1981) study, provides a clear understanding of interdependency of two concepts, information need and the information provision in its operational viewpoint.

Although the information services are largely system-driven, success of the same depends largely upon the level of satisfaction information needs of the user. Hence the systems used in the information services are to be user oriented. User orientation of information supply does not mean only of collecting information exactly to match the user needs but to make them available according to the behavioral patterns of the users and information access platforms available to the user. The fact is particularly true in the case of rural society.

Dervin and Nilan’s model (1986) carry importance relating to conceptual approaches to information need models. Paradigm shift discussed in the literature survey of Dervin and Nilan (1986) in their study points out how the information supply intersects with the information demand. Demand is generated from an information need conceived in a user’s mind. They forward many definitions of information need. The authors say that,

“ …information need has been defined as a state of needing anything the researcher called information. Almost without exception information needs have not been defined as what users think they need but rather in terms that designate what it is in the information system that is needed. The definitions have not focused on what is missing for users, i.e. what gaps they face, but rather on what the system possesses.”

(Dervin and Nilan, 1986 :17)

This account on information needs clearly and bravely points out where the information systems had gone wrong and where it is to be corrected. The authors say that what is missing in an information system creates a gap between information need
and supply and the constraint of the traditional paradigm is clearly mentioned in the above excerpt. When information needs are viewed from the traditional paradigm they are indeed shifty and vague. The study mentions that the users frequently have trouble stating these needs, particularly when pressed to specify what resources would satisfy them. Further the way needs are expressed changes over time, even during a brief interview. They use traditional and new definitions to describe information need as follows.

- Conceptual incongruity in which a person’s cognitive structure is not adequate to perform a task.
- When a person recognizes something wrong in his or her state of knowledge and wishes to resolve the anomaly.
- When the current state of possessed knowledge is less than needed.
- When internal sense runs out
- When there is an insufficient knowledge to cope with voids, uncertainty or conflict in a knowledge area.

The present study sets out important shifts in the user-based research paradigm, treating the ordinary citizen as an independent user, who is not attached to any information service particularly. In the user based analysis of Dervin and Nilan demarcation of ‘information need’ and ‘information demand’ is differentiated and clarified how these connected concepts are interpolate each other.

Another study, which tries to model user behaviour, had also gained its popularity among the researchers of user studies. Tom Wilson’s research, summed up a few important models of the flow of user needs and user behavior (Wilson, 1999). According to the author, most models in the general field of information behavior are of the statement type, often in the
form of diagrams that attempt to describe information seeking activity, causes and consequences of that activity or the relationships among stages in information seeking behavior.

Rarely do such models advance to the stage of specifying relationships among theoretical propositions. As Wilson has shown, models of “Information Behavior” are fewer than those devoted to “Information Seeking Behavior” and ‘Information searching’ or IR models. As Wilson points out, any analysis of the literature of information seeking behaviour must be based upon some general model of what might be called ‘information behaviour’, of which information seeking and IR process are minor parts, which indicate much more inward analyses of information user. As Wilson points out, any analysis of the literature of information seeking behaviour must be based upon some general model of what might be called “Information Behaviour”, of which information seeking and IR process are minor parts. IR models (Information Retrieval models) are very specific, interpreting micro level analysis of the information seeking behaviour especially in connection with an established information retrieval system. The connection between these concepts is to be viewed clearly. Information retrieval is a apart of information seeking bahaviour and the latter is a part of information behaviour.

Wilson provides in his own model, in 1999, the “Information Behavior” in a broader sense depicting aggregation of resources, users, needs, behavior, information exchange or transfer, use of information, satisfaction or non-satisfaction and success or failure. This model is a development of his 1981 and 1996 models. The model connects most of the aspects of a user oriented information system, which leads to information behaviour in a certain environment He asserts that;
…information seeking behaviour arises as a consequence of a need perceived by an information user, who in order to satisfy that need, makes demands upon formal or informal information sources or services, which result in success or failure to find relevant information. If successful, the individual then makes use of the information found and may either fully or partially satisfy the perceived need – or indeed, fail to satisfy the need and have to reiterate the search process.”

(Wilson, 1999: 251)

The model also shows a part of the “information seeking behaviour” which may involve other people through information exchange and that information perceived may be passed to other people, as well as being used by the person himself. The model depicts how the Information Need and Behaviour should be placed initially and how the Information behaves as a resource.

However, Wilson tries to broaden the concept ‘information behaviour’ eliminating the misconception of ‘information behaviour is understood as information seeking behaviour’. As he points out information seeking, information retrieval are subsidiary parts of information behaviour and information behaviour embraces not only the human behaviour of needing it, but the information flow through provision.

3.2.3 Rural Information Needs

There is a need to view at rural information needs though some argue that community information needs embrace all. Though the fact is true to some extent, rural information needs emerge from certain level of disadvantaged communities, especially in developing countries. Mchombu (2002) in his Handbook on ‘Sharing knowledge for community
development and transformation’, talks about the information deficiency in the weak and backward societies including rural people. In this study on rural farming and fisheries communities in Malawi, the farmers do not have the opportunity to communicate their own needs to the extension system. Some farmers living near a Rice Research Centre were interested in improving its rice growing techniques, but did not know how to approach the Center for help. Another group of fishermen was disturbed by low fish catches from Lake Malawi. They believed that there were supernatural forces that had to be appeased. A nearby government fisheries unit had studied the fish migration pattern and knew why there were fewer fish. But the unit did not know that fishermen were concerned and did not however share their knowledge. The example shows the information gap that had existed between a community and the information supply units and shows that this top down model does not reach every citizen in the community.

The handbook asserts that even the very much backward communities in Senegal treat community based information delivery as essential and understand that there is a gap. The hand book refers to a special study that was conducted by Pierre Pradervand (Pradervand, 1980) using remote village samples in Senegal, where child mortality and maternal mortality were considerably high. An excerpt of what a village elder had stated during the study regarding the lack of elementary information at rural level;

“ If you give me a choice between money and information, I will choose information…” (Pradervand, 1980 : 36).

Mchombu brings out a conceptual framework for a people-centered development model. It depicts how this development information actually flows at the grassroots level to influence
the development process. According to this model, information dissemination to grass roots level follows a four step process: the awareness stage; the interest stage; the examination and testing stage; and the adoption and rejection stage. People need both technical and awareness raising information. It is through awareness on information only that the interest to obtain such information will arise. The concept is depicted as a cyclic model in the handbook as follows (Fig. 2.1).

![Flow of Development Information](image)

(Mchombu, 2002 : 25).

The model illustrated in the handbook not only depicts the information seeking behaviour of an ordinary citizen, but also the information behaviour itself as Wilson brought out in his paper, but more simpler than that. Even though the motive of the author is to give a basic idea of rural information flow to the community workers in a rural setup, it has not analysed the user behaviour or information behaviour giving a special reference to the user. Reason for this simple analysis may be the book is written for community/social workers and may not for the serious readers of library and information science.
However the study embraces rural information flow with simple conceptual connection and gives any body a basic idea of basis of an information flow.

2.1.3 Information Seeking Behaviour and Models

Information seeking pattern of rural people is another aspect that the research hopes to explore. Research in information seeking behavior dates back to Royal Society’s Scientific Information Conference in 1948, which includes different user models drawn out for a variety of user categories. Earlier, human behavior was studied in quantitative terms. The situation is now changing as qualitative analyses resulted in a wider tradition of applying theories and models in the social sciences that can be applied in studying user behavior. Under one School of thought, Wilson (2000) says that “qualitative research is concerned with developing concepts rather than applying concepts”.

Wilson sums up the different views of researchers on qualitative research and its applicability to information need and behavioural study models. He points that qualitative research models are particularly appropriate to the study of the information needs underlying the information seeking behaviour because;

- the concern is with uncovering the facts of the everyday life of the people studied,

- by uncovering those facts we aim to understand the information need which presses an individual towards information seeking behaviour,
by better understanding of the information needs we are able to understand what meaning information has in the day to day life of the people,

by all of the foregoing we should have a better understanding of the user, be better able to design more efficient information services, and be better able to create useful theory of information-seeking behaviour and information needs (Wilson, 2000).

The above reasons build up a valid rationale for using qualitative models in information need and behaviour analysis. What Wilson asserts about qualitative models is much acceptable and reasonable as the present study hopes to build up an information flow model with qualitative variables which emerge through the survey.

He also brings up another model in “Information Seeking Behaviour” in a very clear sense, placing person’s physiological, affective and cognitive states, within his social role and the environment he belongs to. Eventually he connects this sub system to the information seeking behaviour model through barriers encountered in seeking information.

Furthering the sense making approach of Dervin (1983), Paul Soloman (1996) conducted a project investigating into how and what ways information fits into peoples’ lives, under a three-year longitudinal case study of work planning in a public agency. Though the study involves an enclosed environment, when comparing with the present study, it reveals how people struggle to fulfill their information needs making sense of information seeking task in a rapidly changing environment. The interrelated perspectives studied were; time and timing of the information and seeking behaviour, the social surrounding and the personal factors. The study emphasized the significance of information
behaviour that makes sense in a context of task and situation. Though the study is looking inward at the information behaviour, it is imprudent to say that it is less important for the information behaviour of people scattered at large as being treated in the present study. Social surrounding and personal characteristics are important factors that affect the behaviour not only in an organization but also in the society as a whole. The difference in organizational information behaviour is, it is more related to task building and very much corporated with stress factor (Folkman, 1984; Folkman and Lazarus, 1985; Miller and Mangan, 1983; Kleiber and Montegomary, 1995; Van-Zuur-an and Wolf, 1991) than in information seeking behaviour of an ordinary citizen who is not attached to any organizational frame.

In the model he explores the user behaviour in a broader sense, aggregating resources, users, needs, behaviour, information exchange or transfer, use of information, satisfaction or non-satisfaction and success or failure. The model is more of a broader nature discussing the environment where the user belongs than the model brought forward by Mchombu which was discussed in section 2.1.2. However these two models depict different flow patterns where the same kind of aspects acts in different angles. Wilson’s model will be applicable in the present study as a theoretical framework in placing the rural community information needs within correct social context.

Mass media researchers tries to identify user in a different angle because information is flown through mass media is listened by many though sometimes targeted to a specific user group. These scientists however, treat the user as a recipient. An important model that gives some idea about information access and receiving pattern of information users, but specifically on the perspective of listeners’ point of view.
(Maletzki, 2000). This is a mass media model but concentrates on the environment where the individual user belongs when listening to the radio or any audio information dissemination mode. This model connects information seeker, communication and channels of communication. The model also connects intervening variables and feedbacks in a series of modular representations. Postulations used in the series can be used in building up information seeking behavior and information provision models.

His angle of treatment for information supply and demand side is mass media based. The connectivity of supply and demand is based in turn on the medium of communication based in turn on prevailing communication technologies. He treats the information supplier (supply) as the communicator and the information user (demand) as the receiver. The study is very comprehensive as every aspect discussed of the receiver is taken into a separate complex model, such as, receiver’s self image model, receiver’s environment model, receiver as the member of the audience, receiver’s personality structure etc. Maletzki (2000) analyses the user’s information receiving status from personal angle on any environment he is in at the time of broadcasting. This micro analysis helps to understand the position of user at a given time when broadcasting taken place.

There are other models also in user behaviour context. One is Kuhlthau’s model (1992) which looks at the user in a cognitive perspective. Her model based on an intensive longitudinal study of a group of high school students, relates the user as an active participant in the search process. This model gives some support to cognitive processes involved in the information seeking process but is very much relevant to literate and intelligent groups of users.
What emerges in the model is important as she goes beyond the mere mechanisms of information seeking. The stages include Initiation, Selection, Exploration, Formulation, Collection and Presentation which is very much similar to Information Retrieval process when a user is attached to a particular information system. The status that describes here includes aftermath behaviour when the user is contacted to an established information system. The behaviour discussed in the model in much internal to a person. As seen in the overall behaviour described here is valid only for a literate kind of user and cannot be applicable relating to any kind of user in a society, because the user discussed here is an active participant in the search process. In an ordinary situation information literacy level of user may vary so that level of participation would also tend to vary.

A similar model, Big Six Skills model of Eisenberg and Berkowitz, (1990) also frames information retrieving behaviour of users but is more concerned with cognitive analysis leading to the development of information skills. Basic idea of the model however is important in training even an ordinary citizen towards information literacy. Eisenberg’s Big Six model involves six processes; Task definition, Seeking Strategy, Location and Access, Use of Information, Synthesis and Evaluation. According to the authors these models are applicable not only to academic situations but can be incorporated into daily lives of ordinary citizens.

After these two major works there were many scholarly additions to the behavioural research in information seeking. Bruce’s relational model of Information literacy (Bruce,1997; Bruce –home page 2004), theory of 7 pillars of Information Literacy skills (or 7 headline skills) developed by SCONUL (Society for College and University Libraries) in UK based on Bruce’s model (SCONUL, 1999; Town, 2002), EXIT Model
of Ontario School of Library Association, dealing with college level student literacy level (OSLA, 1999), Ralph model of information literacy with its contribution to other types of literacy (Ralph, 1998), Penny Moore 6 stages of information problem solving (Moore, 2002), the Prague Declaration of UNESCO, NCLIS, NFIL (2003) etc. are leading among many theories, models and standards published.

These models can be treated as behavioural models but depict activity-based processes of information seeking behaviour of literate citizens and very much contributes to the information retrieval research. Importance of these models for the present study is to identify the user’s position when he was advent into actual information seeking when reached an appropriate place after succeeding barriers that stand in between the user and the information. Also these models would be helpful in planning community information service models retaining the user at centre focus.

2.2 Empirical Studies

It was observed through the literature survey that a significant set of theories has advanced to empirical implementation. These approaches will be useful in planning the present study which hopes to view the needs from the angle of the user and build models for rural information needs and information seeking behaviour independent of a pre established information provision system. In this section of the chapter, literature on empirical studies carried out related to the present study will be reviewed.

One of the objectives of the present research is to explore the operational status of information delivery to rural citizens and suggest planning considerations for operational framework for
an ideal information system for the rural sector. Therefore literature covering a similar operational scope was selected for reviewing. Studies selected cover case studies, district and national level surveys conducted in Africa, India, Soloman Islands, Sri Lanka and UK.

A national survey conducted in U.K. (Marcella and Baxter 2000), defined the citizenship information, categorizes occupational and social classes and their information needs and gives some idea about the sample collecting method (Walk in Interview method). Citizenship information can be treated as a part of rural information needs. This research elicits openly, the views of respondents as to the nature of citizenship information rather than imposing a pre-conceived and limited conception; therefore the interview schedule did not contain a definition.

The design used in this study is very much similar to the research design intended to be used in the methodology used in the present study, this is walk-in-interview method. Data collection methodology in the study gives a clear picture about organizing the samples. For planning of the survey, researchers used the divisions of government electoral wards. They have used the Standard Occupational Classification and social classes in collection of the sample. According to them each interviewer was effectively asked to conduct interviews in the ward containing in the ward containing the highest percentage of residents belonging to Standard Occupational Classification, social classes IV and V (i.e. partly skilled and unskilled occupations), the ward with lowest percentage of Classes IV and V, and three other wards spread across the cumulative population figures for the town/city.

The interviewers were instructed to use the ‘Random Walk Sample’ method and instructed to deal with the practical
problems they would encounter. The interviewers randomly selects the starting points within each ward and proceeded to attempt an interview at every seventh house hold within the ward until the required quota had been reached. Detailed printed Guidelines were provided to the interviewers, about dealing with road junctions, selecting house holds such as vacant, closed and abandoned houses and blocks, offices and commercial premises, road junctions etc.

2.2.1 Rural Information needs

As accounted by many researchers rural information needs vary from one location to another. Nevertheless underlying base facts and need frames are found to be similar almost in all cases and surveys. The studies selected for the review are of an extensive and comprehensive nature and gives productive considerations that can be used for the present study.

According to a study conducted in Africa, information is recognized as an essential resource for social and economic development in the third world, the fact that it is accorded a low status as its potential value is not yet fully recognized. The contradiction between the vital role of information in development and its lack of official recognition in Africa can hardly escape the attention of information specialists (Mchombu,1996). He discusses the dynamics of information provision to support development in Africa. He points out that information is central to the solution of any society’s economic and social problems and should be regarded as a factor of production.

Mochombu’s study was designed to identify “key information needs” and facilitate the supply and use of information by the community in these key areas, and measure the changes which
take place as a result of the information input. The research tries to identify the impact of information on rural development and select key areas and facilitate the supply and use of information by the rural communities. The findings show that rural information needs fall into two categories; information needs common to all rural communities and needs that are location specific. But community specificity of information needs was not mentioned therein and may be due to that the location specificity is prominent in African countries.

Based on two basic categories mentioned the study identified six sub categories of rural information needs as follows;

- Information on income generation
- Community leadership
- Literacy support
- Financial information
- Government policies on rural development
- Soil conservation

He has presented location specific information upon two projects (INFORD 1 & 2) conducted in a few African countries. According to this study, information needs categorized do not give comprehensive picture. Many need categories like health, education etc. were not treated as main categories. The category called ‘information on income generation’ may be inclusive of agricultural, industrial, other income generation etc., but not clearly mentioned. It is noticed that there are many categories that are not included in this need frame.

A survey at national level conducted in U.K. by Marcella and Baxter (2000), identifies need categories regardless of the location or community type. The study evolves around ‘citizenship information’ which is treated as similar to
community information. Citizenship information is defined as;

“Citizenship information is information produced by or about the national government, local government and related public sector organizations which may be of value to the citizen either as a part of everyday life or in the participation by the citizen in government and policy formulation.”

(Marcella and Baxter 2000 : 137)

The study also brings up 10 kinds of citizenship information needs. It was seen that these categories were much related to the UK and European citizenship, but it sheds some light to the general needs like ‘Survival Information’ of citizens regardless of the regional differences. But the study do not talk about much needed information like irrigation and water shed problems, health issues, infrastructure issues, land disputes etc. that are much relevant and much sought after by citizens in the rural areas of tropical and developing countries. This research elicits openly, the views of respondents as to the nature of citizenship information rather than impose a pre-conceived and limited conception.

Studies conducted on village information centres that really cater to Asian rural citizens, were found few and not comprehensively covered the aggregate need scenario. Some studies covered few fields of information research mostly like agriculture, fisheries, cottage industries etc. (Amt, 1987; Fernandez, 1989; Laflin, 1982; Moyo, 1994; Fraser, 1985; Hasan-Imam, 1987; Hewavitharana, 1999; Jagannathan, 1984; Kaniki, 1991, 1992; Adimorah, 1995).

A study conducted in Southern India seems relevant to the present research area. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai in 1998, launched a project to provide information through rural knowledge centres (Senthil Kumaran, 2001). It
is a pilot project and its main objectives were to establish village information shops, training rural youth in collection, maintaining, updating and disseminating information needed by rural people of the area and building a model in information dissemination and exchange in rural areas that uses advanced information and communication technologies.

Project methodology was Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and was used especially to identify information needs to create knowledge bases at Knowledge Centres. The knowledge bases created are based on the research findings of information needs. According to his study, the needs were broadly categorized under:

- Current Information
- Long-term Information
- Citizens’ Charter
- Cattle and Feeds
- Health Information
- Agricultural Information
- Educational Information
- General Information

This study extensively describes the specific needs that come under each broad category. Though the specific topics are mostly relevant to Indian society, the broad categories mentioned here are highly useful in outlining information needs of rural community in Sri Lanka. The assessment of information needs of this study did not emerge from a survey. The needs were assessed through the databases built up in the information shops by the local community itself. The report states that, information provided in the village knowledge centres is local, specific and relates to prices of agricultural inputs (such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides) and output (rice, vegetables), marketing (potential for export), entitlement (the
multitude of schemes of the central and state government banks), health care (availability of doctors and paramedics in nearby hospitals, women’s diseases), cattle diseases, transport (road conditions, cancellation of bus trips), weather (appropriate time of sowing, areas of abundant fish catch, wave heights in the sea), etc. The unique feature of this project is that most information is collected and fed in by the local communities itself and the centres are operated by local volunteers. This prototype model solves the problem of sustainability that face by this kind of projects.

Senthilkumaran had identified categories which rural communities in Southern part of India are much looked for (Senthilkumaran, 2001). It was seen in this study that need categories are disorganized and not arranged into broad headings and not presented in systematic manner. For example, Cattle and Feeds should come under agricultural information, Citizen charter has to go under government information etc. Also current information, long-term information and general information do not give any sense regarding the nature of those categories. Therefore though the study cover some important categories, comprehensive need frame was not clearly drawn in his work.

It was also seen that, some relevant studies were not be using the word community information, though evolves around the same scope like citizen charter. For instance, Ikoja-Odongo (2001) investigates information needs of the informal economic sector in Uganda. He presented the results of the preliminary survey that gathered data on information needs and information usage of the informal sector through a pilot study conducted in Soroti District in Uganda. The study was exploratory and primarily directed at testing research instruments to determine their suitability for use in a major study scheduled to begin in 2001.
There are about 800,000 informal sector enterprises in Uganda providing opportunities to an estimated 1.5 million people. This amounts to about ninety percent of the total of non-farm workers and one area that was significantly brought out in the study was the sector’s information-gathering behavior. The sector consists of micro and small enterprises and many unregistered business. The study identifies the lack of access to information which remains a major hindrance to the sector's growth. It was said in the paper that very little is known regarding its information needs. It is not clear to information-delivery stakeholders how the sector gets its information, how the people use it, and in what form. It is also not known to what use this information is put once it has been acquired.

Thus, neither the impact of information resources on the growth and development of the sector could be measured nor can its information needs be addressed. This incomplete state of knowledge results in uncertainty regarding how to support the sector's development. The fact is extremely important to be emphasized regarding any country, because the problem of closing the existing information gap is much obligatory to this kind of situation.

Ikoja-Odongo’s findings indicate that their information needs varied at different times, such as Marketing information needs and information on seasonal effects carry higher demand during harvesting times. Other information needs that are related to control of water hyacinths, getting rid of floating islands (suds) etc., demanded when needed. The study finds that information usage should be linked to a larger framework of planned social change, bringing usage into close contact with social problem solving.
The study analyses the information seeking pattern in a closer context, not with a personal bias but with ‘information behaviour’ context, though it was not worded. The researcher explains how the needs differ depending on the seasonal effects and upon social change. What is most important in the study is the conclusion he reach regarding planning of information provision with framework of planned social change.

2.2.2 Information Seeking Behaviour

Empirical studies on information seeking pattern of rural citizen are as important as the conceptual approaches, because former reveals the actual mobility of ordinary citizens in looking for information, how they approach information channels, how they decide on the correct channel, problems they encounter in accessing or receiving information and the way they utilize the pieces of information obtained. The behaviour depends upon socio-economic, socio-cultural and infrastructural foundations of a location.

It was seen that most of the rural people contact informal channels in obtaining information or in creating awareness relating to the actual information he needs. This situation is common in every society regardless of the location or community type.

Ikoja-Odongo’s (2001) study reveals the channels consulted by the ordinary people in the informal sector in accessing into information. The investigation was administered with a structured option list of fifteen items provided to the respondents. The option table is given below.

- Contacting people who know
- Talking and listening to people
Asking friends, relatives, and neighbors  
Recourse to personal experience  
Reading newspapers  
Radio  
Asking extension agents  
Inquiring from educated people  
Inquiring from area counselors  
Using social networks  
Asking the opinions of leaders and role models  
Asking supervisors  
Asking and listening to politicians and others  

(Ikoja-Odongo, 2001: 4)

It is apparent that these channels are not formally established, but ordinary people seem consult these channels very often, sometimes before approaching a formal channel. Ikoja-Odongo describes information seeking bahaviour of an ordinary person more than any author going into in depth details of their pattern of information seeking. He suggests the kind of information which should be provided to the community he studied and makes recommendations on the same.

Uhegbu in (1997) had conducted a study in Nigeria and identified seven main categories of information needs in a survey conducted in randomly selected autonomous communities. First category is rural leaders (traditional rulers like chieftains, chairmen of community development associations) and the second category is ordinary rural dwellers that do not hold any leadership position. The study had identified main needs of the African rural communities and the obstacles that hinder the smooth flow of information within the communities. Though he identifies need categories, hindrances to the smooth flow of information, his sample population of information providers were limited to a selected
category (rural leaders). As the sample is limited, it is seen that actual realization would be difficult and inductive approach cannot be accepted for conclusions and implication to the policy. Especially the fact is affected in identifying and generalization of hindrances to the information flow in absence of surveying the status of information provision by other suppliers like, government agencies, private organizations, NGOs and related projects etc. Nevertheless he points out that rural areas need adequate information for a meaningful development.

2.2.3 Rural Information Provision

The present research also aims at investigating rural information provision in rural Sri Lanka. It was tried to select and review the previous studies on information provision relevant to developing countries. It was observed that rural population had derived very little advantage or had lost out through the process of change expected to be attained through many development programs planned (Correa et al. 1997- a study conducted by UNESCO). As the literature indicates, rural information flow is in disorganized nature or a systematic information flow within the rural community is not available. These reasons were accounted by Correa et al. as one reason for the high failure rate of rural projects. Development process can only reach this full potential if agents transfer their knowledge and techniques and if people are motivated to use them.

The study asserts that, in the 1970s rural information provision in developing countries was reviewed as an extension of public library services. The services are restricted to print materials; hence the services were deliberately focused on the literate membership of the community. The fact is also brought out by researchers such as Sturges and
Chimseu (1996), Giggey (1996). The information literacy is different from language literacy it is mostly seen that the rural people consists of disadvantaged groups with low level of information literacy. The situation is also valid to Sri Lankan rural sector too.

Importance of decentralization of information provision was also brought forward by this UNESCO report. Genuine decentralization of government will only work if it is accompanied by an information support system. In measuring information provision the study group had identified information content needed by the rural community of Africa. Information provision identified and categorized in the report are health related information, basic economic information, income generation, self generation and community health management, agricultural and environmental renewal, location specific information and educational needs.

Information transfer and information delivery are also discussed in the report including the “Indigenous Knowledge”. Though the description is very brief, addressing the hidden and unpublished part, the knowledge that is not assessed and measured is really important to keep on tracking the rural information flow. The report claims that, rural peoples’ own knowledge tended to be despised and ignored. This is no longer the case and the existence of indigenous knowledge, side by side with external information is to be acknowledged as significant in the development process. The fact pointed out here is crucial that these beliefs and cultural practices merely can not be overlooked but have to be identified and transferred.

The prevailing communication system in rural areas is also analysed in the report. It identifies common places where the people meet like, market places, health clinics, bus stops,
village meetings, schools, churches, mosques etc. Person to person communication is the most effective. This is visible via priests, local dignitaries, age group leaders, friends, neighbours etc. Media of communication is also identified in the report i.e. public libraries, work of NGOs and other centres. The work depicts a very closer scenario to the Asian rural context though the study is conducted in an African country. The study comprehensively reveals information provision channels in the rural sector more than what Odongo’s has studied. However Odongo did not paid attention to the common and frequent places where the people meet. The fact is crucial when planning information provision.

Many researchers tried to identify the impact of information on rural development. One of such information scientists is Mchombu who explored the ‘information dynamics’ when working the INFORD project 1 and 2. Mchombu (1996) asserts that, information is central in answering economic and social issues in a country. According to him, information should be treated as a factor of production. The project had selected key areas of information supply and investigated how the supply should facilitate and increase the use of information by the rural communities. The study categorises the communicators, coordinators, stakeholders and role players in rural information provision and how they solicit their cooperation in disseminating information among their own community and helps to identify the type of stakeholders of information provision and how they solicit their cooperation in disseminating information among rural communities. The project identifies these stake holders in more systematic order including them by their functional role, which made the providers’ role clearer in information dissemination.
There are a few more studies attempted on investigating the same aspects relating to different countries and communities including surveys and strategies to provide information fairly to all citizens in a particular county. Leach (1999) analysed the information provision levels to rural communities in Africa. Under strategical approaches, Information Highway Advisory Council for Business Support and Financing in Canada (IHAC, 1997) planned a national access strategy embracing basic network services to lay an information highway to be access by every citizen. U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (1980) had drawn guidelines for information access and safeguard strategies defining the public information and ensuring rights of citizens to access public information.

Evans (1992) explores the services provided by public libraries and community libraries in providing reading materials, other information relating to community development through extension and remote services to villages in remote Solomon islands. Fernandez (1989) explores the information provision in rural Philippines and states that the rural areas are deprived of information vital in improving lives and claims that the agricultural information system established in these areas came about as a result of contact with the west, often as an offshoot of colonization. Pettigrew (1996) studying about community information, has also tried to bring out some modular analysis with definitions. Pettigrew says, that it can be envisaged three ways of defining community information; (1) all data that have been made to flow (about a community) (2) all original data that have been made to flow from within the community, or (3) all data that are flowing anywhere that is useful to a community.

A study conducted in Latvia by Gerkena (2005) looked at the ways that can be adopted to create a distributed community
network which would allow each public library to maintain its community information data bases while sharing access to information with other libraries and local authorities. It determines what the community information is and why it is essential to community life. Though the study is on networked access, it explores the necessity of being connected country wide embracing information regarding information suppliers. The study identifies main suppliers of community information. Gerkena’s study presents a diagrammed representation of community information scenario connecting information providers and libraries in the locality. The model also connects community information provision with local authority which plays the role of integration of suppliers and maintaining the authority and standards. The public library plays an important role in information dissemination and which is fed by the other information suppliers in the locality. There are small groups formed to upload the information that are available locally to the community information service. The model drafted by Gerkena is a strategic model rather than conceptual though it connects only basic operations. The model seems prepared with a view to expand the information flow in provinces in Latvia. The study however identifies clearly the information suppliers that operated within the local boundaries.

Many community based information projects targeted the existing public library as a centre for information dissemination. Owens (1999) identifies the flow of public information emphasizing the place of public library in community information provision. The only adequate information system is that which recognizes all groups and individuals as potential 'information literates'. According to him the flow of public information is considered in terms of two provision levels;
1. macro-flow - from government departments or large organizations
2. micro-flow - from small specialized bodies

This study emphasizes the importance of public library as a unit in the provision of information, acting as the switchboard site with the librarian, as the operator to combine information and the consumer. Owen approached this collaboration in a concept, treating the public library as the ‘operator’ and the consumer as a ‘caller’. In this study the author discusses this approach of information provision within a pre established boundary that is the public library system. Even though the author sees the public library as centre point for information dissemination, he fails to see that the public library is only an operator of pre collected information using pre-coordinated indexed information and that community information cannot be provided through this kind of conventional origination as some authors (Struges and Chimseu, 1997) point out. According to these authors community information consists of different information flow which cannot be satisfied with the literary content but looking for remedial information to solve many daily problems.

An analysis carried out was used to draw out a plan to disseminate government based information for both IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Project) policy makers and citizens. Its focus was for planning an information base for the purpose. (Fernando, 1980) The model drawn used the existing district administrative structure with modifications proposed to establish Information Unit, Program Planning Unit, Monitoring Unit and Implementation Unit. The model embraces line ministries and government departments at state and district level, government units and projects at village level and IRDP offices which operated in the district. The
model evolves around the concept of providing relevant information to the users.

“Too much irrelevant information may be as bad as too little information. Although basic data is vital, excess of IT could clog the communication arteries.”

(Fernando, 1980: 67.)

The action plan attempted to obtain details about information needs; from villagers, village leadership, village organizations and government officers at village level. The plan also identified target group of information base.

There is also lack of clear identification of the target groups—i.e. all those who do not get an adequate share of the benefits of development;

a) Unemployed and Underemployed—urban & rural
b) Self-employed with subsistence incomes
c) Marginal farmers
d) Landless laborers
e) Women and Children

The study also identifies the problems in information content gaps that exist. The model of the information provision system tries to close the gaps identified in the village level people and project planners in operation at IRDP. This project plan gives a significant understanding about the information provision structure existing in relation to the government administrative structure in Sri Lanka and weaknesses available in upgrading the rural information scenario in Sri Lanka.
2.2.3 Rural Sector Studies: Sri Lanka

In most rural development project reports the background of the rural society is analysed and explored from different angles like socio-economic, techno-economic, socio-cultural, socio-political, socio-technical etc. These studies can be used to plan a conceptual framework for research methodology including system environment, subjects and activity flows in communities.

Dissanayake (2000) provides a conceptual framework in implementing UC-JICA joint study project on participatory rural development in Wayamba Province, Sri Lanka. The study identifies, environment surrounding the villages as Internal and External and the components of environment as Hard and Soft. Under eternal environment information providers and stake holders were identified and Dissanayake asserts that the magnitude of the access to most of these external resources by villagers is seen limited. The framework developed thus focused on rural community development at rural level. The study emphasizes the measures that need to be taken to improve productivity and quality of life of the rural landless families who live on a natural resource base which is fragile and needs protection. Strategies also need to be geared to improve the productivity of land as well as labour in farm and non-farm occupations. In addition nutrition, health services, elementary education and shelter and other areas in rural community needs greater attention. To achieve these development needs Dissanayake produces a strategic model for rural development. In the 6\textsuperscript{th} strategy proposed, he notes that dissemination of information from farmer to farmer is also another important aspect of the importance of information in rural participatory development because the diffusion of messages regarding technology,
incentives and organizational structure through local people has a great impact on the success of a programme.

A joint study program conducted in six rural areas in Wayamba Province by UC-JICA Project (Abeyratne, 2000) brings forth village profiles indicating economic conditions pertaining to the Sri Lankan rural society. The study highlights the issues that should receive priority in the village development projects in economic activities. The analysis expresses concerns with poverty and basic needs that exist in the villages, state of the basic economic activity in the villages, some preliminary observations regarding agriculture technology and output markets for agriculture, and employment status of the rural community. In conclusion, the direction of participatory development activities that emerged form the basic economic activities are outlined.

Aluvihare-Samaranayake et al. (2004) in a survey conducted in eight rural areas, namely Anuradhapura, Balangoda, Batticaloa, Galle, Hambantota, Hatton, Monaragala and Puttalm., analysed preferred areas of learning, their preferred modalities for learning and preferred times for learning. Data gathered of each area are presented to provide a macro picture first covering socio-demographic data. Then the micro picture on learning needs and preferred areas of learning, preferred mode of learning preferred time of learning, were drawn out relating to each sample selected. The analysis was followed by the results of a comparison among the case study areas on the impact of the age and income in relation to the main aspects studied. The learning needs categorized in the study were; vocational training, health and nutrition, marketing information, loan facilities, education, employment and entrepreneurship, legal and women’s rights. Modes of learning preferred were radio, print group work and demonstrations like street drama. Preferred time for learning
in all case study areas were ‘any time’ by youth and ‘afternoon’ by adults. The study present information regarding areas rural people like to receive education or any sort of learning to develop their day-to-day life. Though the study focused on learning needs it reveals some of categories of information needs rural people in Sri Lanka would prefer to get.

2.2.4 Intervening Variables of Information Behaviour

Besides other aspects of information behaviour the intervening variables have been discussed in information science bias as well as in other subject biases such as psychology, consumer research, marketing and advertising research etc. As Dervin, Nilan (1983) and Solomon(1996) brings forth there are factors that affect information seeking behaviour, i.e. time factor, social factor and personal factor. These variables interfere the human behaviour in information seeking, either favourably or unfavourably. According to a study material in information behaviour (informationr.net, 2005), there variables treated as barriers to information seeking behaviour , i.e. personal barriers, social or role related barriers and environmental barriers. This approach is much more pragmatic than that of Solomans’. Under personal barriers, physiological, cognitive and emotional characteristics were discussed (Johnson and Macrae, 1994; Borgers et al., 1993; Kassulke, et al, 1993; MacInnis and Jawoski, 1991; Slevin, 1988; ). Economic and Social barriers also have an impact over the behaviour. Stigler (1961) argued when choice alternatives among paid information are similar search attempts would also be reduced because gains that would be made are also reduced.

Yet in psychological perspective, Urbany, et.al. (1989) argued that, when choice alternatives are similar, search attempts
would also increase to reduce the uncertainty. Interpersonal skills seem to have an effect over the behaviour encouraging understanding the situations. According to health information scientists (Borgers et al., 1993; Howze and Redman, 1992; Sheen, 1992) personal power through interpersonal communication increase successful usage of information. Environmental barriers discussed by researchers include time factor, geography of a location (Cornell and Crawford, 1988), national cultures (Hofstede, 1980). Under time factor Cameron et al. (1994) brings conflicting idea regarding interpersonal variables. They say that due to the limited time devoted to a client by a consultant/ would cause loss of information. It is seen that the barriers discussed in these studies has partiality towards the nature of client groups that authors analysed or specific for the location or for the socio-economic and cultural diversity of the community in question.

2.3 Discussion

There are a few theoretical models on information needs and users that shed some light on the present study. Dervin’s model of information user and his needs (Dervin, 1983) (later developed into Sense Making Approach) is selected as the base conceptual approach for the present study. The model underpins user needs from different angles on the basis of user genera (user focused) than system genera (system focus). In many other studies user was treated as a client attached to an information system. Dervin treats the user as a separate entity and as the point where an information need emanates and the focus of this model is exactly relevant to the present study. The present study was planned to keep the user at the centre focus when investigating through information needs, level of satisfaction, barriers encountered and consulting channels to obtain information. The present study focuses on the common
citizen in user genera, as he/she is a person not attached to any particular system in fulfilling his/her information needs.

Another study was also selected as a base model for the study, which is Wilson’s Model of Information Seeking (Wilson, 1999). He treats the user in use genera as well as information genera. The model indicates how the user needs emerge within a person upon different basic human needs, and how he behaves when a need arisen. Though the Wilson’s behavioural model is simple it gives the base idea to plan a model for the present study.

Under empirical literature reviewed, studies in approximation to Sri Lankan scenario could not be matched exactly as those covered areas other than rural or do not cover community information needs comprehensively or the socio-cultural context is different. For example, Senthilkumaran’s (2001) report on establishing rural knowledge centres at grass root level and Ikoja-Odongo’s study (2001) in information channels in Uganda in the informal sector indicates some relevance but no exact approximation for the present study. The channels they had identified are similar to any ordinary community hence little relevance had shown in Sri Lankan context. Therefore, the present study would be a seminal study which can constitute to improve access of rural community information. Significance of the present study when compared with studies reviewed is, that it hopes to investigate ‘rural community information needs’ pertaining to Sri Lankan communities and hopes to emphasize available formal and informal information flow in the rural sector. The study does not stick to any specific category of rural user but embraces the whole rural community and their information needs.
Chapter 03

Theoretical Framework of the Study and Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction
The study focuses on the rural information scenario and the objectives of the research targets on exploring information needs of the rural community and the status of information provision. Within this area, the study will explore into the various issues which the rural citizens encounter due to the influence of external and internal factors, when fulfilling their information needs. All these investigations were carried out keeping the rural citizen as the focus of the research.

3.1 Research Design and Methodology
3.1.1 Research Design

Since the scope of the study deals with a community problem and the population is scattered country wide, survey research method was chosen. Survey research is characterised by the selection of random samples from large and small populations to obtain empirical knowledge of a contemporary nature. As Powell (1991) points out, survey research is better suited than experimental research to study a large number of, and geographically dispersed, cases. Survey research is also generally considered to be more
appropriate for studying personal factors and for exploratory analysis of relationships.

The first phase of the study is to examine information needs and information seeking patterns of rural communities in Sri Lanka to achieve the first objective. Second phase is to gather data on information provision from the providers that operate in the areas that were selected for the study. The data collection from these two populations was designed to find out demand for information from the rural citizens and supply of information by providers in the areas selected for the study. Research method chosen was structured interviews and focus group discussions with a selected number of respondents.

On the basis of the information demand, the study hopes to map a ‘rural community information need frame or profile' pertaining to rural citizens, information provision status and information behaviour in rural Sri Lanka. The literature survey identified two main scholarly works that were used as theoretical frameworks for the research design to formulate conceptual framework for the study. The studies are Kempson’s Guidelines for researching information needs (1990) and Wilson’s Information Behaviour model (1999).

3.1.2 Theoretical Framework

There were two studies selected to design the present research study. The first study is a holistic approach to the total community information scenario. The study by Kempson (1990), had framed some guidelines that is helpful in conducting information needs research especially in case of rural information needs. Her study is an integrated approach to some of the concepts dealt
within the present study, viz, building a community profile, description of rural environment, characteristics of population, their behaviour, need analysis and provision etc. Kempson had submitted a report to IFLA, identifying three main profiles to be drawn out in a rural research endeavor, i.e. Community Profile, Information Need Profile and Information Providers’ Profile.

Kempson’s study is used as a guide for the present study, in gathering data on community, the rural environment, characteristics of population and their behaviour, community needs and provision etc. Kempson’s identification of information need division gives a base to plan the present study, especially regarding preparing community interview schedules. It also had been supportive in building up information provider’s profile in rural areas in Sri Lanka.

The second concept considered was about modeling information behaviour. The model by Wilson (1999) is a general approach connecting information user, his needs and information provision. The model locates the concepts of information need, information seeking, information exchange and information use in a flow diagram that can be seen as charting the behaviour of a person faced with a need to seek information. According to Wilson this is a general model of information behaviour upon which the additional research may be launched upon. Wilson’s model is given in Figure 3.1.

The model suggests that information – seeking behaviour arises as a consequence of information need perceived by an information user, who in order to accomplish the need, makes demands upon formal or informal information sources or services. The process leads to the success or failure as in any information retrieval model.
The model does not show how a failure could be remedied by a strategic measure. But non-satisfaction of a need retracts the user to reiterate the information searching process. It also does not show, what knowledge level would be achieved after obtaining certain levels of satisfaction. Main limitation of this model is that, it fails to identify causative factors of information seeking behaviour. Eventhough these limitations are inherent in the Wilson’s framework, the model was selected beside the other behavioural models, for the study due to its holistic approach towards the information behaviour, which embraces macro levels and micro aspects of the area; For example information behaviour at macro level and information seeking
behaviour of an individual and level of achievement at micro level. Other models of Elli, Folkman (1984) Eizenberg & Berkowitz(1990), Khulthau (1999), Kleiber et.al.(1995), Maletzki (2000) etc. analyse behavioural patterns in seeking information, more inwardly, relating to different types of individuals, than treating the information behaviour as common to all users.

The Wilson’s model however, supplies research aspects need to be incorporated into the research design and provides a strong idea to build up a conceptual framework for the present study. It is envisaged through the present research, to either expand or modify the information flows indicated in the Wilson’s model, once the analysis of data for the present study is completed.

The present study proposes to build a model integrating Information needs, seeking behaviour and channels of information provision. About 90 percent of the user population in this study will be illiterate, poverty stricken and disadvantageous, hence the information user may not know to demand better information systems, may not know about the availability of information sources and not be aware of the barriers that affect the information access. They may consult different channels within their own community or consult outside service providers depending on the awareness given to them. Information exchange occupies an important place in the present study as in Wilson’s model.

3.2 Conceptual and Analytical Frameworks

In accomplishing the aim of the research design, a conceptual frame work was developed upon two theoretical frameworks selected (Kempson’s and
Wilson’s). Analytical framework for the study was drawn based on the aspects derived from the conceptual frame.

First finding, that is information needs of rural people, leads to build up an ‘Rural Community Information Need Frame’ at the 2nd stage. Data collected on information provision, information access and barriers to access, were analysed to map information needs with information provision. It was pointed out by many researchers (Dissanayake, 2001; Narayan, 2000; Samaranayake, 2004 etc.) that rural information provision has faltered at many points. It is also expected to identify barriers if any that affect for information access, by analyzing data at the 2nd stage. The analysis would lead to identify ‘nature of community information’ and ‘barriers to information access’, at the 3rd level. The total analysis will lead to recognize existing information flow in rural sector in Sri Lanka and to draw an ‘Ideal Information Flow Model’ for rural Sri Lanka.

3.3 The Population and the Sample
3.3.1 The Population

There are two kinds of populations considered in the study. First is the rural population scattered in 8 provinces. The second is the population of the information providers that operate in the areas studied.

- **Population 1** - First sample consisted of rural population scattered island wide. This population whose information needs and seeking channels are investigated is treated as homogeneous and represented in a sample selected as given below under sample selection criteria.
• **Population 2** - The second population comprised information providers that operate in rural areas. The sample will be selected from the village clusters selected to draw the sample for the first population.

3.3.2 Sampling Method

The basis used to select the samples was the administrative divisions in Sri Lanka. It was expected to select one village from one *Grama Niladhari Wasam* (name used for a village administrative area) from the selected Divisional Secretaries Division according to the sample selection criteria used. The sampling method used was ‘Multistage Cluster Sampling’ method.

3.3.3 Sample Selection Criteria:

**Sampling Process 1 – Deciding the topology** – selecting the clusters to be considered in selecting intended groups of population. The topology used to select the clusters was as follows.

1st stage - Five (05) provinces were selected *randomly* out of 07 provinces after excluding Northern and Eastern province. This province was excluded due to political and ethnic disturbances that were prevailing during the time of survey. The provinces selected were, the North Western, Western, Central, Uva and Southern. 2nd stage – Two Districts were selected randomly from each province. Ten Districts were selected. 3rd stage – One Divisional Secretary’s (D.S.) Division was selected *randomly* from each District. The number of D.S. divisions selected was 10. 4th stage – One Grama Niladhari (G.N.) division was selected randomly out of each D.S. Division (Source: Recommendations received from DS and data banks available at D.S. offices).
Total number of G.N. Divisions selected was 10. 5th stage - One village was selected from each G.N. division. The villages were selected randomly (Source: recommendations received from the DS and GN). Total number of villages selected was 10.

**Sampling Process 2: Sampling the population**

**Sample 1 – Community Sample**

Two main sample categories were drawn from the clusters selected according to the above process, to represent a) Households and b) Information Providers. Sampling method selected to select households was ‘Simple Random Sampling’ method as the population considered is homogeneous.

The house holds were randomly selected from the registered house hold lists available at the G.N. office. One person from each household was selected for the sample. The person selected to consult for data collection was the head of the household regardless of the gender. The upper age limit expected from the person selected was 60 years and lower limit is 18 years. If the head of the household was above 60 years, the wife if below 60 or son/daughter or any adult above 18 years of age belonging to that particular house hold were selected to be included in the sample. The subjects were selected in this age range as it was intend to obtain information with a logical sense and the ability relate the needs of the house hold as in the study the household was treated as the ‘Unit of Analysis’.

The expected sample was to comprise of 30 persons from each village selected and 300 persons from 10 clusters (30 households x 10 villages = 300). It was believed that the number tantamount to 5% of the total population in a cluster. Yet in actual fact, the sample selected varied from 23 to 37 and the total was
Therefore 30 households from each cluster were believed to be a convenient sample and manageable for conducting the survey.

**Sample 2 - Information Provider Sample**

The same clusters of D.S. Divisions were used to collect data for this sample. The criterion used to select the sample was the nature of information suppliers, seen across the population. The population of information providers is not homogenous, hence stratification was necessary. Two main types identified were:

(i) Institutional providers  
(ii) Individual providers  

This second population was the information providers who operate within a particular rural community cluster that had influence in information delivery over the rural community sample selected.

i. **Stratification of Institutional providers**

Institutional providers again were divided into two sub categories;

a. Government Organizations/Agencies  

b. Non-governmental and Private Organizations.  

a. **Government Organizations**

This category consists of government offices established at the divisional level with the reporting hierarchy to central government, provincial government and to district authority. This category also includes Local Government Authorities of the cluster selected.
There were many government institutions in operation in a Divisional Secretary’s (DS) division. When selecting the sample organizations, it was seen that some such organizations were in operation in every cluster selected. These offices maintain a government administrative structure and are in operation to conduct essential services in every DS division. Therefore it was decided to select offices that are commonly available in every DS division i.e. Local government authority, (the ‘Pradesheeya Sabha’), to which the selected cluster belongs, is automatically selected as an information provider. Selected government offices are given in Table 3.1.

Agrarian Services office at divisional level operated by two officers; i.e. Agrarian Services Officer (ASO) and Agricultural Officer (AO). AO’s work deals more with agricultural methodology and usage while ASO deals with implementation of the agrarian services including financial needs of farmers. Nevertheless activities of both officers overlap sometimes. PHIs who operated in the division are to report to MOH office, hence only MOH was selected for the sample. The public library is always affiliated to the Pradesheeya Sabha, but the functions they perform are different, therefore, both are included in the sample as separate entities.
Table 3.1: Stratification of Institutional Providers - Sample 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Category</th>
<th>Sub Category</th>
<th>No. of samples decided to collect per cluster</th>
<th>Total No. of samples intended to collect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Offices</td>
<td>Div. Secretary (DS)</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Div. Agri. Office (AO)</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Div. Medi. Office (MOH)</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Library (PL)</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post Office (PO)</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Govt.</td>
<td>Pradesh. Sabha Office (PS)</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>06</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Organzs.</td>
<td>Com. Banks/Sav. Inst.(CB)</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td></td>
<td>02</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>04</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expected</td>
<td>Institutional sample</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Non-Governmental and Private Organizations

The NGOs and related projects, financial and savings institutions, banks, other commercial or social organizations that operated in the areas were in this category. Initial list of NGOs were obtained from the Ministry of Social Services and locally from the DS office and their scale of activities was also identified through the DS office.

These were seen to be available in a mixture across clusters selected. Non-governemental Organizations (NGO) and private institutions that were
available within villages and nearby townships, were seen to operate in a variety of businesses and services, i.e. banks, savings institutions, insurance companies, leasing and finance companies, cooperative societies, NGOs and related projects, commercial establishments, private business stores / centres relating to the work concerned with village occupations (sellers of equipment and technology, materials, other supplies) etc. However these organizations are not available uniformly in every cluster selected for the survey. Therefore the organizations commonly available in most of the clusters were considered for the sample. Thus, two Commercial Banks or Rural Savings Institutions each in the vicinity of the cluster were selected.

Though NGOs were seen to be in operation in most of the townships of the clusters, selecting them for the sample had been an issue due to the inconsistent operation of their activities for a considerable duration. These NGOs were seen to operate in different scales of activities and in different reputations. Some NGOs and related projects were branches of very well established NGOs and international organizations, such as Sarvodaya, World Vision, Red Cross etc. Thus it was decided to select two NGOs from each cluster on the basis of the duration of visibility in the area selected. The duration of visibility decided was six months.

ii  Individual Providers

Individuals were divided into two main categories according to the nature of the activities they engaged in.

a. Government officers established at village level
b. Other individuals who operate informally
Government appointed officers were selected upon the level of availability to the community for service and according to the importance given by the community itself for the activities of these officers. The level of importance was recognized during the pilot study. (Details of the Pilot Study are given under data collection methodology). Thus following officers were seen as having a direct involvement with the community and only one officer was selected from one GND division (‘Wasam’).

- Grama Niladhari /Sewaka (Representative of the DS, and the head of smallest unit in administrative structure) – GN
- Agriculture Produce Research Officer (Community agrarian adviser at wasam level, reporting to Director Agrarian Service Officer at the division) – APRO
- Family Health Worker (Community health worker at wasam level, reporting to the Medical Officer of Health at the division) – FHW
- Samurdhi Officer (Officer in-charge of the ‘Samurdhi’, Government Poverty Alleviation Programme, at the wasam level, reporting to the Director Planning at DS office) – SO
- Social Service Officer (Officer in-charge of social services at the wasam level, reporting to the Director Planning at DS office) – SSO

It was decided to select GN, APRO, FHW compulsorily but decided to select either SO or SSO. It was seen that both SO and SSO provides the same kind of information and sometimes information provision is interdependent, though their service minutes are different. E.g. SO deals with Samurdhi matters while he has to obtain base information from SSO. SSO deals with welfare of the
community while Samurdhi facilities also come into the purview of social service. Hence either SO and SSO were included in the sample.

b. Other Individuals

Other individuals were selected upon two criteria; upon visibility of activities and upon Occupational Prestige Scale (Gunawardena, 1990). Individuals who were selected upon visibility in providing information to the community were:

- Boutique owner/ supply seller in the village
- Community Leader

Persons who were selected upon Occupational Prestige Scale were:

- Principal / Head master at the village school
- Priest of the temple/ church/ mosque
- Rural elite

Number selected for the sample consisted of 01 Head priest, Principal of the village school and 01 Community leader or Rural elite if available, 01 Boutique owner or material/Equipment supplier who operates in the village. There are other individuals who act as information providers but not available in every community. Therefore four categories of persons mentioned above were selected due to their existence in every cluster surveyed. Table 4.2 indicates number of samples intended to collect from each category of individuals.

3.4 Rate of Response

Rate of response received for the samples was highly satisfactory. For the community sample there was 100 percent response recorded while for the
provider sample the rate was 87.8 percent. Average response rate for the total survey was 93.9 percent.

The community sample recorded 100 percent as the data collectors were able to collect intended sample somehow from the villages surveyed. The provider sample recorded response rate of 87.8 percent due to the non availability of some of the providers in some clusters, see Table ..... According to the samples collected the response rate of government officers were 100 percent.

Other organizations recorded 67 percent as only 07 NGOs matched the six months’ visibility expected. In one cluster there was no Samurdhi officer and another officer was covering the duty. Seven priests were able to be contacted from 07 villages while others did not have a temple or a church close by. Some villages had only one boutique in the village. Therefore total response rate from providers came to 87.8 percent.

3.5 Community Types Selected for the Sample

Sample distribution by community type is shown in the Fig.3.1. The basis for selecting the samples (purposively selected) was the community types available within the five provinces that was selected randomly. The process was described under the section 3.3.3.
**Fig. 3.2 : Distribution of the sample**

![Bar chart showing the distribution of samples by community type.](image)

**Fig. 3.3 : Villages represented by community type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Rural</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Estate</th>
<th>Fisheries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hevanakumbura – Weлимada, Badulla</td>
<td>Kumbiyangahaela ula, Matale</td>
<td>Mathurata Plantations - Walapone, Nuwaraeliya Holinborn Estate Mathugama, Kalutara</td>
<td>Naguleliya + Muthupanthiya – Arachchikattuwa, Puttalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahanbana - Monaragala</td>
<td>Walaswewa – Galgamuwa, Kurunegala</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alawala – Nittumbuw Gampaha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malamure – Nagoda Galle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattala – Lunugamvehera, Hambanthota</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6  **Data Collection Methodology**

The main data collection methodology utilized was ‘Structured Interview’ for both samples. In addition to this, ‘Focus Group Discussions’ were also conducted with selected group of respondents.

The data collection instruments utilized was the Interview Schedules. Two interview schedules were prepared for collecting data from two samples. The questions in the interview schedules were first prepared according to the aspects extracted from surveys conducted in the other countries, which were extracted from the literature survey. The questions included thus, were tested at the pilot study. It was revealed that, even though some basic features of rural communities surveyed in other countries were matched with Sri Lankan rural scenario, there was a need to modify the items to suit the specific situations in the communities. Outline of the Interview schedules are given below.

3.6.1 **Outline of the Interview Schedules**

The aspects drafted in the interview schedule are given below in a summary.

**Schedule -1 Community Survey**

1. Community Profile
2. Need categories in demand
3. Core competencies available – Internal to a person, External to a person
4. Channels consulted to obtain information
5. Difficulties encountered in searching for information
6. Attitudes of the community relating to information usage and provision
Schedule 2 - Provider Survey

1. Provider Profile
2. Need categories provided
3. Competencies to provide information—equipment, facilities etc.
4. Status of provision—collection, Organization format delivered & method delivered
5. Provision channels
6. Attitudes of the providers relating to information usage and provision

3.6.2 Data Collection from Sample 1

Data collection planned for sample 1 was carried out mostly during the week ends by walking to selected households. Data collection was planned on the basis of the experience received from the pilot survey as follows.

- It was tried to interview the head of the household. If the person is not available at the time of interview, the interviewer tried some other time during the data collection session.
- If the head of the house hold was not available another responsible person from the house hold was contacted.
- When the selected house was closed, abandoned or could not be reached due to any impassable obstacle (stream, hill, marsh, fence etc.), a person from the next approachable house hold was interviewed.

3.6.3 Interview Style

Sample 1

As the population under study was relatively less educated and the subject covered in the survey is not an area commonly dealt with, the interviewer had to pose questions to the respondents strategically. Quite a number of ordinary rural citizens
could not understand what some of the questions meant, they were not sure or were hesitant to answer. The interviewer had to get the information needed to collect through an indirect way.

In this kind of circumstances, a strategic approach similar to ‘listening survey’ conducted by Pradervand (1980) had to be used. Pradervand’s experience in listening survey, which was conducted in Diana, Senegal is hoped to be used as a basic method to approach the respondents. This type of survey differs from traditional research in which the researcher decides before hand what he is going to find out. Mchombu(2002) regarding the same work adds that;

“….The researcher works from questionnaire or interview plan to meet this goal. In a Listening survey, a team of people (not a single person) pays attention to unstructured conversations, when people are relaxed and talk about things they are most concerned about. Not only does the survey team listen for facts, but they also listen for the feelings of people on daily issues, on emotional issues, as well as on basic physical needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self-respect and personal growth…”
(Mchombu, 2002, p.37)

This kind of survey is open and is carried out in common places where people gather. At the end of a session or fact-finding exercise, a person or a small group should prepare a report on the range of core topics revealed through the community communications listened to. These reports were used to create a record for future consultations to prepare data collection instruments and decision making. This ‘Listening Survey’ method is expected to be used initially in the pilot study to try out the method before conducting the main survey. This is because there is no clear idea regarding the behaviour of the respondents selected for the study.
The approach was a way of letting the respondent to go on explaining about their interests, hopes, present issues etc. relating to the scope of the question asked. For example, obtaining answer to the question, ‘what sort of occupational training you prefer to obtain?’ (options given to choose), prompted the respondents talk about many a detail regarding, discrimination they faced when get nominated, difficulties they ‘would’ face even if a training was obtained, problems relating to the capital expenditure when they want to start a business or project after obtaining a training etc. The interviewer had to pick up what the exact preference intended by the respondent.

At times, interviewer could not use the same wordings that appeared in the Interview Schedule when asking questions. The interviewer had to use local words in place of standard words used in the schedule. The local terminology was picked during the meeting with the GN of the wasam before starting the survey. Sometimes the respondents diverted completely from the focus of the survey. The situation had to be tolerated as disturbance to their explanations might lead to frustration at the interview session. Most of those explanations contained their grievances and they were relieved to tell somebody regarding the issues and problems at hand.

During this kind of lengthy sessions the interviewer recorded the session using a portable voice recorder. At the day’s end recorded conversations were played back and missing information was picked up. The process thus took a long time than expected to finalize the data collection from sample 1.

Sample 2
Sample 2 comprised the ‘Information Providers’ that operated in the clusters surveyed and the data collection was performed without much difficulty unlike
from sample 1, as most of the respondents were in the educated and literate category. Questions in the Interview Schedule were posed to the respondents directly and about 90 percent of them were able to respond directly to the questions.

Only disturbance experienced during the data collection from sample 2, especially from the government officials, was obtaining appointments from them and their difficulty to stick to the time slots given. Reasons for this were observed to be due to the responsibilities and commitment they had officially as well as socially and politically, especially when they work at the regional administrative levels.

### 3.6 Pilot Study

The pilot survey was conducted in a traditional upcountry village, which was in Kandy district, within the Daulagala Divisional Secretaries Division and belongs to Handessa Grama Niladhari division (GS division). The village selected was Rabbegamuwa north and south, which is situated in a hilly landscape sloping down to a valley. The valley was used for paddy cultivation belongs to the temple. The village itself is a “Nindagama” (a village dedicated to the service of the temple) and the village community initially were duty bearers of nearby ancient Buddhist temple (Lankatillaka Rajamaha Vihara. At present they perform the duty to the temple while engaging in other occupations. The community is a traditional upcountry rural community, and people are farmers, brass smiths and other informal workers. The nature of the community is a mixed one, with traditional old generation and dynamic youth but with very low opportunities and avenues for self development in present day.
The pilot survey was carried out visiting 37 households to collect information using a semi-structured interview schedule. As the questionnaire was semi-structured, the respondents were allowed to express their needs and open views through some open ended questions. Through the pilot survey, specific needs pertaining to rural communities in the country, other than, the typical information needs, could be identified. The final interview schedule was formulated using the information gathered through this pilot study.

Information provider sample collected during the pilot survey had been helpful to reshape the questions included in the schedule. The DS office, Agrarian Services office, Medical Office of Health Office of Daulagala Division had been highly contributed to refine schedule 2.

3.7 Summary

The community clusters under survey were almost rural and traditional. They are in the low-income category and most of them were landless. Majority of the sample consists of Sinhalese Buddhists and the minor percentage consists of Catholic, Christians, Hindus and Muslims. Most of the respondents were within age group of 26-60. Their main occupation was agriculture or agri-based activities. Majority of the clusters selected were situated in difficult geographical areas. A substantial number had attended school and continued till grade 6-10 and were competent in using Sinhala language. Knowledge of English as second language was very low. Computer literacy in the area was also extremely low. The training received in different economic activities was not satisfactory at all.

The data collected from the clusters selected showed that these communities are in underprivileged condition due to difficult socio-geographical condition and
unfavourable socio-economic condition. Villages surveyed showed a situation where people struggle to survive with basic needs at bare minimum.

Providers were seen as educated in most cases. 100 percent of the heads of the government offices contacted were graduates and mostly with masters degrees or diplomas (both academic and technical) relating to the area of activity. Officers at community level were also educated having G.C.E. (AL) as minimum educational requirement. Principal, priest and rural elite had an education ranging from G.C.E.(AL) to graduates.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

The study was planned to cover rural communities in Sri Lanka but a national sample for the study could not be used due to time and cost constraints. Therefore systematic and non-systematic cluster samples had been taken to minimize sampling error. A bigger sample could have been collected to arrive at more generalized outcome from the research. But due to the difficulty in collecting the sample from the distant communities, the size had to be confined to a manageable sample, hence 5 provinces were selected randomly.

Due to time constraints of the study some of the important aspects such as; information infrastructure in rural areas, usage and productivity level of the community information, impact of different media over the information provision to rural areas could not be studied at length but covered up to the extent to support the study.
Chapter 04

Community Information Needs of Rural Sri Lanka

4.0 Introduction

Main objective of the present study is to explore community information needs and to explore the information flow in rural Sri Lanka. This chapter analyses data to identify types of information needs in different communities and also to which extent these information needs are fulfilled. The analysis identifies information need categories and sub categories that come under each main category. An attempt was also made to find out the level of fulfillment of these needs. The present study used a community-genera approach where the analytical insight develops as an inductive approach.

4.1 Characteristics of the Sample and Rate of Response

The community clusters under survey were mostly rural and traditional. The respondents were mostly in the low-income category and most of them were landless. Majority of the sample consists of Sinhalese/Buddhists and minor percentages consist of Catholics, Christians, Hindus and Muslims. Most of the respondents were in the age group of 26-60. Their main occupation was agriculture or agro-based activities. The majority of the clusters selected were situated in areas with adverse geographical conditions. A substantial number had attended school and continued upto grade 6-10 and were competent in
using mother tongue. The characteristics of the sample were presented in page (see page 166-167.

Their engagement in alternative occupational activities and training opportunities relating to different economic activities were minimal. The data collected from the clusters selected also showed that these communities were in an underprivileged condition due to difficult socio-geographical conditions and unfavorable socio-economic conditions leaving them to struggle to survive with basic needs at bare minimum.

Table 4.1: Age distribution of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of Respondents</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>11-20</th>
<th>21-30</th>
<th>31-40</th>
<th>41-50</th>
<th>51-60</th>
<th>61-70</th>
<th>71-80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the respondents, knowledge of English as a second language was very low. But respondents from traditional rural communities and from settlement areas were competent in usage of Sinhala language. In the estate sector English language knowledge was almost nil. Computer literacy among the respondents was also extremely low.

The sample size was 300 households in sample 1 and the total number of households was interviewed. Therefore the response rate was 100 percent. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, an attempt was made to interview the head of the household as much as possible. In five marked households, head of the family was not available and only young were at home at the time of the survey. In such instances the adjoining household on the same
This chapter analyses aspects relating to the emergence of information needs and how the information seeking behaviour had taken routes when approaching the correct source. As indicated, information needs do not emanate from a void but with a firm base of basic needs. Problem that lies for analysis is whether this demand is recognized or not. Due recognition of the information needs would lead to higher levels of satisfaction in the satisfaction scale (See Ideal Information Flow Model; p….). These aspects will eventually be connected with other aspects in the analytical frame, in Chapter 5, embracing the entire existing information flow in rural Sri Lanka.

4.2 Categorization of Information Needs

The study attempted to build a basic frame of Information Need Categories for the study through the literature, which was from the studies conducted in different countries and for community sub groups like researchers, farmers, industrialists, financiers, women etc. and subject areas like agriculture, science and technology, health and nutrition etc. However, it was not able to find a basic need frame covered in literature that embrace all aspects of the community information needs hence the study used a data collection frame drawn from the pilot study conducted.

The community survey was designed to give freedom to respondents to express their information needs in an unrestricted manner (Dervin, 1983), which led the interviewer to derive both ‘expressed needs’ and ‘unexpressed needs’. Most of the questions in the schedule were of a structured nature but the interviewer allowed the respondents some freedom to express their ideas maintaining a degree of openness. This was done by
adding a field ‘other’ in each information need category. Expressed needs were easily gathered as a need was already conceived in the mind of the respondent though much effort was taken to retrieve ‘unexpressed needs’ that is dormant in their knowledge that may lie unconscious to a person. This chapter will examine these two need categories and use the responses to build an ‘Information Need Frame’ for rural citizens in Sri Lanka.

It was observed in the pattern of responses received, people had opted for information sub categories as multiple responses opting for more than one sub category. As the initial step, these responses were tabulated separately under each main need category under multiple responses.

4.2.1 Information Needs Common to All

The responses received were recorded against each main category and sub category in the ‘information needs’ section of the interview schedule. For most of the respondents the question had to be explained by the interviewer to help him to pick up the necessary choices or interviewer had to pick up the facts intended to collect while the respondents going on talking about many a detail about their day-to-day life struggle. When some individuals are hesitant to express their needs the interviewer had to approach the question in a roundabout manner to reveal what actually they hope to say. The methodology (Listening Survey) was explained under interview style in chapter 3. Table 4.2 below indicates responses received for main information categories.
Respondents were presented with 15 different categories of information needs and their responses are presented above. It was observed that some information categories record higher responses from many respondents regardless of their diversities like ethnicity, personal characteristics etc. These categories of needs were identified as ‘Information needs common to all’. These were identified through the higher priorities opted for by the respondents. Appendix 4.1, gives the “Need Frame”, List of Main Information Categories and Sub categories that come under each main category which were revealed through the study.

All information categories, for which more than 50 per cent responses were received, have been identified as common information needs. According to this criterion, following

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Need Category</th>
<th>Total Res.</th>
<th>% out of MRR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Agricultural Information</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Educational Information</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Financial Information</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Government Information</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Health Information</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Industrial Information</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Infrastructure Related Information</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Labour/Employment Information</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Legal Information</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Local Government information</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Market Information</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Political Information</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Recreational &amp; other Information</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Self Emp./Training Information</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Weather &amp; Natural Disas. Info.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
information categories, which had obtained above 50 percent response rate, are treated, as information needs common to all and given in the ranking order.

- Government information (100%)
- Political and related information (99%)
- Local Government (95%)
- Health and Nutrition information (87%)
- Financial information (86%)
- Infrastructure related information (80%)
- Self Employment and Training information (64%)
- Educational information (58%)
- Agriculture and related information (57%)

**Fig. 4.1: Need Categories – Main Divisions**

Responses received over 50 percent were marked as Needs Common to All. Accordingly, there are 9 need categories that were identified as commonly needed by all rural communities, regardless of the geographical location and other socio-economic conditions.
Some categories like Weather / Natural disaster related information, Recreation related and Legal information counted low in Sri Lanka as common rural needs. Industrial information counted also low, may be due to those needs being related to specific occupational categories and emanating from community sub groups like young people and craftsmen communities, e.g. brass workers, gold smiths, minor crop cultivators etc. Market information specifically needed by agricultural and industrial communities and also did not count high when calculated under common responses. Some categories such as recreational information, legal information, industrial information etc., scored less in Sri Lanka, but scored higher in other countries. Table 4.3 indicates choices placed by respondents for need categories by community type.

**Table 4.3: Need categories by community type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Categories</th>
<th>Trad.</th>
<th>Estate</th>
<th>Fisher</th>
<th>Settle</th>
<th>N=300 (n/N)%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N=300 (n/N)%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n1</td>
<td>n2</td>
<td>n3</td>
<td>n4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Agricultural</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Educational</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employment</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Financial</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Government</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Health</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Industrial</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Infrastructure</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Legal</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Local Government</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Market</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Political</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Recreational</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Training</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Weather &amp; Nat. Disas</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The gender difference also had some influence over the demand for information. Table 5.4 illustrates the responses received for the need categories by gender. According to the rate of response out of 300, that is the sampled number, some categories have higher preferences by males than females and vice versa. These differences observed will be treated categorically when main need and sub categories are discussed.

Table 4.4: All Information Categories by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Need Categories</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>(n/N)% N=300</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>(n/N)% N=300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Agricultural Inform.</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Educational Inform.</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employment Inform.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Entertainment/Religious etc.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Financial Information</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Government Inform.</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Industrial Information</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Infrastructure Related</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal Information</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Local Government</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Market Information</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Political Information</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Training Information</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Weather &amp; Natural Disaster</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These two tables will be referred through out the chapter as guide tables in discussing the need categories. Under each main need category, there are sub categories, which are discussed below.
4.2.1.1 Government Information (GI)

Government Information (GI) is information produced by the central government, local governments, government departments and public sector organizations, which may be of value to the citizen either as part of everyday life or in the participation by the citizen in government and policy formulation (Seneviratne, 2001). It also comprises the main part of the Citizenship information (Marcella & Baxter, 2000; Susman, 2001). The word Public information (PI) is also used to depict same information category, but normally is created, compiled and/or maintained by a federal government.

Out of these categories PI and GI are created for people by their governments, held in trust by their governments and are made available to their people except in occasions where restricted by law. The GI flows within the scope of public ownership and public trust which is required by all citizens in a country. The government is the biggest sector that affects lives and destiny of the people in a country and it exists to serve the interest and general welfare of the people. Even though supplying most needed resource based services like land, water, education or credit and relevant information on the same is a political decision, modern citizen believes that providing authenticated information is one of the prime duties of the government and understand the necessity of obtaining government related information.

Responses received for this category in the present survey was 100 percent which indicates all 300 respondents agreed that they need Government and Administrative information, by placing highest value for the category over the other need categories regardless of their social status. This indicates how important the GI is for any type of citizen in a country and few reasons for the situation had been recognized through the study.
A long established administrative tradition in Sri Lanka, though it had undergone many changes through different royal lineage, Indian and Western invasions and with the influence of eastern and western political systems had established a certain government information frame and her people knew from early historic era that they were within it. So that even a person in the most rural community knows that he needs to obtain government and administrative information for his survival as a rightful citizen in the country. It was also observed that many other supporting services initiated by the government, rural development projects (IRDP), poverty alleviation projects (Samurdhi program/Manelmal program etc.) irrigation/conservation projects (Upper Watershed Management project), senior pension scheme (Mahajanadhara) etc. had provoked the citizen to search for government-originated information.

Table 4.5 : GI categories and multiple responses received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Need Categories</th>
<th>Total Res.</th>
<th>% out of MRR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NIC/PP/B&amp;D/Mrrg</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle License</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree License</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L &amp; B License</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Registration</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. Notifications/Gazettes/Tax info. Etc.</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown lands</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MRR</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR= Multiple responses received
These mobilization activities not only bring the knowledge external to the rural sector, but also established the importance of maintaining the status of registered citizenship among rural people. This recognition of citizenship paved the way for the rural citizen to consult government agencies for relevant information. Figure 5.2 indicates the responses received for government related information categories.

According to the multiple responses received for government information categories, personal registration issues or category one (National Identity Card, Passports, Registration of persons as citizens, issues in obtaining Birth, Death and Marriage certificates etc.) had received higher priority from both male and female respondents and this category recorded the highest, 83 per cent out of 300. Therefore it is seen that personal registration issues carry higher priority among rural settlers regardless the socio-economic differences within government information category.

Next category that had received next higher priority was the information on tree felling licenses. This category had recorded a 44 percent response rate and was observed that men more than women mostly requested information for tree felling, 91 men and 41 women (Table 4.6). In most of the rural areas, except in dry/arid zones and fishing communities, felling of trees was commonly seen as an informal income generation source.

Responses for Land and building licenses were low, perhaps because there were few commercial buildings and a considerable number of houses in remote areas were built on crown lands without necessary approval. As was seen in Table 2 in Appendix........ that people belonging to 26-60 age groups, mostly sought information on obtaining vehicle licenses.
Multiple responses for company and business registration (5%) indicate low level of operations in formal business ventures as most of the commercial activities in rural areas fall under informal business category, hence demand was not seen very strong. It was observed that only a few people bothered to register their business and many did not know the benefits of this legal practice. It was gathered according to the survey that there were no awareness programs to enlighten people on the subject. Information on legal matters relating to the businesses is mostly provided by the commercial banks, though people are not aware of it. When a client applied to obtain a business loan, the bank normally provide information on legal requirements that are needed to be fulfilled. It was only then most of them came to know that, without a business registration, business development loans could not be obtained. Not only this example, but there are many more information gaps were identified on different aspects.

People in the rural sector though not very vigilant about the notifications issued by the government, there is a demand especially from youth for the government gazette in relation with obtaining information on government employment. Twenty eight percent (28%) out of total respondents and 11% out of Multiple responses received response recorded for this category also includes taxes payable to the government and local authorities.

Income and Taxes category which includes, revenue taxes, property taxes and different levies to the government and the local government mostly sought after by the businessmen. Even though the most businesses in rural areas possess an informal nature, taxes are being collected through the ‘door step’ method by the local authorities (Pradesheeya Sabha) from important business operations within a certain locality.
(eg: Sunday Fairs, wholesale markets etc.,) and from business premises regardless of the status of the buildings. Since most rural business activities do not turn out a high constant income to pay revenue taxes, demand for information regarding income tax is less.

Response rate recorded for Crown Lands was 10 per cent. Out of 10 clusters selected, illegal usage of crown lands was seen mainly in five Divisional Secretaries’ (DS) Divisions, namely in Arachchikattuwa, Galgamuwa, Naula, Lunugamvehera, and Monaragala. Information sought regarding crown lands was basically for obtaining permanent deeds for illegally owned lands and lands cleared for dwelling and sometimes for Chena cultivation. It was also found that people need information regarding the disputable situation of transferring deeds to family members or next of kin.

Twenty six per cent (26%) responded for Social Services and Other Information Needs category, which consists of financial assistance for the poverty alleviation programmes of the government, ‘Samurdhi’, senior pension scheme, ‘Mahajanadhara’, other financial assistance and referral information relating to other government services.

Table 4.6 indicates the responses received by gender. Total male response rate was 58 per cent and for females 42 per cent. According to the tabulation, response rates received for need categories were higher for males than for female respondents, except in third category, that was information on income taxes. The data indicates that the need for information on driving licenses, land and building licenses, company registration and information on crown lands were demanded less by women.
According to age distribution for GI category, the group belonging to 30-60 years of age needed more government information than other age groups, which depict the active involvement in social and economic activities by these age groups. Out of the groups, two main age groups were identified as most important in looking for government information; i.e. 31-40 and 41-50 who were seen as highly active in socio-economic activities. It was also found that these two groups consist of more literate people with higher percentages in employment and therefore need more government information than the other groups. GI by age groups is given Fig. 4.3.
The responses received from employment categories for government information are indicated in Table 3 in Appendix. As per the data, people who engage in private sector and in self employment activities recorded a higher average response for all categories though responses were different for individual categories. In the private sector employment category, personal registration recorded a higher value probably because this employment category consists of estate workers and many of them did not have proper National Identity Card (NIC) by the date of survey.

Nevertheless DSs relevant to those communities stated that a plan to register these persons as rightful citizens is underway. Self employed group recorded higher responses for all types of government information except in Land and Building License category. In most of the cases in Sri Lankan rural sector, self-employed people were identified as low-income earners and without business premises. Many are engaged in cottage industries or micro industries or businesses and hence had not owned commercial property to obtain licenses.
Other economic activities of the respondents also had shown some influence over the government information demand. According to the average rates calculated informal workers and agricultural workers have shown interest in obtaining government information mostly, compared to other categories. The situation relating to economic activities were different from other developed countries according to the case studies reviewed. What was observed in this study relating to the GI needs requested by rural people as a whole is their enthusiasm to obtain state related information and significance (rate of response is 100%) they placed on the category. The analysis indicates that modern citizen though lived in rural areas understands the importance of GI as a survival information category.

4.2.1.2 Educational Information (EI)

Education is treated as a prime need of any civilized community. Sri Lanka reports a literacy rate, which is claimed to be equal to the rate in highly developed countries. But this indicator does not imply that the all citizens in the country, especially the rural people receive a standard education as received by the urban population. Total response rate for educational information (EI) needs was 58 per cent. Responses for EI needs were received as responses for individual categories and as responses in need combinations or as multiple responses. When the response rates were aggregated from the multiple response tabulations, following percentages were obtained and presented in Table 4.7.

As seen in the table, better schooling for children (21%), extra classes and other alternative education streams available (23%), higher education options/opportunities (17%) and tertiary education opportunities (17%) recorded higher responses.
Table 4.7 : Rate of Response for Educational Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Sub Category</th>
<th>Total Res.</th>
<th>% out of MRR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Education</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better School</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Classes/Alternative Edu</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Education</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursary/Aids</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Edu./ Regional Courses etc. &amp; Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Multiple Responses (MRR)</strong></td>
<td><strong>393</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 11 percent have opted for the information sub category, ‘Self Education’. Among the few reasons for a low response for need for self-education, a) Inadequate time to be spared for self education due to the busy schedule (especially farmers, fishermen and craft communities), b) Low awareness about the programs available c) Low propagation of a positive attitude towards learning and learning culture and d) Financial problems were especially noted. It was also seen that females are more deprived of from being self educated due to early marriage, low level of education and ethical environment especially in Tamil and Muslim communities.

Bursary and Aid for education counted low, as most of the rural parents were not geared to find out about opportunities due to their pessimistic attitudes or lethargy in finding out the available opportunities due to a busy life style or by wanting children to be involved in their family business/economic activities etc. The reason for the low demand and enthusiasm for distance and other opportunities, were seen as due to less
awareness regarding the avenues available. Most people do not aware that the opportunities available for all age groups for open learning, which can be carried up to degree level and were also not sure about convenient learning blocks and related payment systems offered by Open University of Sri Lanka, National Youth Council of Sri Lanka, National Skills Development Program etc.

Table 4.8 shows that 84 percent responses received for EI was from parents having school going or young children. Out of the 84 percent who responded thus, 4 need categories highlighted received a higher response. According to the behaviour of responses a significant relationship was seen with these two sets of variables; EI needs and status of having children. According to Pearson Chi-square test performed relating to these two variables recorded 78.8% significance level ($p=.000$).

Table 4.8 : Education Information and Status of Having Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Category</th>
<th>Having Child.</th>
<th>Not Having Children</th>
<th>RR. out of MRR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Education</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better School</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Classes/Alternative Edu</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Education</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursary/Aids</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Edu./ Regional Courses etc. &amp; Othe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of response %</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received  
RR = Rate of Response
It was observed that regardless the parental education people needed EI when it comes to educating their children. But in the case of obtaining self education or training the education level of the respondent mattered significantly. The Chi-square test also confirmed indicating a high significance level ($p=.002$) of the relationship of two sets of variables and indicates that education related information needs remarkably varied with parental education.

However according to the focus group discussions, rural people unanimously agreed that the information on education is essential for improving rural life status of them selves and for the younger generation.

### 4.2.1.3 Information on Occupational Training (OTI)

Rural villages are known to be virtually agricultural economies and most of the villagers are farmers or agricultural workers and like to call themselves as farmers.

![Fig. 4.4: Training Status of the Respondents](image)

These people have received very little training in other skills training for agriculture related or micro or small industries related activities (Abeyratne, 2000). As data reveals, only 28 per cent received some sort of training relating to an
occupation, while as illustrated in Fig. 5.4, 72 per cent of the respondents had not received any kind of occupational training.

During the study, many respondents including women agreed that obtaining training in other occupations is very important to overcome the poverty they face at present. Occupational training category consists of training related to agriculture, industry and self-employment. Other categories include training needed by people on social services, counseling etc.

The demand for occupational training was recorded as 63 percent. The number which responded for OTI was 188, out of which 68 responded for individual training needs and 120 responded for the needs in combinations (multiple responses). The responses were calculated from the individual and multiple responses received. See figure 4.5.

Out of the total, 3rd information category, ‘self-employment related information’ scored higher response (36%), when calculated out of individual and multiple responses. The situation indicates the enthusiasm shown by rural people to get them trained for some kind of alternative vocation.

Table 4.9 illustrates about the type of training they received so far. It was seen that most of the training received was from family-based skills and occupations that had been inherited from family; e.g. brass workers, blacksmiths, gold/silver smiths, carpenters, masons, sculptors, indigenous physicians and veterinary experts, weavers, pottery workers etc.
Table 4.9: Nature of Training Received by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Training</th>
<th>No. received Training</th>
<th>% of out of MRR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family based</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received

Fig. 4.5 shows OTI need categories and the response rate received out of the total number of respondents in the sample. Highest score was recorded for self-employment training, showing how citizens in the traditional rural societies gradually express the need to divert to independent income earning channels, rather than depending on the traditional occupations.

**Fig. 4.5: Responses for Information Need Categories - Occupational Training**

When analyzing the categories of training they opted for, it was observed that some people were willing to receive
information under the same occupation they were involved in, with the idea maximizing efficiency and gains. The situation is clear for the responses received for agriculture related training and for industrial related training.

Need categories under this section were further analysed in relation to the age groups of the respondents to obtain a clearer picture about the needs for occupation related training depending on age. People belonging to age group 31-40 was normally working people and demonstrate their enthusiasm in learning for betterment of their occupational knowledge.

**Table 4.10 : Occupational Training by Age Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Agri. Related</th>
<th>Ind. Related</th>
<th>Self Emp</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td><strong>139</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>383</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category Percentage | 23.5 | 24.5 | 36.4 | 15.6 | 100 |

The response rates for all four training need categories were recorded higher in these age groups than other groups. According to the above table age group 31-50 scored higher responses for self-employment which shows the need for earning more for their families. It was seen that other two categories, agriculture and industrial training, had received responses from persons engaged in related economic activities. Most of the young respondents had indicated a need
to obtain information on different categories of training like self-employment, income generation etc.

When analyzing the occupational training information needs with regard to the economic activities engaged in by the respondents, it was seen that the main three categories were sought mostly by people engaged in informal work (30%) and agriculture related activities (54%) when compared with the number of responses received from each activity category.

As indicated through the behavioral pattern of demand for this need category, it was proved that rural people too enthusiastic to obtain suitable training to upgrade their occupations and businesses etc. to upgrade the status of their lives regardless the social status and other socio economic or cultural differences.

### 4.2.1.4 Health and Nutrition information (HI)

Maintaining health and nutrition is recognized as a basic human need of modern social life. The scores obtained this category of information indicated an obvious significance among almost all citizens. According to the survey, information needs relating to health and nutrition (HNI) had counted third highest, 87 percent out of total number of respondents (262 out of 300 in the sample Table 4 in Appendix).

With 262 having responded for health topics, total multiple responses received for this category of needs were 1077 out of which mostly sought after need categories were information on diseases, worm treatment, nutrition, vaccination and public facilities as indicated in Table 4.11.
The Table identifies choices opted for respective categories and among those there were three categories noted as areas in high demand. Importance of these topics could be already seen through the percentages obtained by calculating the number responded against total responded in the sample. This value was calculated for each topic in the need category. See column "% out of N=300". Response rates for Vaccination, diseases, nutrition and carried, 61 percent, 73 percent and 51 percent respectively.

**Table 4.11: Information Need Categories- Health & Nutrition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub need categories</th>
<th>Total res</th>
<th>RR % out of MRR</th>
<th>% out of N=300</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Facilities</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaccination</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worm Treatment</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy Related</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Control</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eradctn of epidemic des</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>1077</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received  
RR = Rate of Response

Information on public facilities, worm treatment, and pregnancy related topics carried significant rates of responses as given in the above table. Thus the high priority need categories identified were; vaccination, diseases and nutrition were paid top attention by rural people especially regarding their newborn and young children.
The gender distribution for priority areas recorded in Table 4.11, slightly changes the picture. The response rates were recorded as 52 percent, males and 48 percent females and do not show significant difference in options.

### Table 4.12: Demand for Health & Nutrition Information by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Categories</th>
<th>MRR Males</th>
<th>MRR Female</th>
<th>Total Resd</th>
<th>MRR Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Facilities</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaccination</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worm Treatment</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy Related</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Control</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eradication of M/I/P</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR received</strong></td>
<td>649</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>1376</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received  
RR = Rate of Response

Among 147 male respondents there were five main categories prominently seen, i.e. public facilities (15%), vaccination (13%), diseases (16%), nutrition (12%) and worm treatment (14%).

Female responses had increased towards pregnancy related information naturally recording 13 per cent while male response rate for the same was 5 per cent. Birth control,
eradication of Malaria, infectious diseases and the other epidemics and other category (Various other health and nutrition needs) were rated little higher by males than by females.

It was observed that, higher interests exhibited by female respondents on health and nutrition topics, were largely due to the responsibility they carry in bringing up children. Giving the very young children a protection by both parents in these rural settings, from various infectious diseases and other epidemic conditions can be said as an appreciable condition. Even though data records a higher need for pregnancy related information than men, most of the other categories do not indicate drastic difference in gender responses.

The situation can further be clarified through the status of having children, which was seen as having a significant effect on health information needs. People who had children had responded in 84 per cent for health and nutrition information. It was seen that people who have children had requested first 6 categories of information as opted by female respondents. See table 4.13.

Data tabulated in Table 5 in the Appendix indicates that marriage is not an indicator for demanding HNI though some bias was seen regarding some categories of information like, pregnancy related and birth control. According to the tabulation, it was seen that the rate of responses derived did not show a drastic difference in responses received for need categories, while keeping the priority areas (first 5 need categories) unchanged. Few reasons for this situation were observed during the study. Those who were unmarried in some cases were seen looking after children in family circle and seniors in the family and if separated/widowed or
separated from spouse, especially in case of women, would still bear the total responsibility of children.

The significance level was also tested for the relationship of HNI needs categories and people who have children using Chi-Square test. It was noted that there was a high significance level \( (p=.000) \) recording 89.5% counting less than 5.

In general, the analysis depicts that rural people in Sri Lanka are much concerned regarding in obtaining health and nutrition information. This high demand for HNI information, owes much to the effectiveness of health awareness programs organized by the MOH office and DMO and rural level health network established in Sri Lanka.
4.2.1.5 Agriculture and related information (AI)

Sri Lanka is primarily an agricultural country and plantation crops occupy 40 per cent of the utilized area. About 75 per cent of the population live in rural areas are mostly rely on agriculture and allied occupations. About 38 percent of the total labour force of the country was engaged in agriculture and related activities in Sri Lanka (Abeyratne, 2000; Tennakoon, 2003; Attanayake, 2003). As was seen during the study, agricultural community in Sri Lanka is virtually traditional. Most of them were not clearly aware that they could use well-researched and well-established information for the betterment of their main occupation and obtaining higher productivity.

According to the study, agricultural information (AI) needs of the rural community surveyed recorded a response of 57 per cent out of 300 respondents as mentioned in Table 4.3. Out of 170 that opted agriculture related sub categories many of them needed 2 or 3 category combinations. Gender representation of the responses was 39 per cent for male and 18 per cent for female according to the Table 6 of Appendix and Fig.4.6 indicates behaviour of demand for AI needs.

**Fig. 4.6: Agricultural Need Categories**
Among the agriculture sub categories, crop related, fertilizer and insect pest control, diseases (of plants, animal and fish) and irrigation and soil related information were recorded as higher priority areas. Other categories such as post harvest methodologies, cattle and related topics and agricultural machinery, scored low and indicates low emphasis placed upon acquiring modern methodologies for agriculture in these areas.

Age group tabulation shows that AI, was concentrated (high as 30%-58%) within the age group of 26-60, which shows the active participation in the agricultural activities within working age of rural populace, see Fig.4.8. Age groups 21-25 indicates less involvement of agriculture by youth just passed out from schools, mainly due to their trying to be occupied in some other occupations and due to following short courses (especially computer courses in near by townships) in different nature.

**Fig. 4.8 : Agricultural Information Needs by Age Groups**

At next 2 age levels it was gathered according to the focus group discussions conducted, that there is an increase in
engagement of agriculture due to less availability of other occupations in the rural sector and the youth getting into marriages. Hence the demand for information on agriculture too varies.

According to the distribution of the sample, it was seen that most of the responses indicating a need for AI had come from Intermediate zone. Table 4.13 indicates that 70 per cent of the responses came from five DS divisions, namely Arachchikattuwa, Galgamuwa, Lunugamvehera, Monaragala and Welimada, out of which, 3 were from the intermediate zone. Response rates of individual samples in those five districts recorded more than 67 per cent of the total number of respondents (30x5=150) in the sample cluster surveyed.

Table 4.13: AI Needs by Community types, Geographical Zones and DS Divisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Type</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Div.Sec.</th>
<th>Needed</th>
<th>RR received out of MRR</th>
<th>RR % out of ni=30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coastal Rural-Fisheries</td>
<td>Puttalam</td>
<td>Arachchikattuwa</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowcountry Rural</td>
<td>Gampaha</td>
<td>Attanagalla</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Zone-Rural</td>
<td>Kurunegala</td>
<td>Galgamuwa</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Zone - Rural</td>
<td>Hambantota</td>
<td>Lunugamvehera</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Zone-Rural</td>
<td>Monaragala</td>
<td>Monaragala</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet Zone - Estate</td>
<td>Kalutara</td>
<td>Monaragala</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet Zone - Rural</td>
<td>Galle</td>
<td>Mathugama</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Zone-Rural</td>
<td>Matale</td>
<td>Nagoda</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcountry - Estate</td>
<td>N’Éliya</td>
<td>Naula</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcountry - Rural</td>
<td>Badulla</td>
<td>Walapone</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Welimada</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received    RR = Rate of Response
Three clusters, Attanagalla, Nagoda and Naula also give higher response recording rates of 50 per cent, 43 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. Other two responses were quite low depicting communities engaged in other economic activities. According to the study estate communities had a low interest in obtaining agricultural information. Data in the table above indicates that Holinborn estate (Rubber) in Mathugama and Mathurata Plantations (Tea) estate in Walapone received a low response for agricultural information.

Eventhough a higher response rate was recorded in some cases, like Arachchikattuwa, choices for subcategories depict a dependence on economic activity and location. In Arachchikattuwa, the community surveyed was Muthupanhtiya-Naguleliya, which was a fishing village, located in the area of Mundalama lagoon. Their main interests were not crop related but fishing, fishery farming, post harvest methodology and alternative methodology, of fishery related activities, which were also included under agriculture categories. Malamure in Nagoda also indicate a different kind of choices as the community studied engaged in cinnamon and mixed crop cultivation.

Nevertheless, it was seen that responses received for agriculture categories have clear relationship with the economic activities engaged in by the respondents. The distribution of choices will be discussed below in relation to economic activities and the occupation engaged by the communities. It was observed that rural people were willing to obtain AI even though some of them were not directly involved with agricultural activities.
Table 4.14 : AI needs by Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Categories</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Tot</th>
<th>MRR %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crop related</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizers &amp; I/P Control</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases-crop/farm/fish</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation/Soil related</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Harvest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming-Animal/Cattle/Fish</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri machinery</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% out of Total</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRR = Multiple Responses Received</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR = Rate of Response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=Informal work 2=Agri-related 3=Cattle breeding etc. 4=SMI 5=Fisheries

For instance fisheries information, though not represented very high within agro information category (8%), counted higher within Fisheries community surveyed (40%).

As indicated in Table 4.14, most of the agriculture-based information was needed by informal work groups and agriculture related activity groups, who responded as 23 percent and 54 per cent respectively. Information on diseases, and farming, cattle and fish breeding were also wanted by fishing communities, which carried a 13 percent response rate. The business community scored a lesser rate in looking for agricultural information. It was observed that business people needed information on fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides for the promotion of business activities. They also needed farming and cattle breeding information as they also keep cattle and especially in the case of traditional rural settings and prawn farms in fishing communities.
When analyzing the AI needs in relation to property ownership, it could be recognized that top four needed areas in agriculture information were very much needed by those who own agricultural lands. According to the Table 7 in Appendix, response rate from agriculture landowners were, 99 per cent when calculated upon MRR. Among agricultural landowners, higher score rate was seen for the same four areas responded to by other occupation categories.

The analysis shows that the demand for agriculture related information behaves upon the nature of independent variables (age, occupation and economic activities, geography of the location etc.) taken into consideration.

4.2.1.6 Financial Information (FI)

In the present survey financial information (FI) is another important category that had received a high score of 86 per cent. There have been hardly any in-depth studies regarding rural demand for financial information and its level of fulfillment. See Table 4.15 for the multiple responses received for sub financial need categories. Through the study it was noticed that almost all the people were in need of financial information regardless of gender.

Nevertheless few were seen to be reluctant or lethargic about looking for finance related information due to many social and economic reasons, personal reasons like less confidence, social distance with information providers, inability to pay or lack of awareness about payback methods etc. In addition, it can be mentioned that higher demand went for information on Savings (26%) and on Samurdhi loans (21%). Information on other loan categories also had a low level of demand.
Table 4.16 below indicates gender responses for FI need categories. Out of total responded, 60 per cent were male and 40 per cent were female and all the community types placed a high value for FI (see Table 4.3 for responses by community type). As given in the table below the response is higher (31%) in the areas of savings and investment by women.

Obtaining short term and small loans were also an essential need of the rural community and according to the respondents’ views communicated through the focus group discussions, large and long term loans are not affordable to them due to unstable and low income. It was revealed at the discussions, that they are in need for information on financing for many of their minor plans like repairs to buildings, financing small businesses etc. but were reluctant to obtain loans as they have no means to pay back.
Table 4.16: Financial Categories by Gender (Multiple responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Categories</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture Loans</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Loans</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Loans</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurdhi loans</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indebtedness Redemption</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MRR received</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received

It was seen that the solutions for this kind of issues available at the banking services, were not communicated to them clearly and the people also were not clear about with whom these issues need to be discussed. Thus a serious information gap in FI was identified.

As seen in the survey, efforts taken by the government to serve poor agricultural communities had mixed results and had not favourably supplied necessary FI for the intended community in a service oriented manner. Foreign funded NGOs tried to address the problem but were seen to operate in an ad-hoc manner in these areas. It was observed in this survey that, in the case of dissemination of necessary FI productively, these institutions were not strong in making a break through into the problem of financial information poverty.
It was also observed that the demand for information on affordable loans schemes was in high demand, see Table 4.17. The percentage of respondents who engage in agriculture and financial information needed was 56 per cent out of total number who responded (258) for finance information.

Out of the multiple responses received for individual need categories, agricultural workers recorded a high need for Agricultural loans (22%) and Samurdhi (25%) indicating their dependency on agriculture and government initiated poverty alleviation programme. People engaged in informal work recorded a little lower (21%) need rate for information on financial matters, while the fisheries responded as 11 per cent.

Out of those who indicated a need for industrial loan category, Informal workers (25%), Fishery community (11%) and Agriculture workers (47%) showed a higher interest.  

**Table 4.17: Financial need categories by Economic Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Category</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture Loans</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Loans</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Loans</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurdhi loans</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indebtedness</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2=Agriculture related  3=Micro activity  4=MSMI  5=Fisheries
It was also observed that young farmers look for agriculture and SMI loans for starting agriculture related industries, or improving agricultural activities; e.g. Prawn farming (Arachchikattuwa), Cinnamon processing (Nagoda), coir based products, post harvest methods for medicinal plants / herbs (Galgamuwa, NaUla, Lunugamvehera, Monaragala), excess vegetable processing, canning (Welimada, Lunugamvehera) etc.

Financial assistance for chicken farms, cottage industries like making incense sticks, ornamental wooden items, and ornamental plant supply for large scale export companies were also noted among micro and small industries (Nittumbuwa, Arachchikattuwa, Welimada). Small business category and fisheries category also needed industrial loans for their micro and small projects.

Investment information did not record a very high response by the work categories though the fishery and agricultural workers recorded rates of 8.5 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. It was gathered that most rural people were not much aware about or not clear about the financial investment in on financial market instruments (e.g. treasury bills, stock market etc.) popular among businessmen and other work groups in the urban setting. The financial institutions established in these areas were also not prepared or equipped to serve the customers on alternative investment methods other than the traditional investment relating to their deposits.

Information on savings systems were highly opted for by the fishing community and agricultural workers. The category also shows some bias in demand from women than men. This perhaps indicates the strong position of women in rural setting, with regard to managing finances in the households and thinking about future by saving for children.
Level of significance was tested to find out the behaviour of FI categories in relation to the economic activities engaged in by the respondents. Test of significance placed a higher value ($p=0.000$) over the economic activities engaged by respondents.

Engagement in permanent employment was seen to be very low in the rural sector. Out of the total sample, only 94 respondents opted for the category, had permanent employment and most of who were estate people employed in privately owned estates.

Table 4.18 : Financial Information Needs by Employment Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Category</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture Loans</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Loans</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Loans</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurdhi loans</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indebtedness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% out of MRR</strong></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=Government        3=Private sector  5=Abroad
2=Semi Gov.         4=Self Employment  6=Pensioner

According to Table 4.18 people engaged in the private sector (including estate employment) and self employed people engaged in micro (cottage) small and medium scale industries sections, recorded higher response rates for FI. Private sector employees recorded 50 per cent and Self-employee category recorded 35 per cent out of the total responses received.
Government employers recorded only 6 per cent as there are only a few people employed in the government sector.

It is important to note that information needed regarding Samurdhi had emanated from those who were employed in private sector too. During the survey it was especially noted that many private sector employed persons who looked for Samurdhi information were from the estate-working category. According to them they are not properly informed regarding the rightful entitlement of the Samurdhi schemes that are particularly made available to very low-income groups and for registered citizens. They were not aware that Samurdhi entitlement is for citizens below an income level of Rs.2000.00 and that the small groups hold a participatory responsibility when obtaining Samurdhi loans.

Most of the tea estate workers are still not treated as registered citizens and the plans are underway to register them and issue identity cards. Similarly, the focus group discussions conducted showed that people are not certain about some of the information that reached them. For example people are not certain about the duration to claim back the balance of the Samurdhi savings account after obtaining the loan against it. They were also not sure about why some proportionate amount is deducted from the loan apart from the installments paid monthly. However this sub need category has a vibrant demand from the rural communities.

4.2.1.7 **Infrastructure and related information (INI)**

It was observed that infrastructure facilities in the rural sector studied (rural, estate and settlement areas) was in a marginally undeveloped stage, though national statistics show some level of development. It is true that electricity, telephone, roads, water are available up to the main road leading to the GND
division in case of many clusters selected. The problem seen was that the motorable road stops at some point from where people had to walk or arrange their own transport from about 7 to 20 kilometers to their hamlets. More the distance the village was away from main motorable road, more the difficulties faced by the rural people regarding infrastructure especially obtaining potable water, telephone, household power etc. Nevertheless it was observed that electricity supply is available to many villages, even though, it had not reached every household. The situation had led the village citizen to look for relevant information in order to obtain or improve necessary infrastructure facilities.

According to Table 4.3 in section 4.2.1, options received for infrastructure related (INI) needs was 80 per cent that indicated out of the total number of respondents. According to the disaggregation of gender responses recorded, (Table 4.4) males requested more infrastructure related information than females (47% male and 33% female). Fig 4.9 indicates that responses received for each need category. The responses represent higher demand on electricity and water supply accommodating 41 percent and 24 percent, and indicate the importance placed by people in those categories than in other categories.

Fig. 4.9: Infrastructure Need Categories
People in these areas face considerable inconvenience due to very poor road structure and telecommunication facilities are also minimal. This situation indicates the need for information on the same. Therefore the responses received for road facilities and telephone facilities were the next highest among the responses received.

Tabulation by community type in Table 4.19 shows distribution of 239 respondents among four community types studied. (Table 4.3 in Section 4.2.1 gives full tabulation of information needs by community types). Out of the responses received, traditional rural communities scored higher response rate (56%) while estate sector recorded 19 per cent and, fishing and settlement scored the same rate of response (13%) for infrastructure information needs.

According to the responses indicated, people need more information on obtaining electricity, which recorded 88 percent out of total responses received from all community types. Similarly information on water, roads and telephone connectivity were recorded as second, third and fourth choices.

Many of the respondents either did not know whom to talk to about obtaining electricity or did not bother to find out information due to the hassle they had to undergo in looking for information. Estate sector communities are normally provided with electricity, water supply and roads up to a certain extent by the estate authorities, but not meeting standard requirements of people.
It was seen that they have no option but to accept what the estate authorities had provided them. The total response rate was 19 per cent for all categories and they were also interested in obtaining information on obtaining electricity individually.

Rural communities in settlements and fishery villages were much interested in obtaining both electricity and potable water. These two basic necessities were not provided amply in these areas. As in the rural sector these two communities faced the same problem of obtaining electricity, but water was the most important need which was not provided sufficiently and some had to pay Rs.15.00 for one can of water (3-5 gallon can in Muthupanthiya and Nagul eliya in Arachchikatuwa division). The situation made them look for alternative ways to obtain drinking water but it was seen that they have no idea as to how to reach the relevant authority by obtaining necessary information.
In the need categories mentioned above, there was a demand for information on alternative power. This demand is due to the information and awareness received through mass media and knowledge obtained by youth from the vocational training and information received from Youth Councils active in some clusters and from NGOs (Sarvodaya, Seva Lanka Padanama, World Vision etc.). They have shown interests in obtaining information on alternative power systems; e.g. biogas projects, solar power projects etc. Some projects were initiated by NGOs as prototype projects utilising foreign funds received through DSs and state sector banks (e.g Seva Lanka Padanama).

An attempt was made to find out from the study whether there was any connection between property ownership and the need for ISI. According to the study agricultural landowners showed higher interest in this information category than other property owners. Response rate was 99.5 percent from agriculture landowners, as they had affordability and stability in obtaining required amenities for their family (Table 8 in Appendix).

Attempts were also made to find out whether there was any relationship between age group of the respondent and the INI needs. As the cross tabulations depict (Table 9 in Appendix), people were in need of the same priorities mentioned in the above cross tabulations of gender, education and community type and property ownership regardless of age. But it was seen that the age group 31-40 demanded this category of information mostly due to the engagement of work that need information to get a proper infrastructure established.
4.2.1.8 Political and related information (PI)

Citizenship information normally contains political information (PI). In developing countries the interest shown by ordinary citizens regarding political issues was seen as very low, but the case in Sri Lanka is different. According to the political reviewers the voting rate of Sri Lankan ordinary citizens are higher than in many other developing countries, which shows their interest in participating in the ruling activities of the country.

According to the present study the need for political information is only second to the demand for government information. The response rate was 98.7 percent (296 responded out of 300).

**Fig.4.10 : Responses for Political Need Categories**

Except for the category, registration as a voter, other three need categories had shown a higher enthusiasm among people, by responding 33 percent for all three out of the total who responded (see Fig.4.10). The responses received for political information by community type is shown in Table 4.20.
Table 4.20: Political Information by Community Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub categories</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Estate</th>
<th>Fishing</th>
<th>Sett lmnt</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration as a votee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominations/Nominees</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political News-Cen. &amp;</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prov.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td>523</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR= Multiple responses received

Total responses received for this need category were seen to be less complex when compared with the multiple responses received for other categories. Only four persons from traditional rural category did not opt for political information needs and it was noted that these four cases belonged to 60-70 age group.

Except in a few cases most of the citizens know how to get their voting rights, so that, the category 1 indicated only 16 responses, see Table 4.20. Almost all wanted information regarding political parties, about nominees, political news of central government as well as provincial government.

Responses for political information from the age groups of 26-60 showed higher distribution among three need categories, i.e. political parties, about nominations and political news. ‘registration as a votee’ counted a low response as most of the citizens obtain registration as a citizen after 18 years through updating of entries done by the GS for Voting Register.

Nevertheless there was a problem seen among estate communities regarding obtaining citizenship on registration. People in the estate communities looked for information regarding the 1st sub category of political information and a
higher concentration was seen in the age group 26-50 (See Table 10 in Appendix).

5.2.1.9 Local Government Information (LGI)

Local government authorities operating in rural areas are named as Pradesheeya Sabha under the Provincial Council Act. The Pradesheeya Sabha is a replacement for former Village Councils. It was observed that information needs relating to local authority is very similar to the government information needs, as local authorities deal with the same kind of administrative matters within the locality. Table 4.21 indicates the information need categories and responses received for table.

According to the rate of responses indicated in Table 4.21, information regarding property and business taxes levied by the local authority was of high importance among the rural citizens (78% = 223 out of total number (285) and recorded 21 per cent out of the total multiple responses received.

Table 4.21: Local Government Information Need Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Government Need Category</th>
<th>Responses Received</th>
<th>Rate Response %</th>
<th>% out of Total no responded n=285</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle Reg./License</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree felling License</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L &amp; B License /Certificates</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company / business</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes – Income &amp; Property</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown / Prime Lands</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads, Electricity, Water Supply etc.</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry and Environment</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MRR</td>
<td>1056</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR= Total Multiple responses received
The second important was the ‘roads, water, electricity, telephone etc.’ category. The total rate of response (95%) recorded for this category proves the importance attached to the needs by the people (Table 4.3).

Local tax information category recorded 73 per cent and shows the attention paid by the villagers, as paying taxes are compulsory for a citizen. Eventhough the taxes to be paid by citizens is not very high in rural areas, they are to plan for keeping funds aside for the purpose and mostly the small businessmen needed to know on what basis and on which regulation they are going to be taxed.

There are two other information needs that count higher priority in any local authority, as people needs to obtain certificates (20%) that give approval to build houses and to obtain necessary amenities like water, electricity etc. This category of demand also emerged from rural business people in obtaining approval to use business premises within the locality. People who do selling in Sunday fairs, weekly fair etc. in villages, are also being taxed on site by the local authorities. Hence there are reasons for the enthusiasm they had shown to obtain information about the taxes and regulations.

Information on tree felling license recorded 18 per cent out of total Multiple Responses Received and 71 percent out of the total response. Tree felling was seen as one of the income generators though the very act is not a productive practice in rural areas except among fishery and estate communities. Ordinary people were seen extra cautious to obtain information to follow correct regulations in felling trees as the rules of environment protection are strict. Vehicle registration and obtaining licenses (9%) also emerged as important among the youth and businessmen in villages.
It was seen that the total pattern for information seeking on local government matters were of little different from government information as local information show a higher concentration on four sub information categories discussed above.

4.2.2 Other Information Need Categories

In addition to the information needs sought after commonly by communities, there were other needs that were indicated in Table 4.3 in section 4.2.1 above. These categories stayed below the 50 per cent markline, which was used to demarcate the ‘common needs’ and ‘other needs’. Despite the lower average scores received for this second class needs, those had obtained higher scores within a specific community or locality. Therefore it does not mean that needs scored below 50 per cent are not important, nevertheless maintain ‘location specificity’ and ‘community specificity’. The information need categories identified under this class are analysed below.

4.2.2.1 Labour Issues and Employment Information (LEI)

Information needs relating to labour issues(LEI) was not a very popular information category among rural citizens as most of the rural people are not engaged in permanent employment. For this category a 22 per cent response rate was received from all community types according to the Table 5.21 below. People in settlement areas and estate workers needed more information on LEI than other sectors. It was gathered during the survey that there are many youths working in newly established garment factories and many employment related issues at hand. Estate workers too face different labour issues due to the working and payment systems established in the estate sector.
Table-4.22 : Need for Labour Issues and Employment Information by Community type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Type</th>
<th>Needed</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Not Needed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.4.11 indicates sub need categories and responses received for each category. Out of the total responses received for all five need categories, issues relating to Employee Provident Fund and Employee Trust Fund and other Job opportunities, received higher responses respectively 21 per cent and 22 per cent.

Information on labour rules received 15 percent of responses. Most of the respondents for labour rules category were from the estate sector and demand for information of EPF and ETF were also mostly from the same community.

Fig. 4.11 : Multiple Responses Received for Labour Needs
It was seen that information on ‘other job opportunities’ available was the highest among the sub categories (25%), which consists of more demand from the young and middle age groups.

The situation can be proved through age group cross tabulation at Table 11 in Appendix. According to the tabulation, respondents in age groups 31-40 and 41-50 needed more labour issues related information than other age groups. Career mobility and self-employment were mostly sought after by people beyond 30 years. It was also seen that there is no significant difference by gender in demanding LI information. See Table 4.3 for gender responses.

Another important fact that was revealed through the study was the positive relationship between the education level and labour information needs of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour/Emp. Need Categories</th>
<th>Attended School</th>
<th>Never Attended School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour Rules</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Mobility</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job related</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPF/ETF</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Opportunities</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total responses</strong></td>
<td><strong>125</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>126</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.23 illustrates that 99 per cent responses were from the respondents were had some level of education from a school.
Out of 67 respondents who opted for the need for labour information, 43 had engaged in some sort of employment. According to the Fig. 4.12, 86 percent of the responses received for all categories were from private sector employees, than other sectors like government, self employment. The total number of private sector employees indicated a high demand for EPF/ETF related information due to problems they face while working for private sector. The need for diverting from the job they were doing and looking new work places with higher wages scored higher within people, who had some level of education.

Overall picture of the labour issues and employment information needs depicts an undeveloped knowledge level regarding using information on the related field. The behaviour of information requirement shows a bias in the level of education.

**Fig.4.12: Labour and Employment Issues by Employment**

According to Fig.4.12, private sector employers have depicted more interest in obtaining this category of information than other sectors among the respondents who opted for LI. Self employed people also had shown some enthusiasm regarding
employment issues, especially in the case of self employment opportunities.

**4.2.2.2 Industrial and Related Information (INDI)**

Prior to independence, economic development placed a higher emphasis on agriculture and exports that were restricted to primary products. Industrial development was not a matter of much concern. Establishment of free trade zones and penetration of the new culture to the rural life by setting opportunities for cheap labour for these FTZ factories, made some of the rural people to think differently about income earning and different economic activities.

According to the study there were 24 per cent out of total respondents who needed industrial information (INDI), (see Table 4.3). Distribution of industrial information needs across the sample is given in Table 4.24 below. It was seen that traditional rural communities indicated a higher response out of the total number of respondents for industrial information. Nevertheless percentage of the number of respondents in the sample from the rural sector is only 23 per cent. When compared with the demand from fisheries sector, i.e. 58 per cent out of total number of respondents in the sample was higher than rural, estate and settlement sectors. This shows the need for diverting from the conventional income earning style in the fisheries sector.

**Table 4.24 : Industrial needs distribution by community type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Category</th>
<th>Needed</th>
<th>Rate of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MRR</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of the total number of 180 responses only 22 were received for single categories. Rest of the responses, 160 was for combined needs. These responses were presented in Table 4.25, and according to the values, the first three categories of information needs scored higher responses, that were for starting a business, micro, small and medium industries and for production processes.

Table 4.25 : Responses received for Industrial need categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Responses</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting a Business</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro/Small/Medium Industries</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Processes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble Shooting</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Buildings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Keeping Methods</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw Materials</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Machinery</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Multiple Responses</strong></td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 12, in Appendix respondents in 26-50 age group shows higher demands for industrial information as in other needs. The situation shows the enthusiasm that prevails within this age group to find alternative sources for income generation due to the need to support their own families and other commitments. It was seen that starting a business, information on micro, small and medium scale
businesses, and production processes received higher responses than other categories.

When exploring the situation with regard to the engagement in economic activities, (Table 13 of Appendix) agricultural activity category needed a higher rate of industrial related information than other activity categories. Responses received from the said category were 41 per cent. Agro related workers, informal activity category and fisheries category had shown interest in obtaining industrial information in Starting business, Micro Small Medium industrial activities.

Production processes and Raw materials also secured responses by 16.9 per cent and 8.5 percent respectively, from all the economic activity categories except from Small business/boutique owner group. However it was observed through the survey and according to the focus group discussions most people were willing to obtain information relating to extra income channels whatever the economic activity they engaged. Statistical significance of the dependence level of industrial information needs upon economic activities was measured as higher according to the chi-square test performed ($p=.000$).

Situation was different among employed people who had responded in the sample. Total response from the employed respondents for the IDI was relatively low when compared with the people engaged in other economic activities. Reason for the situation may be that they were having permanent employment despite the employment status as most people were employed in minor working categories in both government and private sector. It was indicated that private sector employed people and self-employed or micro and SMI sector employed people demanded a higher level of information on industrial aspects than other sub categories.
Sixty one per cent of the private employees and 25 per cent of the self employed people responded to this need category. The analysis shows that the people face some issues with the private sector employment and shows an enthusiasm obtain information to remedy the situation (Table 14 in Appendix).

4.2.2.3 Market Information (MI)

It was noted through the survey that rural citizens are well aware of the importance of information and facts relating to the prevailing market situation. There was a 37 per cent response for market information (MI) out of the total number of respondents. Upon the responses calculated by community type, in Table 4.26, a higher rate of response was received from settlement areas and from fishing communities. People from villages in traditional rural areas reported a 39 per cent need rate which was comparatively low compared with other community types. Reasons for this low response could be attributed to, unawareness of the availability of information, traditional thinking and helplessness embedded in these communities or just because of abject poverty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community type</th>
<th>Need for Market Information</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MRR</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR= Multiple Responses Received
The survey revealed that the demand for market information categories and priorities had been influenced by gender and economic activities than other socio-economic characteristics. Multiple responses received for market information categories derived through the survey were categorized and tabulated in Table 22 in Appendix VI. An extract of the data compiled is given below in Fig. 4.13.

According to the behaviour of responses, product related market information scored a higher response rate of 22 per cent. This category consists of information relating to the products with a high demand at present in the market, product quality, product quantity etc.

![Fig. 4.13: Multiple Responses Received for Market](image)

It was seen that rural people still do not have a better understanding of market-oriented cultivation. Even though there is an agricultural produce research officer assigned to every GND division, people complain that they still do not get information on proper market oriented crop planning.

Response for pricing information was 21 per cent out of the total responses received. It is a common knowledge that there
is a surplus harvest in most of the crops cultivated in rural areas during some harvesting seasons. Harvest of the crops like perishable vegetables records higher wastages in the markets especially due to over production, which sometimes creates zero demand in the markets. Lack of knowledge in post harvest technology and improper transport were responsible for this situation. Responses for information for post harvest technology and transport timing scored 11 per cent and 12 per cent respectively.

According to the focus group discussions conducted with the farmers, it was a painful experience for them to take the produce back to the village, which was transported painstakingly to the market. Some said they were compelled to abandon the produce, due to the inability to afford or absence of transport to take the bulk back. They said it is a disgusting experience as they had spent a lot of time, labour, money and dedication to obtain the produce. Nevertheless it was found that there were some people who knew that information on pricing and transport would be very useful in minimizing the deterioration of crop harvest, and used it to obtain profit. Yet fair access to this information to all farmers was seen to be minimal.

Information on exports and imports, methods of profit maximization through market strategies and other minor MI had recorded a low response, and hence showed a low demand. Most of the village people were found to be apprehensive of even thinking about exports and imports.

Very few rural elite or educated people wanted to know about export opportunities or import possibilities of different products. These product categories consist of medicinal plants, horticultural products, dehydrated and canned vegetables, cottage products like incense sticks, handwork etc.
Responses tabulated by gender, records a higher rate from males than females. The rates recorded as 63 per cent and 37 per cent respectively.

Market information had also recorded a variation by economic activities engaged by respondents according to the data in Table 4.27. Response for market information was higher with people who engaged in agriculture based activities; the response rate was 63 percent.

Table 4.27 : Responses for Market Categories by Economic Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Categories</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% out of MRR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product related</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing harvest/sales</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import/Export</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Harvest</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit maximization</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco. Act. Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco. Act. %</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=Informal  2=Agriculture  3=Farm/Cattle breeding
4=Micro Activity  5=SMI/Seller  6=Fisheries

Next important activity category that responded for market information was informal workers. They recorded 23 percent response and other activity categories did not record any significant response towards market information. Dependence level of market information had strong
relationship with economic activities engaged by respondents according to the level of significance test \((p=.000)\) performed.

### 4.2.2.4 Legal Information (LI)

As the study reveals, requests for legal topics were comparatively low when compared with other categories. Table 4.28 shows the situation that it was only 45 out of 300 respondents (15%) who opted for legal information.

**Table-4.28 : Legal Information by Community Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Needed</th>
<th>% out of MRR</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MRR</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>(45/300=15%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received

It was seen that demand for the interest in legal information was higher in settlement, fishing and estate sector. The study revealed that the majority of the legal issues in the settlement and fishing communities were related to illegal settlements in crown lands. Estate workers also had unsettled issues relating to the houses and property they wanted to occupy from the estate owners and relating to many other infrastructure issues.

It was seen that legal categories received more single responses than multiple responses. Out of 58 respondents 32 had opted for individual information categories and 26 persons had given multiple responses. The situation indicates that LI need categories within the rural setup is less comprehensive compared with demand for other need
categories. According to the gender wise response for legal topics, males demanded more legal information than females (see Table 4.29). The table indicates the total multiple responses derived for legal topics from the response tables in Appendix. It illustrates that the majority of the legal issues were related to property ownership. Responses received on the same were higher from males over female responses.

Table 4.29: Multiple responses Legal Information Need Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal Need Categories</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property Related</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family issues</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Related</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received

As the data indicates women mostly rather than men sought legal aid for marital issues and Family based problems. It was gathered that family issues were seen common in all areas and marital issues were higher in the estate and fishing colonies. Table 15 of Appendix indicates LI category needs by Civil Status of the respondents. It shows that almost all responses were received from married persons.

Legal information requirements had shown a higher bias in the level of education of the respondents. It was seen that 73 per cent of respondents who demanded legal information had received formal education, regardless of the grades they passed in school. Majority of the respondents those who
attended school needed information and clarification, relating to the property ownership than people who never attended school, while respondents without education had needed legal advices and information relating to family and marital issues (Table 16 Appendix).

It was observed through the study that information needs on legal requirements depicts some specialty in its nature. It was conceived by ordinary citizens that intellectuals could only deal with this kind of information. This perception kept them distant from attempting to obtain legal information or advice for the issues they face. Even though the modern rural citizenship has some kind of understanding regarding the importance of the same, the opportunities for them to access legal information is seen as low.

4.2.2.5 Weather and Natural Disaster Related Information (WI)

People in Sri Lanka have a long practice of sensing climatic variations through their traditional and indigenous knowledge and by experience. This fact is exceptionally true in the case of rural and traditional people. The rural farmer and the fisherman can predict the climatic variations by sensing the heaviness in the wind or by looking at the sky. Sri Lanka is situated in an area lesser prone to earthquakes and people had no fatal experience relating to disasters caused due to earthquakes though there were instances recorded of earth slips mud slides etc. Therefore natural disaster related information was not seriously taken into consideration by ordinary people, until the recent disaster that occurred in coastal areas caused by tsunami waves.

It was seen through the study that ordinary people in Sri Lanka do not depend very much upon the formal sources in
obtaining climatic information, except fishing communities scattered around the island in coastal areas. A 22 per cent response rate was received for this category of information needs (Table 4.3). This fact is visible in the community representation of weather information needs given below in Table 4.30.

It can be seen in the responses received that weather information was sought by 46 per cent in fishing communities. There was a 100 per cent response from the fishing community. Even though fishing communities have their own traditional ways of detecting the prevailing weather they are now becoming more and more dependent upon weather forecasts from formal sources like radio and TV, due to the risky life style they lead.

Table-4.30 : Responses received for Weather & Natural Disaster by community type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community category</th>
<th>Needed</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| No. of Respondents | 65 (22%) | 100 | 300 |

Rural farmers also needed weather related information; a 19 per cent response was recorded against the number of respondents in the rural community category, for their cultivation related matters.

It was seen from the weather related information needs cross-tabulated with the Divisional Secretaries Division in Table 17 in Appendix, that the majority of the responses were received
from Naguleliya-Muthupanthiya village from Arachchikattuwa division. Summary of the aggregate responses received for sub categories are given below in Table-4.31 It records higher responses for daily weather, coastal weather and wind direction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weather need categories</th>
<th>Responses received</th>
<th>% out of MRR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Weather</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainfall Patterns</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind Directions</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Weather</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal Weather</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drought/Flood</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MRR</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received

It was observed that majority of the rural sector was not highly dependent on the weather and disaster related information sources at the time of data collection. At present the situation is changing rapidly due to tidal wave destruction occurred in the coastal areas of south and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, and series of tremors that occurred in several inland locations. People now have developed a very keen interest to obtain weather and natural disaster related information from formal sources.

4.2.2.6 Recreational and miscellaneous information (RMI)

Recreational and miscellaneous category consists of information needs on sports, games, entertainment, camping, mountaineering etc., and other social activities like
performing and other types of arts, music etc. The category also includes activities of a religious nature and a social service nature (donations, alms giving, relief activities, disaster assistance, pilgrimages, religious activities etc.). It was observed that this category of needs mostly had emanated from youth in the surveyed area.

The response rate for the recreational information was 12 per cent, which shows that there is a low demand from total rural community for the category. According to the community type tabulation (see Table 4.3) traditional rural community recorded 54.3 per cent, estate 17 per cent, fishing 20 per cent and settlement 9 per cent response rates which was calculated upon total multiple responses received (MRR) for this category. Fig.4.14 indicated the rate of response received for the sub need categories.

According to the responses received, demand for Sports category and Societies/Social activity category had received higher responses among the sub categories.

**Fig. 4.14 : Responses received for Recreational Information**
It was noted that demand for ‘Sports, Games and Other Entertainment category secured a higher number of respondents. This is because, unlike in other developed countries, recreational activities of ordinary communities are very much limited to sports, games, and sight seeing trips within the country. Demand for information on amateur reading, photography, painting, performing arts, social work, religious activities etc. are seen low among rural people.

It was also seen that recreational information mostly emerged within youth categories than in adult categories. Table 4.32 indicates that the age group 26-30 recorded higher responses for the total number of categories out of total multiple responses received.

Table-5.31 : Recreational Information Categories by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Categories</th>
<th>Age Group of the Respondent</th>
<th>Tota</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>26-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational reading</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports/Games/Camping etc.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing and Other Arts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societies/Asso./Social activities etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion related</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% out of MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                                            | 31-40                       | 41-50|
| Recreational reading                        | 1                           | 2    |
| Sports/Games/Camping etc.                   | 4                           | 5    |
| Performing and Other Arts                   | 2                           | 2    |
| Societies/Asso./Social activities etc.      | 1                           | 1    |
| Religion related                            | 1                           | 1    |
| **Total MRR**                               | **8**                       | **14**|
| **% out of MRR**                            | **8**                       | **14**|

|                                            | 51-60                       | 1    |
| Recreational reading                        | 2                           | 0    |
| Sports/Games/Camping etc.                   | 2                           | 2    |
| Performing and Other Arts                   | 1                           | 1    |
| Societies/Asso./Social activities etc.      | 1                           | 4    |
| Religion related                            | 1                           | 4    |
| **Total MRR**                               | **6**                       | **79**|
| **% out of MRR**                            | **8**                       | **100**|
Even though there are public libraries attached to each local government authority, reading for entertainment was seen to be low among these communities. A main reason observed for the situation is the unavailability of public libraries or community information centres within easy reach of rural communities.

They had to walk about 18 KM on average to the nearest Pradesheeya Sabha (local authority) library. Even though some libraries were situated within the vicinity of the rural communities, it was observed that reading materials available in these libraries were at a bare minimum in number. Available materials were confined to common readers like newspapers, tabloid papers, free or cheap magazines, to the books used as text books for school going readers, or to few other materials that were highly outdated in content.

Apart from that it was seen through the survey that, even younger generation in the rural communities in Sri Lanka was not trained for a ‘Reading Culture’ during their school days. Adults in general also did not seem accustomed to reading for entertainment, even though the country records a higher literacy rate. But there were very few cases recorded within rural communities on the contrary. Many other socio-economic reasons like lack of time, transport problems, household matters, and marital affairs were seen as factors that had an effect on this adverse situation.

It was also seen that looking for recreational information was high among males than females especially in the category of Sports. Both males and females needed information on activities of societies/associations etc. (Table 18, in Appendix). It was gathered that main reasons for less demand from females were, family responsibility they bear and time sacrificed for free labour for household chores, culture and
values in rural settings, child bearing, cooking and doing extra work for the family etc. These responsibilities caused less freedom for females to engage in amateur and recreational activities on par with males.

5.3 Level of Fulfillment of the Information Needs

While collecting data on information needs, the study attempted to collect information on level of fulfillment of the community information needs. It was found that the fulfillment levels of information need categories were different from each other. The fulfillment levels were evaluated by giving weights to the satisfaction levels indicated by the respondents as given below. The weights were assigned only to main information need categories as it was found that, weights assigned for subcategories varied considerably within a main category. Weights assigned for fulfillment level were;

- Highly Fulfilled (HF) = 5
- Fairly Fulfilled (FF) = 4
- Neither Fulfilled nor Not Fulfilled (NF/NNF) = 3
- Poorly Fulfilled (PF) = 2
- Not Fulfilled (NoF) = 1

The responses given for the fulfillment level of information needs were rated upon the number responded for each category. The responses were weighted to obtain Weighted Averages for all 15 need categories. Accordingly weighted percentage was also calculated for easy comparison of fulfillment levels and grading of the Level of Satisfaction achieved. The scale mentioned below is used to grade the level of satisfaction and the level of frustration. (See Fig. 4.15).
Fig.4.15 : Measurement Frame for Satisfaciton/Frustration Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weighted Percentage of Responses</th>
<th>Scale of Satisfaction</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above 90% = Very High</td>
<td>Highly Satisfied</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90% - 75% = High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74% - 50% = Moderately High</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49% - 25% = Moderate/Fair</td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24% - 1% = Low</td>
<td>Less Satisfied/Frustrated</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 1% or 0% = Extremely Low</td>
<td>9Frustrated</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Table 4.32 in page 165, few categories attained ‘Highly Satisfied’ level, but it was seen that all these categories did not come under highly needed categories which were categorized under ‘information needs common to all’. The categories which received “Highly Satisfied” level were Government and Administrative Information, Health and Nutrition Information, Weather and Natural Disaster, Political Information Local Government, Finance and Investment and Infrastructure related information.

Some categories received “Satisfied” level (weighted averages 74% – 50% ) level was gained by 5 categories, namely; Agriculture related, Labour and Employment related, Educational information, Recreation and religious etc. and Legal matters. The “Moderately Satisfied”, category was reached by 3 need categories; Market information, Industrial information and Occupational training related information. According to the behaviour of options for satisfaction, it was seen that higher the number of responses for the HF category
received, higher the level of fulfillment of information needs goes up, depicting a positive relationship between the Rate of Response and the Level of Fulfillment. Fairly Fulfilled category has to be treated as a complementing level for the Highly fulfilled category, as this level is the next in value of the first category. Both these levels are determinants of ‘satisfaction’ level of information seeking.

Poorly Fulfilled and Not Fulfilled levels had been treated together, as these two levels are determinants of ‘Frustration’ level in the fulfillment scale. It was noted that these determinants behave differently than the determinants of satisfaction level. It was observed that, higher the number of responses received for 1st and 2nd scales, lower the fulfillment level attained by the information seeker for each need category and higher the frustration level that accumulate for an information need.

Out of the responses received for Not Fulfilled scale, training needs, industrial information and market information recorded as Less / Not Satisfied, recording responses of 88, 65, and 53 per cents respectively. The response rates indicate that information needs mentioned above were the mostly unsatisfied among all 15 need categories.

The category, ‘Neither Fulfilled nor Not Fulfilled’ scale, displays a special cognitive level, conceived in an ordinary person’s mind. Apart from the measurements discussed above, there was an ‘indifferent situation’ which respondents faced in determining whether the need is fulfilled or not. The situation indicates the ‘Uncertainty’ where the respondents faced in obtaining information. The measurement leads to another ground of analysis, where a person was not certain about the suitability or appropriateness of information he obtained to fill
an information gap or he is not sure whether the information obtained is comprehensive enough to fulfill the need at hand.

This is a situation that can be identified as ‘Information Illiteracy’ level of a respondent. As illustrated in Table 5.31, responses scaled for this category were comparatively low. This category falls into neither ‘dissatisfaction’ level nor ‘satisfaction’ level, but falls merely into ‘uncertain’ about their own information need. To be an ‘information literate’ a person needs to identify what he actually needs to know, where to look for the information, how to get it, in what format and how to use it (SCONUL 1999), (Seneviratne & Gunawardene, 2003).

None of these attributes were achieved by the information illiterate people who belong to the scale 3. Even though the responses were low, this category shows that there were people who had no clear idea about the extent of ‘information need’ and the competency level of the information solutions they received. This situation is more critical than the low level of satisfaction status, as people in this category do not achieve any productive outcome due to not knowing what they need while latter can be remedied by identifying actual information need.

The analysis attempted to examine whether there is any relationship between response rate for the information needs and the level of fulfillment. It was seen that there is no remarkable relationship between rate of response and the level of fulfillment, but it was observed that some of the highly needed information categories have a low level of fulfillment. The analysis reveals, where the improvement of information dissemination strategies are needed in relation to which information categories. It also reveals that some categories of people need information literacy education and basic awareness about the role of information in upgrading their living standard.
5.4 Summary

According to the analysis of data, it had identified information needs ‘common to all rural communities’ and ‘other information needs’ people need on specific need and depending on community specificity. According to the study the nature of community information identified is of two types: ‘Survival’ and ‘Strategic’. The analysis was performed using multiple responses received for information need categories. According to the analysis, eight information need categories were identified as needs common to all. These categories were extracted from the community responses received above 50 per cent, for each information need. Other information needs that scored below 50 per cent were analyzed separately to check whether these need categories are needed by special communities or whether there were any location specificity in these categories.

Apart from evaluating demand for information, level of fulfillment of the information needs were also analysed to obtain the level of satisfaction/ frustration. As illustrated in the analysis it was seen that fulfillment level was not the same with different information needs; instead fulfillment level varied from highly satisfied level to frustrated level. Through this analysis it was able to identify which information needs needed strategic measures to attain a high level of satisfaction and higher Information Literacy level. The analysis indicates the information need not always has reached the appropriate destination, but diverts to different frustrated levels. Reasons for this will be analysed under Chapter 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of the sample by Community Type</th>
<th>Gender of the Respondent</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Estate</th>
<th>Fishing</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religion of the Respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R.Catholic/Christ</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Race of the respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sinhala</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SinTamil</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SinLMoor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ownership of Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Property</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agricultural land</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industrial property</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other property</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment Status of the Respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training Status of Respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never Trained</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Need Category</td>
<td>Highly Fulfilled</td>
<td>Weighted %</td>
<td>Fairly Fulfilled</td>
<td>Weighted %</td>
<td>Neither FF Nor NFF</td>
<td>Weighted %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government / Administrative</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment &amp; Labour</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Training</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural related</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial related</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial &amp; Investment</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market related</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal matters</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Related</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather &amp; Natural Disas.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation, Religious etc.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF= Fulfilled</td>
<td>NFF= Not Fulfilled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 05

Information Provision in Rural Sri Lanka: Status and Barriers

5.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to present the situation relating to information providers operating in rural areas, by analysing the status of information provision and barriers that operate in rural areas. The study examined the characteristics of information providers who operate in the rural sector, both in formal and informal settings. Information providers considered in the study were stratified into three main categories and the discussion below has been carried out in terms of their position and information supply status.

The study also attempted to identify the channels consulted by people in reaching the information source and factors that affected the information access. The aspects studied in the analytical framework were on the right side of the diagramme.

5.1 Rate of Response

Since the survey was based on data collected through interviews, it was possible to ensure a satisfactory rate of response two categories of Information Providers; Institutional providers and Individual providers. The stratification was explained in Chapter 3 under methodology.
The response rate was found to differ across the sample. The response rates were 100 per cent from Government Offices, 67 per cent from Other Organizations and 88.8 per cent from Individuals, which resulted in an average response rate of 86.3 per cent. The average rate of response for sample 2 was 86.3 per cent, which was little less when compared to Sample 1, which had recorded 100 per cent response rate. This was due to the non-existence of some categories, (NGOs, persons) intended to interview in some of the clusters surveyed.

The category, ‘Government Offices’ recorded 100 per cent response, as those are available at every DS division of the country as an administrative requirement. ‘Other Organizations’ did not record a full response because the existence of NGOs in the clusters varied. In some clusters NGOs were not available or not qualified to be selected as subjects of the survey. The category recorded a 35 per cent response rate as some NGOs were not in operation according to the expected standard. Some NGOs had not recorded expected visibility or penetration to the communities surveyed in relation to their own scope of activities.

Sub-category, ‘Commercial Banks and Savings Institutions’ recorded 100 per cent response, as commercial bank networks and savings institution/bank networks had reached the nearest town of the rural vicinity surveyed. ‘Pradesheeya Sabhas’ are Local Government authorities available at each local government division to perform the administrative and political functions.

The third main category ‘Individuals’ reported an average response rate of 88.8 per cent, as some of the sub-categories from which it was intended to collected data did not existed or were not available in expected numbers, e.g. Agriculture
Produce Research Officer, Social Service Officer/Samurdhi Officer (a representative of poverty alleviation program of the government), Priest and Principal. In some cases, in the sub-category ‘Boutiques and Sellers’ only 01 number available even though it was intended to collect data from 02. Therefore the lower responses received in some categories had affected to the overall response rate.

Information provision in the rural areas was handled by different provider categories and the study tried to represent those categories in the sample strata. When handling information by the providers, a certain degree of overlapping of provision was noted in some information categories. This is especially true between government information providers and other organizations and this feature will be discussed in this chapter.

The traditional information provision system operated through a verbal information transfer system. Information provision in the modern context, is about access to information and knowledge that make people, organizations and society more productive, knowledgeable and more creative by using the same. Information provision contains knowledge or information base (Riemenschneider and Bonnen, 1979), delivery channels of information and means of information delivery (IHAC,1997). According to the literature (Correa et.al.1994: Esmen & Uphoff, 1982: Khan, 2000 ) modern information provision hopes to use;

a) Information providers (established organizational frames or individuals )

b) Relevant information processed and stored, and
c) Suitable delivery methods

Analysis in this chapter attempted to adhere to this analytical frame to organize and control the analysis.
5.2 Information Providers and Categories Handled

An attempt is made to present information categories handled by different providers in this section. However this section will not details of information sub categories, which were analysed in detail in Chapter 5 under information needs. Nevertheless the subcategories, which were not covered in information need profiles, will be discussed in detail here.

5.2.1 Government Offices

Government Information flow that takes place in rural areas consists of Government information and Public information. Government agencies restrict themselves to state, divisional and local government generated information and try to maintain credibility of provision. Government agencies also provide commercial information officially, but limited to the circumstances where commercial collaboration is established officially with a third party, or when another organization has established a reputation in public regarding its scope of activities.

The data showed that information provision by the government sector was expedited at two levels; 1) Institutional level and 2.) Community level. Information provision at Institutional level is discussed under Government and Other Institutions section and Community level provision is discussed under Individuals.

According to the civil administrative system established in Sri Lanka, every area in the country belongs to a Divisional Secretary’s Division (DS division) and the DS is the agent appointed by the government and leads the administrative hierarchy in a division. Other government services like agriculture, health, environment, industry, labour related
services etc. are also in operation at the divisional level and their functions are performed in collaboration with the Divisional Secretary’s Office. Nevertheless, these functions though essential, report separately to the line ministries to which they belong.

There are other government offices that operate independently from the civil administration system in the division such as the police department, education, youth services etc. Apart from that, very few organizations play an important role in providing information to citizens. Out of the examples given the Postal Department and the National Youth Services Council (NYSC) are prominently seen handling information related to the services they provide yet the latter does not reach every corner of the community as the postal services do. Therefore the post office closest to the community surveyed was included in the sample.

5.2.1.1 Divisional Secretary’s Office

The DS office covers the total civil service structure in an area assigned to a DS division. To enable service provision, DS office employs a series of functional officers reporting to Divisional Secretary. Grama Niladhari, Colonization officer, Statistics officer, Social Service officer, Samurdhi Officer, Youth Service officer, Sports officer, Cultural officer, Development officer, Rural Development officers, Tea Instructor are some of the officers in the cadre. These officers operate at the office level as well as at the community (village) level. Out of them Grama Sevaka/Niladhari (GN) is the most important, who has direct access to each individual in the village. Villagers in turn conveniently approach the GS for every sort of problems, mostly to obtain reliable information regarding numerous government information and services. Out of all the information provided by the GS, government
information is the most important as he is the rightful representative of the government at village level.

The other officers also handle dissemination of information to citizens related to the duties they are responsible for. There is some level of overlapping observed, when handling information by them, as most of the officers attached to DS office were conversant about most of the procedures and information relating to the work of other officers very well, due to the nature of collaboration among them. But this overlapping of information provision does not occur in providing services, so that information handled by other officers are mostly in a ‘referral’ (directional) capacity. Some officers are appointed to handle specific economic activities in the area, such as Tea Instructors, Coconut and Rubber Instructors and they also handled information relating to the same activity.

Sometimes people did not know about the categories of government information provided from the DS office, instead they obtained the same information from other sources even though the DS office is the rightful service provider in government services. Some information categories provided through the DS office were not demanded by the rural people, i.e. Irrigation related information, Public health topics, Wild animal problems (wild elephants, wild boar, monkeys etc.), Government notifications, Statistical information and Religion related information. The situation was caused either by not knowing the availability / provision, due to a lack of awareness programmes, or the habit of consulting only one or two channels, which have been convenient or trustworthy to them. This habit made these information blocks to become ‘dead blocks’ (not being utilized).
Fig. 5.1 indicates the main information categories handled by DS office. Almost all the information included in the schedule can be treated as ‘Public Information’, as this information flows in the public domain and is needed frequently by all citizens regardless of their social status or other differences. Frequency of looking for information and channels consulted by people depicts the situation.

According to the data obtained, DS Offices are officially bound to provide government related information as mentioned in the Fig. 6.1. When compared with the information needs demanded by the community, information categories available with the DS office were more in number than demanded. But it was seen that the ordinary rural citizen is not aware about the availability of such information unless a specific need arises. Information on crown lands, social security systems, statistical information, irrigation systems, alternative employment etc. are some of such categories. It was seen that people obtain information from specified channels. Irrigation related information is obtained only from the APRO or from the Govijana Seva office and the people do not

![Fig. 5.1: Provision of Government Information categories](image-url)
understand that irrigation policies are associated with the land usage policy controlled by the DS office. The same behaviour was seen with regard to the health issues. Some health issues are remedied through the involvement of DS office in a division though people normally go to the PHI or MOH office in fulfilling health needs.

Usually ordinary citizens are not concerned with the policy issues, but very much concerned with ways and means of solving a practical problem faced in their day-to-day activities. They seek assistance for necessary information from the offices and persons known to them rather than going to the appropriate source. For instance, statistical information provision at every DS office was seen as very comprehensive. It was a policy requirement for every DS office to maintain a ‘monitoring unit’ equipped with a databank, which contains
statistical information compiled on physical geography, economic geography, socio-economic and socio-cultural data relating to the division. Unfortunately this useful resource was used by a few user categories like high school students, researchers and by the policy makers at divisional level. It was also seen that there was a considerable overlap in providing information on government services with the other agencies that operated in the area. Figure 6.1 indicates how the information supply overlaps within institutional provision.

It was also tried to determine the ‘Dependency Rate on Channels’ in obtaining information. Table 6.1 depicts the channels that rural people consulted in obtaining different kinds of government information. It was seen that most people sought government information from the GS (Grama Niladhari) of the Wasam (GS division) or from the DS office. GS and the DS office were treated as one category because most people in villages contacted the GS for the government information requirements that they should obtain from particular DS office. Several reasons such as distance from the village to DS office, etc. make them reluctant to visit the office. The GS dutifully undertakes to supply much of the information requirements requested by a villager and contacts the DS office on behalf of them. GS in the village can be treated as the nearest source of first hand government information provider and also as a referral channel (directional).
The responses in Table 6.1 indicates that 65 per cent of the respondents seek government information through channel 1 (GS/DS office), resulting a Channel Dependency Rate (CDR) of 65 per cent. The second highest option was the local government authority, (Pradesheeya Sabha Secretary) in most of the cases, with a CDR of 17 per cent.

Other government officers that operate at village level like APRO, SSO, SO were also contacted by the villagers to obtain government information, but the responses do not show a strong dependency on those channels. A similar situation was also seen with the priest, community leader and with rural elite as channels.

5.2.1.2 Divisional Agricultural Office

The Divisional Agricultural Office commonly known as ‘Govijanaseva Service Centre’, was seen as the center for
inquiries relating to agriculture by rural farmers and other persons. Authority of the office was divided between Agricultural Officer (AO) appointed for the division and Agricultural Inspector (AI) appointed by the Department of Agriculture. AO is supposed to handle all the administration of the agricultural policies plus activities in the division in collaboration with the DS of the division, while AI handles technical issues relating to agricultural activities in the division. This two-fold responsibility of the Agrarian Services Office sometimes created disputes when providing information. But the agro workers and farmers depend very much upon the Office for information and agrarian services.

Information categories demanded and categories provided were almost the same in the agricultural information provision. According to the information collected from focus group discussions the following channels indicated in Fig 5.2, were consulted by rural people to obtain agriculture related information.

**Fig. 5.2 : Main Information Categories Handled by the Agrarian Service Office**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Category Handled</th>
<th>Official Channels of Provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crops related-crop selection for the season, crop rotation, selection/ buying of seeds, etc.</td>
<td>APRO, AO, AGSO,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizers/IP Control</td>
<td>APRO, AO, AGSO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases – identification, control, remedies, Trouble shooting etc.</td>
<td>APRO, AO, AGSO, GS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil related Irrigation systems and planning</td>
<td>APRO, AO, AGSO, GS, Social Mobilisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Harvest Issues – preservation, packaging etc.</td>
<td>APRO, AO, AGSO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal husbandry, Cattle/Fowl/Goats/ Pigs breeding related/ Fish/Prawns farming etc.</td>
<td>APRO, AO, AGSO, DVO, GS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri- machinery – introduction,</td>
<td>APRO, AO, AGSO, GS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was seen that the Agrarian Services Office both at institutional level and individual level, played a prominent role regarding agriculture. Nevertheless the boutique owners and materials suppliers also cannot be ignored regarding information provision in rural areas. This category has some influence over the agro-based information provision especially regarding the usage of insecticides, pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals. Though the service performed by the sellers was a strategic approach for marketing the merchandise, they provide a highly useful community service to the villagers.

Table 5.2 indicates the information provision channels consulted in obtaining agro based information. The figures prove the fact that category numbers 2,3,4 and 5 have taken prominence in providing agriculture related information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Category</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>CDR %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grama Niladhari</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri. Produce Res.Officer</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govijana Seva Office</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AgriculturalExt.Ser.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seller of Agri.Chemicals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour/Friend</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradesheeya Sabha/DDS</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio/Tv/News Papers /Mass Media</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boutique/supplies Seller etc.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>283</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MMR = Multiple Responses Received

The total percentage for all four categories was 74 per cent when added together to from Channel Dependency Rate
(CDR) for channels consulted. Other channels indicated a very low response when compared with the four categories mentioned above.

5.2.1.3 The Office of the Medical Officer of Health

The government of Sri Lanka provides free health care to all citizens through the Ministry of Health. In 1992 Divisional Directors of Health were appointed to coordinate preventive and curative services with health promotional activities. The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) with the divisional authority reports to the District Secretary of Health and to the Ministry of Health. There is another health administrative functionary that operates at the DS level that is the Public Health Inspector (PHI) who handles public health administration within the Division. MOH handles most of the health related information and PHI handles public sanitary and health issues. Activities of MOH overlap with the activities of PHI and therefore, PHI was not included in the sample. According to the pilot study, people are not in the habit of going to the PHI regarding ailments, nutrition, communicable diseases and other personal health matters, but consult the MOH office and hospitals directly or through the Family Health Worker (FHW).

During the survey it was observed that health information dissemination network in Sri Lanka is well established using the divisional structure around the country. When compared with other sectors like industry, agriculture, finance etc. health information system is in a satisfactory condition. Information on health related topics were delivered door to door in the MOH division through FHW, the community level worker for health and nutrition information. FHW is commonly known as the ‘midwife.'
This ‘door-step available’ family health worker was trained to deliver information especially on maternity, family planning and adolescent health topics. It was seen that the older people also consult FHW on different personal health issues.

Table 5.3 indicates the level of dependency upon the health channels available in the rural areas by the rural citizens. The data indicates that there was a higher dependency on FHW than on other channels, i.e. hospitals and PHI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channels</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total MRR</th>
<th>CDR %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Health Worker</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Hospital</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Hospital</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health Inspector</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grama Niladharl</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Physn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Doctor, etc.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MMR = Multiple Responses Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total MRR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The FHW was also shown to have more influence over the women than men, as the response rates indicate 41 per cent as against 22 per cent. Reason for this was seen in the study as a result of the FHWs’ frequently visiting the households with pregnant women or newborn and young children and for being closely associated with the women in the households. It was found that rural women were quite comfortable to disclose many a health problem to the FHW than to unknown parties at
other health service points, including traditional physicians, gynecologists in hospital clinics.

The males, on the other hand, behaved in the reverse manner consulting directly the hospitals and PHI for their information needs. Rate of consulting hospitals is depicted in the above table as 32 per cent for Rural hospitals and 35 per cent for District hospitals for men. Demand from women for the same sources indicates lower response rates. It was also seen that consulting PHIs was higher among the men than women.

The study also revealed in the study that, unlike in other information categories people were especially careful about consulting the correct channel to obtain accurate information on health topics due to the health awareness programs conducted by the MOH office at the community level and at the hospital clinics. According to focus group discussions conducted with the community groups, rural people generally trust the information received from the government sources than from the other sources. But they consult indigenous physicians on selected health topics like general ailments such as colds and flu, wheeze, migraine, fracture treatment, treatments for snake bites, etc.

5.2.1.4 Public Library

The public library system was established in Sri Lanka with a view to providing reading facilities to the ordinary citizen. Even though the commencement of public library system dates back to early 19th century, proper establishment of the public library system started during the early 20th century. Public library system operates solely in the hands of local government authorities. At present almost every Municipal, Town and Pradesheeya Sabha (earlier the Village Council) have their own public library. In recent years, the role of the public
library has changed into the challenging role of an information provider. It was observed during the pilot study conducted in Lankatilaka GS division in Udunuwara, that the public library played an important role in the information provision on different aspects relating to education, governmental, industry, self-employment, recreation, religion, history and politics etc.

Therefore the study investigated into the role of public libraries in information provision in the communities studied. Contrary to the findings of the pilot survey, it was seen that all public libraries surveyed were not in a position to cater to the community concerned as strong information providers. It was gathered that, the public library had been consulted by the people for information needs as indicated in Figure 6.3 with the dependency rates of the channels as indicated. According to the data, Public Library is approached by the community mainly for recreational, infrastructure related and educational purposes. When the dependency on this channel is considered, it was seen that there is no strong dependency on it as people are used to consult other channels as well for many information needs.

**Fig.5.3: Channel Dependency Rate for the Public Library**

![Channel Dependency Rate Graph](image-url)
According to the discussions conducted with librarians, 100 per cent of them were of the view that the information provision is a main part of their duty, but added that they were not trained and did not know how to organize the service systematically. Another point they highlighted was that, lack of suitable and timely materials in their collections. Low budget allocation and the interference by the local government authorities for library book selection were pointed out as the main reasons for this situation.

Seven librarians out of 10 mentioned that they had no knowledge about new trends and methods used in information delivery and explained the lack of support from the local authorities in following professional courses in library science.

It was seen that the situation had affected the public library services, especially in provoking the interest among communities to consult the library for their information needs. The public library in these areas serves as a place where newspapers and common study material are available and as a meeting place for school going youth and do not serve as an effective service in informing the community. Nevertheless the distribution, organizational structure, and potential with community participation of present public library structure are seen as strengths and opportunities to develop the same into community information centres.

5.2.1.5 Post Office

The Sri Lankan postal service existed since 18th century through colonial times and was established in larger towns as well as in small villages. The office had been active not only as the mail handling authority of the country, but as a banker, handling savings and pensions, as a telephone network
controller and as a provider of government notifications to the general public. The post office, though it now keeps only the responsibility of state mail service, still acts as the provider of government notifications by providing the government gazette for public reading.

The survey revealed that none of the post offices surveyed had an inquiry service counter or a window established especially to entertain public inquiries, but the post master in many cases (the only officer at village post offices) does referral service for the inquiries received at the post office. The actual information provision of the post office was confined to government, employment, educational and other state related information. Figure 5.4 indicates the rate of dependency on the post office as a channel.

**Fig. 5.4 : Channel Dependency rate (CDR) over the Post Office**

![Bar chart showing channel dependency rate over the post office](image)

During the survey it was observed that the main post offices in postal divisions are converted into ‘public telecommunication centres’ (Sannivedana Piyasa) following a concept introduced by the Minister of Telecommunication (2002) and village youth have awareness through the village post offices, about
the possibility to access to Internet through the Sannivedana Piyasas.

5.2.1.6 Pradesheeya Sabha

The Pradesheeya Sabhas (PS) belong to local government structure and were established at the AGA division level which secured the inclusion of a few GS wasams. Nature of formation of Pradesheeya Sabha structure is completely political. In addition to the traditional local government functions, PSs are equipped with a range of activities, which relate to public thoroughfares, public health services and public utility services (Leitan, 1997). This empowerment of PSs placed them on an important place in the provision of necessary information to the communities and providing services entrusted to them.

Permanent officers and the elected members of PS provide information on a variety of issues relating to local governance and do not target a special category of information. Response rates received for PSs are indicated in Table 5.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need Category</th>
<th>Total MRR for the channel</th>
<th>CDR %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry related</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal matters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>487</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received
According to the values derived, a higher dependency rate for the PS was indicated for local government information. It was quite obvious that being the local authority, PS is the rightful provider of this category of information. There were other information categories such as, industry related information, which deals mostly with areas such as starting a business, business/industrial premises, relevant taxes and registration to be paid, land use for industry etc. Legal matters that PSs handle were mostly related to infrastructure issues such as roads, water, electricity, commercial land building, land usage on infrastructure, etc. that come under the purview of local government authorities.

5.2.2 Other Organizations/Agencies

The agencies commonly available across the clusters were selected for the sample as ‘Other Organizations’. The organizations selected were:

- Financial Institutions
- Non-Governmental Organizations

Out of the financial institutions, one commercial bank and one savings institution were selected. Apart from those, there are other private organizations which operated in the areas under study and were seen operating mainly as commercial establishments with motive of profit making. Their prime motive was not community service or information provision. Instead some of non-governmental organizations (NGO) were seen as active in providing services plus information. Therefore it was attempted to collect two samples from each cluster. The basis used to select NGOs was the 06 month visibility of active operations within the communities selected. It was observed that most of the NGOs were not operating for
a long time except for a very well established few. Therefore data on only 05 NGOs could be collected.

5.2.2.1 Financial/Savings Institutions

Under financial institutions, data from two banks from each cluster were collected. The banks were selected upon the higher two choices given by the community of the particular sample. Figure 5.5 indicates responses received for the banks. There were four banks selected on the basis of the responses and the distribution across the samples was described in Chapter 5, under research methodology.

**Fig.5.5: Selection of the Banks by Community**

The four banks selected were, Peoples’ Bank, Bank of Ceylon, Rural Bank and the Samurdhi Bank. It should be noted that these institutions belong to different grades and also vary upon the type and volume of the business.

It was observed that most of the people in the community obtain financial information from established banking institutions and a few consult other sources perhaps due to many difficulties (such as, transport, unawareness about the services, social distance etc.,) they experience in approaching the institutions. In addition to the banks, rural people consult
Agrarian Office or the APRO in obtaining agricultural loans and subsidies as well as the Samurdhi Officer for Samurdhi loans and other financial benefits (Table 5.5). NGOs also intervene in supplying financial information as they also provide micro loans and small grants for specific developmental activities they conduct within the area concerned. E.g. Seva Lanka Foundation, Welimada. However dependency rate for institutional sources were higher than individual sources.

**Table 5.5: Channel Dependency Rate on Financial Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel consulted</th>
<th>Rate of Response</th>
<th>CDR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agri. Prod. Res. Officer/Govi Jana Seva</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks and Advertising campaigns</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grama Niladhari</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour/Friend/Rural Elite</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO/ Private Organizations</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio/TV/News Papers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurdhi Officer</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>331</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received

It was observed that, the commercial/savings bank had received the highest score in response; provide all information categories that were requested by the community. These were provided especially related to the business scope of the institution; i.e. current accounts, savings account types and related benefits and services, fixed deposits, loan facilities and related liabilities, pawning facilities, property and gold article redemption schemes, loan repayment schemes etc. Regardless of the grade of the agency and the level, all these institutions do a considerable amount of referral and advisory service to the village community as a service.
Data reveals that the banking institutions receive queries on a ‘daily basis’ regarding the services, upon calling to the office ‘in person’. These institutions receive queries rarely ‘over the phone’ but receive queries on a ‘daily basis’ even outside the office hours. One hundred per cent of these institutions treat ‘providing information’ as a duty and also as a service. According to the approximate estimation, bank staff spends 3 – 5 hours daily for providing information out of 6 hours they open the office for public service. These financial institutions provide information on financial matters and operate on advisory and directional capacity mostly on financial related aspects.

Other than the above organizations and agencies selected, community clubs, associations, government sponsored councils were in operation in providing information relating to vocational training, counseling, initiating industrial projects etc. However these agencies were not available or not in effective operation in every cluster surveyed. As examples for such agencies; National Youth Council – Vocational Training Institute (Monaragala, Hambantota), ‘Diri Piyasa’, a Counseling service for women (Walapone), Upper Watershed Management Project (Welimada) can be pointed out. Besides, the mobile secretariats provide solutions and information to most of the problems relating to the use of crown lands. Sports clubs, public meetings like ‘Kanna Rasweem’, ‘Gramodaya meetings’, political meetings etc. cater to awareness among ordinary people in different aspects relating to their information needs.

5.2.2.2 Non-Governmental Organizations

NGOs were seen to be in operation across the sample and 07 NGOs were selected from clusters depending on their visibility within 6 months (during the time of survey) in activities
involved in the area. List of NGOs were obtained from the DS office and their scale of activities were also detected through the DS office and from the community. NGOs contacted are given in Fig. 5.6.

### Fig. 5.6: NGOs surveyed and their scope of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Scope of activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Vision</td>
<td>Lunugamvehera</td>
<td>Child care, Community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seva Lanka Padanama</td>
<td>Welimada</td>
<td>Sanitary facilities, environmental protection, Advisory service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East Irrigation &amp; Agriculture Project</td>
<td>Monaragala</td>
<td>Irrigation management, Advisory service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naula Grameeya Sanwardana Sangamaya</td>
<td>Na-Ula</td>
<td>Development of micro industries and related training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunugamvehera Janatha Suwaya Sandaha Padanama</td>
<td>Lunugamvehera</td>
<td>Health and Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaragala Thirasara Sanwardene Padanama</td>
<td>Monaragala</td>
<td>Assistance for small scale industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welimada Sanwardena Padanama</td>
<td>Welimada</td>
<td>Assistance for small scale industries, vocational training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is noteworthy that information delivered through these agencies were limited to their scope of activities; hence the content strength was specific.

### 5.2.3 Individuals

The pilot study identified a number of individuals who act as information providers in the rural information scenario.

These providers were categorized into two main types to draw a clear stratification as follows:

1. Officers appointed by government
2. Other Individuals
5.2.3.1 Government Officers

The government officers selected for the sample, who were assigned by the Divisional Secretary’s Office, to work at grassroots level with the community were; Grama Niladhari (GN), Family Health Worker (FHW), Agrarian Produce Research Officer (APRO), Samurdhi Officer (SO) and Social Services Officer (SSO).

These officers generally maintain a higher profile among rural citizens due to their capacity in providing credible government information apart from the official duties and functions they perform. Grama Niladhari is the representative of the Divisional Secretary at the village level and is expected to act as an information provider, coordinator, and mediator of government information. He directly provides information and also plays a referral role (directional capacity). Samurdhi Officer (SO) has to handle all the activities related to ‘Samurdhi’ financial assistance scheme, but plays another role as a social advisory and a referral role. Social Services Officer (SSO) handles social development activities, but provides other information categories as done by the SO. Nevertheless, an overlap of activities and collaborative working between SO and SSO was seen to some considerable extent. However, the rural citizen very much depends upon these officers for reliable information provision basically because of their affiliation to the government.

The Family Health Worker was an exception. FHW is always a female worker whose activities were described under the section 5.1.1.3, Office of the Medical Officer of Health. FHW’s intervention in providing other government and community information, is seen low. But her influence on providing health and nutrition information and services to
pregnant women and new born was remarkable. It is also noteworthy to mention that the success of the health service implemented in the rural sector and the strength of the health information provided is attributed to the untiring service of these health workers ‘on foot’. The FHW can also be described as a door-to-door information specialist in health in the information science perspective.

5.2.3.2 Other Individuals

There are many other persons who provide information at the village level. Any person, it is said, is a source of information, but the survey sample consisted of individuals who have high social acceptance in the village community in obtaining advice regarding information needs. The persons were initially selected with higher ranks according to the Occupational Prestige Scale (Gunawardena, 1990). After the pilot study the Ayurvedic physician and government employer/pensioner were replaced with Community Leader/ Rural Elite(CL) and Boutique owner/Supplier of provisions (BS).

It was observed that these individuals play an important role in communicating necessary information to rural citizens as they have social contacts external to the community. The Buddhist/ Christian/ Muslim/ Hindu priest (PR) in the community, the School Principal (PL), Community Leader (CL) have an important influence over the people. They play information brokering role, advisory role, communicator role, coordinator role regarding information provision in the community.

The boutique owner or material/ equipment supplier handles different function. He provides product related information specifically and communicates news on the outside world as he listens to the radio channels through out the day while working in the boutique. As the villagers engaged in routine economic
activities during the daytime, they use the boutique as a place of entertainment and meeting. The villagers listen to the radio and listen to the news while exchanging ideas and information. The seller communicates much commercial information to the villagers, such as information on fertilizers, pesticides, equipment etc. as the commercial producers of the products initially create awareness among sellers of the same. It is evident that the sellers and boutique owners supply information to the customers as a marketing strategy. In addition, as these sellers have connections with the outside parties they have more awareness than an ordinary rural citizen (See Figure 5.7 below). Thus he plays a dual role as an information provider and as a referee to the correct source (Referral role).

It was observed through the study that information categories provided by the individuals display a bias to the jobs/ functions they engaged in. Especially the government appointed officers displays this characteristic providing more government related and local government information than the other categories.

**Fig. 5.7 : Information Provision Status by Individuals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Providers</th>
<th>GI</th>
<th>LG</th>
<th>Em</th>
<th>EI</th>
<th>TrI</th>
<th>HI</th>
<th>AI</th>
<th>Ind</th>
<th>FI</th>
<th>MI.</th>
<th>LI</th>
<th>Inf</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>Rec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHW</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Training related information and financial information was seen being handled by the government sector officers. The APRO and SO definitely were to provide information on agricultural loans / subsidies and Samurdhi loans/ allowances. The priest handles basically religious education and the principal handles information and plays an advisory role in the case of general education.

The Dependency Rate on Channels (CDR) of the people on the individual information providers show a similar sort of picture relating to the government agencies. For example, rural people placed higher value on GS for government information, on FHW for health related information, on APRO and seller of insecticides/ fertilizers/supplies etc. as mentioned above (Fig. 5.8).

**Fig: 5.8: Channel Dependency Rate (CDR) on Government Officers**
There are other individuals, entities and media who act as information providers but it was found that do not exist in every community. Therefore, four categories of persons mentioned above were selected due to their existence in every cluster surveyed. Some channels emerge prominently in providing some information categories within a specific community (for example, political information and labour related issues in tea estates was mostly provided by the ‘Thalawar’, the community leader) but were not seen as common across the clusters. The community leader, mostly called as big brother (‘Ayya’) in fishing community is very much influential in making political decisions. Even though ‘neighbour/friend’ was noted as commonly used channels in the rural communities, mostly in a directional capacity, the reliability of the provision was not proven even among villagers. Individual providers who provide information categories were indicated in Figure 5.9.

However at the community level, information provision operates at two functionality levels that carry equal importance
in operation, i.e. Directional capacity and Information supply capacity. Directional Capacity refers to the directing or referring the information seeker to the correct place or channel while Information Supply refers to the provision of information needed by information seeker on the spot.

Other than the provider channels discussed above, there are mass media (television, radio) newspapers and public advertisements (posters for education, banking, insurance etc.), which play an important role in providing some need categories (news, services, education, weather etc.). These are treated more as mediums than channels and hence, are treated under delivery methods in the present study. See Fig. 5.10 for the values placed for other channels.

**Fig. 5.10: CDR for Other Channels Operated in Providing Information Categories**
5.3 Collection, Organization and Delivery of Information

5.3.1 Basis of Collecting Information

Information supplied by the providers was studied with regard to the information collection policy, format and the method of organization. As mentioned in the introduction information provided is divided into main categories; direct provision of information and referral services.

It was revealed through the survey that organizations and agencies or individuals who handle direct provision of information collect data in their offices or in their own personal way. Those who do referral activity do not necessarily collect information for the purpose of information delivery.

According to the responses received from the institutional providers, 100 per cent of the institutions surveyed have collected information upon the policy decisions taken by their respective line ministries or higher authorities. For instance MOH receives information from the Ministry of Health, as does the DS Office. It was seen that 48 per cent of the institutions like the AO’s office, Public library, Commercial Banks and NGOs collect information upon envisaged information needs through the experiential learning about the community (See Table 5.6).

The individual officers who represent government services indicate a mixture of methods in collecting information. Among the different methods, the fourth method was 100 per cent prevalent and first and third methods were used by more than fifty percent of this category. Other persons showed a different picture in collecting information. They have collected
information basically using the first method as they have no policy to adopt in providing information and they provide information as a service to their own community.

The seller or the material supplier of the village normally collects and distributes information upon queries as well as upon envisaged information needs to maximize the profits in selling supplies to the community.

The whole picture indicates that information was mostly collected by the organizations and government appointed officers as a policy decision taken. It was seen that no provider except two NGOs purchase information materials and information need surveys were not adequately performed even by the government sector organizations, as a basis for collecting information.

According to the officials contacted, this situation exists due to the policy and procedure barriers of the government sector. Prior permission that needed to be obtained from authorities, the long process and the cost of the information material, which perhaps do not come within the purview of budget headings etc., have caused the situation mentioned above. Conducting a need survey was seen as extra work outside the normal work schedule and prior permission would have been necessary in government institutions. However due consideration was not given to explore actual user needs in the community by most of the providers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider Category</th>
<th>Sample no</th>
<th>1st method</th>
<th>2nd method</th>
<th>3rd method</th>
<th>4th method</th>
<th>5th method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divisional Secretary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian Ser. Office</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOH</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradesheeya Sabha</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub total</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% = n(1…5)/N x 100</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Savings Bank</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>11%</strong></td>
<td><strong>4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>59%</strong></td>
<td><strong>85%</strong></td>
<td><strong>7%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% = n(1…5)/N x 100</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grama Niladhari</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri.Prod. Res. Officer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Health Worker</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samurdhi/Social Service Officer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Leader</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boutique Owner/Seller1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>84%</strong></td>
<td><strong>4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>57%</strong></td>
<td><strong>49%</strong></td>
<td><strong>0%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% = n(1…5)/N x 100</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.2 Mode of Collection

The study also attempted to find out the mode of the collection of information materials. It was observed that 100 per cent of the respondents of government offices, other organizations and government appointed individuals collect information in print media which was the conventional manner of generating and storing information and most cheapest when considering the capital cost. It was very recently that government departments considered planning to transfer their data from traditional office files into electronic formats using PCs. Table 6.7 indicates the bias for print media in storing information materials by the providers.

In the case of DS offices there is a policy decision to initiate an ‘Information Chamber’ at every DS office to collect and provide statistical information pertaining to the Division concerned. Though most of these units started with the printed mode and hand written poster display, it was seen that the use of Personal Computers to compile data was the latest development. Other organizations also indicate the same trend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Org./Person</th>
<th>No. of samples</th>
<th>Print media n1</th>
<th>Electronic n2</th>
<th>Audio/Visual n3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Div.Sec.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri. Officer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOH</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradesheeya Sabha</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Government appointed officers and other individuals do not get involved in generating and storing information but collect information in printed formats. The study also reveals that providers who do referral activity do not necessarily collect information in any format.

### 5.3.3 Organization of Information

Organization of information was also an important aspect to study to understand the strength of information provision. It is normally accepted that without proper organization of information, proper delivery is not effective. Table 6.8 below illustrates the methods used by the providers to organize information received and collected by them.
It was observed that, most of the information collected by organizational providers and government appointed individuals were in office files without being maintained using systematic methods. These office files were categorized by activity headings and not according to the classification of information, in terms of library and information science standards.

E.g. Office files were labeled such as Crown Lands, Swarnaboomi Deeds, Samurdhi Recipients and Allowances, Agricultural Loans, Coconut Fertilizer Loans, Coconut/Tea Subsidy Schemes etc. A systematic way of organizing information was seen in the material arrangements made only by the Public Libraries, which were using Dewey Decimal subject classification scheme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.8 : Organization of Information Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provider Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DS office and MOH office also follow some sort of systematic arrangement like alphabetical order and order by year but these office routines of record management were seen as not satisfactory. Due to this situation information provision was affected in a negative manner hampering the smooth flow of information.
5.4 Information Delivery: Formats and Methods

One of the objectives of the study is to explore the format and methods utilized to deliver information to the rural citizen. These aspects are treated as the vehicles used to reach the community in providing information. By studying these aspects it is possible to understand the existing efficiency level of information delivery, why the existing methods of delivery are used, whether there is any potential to use more flexible modern methods and what hindrances are there to implement such systems.

5.4.1 Formats Delivered

Spread of data across the clusters showed that information delivery format had not changed much since colonial times. The providers regardless of their institutional affiliations mostly use the oral and printed formats. 100 per cent of the providers in the sample use oral methods. Institutional providers and government officers use printed matter to deliver information depending on the availability of materials.

Other individuals do not use printed matter unless they receive any material free from another source. Sixty per cent of the boutique owner/sellers deliver printed information as they receive leaflets, posters, displays and handbills from the product and service marketers to be distributed among community.

Fig. 5.10 indicates that digital information delivery is minimal though 9% of digital information delivery records on account by the DS office. This was delivered basically to government and non-government offices as a routine activity or on request, but not to the citizens in the community.
It was obvious that this kind of format cannot be used for the rural people, as there is no preparedness in the community to absorb or utilise new technology for accessing information due to many a structural, social and personal reason.

A few reasons could be identified through the study as to why only the formats given in the Fig.5.11 were used for information dissemination.

- Rural community has low information literacy level – it is strenuous for most rural people to extract correct piece of information out of written communication through their. Language literacy records a high value.
- It is too expensive for the government offices to use modern methods – budget allocation for IT equipment is still low for the divisional level government offices.
- Inadequate infrastructure in rural areas has a disadvantageous impact over the use of modern technology for both community and information supplier.
- Conventional attitude of the higher level officers of government agencies – they have not been made aware
or not been trained regarding modern information access systems.

- Similarly, no initiatives were taken to train communities to use modern information access systems though other Asian countries of similar setup use modern technology to access community information.

5.4.2 Delivery Methods

As discussed earlier delivery methods are the vehicles used to deliver information to any community. According to the study delivery methods used by the providers were basically traditional and were implemented using three methods.

1. One to one – person (provider) to person (receiver)
2. To a group – person (provider) to a group of people (receivers)
3. To a mass - through mass media – radio, TV, news papers

5.4.2.1 One to one method

Figure 5.12 illustrates the methods used by the providers to deliver information among communities. As given in this table person to person method was the most popular way of delivering information. This method was also the most effective way of delivering information though it appears as conventional and passive.

The method consists of inquiry handling, trouble shooting and individual information provision and facilitates through verbal and written communication formats. According to the data, verbal communication consists of not only ‘over the counter
communication’ but also through other media, like telephone though used rarely. Email was not in use at all.

**Figure 5.12: Method of Delivery of Information**

![Bar chart showing method of delivery of information](chart)

The survey also studied the frequency of information provision by different media (verbal, written and electronic). Written communication by the information providers is very low in rural areas, due to the low information literacy as mentioned in Section 5.4.4.1 above.

Using telephone as a media of obtaining information was also seen low in these communities. Even if they used the phone, many cases recorded that the person in need does not talk directly, but an intermediary (mostly the booth operator, a child, another intermediary etc.) communicate with the information supplier, which makes the inquiry lose its original sense and need. This situation was due to the fact that the village communities in general are backward, socially distant, bashful and less confident in using simple technologies which has an unfavourable effect over the information seeking bahaviour. The intermediary communicating the inquiry may
also not contain original issues in the information problem periphery that caused the need.

5.4.2.2 Provider to a Group Method (One to group)

In case of group information provision, target groups were selected beforehand, depending on the information need category, e.g. group of people engaged in the same kind of activity, groups in risk etc. Mostly the institutional providers including NGOs and government assigned officers used these kind of methods. The group presentations and meetings were held both at the organization level and at community level attempting to solve or remedy an issue and also as awareness campaigns.

Community/village level group programs were seen to be very successful in delivering specific information such as agriculture related information, as the providers (government officers, community mobilisers) select convenient places for the villagers (Threshing floors, near Common wells, Boutiques, near Culverts etc.) and at convenient times slots (early evenings and late evenings). The meetings are very much related to crop selection, water management, usage of fertilizers, weedicides, pesticides, vaccinations, break of epidemics, infrastructure, diseases, community problems and so on.

Other organizations also disseminate information through electronic (especially through CD-Roms) and audio-visual media. Cultivation, cropping methods, post harvest techniques, usage of equipment and machinery etc. were demonstrated in workshops conducted by Agrarian Services Office for the farmers and targeted communities. MOH office also used audio and video techniques to popularize and educate rural people in preventive and remedial health care. The MOH
office and Agrarian Services receive these materials from the relevant ministries and materials were mostly generated by foreign agencies such as FAO, WHO and other foreign funded agencies like AGRIS (Information System for Agricultural Sciences and Technology) and CARIS (Current Agriculture Information System).

5.4.2.3 Print and Mass Media

Another important type of information dissemination method is the mass media, which also was observed as an important delivery channel. The mass media consists of radio, television and the newspapers. It was observed that Information provision through mass media was not directly handled by the divisional authorities but at the departmental or ministerial level.

It was observed that, intervention of rural information providers was seen as minimum in the radio or TV programs, except in the case of interactive radio programs and teleprograms like ‘Kamatha’. Many rural people were seen reluctant to participate in these programs over the phone as they do not have telephones and even if they have, connectivity to these programs are observed to be very difficult due to line congestion. According to the study 86 per cent of the total population opted to watch or to listen to agriculture related, industry or self-employment related programs on radio and TV.

Nevertheless respondents added that there are difficulties in grasping information through radio and TV. One was the time the programmes are being broadcast or telecast. Ninety one per cent of the respondents of the agricultural communities said that they are mostly in the field during daytime, so listening to radio or watching the TV is difficult. Some would argue that
the farmers could carry the radio to the fields. The argument is acceptable in the case of dry zone areas, but not possible in rainy and misty hill country, like in districts of Welimada, Walapone etc. Another problem they face with the TV media is inaccessibility of most of the channels from remote areas.

Newspaper was the other conventional method among mass media for obtaining information especially for news updates, relating to the social, political and general situation in the country and overseas. Table 6.9 indicates that only 164 people out of 300 had responded as newspaper readers, out of which 71 per cent were from traditional village settings. The table also indicates the places where the newspapers were available for rural dwellers.

Due to many geographical, infrastructural and economic barriers, access to newspapers recorded a very low rate among rural people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.9 : Usage Distribution of Newspapers by Community Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boutique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. Offices, DS, AO etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News stands-roadside/town/Bus stands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MRR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Res %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received
Most people get an opportunity to read newspapers when they go to the boutique, to a nearby town, to a government office (DS office, AO’s office, NYSC etc.), but the distance mattered again.

One important characteristic that was observed regarding community information was that, Community Information targets mostly vast community groups unlike the bibliographic information, which targets to a specific calibre of users. It is also seen that the same set of bibliographic information is used by different people to attain different targets, while people to fulfill similar information needs use community information.

The study also looked into the attitudes of information providers towards norms of delivery of information to the relevant community. It was found that 100 per cent of the organizational providers plus government appointed officers agreed that providing information to the citizens is their prime duty of them and that goes on par with the service provision. They also treat this activity as a community service. Other individual provider categories do not treat providing information as a duty but as a community service. Therefore it was seen that all provider categories supply information even outside the office hours frequently and sometimes daily.

At the official level the organizational providers handle information daily according to the data collected. Apart from the queries handled on an ad-hoc basis daily there is a specified ‘Public day’ (normally Wednesdays) at DS offices to handle queries from the public. According to the behavioral patterns observed, people used to obtain information through a second person and the practice was higher when dealing with the government offices. As the Divisional Secretaries related, the intervention of intermediaries with the information provision had become a serious problem, because the
intervention frequently caused ‘information distortion’ and ‘exploitation of the information seeker’ in different ways.

According to the study, strength of the Information Provision (IP) is a function of nature of the provision, comprehensiveness of the content, medium delivered, method utilized to reach the community and frequency of the information provided. As the variables identified are in qualitative nature, it is seen that the substitution of values are difficult to these variable to formulate a mathematical expression. However it can be mentioned that information provision level and it’s strength changes upon the behaviour and status of the variables analysed.

5.5 Barriers to Information Flow

The study attempted to identify factors that stand as barriers to information flow among rural communities in Sri Lanka. The problems and issues discussed were obtained from the respondents through an open question which asked regarding each need category. The respondents were requested to relate the difficulties faced in fulfilling their information needs. Nine difficulty categories were identified but for easy discussion discussed under three main headings, as;

- Geographical barriers
- Structural barriers
  - Infrastructure barriers
  - Institutional barriers
  - Cultural barriers
  - Socio-economic barriers
- Personal and Attitudinal barriers

The responses mentioned as barriers in obtaining all 15 need categories are scheduled in Table 5.10.
5.5.1 Geographical Barriers

In discussing geographical barriers, it became necessary to consider the geophysical areas, from which the samples were drawn. Main geographical areas and weather conditions of those areas are given in Fig. 5.11.

Fig. 5.11: Distribution of Village Clusters among Geographical Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geo. zone and No. of samples</th>
<th>Elevation</th>
<th>Weather conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upcountry wet zone – 02</td>
<td>Hilly, higher elevation (900 - 1500 m)</td>
<td>Cold, Misty, Windy, Constant Rain Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcountry Intermediate zone – 01</td>
<td>Low hills (150-305m)</td>
<td>Dry, Temperate, Seasonal Rains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low country wet zone – 03</td>
<td>Low country (30-150m)</td>
<td>Wet, Humid, Seasonal Rains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low country dry zone – 03</td>
<td>Low country (30-150m)</td>
<td>Dry, Seasonal Rains</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The village clusters selected for the survey have their own geo-physical features and related social characteristics. It was observed that people in these communities live with minimum social amenities amidst unfavorable geo-physical and weather conditions, which make the life uncomfortable for most of the remote communities.

It was seen that these geo physical conditions had an adverse impact, fully or partly, over the information seeking behaviour and fulfillment of the information needs especially when the people needed to go out of the village to obtain information. Hilly and rocky mountain sides with narrow foot paths, impassable marshes and lagoons etc. were seen as complementing the adverse infrastructure condition.
The situation was visible in the hilly wet zone and remote dry zone villages.

The communities that live in these areas face difficulties due to weather conditions as well. Cold, misty, rainy or dry and extreme hot climate make their working days shorter and seasonal natural disasters (floods, drought) had been disturbing the development of social life. These difficulties cause denial of chances and opportunities for them to acquire the required knowledge regarding the information they need to lead a better life.

Despite the geophysical condition or drastic weather conditions that prevail in most of these areas, a praiseworthy information service operates in these areas. That is the information and services provided by the door to door health workers operated through MOH office. The agriculture service network was also seen as fairly satisfactory but not as strong as health sector. However, the geo physical condition of these areas had caused somewhat slower development than in urban or suburban areas.

5.5.2 Structural Barriers
5.5.2.1 Infrastructure Facilities and Services

As related by the respondents, infrastructure issues had a remarkable impact over their information seeking process. People who live in these areas have less than a minimum of infrastructure facilities like motorable roads to every corner of the village/settlement area, electricity to every household, telephone connectivity to the closest point of the community and all purpose water service for every person etc.

As the data indicates infrastructure difficulties affected the obtaining of information relating to the market (15%),
finance (17%), health (35%), entertainment (33%) and government (18%) information heavily. It is also indicated that there is a relationship between distance that had to be traveled to obtain information and the importance of the information. For instance, people have to go to the nearby township or market centre to obtain market related information like commodity prices, transport times, auction times etc. and to obtain financial related information where they had to go to the nearest bank or savings institutions.

Distance stands as a barrier to them due to the non-availability of transport mainly due to the dismal condition of roads. On some roadways, as seen while on survey, only tractors and haulage trucks were in operation as a transport medium for goods, people and animals. Difficult roads also bar other commercial delivery vehicles coming into the villages for the purposes like delivery of newspapers, service/product sales promotion, delivery/paste of handbills and posters etc. Infrastructure of the areas surveyed is indicated in Table 5.12.

In many cases distance observed was too far to reach service points like government offices and other offices, community/training centres, hospital clinics and schools, sometimes even the village boutique. Availability of post offices and private communication booths, public libraries or resource centres in these areas is not available at an approachable distance, comfortably foot. See Fig. 5.13.

It was observed that the public library was used mostly (about 95%) by students and was not popular among adults due to lack of awareness about the benefits of using a public library, absence of community outreach programs launched through the libraries, inadequate resources available in libraries and the distance from the settlements.
According to a policy initiative taken by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication in 2003, main post offices are equipped with e-access systems (‘Sannivedana Piyasa’) at present, yet not quickly accessible for ordinary people. The distance therefore, stands as a barrier for speedy access of information channels and information sources available in the vicinity of the village.

Less systematic distribution of electricity also had compounded this disadvantageous situation. Table 6.13 shows the availability of power sources for the purpose of accessing communication services. Out of 300 households surveyed only 192 had electricity and the rest were using kerosene for household purposes and dry cell batteries (torch batteries, automobile batteries etc.) to operate radios and television sets.

Radio and TV are treated as strong media for dissemination of public information. It was seen however that without electricity, information dissemination through mass media was also limited. The villagers thus had to depend upon battery as a source of energy, to listen or watch news and
other programs of their interest. It was gathered in discussions that most of the respondents, especially the estate communities use battery power to watch TV, but try to preserve the power to watch teledramas and Tamil / Hindi films, rather than watching useful programs that provide information for productive ventures.

As per the focus group discussions, some useful programs in the TV, which are noted as helpful to ordinary citizens, have not been watched/listened to, by most of the people due to the time blocks used by the radio/TV channels in broad/telecasting of those programs. Normally these kinds of professionally and vocationally useful programs are scheduled during daytime and ordinary citizens are not around at this hour of the day due to the economic activities they are engaged in. But the radio is listened to by many, yet in up country areas those who work in the fields/farms during the day cannot use the radio due to constant rain and drizzle.

### Table 6.13: Usage of Power Sources to Access Communication Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose used</th>
<th>Electricit-y- Total MRR = 192</th>
<th>% out of Tot. Rate of Res</th>
<th>Batter-y- Total MRR = 99</th>
<th>% out of Tot. Rate of Res</th>
<th>Kerose-ne- Total MRR = 108</th>
<th>% out of Tot. Rate of Res</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House hold Lighting</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>537</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>157</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>108</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received
Newspaper is another source where a citizen could obtain news and much other relevant information. During the survey it was seen that access to newspapers was very low among rural dwellers due to many geographical, infrastructure and economic barriers. Most people get an opportunity to read newspapers when they go to the boutique, nearby town or a government office etc. Table 5.14 shows, people do not buy newspapers except in a very few cases like 3 per cent, for themselves, due to lower affordability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of Access</th>
<th>Multiple Res.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boutique</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Agency</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. Offices</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the town</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>268</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received

It was also revealed that ownership of telephones and access equipment for mass media in rural areas was also low when compared with the urban and sub-urban settings (See Table 5.15).

As Table 5.15 indicates, entertainment and communication equipment like television, radio and telephone facilities were not adequately available to the communities studied. In gaining access to the telephone facility these people highly
depend upon facilities available at post offices, boutiques, communication agencies etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of Access</th>
<th>Television</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boutique etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Agency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total MRR</strong></td>
<td><strong>195</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>355</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>354</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MRR = Multiple Responses Received

### 5.5.2.2 Institutional Barriers

Institutional barriers are difficulties faced by an ordinary citizen in obtaining information from an organization. Data collected on this aspect identified lack of encouraging reception, absenteeism at government offices, long procedures, incomplete or incomprehensive information and distortion of information through intermediaries etc. as barriers to proper information flow. These institutional difficulties were categorized into two; viz, inefficient service provision and content quality (See Table 1 in Appendix VII).

According to the analysis, except for health, finance, weather, political and entertainment information categories, other need categories were highly influenced by institutional barriers. Agriculture information (54%) and legal formation (51%) were the categories drastically affected and the
government, infrastructure and employment information were the categories that were less drastically affected as were stated earlier.

Lack of usage of information technology in organizing information was one barrier seen in the institutions. Out of 50 offices consulted 19 offices agreed that computers were being used for secretarial and accounting purposes and for building up and maintaining official data. It was seen that only 6 DS offices used computers to provide information for the citizens. Nevertheless these computers were not ‘dedicated’ for the purpose, but are being operated by the officers to retrieve information for the users. Fig.5.14 indicates the status of usage of IT in institutions, which operate in the areas studied.

Internet was seen as an under-used resource and in most of the offices Internet connectivity was not available. E-mail facility has been used by government offices for maintaining official communication between the head offices and regional offices and to obtain official information, i.e. DS offices obtain public administration circulars through e-mail. Two Divisional Secretaries said that they hope to download important gazette notifications through Internet but that they need policy decisions to obtain connectivity. Private institutions and NGOs showed a situation which was no better than that of government offices that operate in the areas. These offices used the computers mainly for secretarial purposes and to maintain official databases. Two NGOs had Internet connections and used to obtain project related data and access into their home websites (Seva Lanka Padanama and World Vision).
The other institutional barriers and drawbacks revealed through the study were, i) lack of funds allocated for IT based equipment and systems, ii) less enthusiasm among officials, to utilize IT based systems and unawareness of the benefits of using IT in information provision and iii) ‘Safe keeping’ attitude of higher officers towards computers and IT equipment.

### 5.5.2.3 Cultural barriers

Under socio-cultural barriers gender was the first factor that was underlying in the process of obtaining information. In rural communities females are equally active as men but rarely go out of their community in looking for information, especially married women, regardless of the age category. About 70 per cent of the female respondents of the two special communities observed showed difficulty in going out in obtaining information even though they needed to get information on many topics. Educational, training, financial
and legal information categories were recorded as having a higher difficulty of access, especially in the case for females, due to the difficulty for their going out of the dwellings to obtain information.

According to the sample characteristics studied, 12 per cent female respondents out of total who responded were not employed permanently (Chapter 4). Table 2 in Appendix VI indicates the difficulties faced by female respondents especially in the case of obtaining education, training, financial, legal and entertainment need categories.

There was no information outreach programmes specifically designed to provide necessary information and to provide convenient accessibility for females or disabled members in the community, except in a few service categories such as health, few sub categories of education and cultural affairs.

Male respondents in these communities were highly active and empowered workers. But very few had shown efficiency in obtaining information to fulfill their needs. It was seen that most of the people (85%) in special communities like estate and fishery, depend upon the community leader (eg. In estates ‘Thalawar’) or religious leader (father or priest). These people conceive the idea that they should oblige the community leader in taking certain decisions and getting into new ventures.

Language illiteracy was also high among the women in the estate and fishery communities unlike among traditional villagers and settlers (See Chapter 4). About 50 per cent of the females identified in the survey were illiterate and very much depended for information upon husbands, relatives and their own children and had to be satisfied using the solutions provided. The situation has a relationship with their ethnicity
and religion i.e. estate communities (tea, rubber) and fisheries and among Muslim/Tamil women. This situation was not highly visible among ordinary rural communities, especially among females in settlements. The younger generation however regardless of the community type shows a higher level of literacy than adults.

5.5.2.4 Socio-economic barriers

The economic conditions in the areas investigated were not highly favourable for the social life of the communities, where economic conditions have a direct impact not only on the survival strategy, but other socio-economic activities such as education, training, health, housing, etc. All 10 villages surveyed belong to low-income groups. About 71 per cent of the respondents do not hold permanent government or private sector employment. Forty two per cent (42%) were not engaged in any kind of income generating activity according to sample characteristics studied (Chapter 4).

As the majority of the rural people are from low-income groups, they were definitely at a certain level of poverty, which made them, spend most of the time to earn for their families regardless of gender. Thus time to spend for information seeking is difficult to them as information provision facilities are minimal or not comfortably accessible to any person in the area. Nevertheless, when information is needed to remedy a critical issue or as a survival strategy which is to be handled using the information, they have shown a high level of enthusiasm about grasping the necessary information. For example, during the outbreak of an epidemic disease, they try to obtain necessary awareness despite the difficulties that are to be faced in accessing information.
These communities, even though they are in need of information, have no spare financial means to be spent on contacting the source of the information resource or obtain the intended resource etc. People with low income were seen as hesitant to go seeking unknown territories to obtain information because of fear of spending unknown prices. Out of 45 persons, who responded for Industrial category, 13 per cent mentioned that they had financial difficulties in obtaining information and out of 192 respondents, 61 per cent who responded for legal category, said they had the same difficulty in obtaining legal information.

The fear of using unknown information also, was discernible due to lack of alternative solutions if any decision had gone wrong, especially in the case of agriculture, industry etc. In communities with better, stable income, the situation changes with the awareness and exchanged knowledge, the possibility of accessing information sources and the possibility of obtaining them. For example, almost 100 per cent permanent employees of government, private sector or self employed knew that they need information were able to categorize, select, evaluate and use them and also direct another to the required source or share the information with another. Almost 90 per cent of the businessmen knew how to obtain the information and when an information need had arisen. Many people do not treat information as a commodity and thus, do not know it has the ability to change or divert their method of living or earnings and altogether the quality of their life.
5.5.3 Personal and Attitudinal Barriers
5.5.3.1 Personal barriers

People in these remote areas were normally seen as backward. It was not the level of intelligence, or level of education that mattered when they access information, but the ‘social distance’ embedded among people in the rural society. As a general characteristic, most of them were less enterprising due to many a socio-economic or cultural reason. This quality bars them from approaching most of the services available at different government, private and non-government institutions, even though they were educated about those through mass media or by other means of advertising and awareness campaigns.

According to the study, respondents who communicated the difficulties reported three main areas;

(i) No confidence to find the information or they were not clear about the exact information needed.
(ii) There was no clear idea regarding whom / place to be approached to obtain information.
(iii) Difficulty to go out of the house or village (this difficulty was mentioned under socio cultural factors also, when females were not allowed to go out alone, especially in case of Muslim and Tamil communities).

Table 1 & 2 (Appendix VII) indicates the difficulties that people face in obtaining information due to personal barriers. The percentages were calculated upon the multiple responses as in earlier cases. It was seen that educational information, training information, industrial information,
legal information, and entertainment/general information were much affected by the personal barriers.

The barrier identified as ‘difficulty to go out’ of the house or from the village hamlet is also due to;
- ‘Having young children at home / No way to leave them alone’
- ‘Due to physical disabilities’

Other personal difficulties identified were;
- ‘No trustworthy or capable person to send for looking for information’
- ‘Spouse engaged in economic activities, so that have no spare time to go out’

It was seen that the personal difficulty category has a gender bias, than the other difficulties mentioned. The fact was especially revealed in case of female respondents. Higher percentages of females than males mentioned, more personal difficulties in obtaining government, educational and vocational information categories (See 1-Appendix VI).

5.5.3.2 Attitudinal Barriers

Dugan & Banwell, (2004) identified ‘information recipients’ attitudes and assumptions’ as a barrier category. The survey attempted to enquire into attitudes regarding aspects of information dissemination. The attitudes covered through the study were:

1. Whether the ‘community information’ is essential for rural development?
2. Whether they think that they could use ICTs for effective use of information dissemination if necessary training is provided?
3. Whether they think that ordinary rural people could use simple ICTs for effective access to information if necessary training is provided?

These attitudes were measured using the Likert method, employing four scales;

- Not Essential(1), Not Very Essential(2), Essential(3) and Very Essential(4).
- Not Effective(1), Not Very Effective(2), Effective(3) and Very Effective(4).

For the first attitude tested, which was “the information provision a grass roots level is ‘Essential’ for rural development”, respondents recorded a mean value of 41 per cent for fourth (Very Essential) category and 40 per cent for third (Essential) category.

Fig. 5.15: Attitudes on “Information Provision is Essential for Rural Development”
When considering individual providers, state based organizations had given a 100 per cent positive attitude for the aspects tested, see Fig. 5.15 (an extract of Table 4-Appendix VII). Again government appointed individuals recorded a higher percentage of response for fourth and third categories.

The second attitude that was measured was “willingness and capability of using ICTs in information organization and provision” by the provider. According to Table 5 in Appendix VII, this attitude recorded a mixed rate of responses, for all four scales, recording mean percentages above 25 per cent for third and second categories. It could be seen that the idea of using ICTs in information organization and dissemination was ‘not very clear’ or ‘not certain’ to most of the respondents as the response for fourth scale was low. Out of all respondents the public library recorded a positive response rate of 80 per cent in fourth scale. See Fig. 6.16 below.

Fig. 5.16: Attitudes on “Willingness to use ICTs in Organization of Information and Provision”
Thirdly provider’s attitudes about “using simple ICTs by ordinary rural people in obtaining information if training was provided” was tested. This aspect also received mixed rates of responses as for the second attitude mentioned above. The Divisional Secretary and the public library recorded 80 per cent responses at fourth scale (Not Effective), and Community leader, Principal, Post office recorded 73 per cent average and 50 per cent by the Pradesheeya Sabha (Local Government) respectively at third scale (Essential). It was observed that unlike the former attitudes this attitude had received mixed responses, for “introducing simple ICTs to ordinary rural people for information access”, see Fig.6.17 below for mean percentages extracted from responses compiled.

**Fig. 5.17: Attitude on “Introducing Simple ICTs to Ordinary Rural People for Information Access”**

The barriers identified through the study emerge as determinants of the Information Access (IA). So that, these factors govern information behaviour of ordinary citizen, when they are in need of information for their ‘survival’ or to obtain ‘strategic/specific’ information to remedy an issue.
Therefore the determinants are the variables of information access function.

As the variables identified as Geographical Barriers, Structural Barriers and Personal Barriers that were very much qualitative in nature, and due to the difficulty in substitution of values, a mathematical expression was not formulated. The variables can be quantified if those are interpreted using some ranking method or assigning weights.

5.6 Nature of Community Information

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 means that the community information comprise programs, services, organizations, on-going events, technology and methods, knowledge about people and places etc., about which the community might need information and not necessarily recorded or organized in books, periodicals, reports, manuals or in any other bibliographic forms. This type of information was also not recorded or indexed in any national documentation publication except in case of Gazettes and parliamentary publications. 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 Chapter 5.

The study looked into the methods followed by providers in collecting, organizing and delivering this kind of information. 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.
Another characteristic that was noticed regarding community information was 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. But the bibliographic information is mostly targeted to be delivered to a specific calibre of users, and the same set of bibliographic information is used by different people to attain different targets, while community information is used by citizens to fulfill similar information needs and targets.

5.7 Summary

As was seen through the study, government administrative services, social service agencies and other organizations had already penetrated rural society, apart from the individual information providers. As the study reveals, information delivery through individuals of different status was seen prominent within rural communities both formally and informally. Through the results it was seen that government information providers play a prominent role in providing information even though the delivery mechanisms are not efficient enough to cater to the growing information needs of rural citizens.

It was also observed that there are factors which hinder information flow to the rural communities and in accessing information at users’ side. The situation also had affected adversely the level of information literacy of rural people as an indirect impact.

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. There
were many channels that the rural people had contacts with when looking for information but found as not providing that particular source (the CDR proves the situation). 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. The Model is given in Fig.5.17 above.

As the model indicates the information user; the citizen do not get stuck at any point along the information seeking process. The citizen is always provided with formal channel to approach the information source. Depending on the accuracy and the

Comprehensiveness of the information supplied, the user will attain a scale of satisfaction. Even though the person had fallen into a status of ‘failure’ at a low satisfaction level, he/she will again be placed on the information supply track
through the Awareness /Trouble shooting Programmes conducted by the CIC.

The ideal information provision also leads to a very important information flow, that is, information transfer, through productive information usage, and subsequently leads the user to achieve higher level change in the knowledge level. As in the scale of satisfaction, scale of knowledge will be higher according to the usability of information obtained. Even if the user had fallen into the low knowledge level, he will not be stuck at that level, as the model plans, as there is a possibility for him to reroute the information seeking behaviour through the trouble shooting, awareness etc., programmes initiated by Community Information Centres proposed.

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.
Fig. 5.17: Ideal Information Flow Proposed

- **High** Level of Satisfaction
- **Low** Level of Satisfaction

**Demand for Information**

**Information Needs**

- **Basic Needs:**
  - Psychological
  - Affective
  - Cognitive

**Community Information Centre** (Integrated Supply of Information)

- **Information Provision/Supply**
- **Information Transfer**

**Formal Channels**

**Institutional Channels**

**Demand for Information**

**Barriers**

- Awareness programs
- Referral programs
- Guidance programs
- Trouble shooting programs

**Failure**

**Citizen**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier Category</th>
<th>GI</th>
<th>LG</th>
<th>EI</th>
<th>EdI</th>
<th>TI</th>
<th>HI</th>
<th>AI</th>
<th>IndI</th>
<th>FI</th>
<th>MI</th>
<th>LI</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>WI</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>EntI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Geogr/weather problems</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category rate %</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Structural Barriers; 2.1 Infrastructure - transport</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Institutional barriers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Content quality</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Cultural/Ethical Barriers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Socio-eco. Barriers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Socio-political barriers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category rate %</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal Barriers</td>
<td>3.1 No Conf. / needs not clear</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Social distance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category rate %</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo. zone No.vill.</td>
<td>Electricity supply</td>
<td>Roads &amp; Transport</td>
<td>Water supply</td>
<td>Telephone/ Radio/TV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcountry wet zone village –02</td>
<td>Electricity supply is available. But affordability to obtain facility is highly unsatisfactory.</td>
<td>Motorability - with difficulty or not suitable at all. Hilly pathways post walk only. No public transport up to the village. Few private vehicles.</td>
<td>Fountain &amp; well water. Clean potable. No pipe service or irrigation terrace. Hill y places have no pipe lines. But tea estate com.s have water service.</td>
<td>10 land phones, 6 hand phones./ 98% access to radio, 85% to TV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcountry dry zone village –01</td>
<td>Electricity supply is available. But affordability to obtain facility is highly unsatisfactory.</td>
<td>Motorability - with difficulty or not suitable at all. Rotten pathways post walk only. Occasional public transport up to the village. Few private vehicles available.</td>
<td>Public deep wells and. no water service. Need walk long distance to obtain water. In dry season water is distributed by LGO. Sometimes need to buy water.</td>
<td>3 land phones, 4 hand phones./ 98% access to radio, 75% to TV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowcountry wet zone 03</td>
<td>Electricity supply is available. about 75% of the families.</td>
<td>Motorability – roads in good condition. Regular public transport up to the village. Private vehicles available.</td>
<td>Basically well water. Some local govt. divisions provide water service.</td>
<td>Considerable no. of Land phones + phones. 98% access to radio, 98%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowcountry dry zone 03</td>
<td>Electricity supply is available to a main point on the village road.</td>
<td>Motorability - with difficulty or not suitable at all. Rotten pathways post walk only. Occasional public transport up to the village. Few private vehicles available.</td>
<td>Public deep wells and. no water service. Some people need walk long distance to obtain water. In dry season water is distributed by local government office. Sometimes need to buy water.</td>
<td>5 land phones, 4 hand phones./ 88% access to radio, 60% to TV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries village –01</td>
<td>No electricity supply.</td>
<td>Motorability - with difficulty. Main roads not in good condition. Sandy paths. Occasional public transport up to the village. Very few private vehicles available.</td>
<td>No water service.</td>
<td>0 hand phones. 90% access to radio, 78% to TV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion and Policy Implications

7.1 Recapitulation of Findings

The aim of the current study was to investigate the community information needs of the rural citizens and the way they consult channels, difficulties encountered in the process and the status of information provision within the rural sector in Sri Lanka. The study attempted to identify various information categories and the information need types and the level of fulfillment. In attempting to study the information flow, information access methods available to rural people, categories of information provision to the rural communities and barriers that affected its smooth flow were explored and analysed.

This study identified that there were 15 basic categories of community information types which rural people seek or interested to obtain. Sub categories of this basic fifteen categories were also recognized and it was able to draw out a ‘Rural Community Information Need Frame’. (See the Appendix V). According to the responses received the fifteen community information categories were identified under two types as ‘Survival’ and ‘Specific/Strategic’.

As an integrated approach, the present study attempted to identify factors that affect the demand for information. The study
identified three basic factors that had an impact over the demand. Those were:

- Nature of information
- Factors internal to a person
- Factors external to a person

Nature of information observed was of two types; ‘survival’ type and ‘specific/strategic’ type. Internal factors identified were personal characteristics of a person, i.e. ethnicity, age, level of education, gender, marital status, having children or not and the level of knowledge. External factors observed were economic activity engaged in, land ownership, employment category and the level of occupational training.

When studying information demand, the Level of Fulfillment also could be identified and measured through the study. According to satisfaction scales it was seen that some of the most important needs that come under both ‘survival’ and ‘specific’ categories were not met satisfactorily and most of the highly satisfied need categories were supplied with the government intervention.

Apart from the above mentioned factors that affect information demand, the study was able to identify the barriers that affected Access to Information (AI) from a citizen-centered perspective. The present study identified three main barriers according to the responses received from the respondents. Those were; Geographical factors, Structural factors and Personal factors.

Inadequate information provision in rural areas was identified as one of the drawback for economic and social development. According to the study, information flow in rural areas was not adequately planned to reach the communities intended. The study carried out a situation analysis regarding information flow of the rural areas in Sri Lanka and found that there was an
information flow already established, though not organized in an appropriate manner. The study indicates that there is an information flow at;

- Institutional level and
- Community level (Village level)

It was seen that government organizations were established to fulfill a compulsory requirement of the government administration and to provide related services. Other institutional frameworks had also been established with the motive of providing products, service and information to the areas concerned. It was specifically seen that these institutional structures are established mainly at the Divisional Secretariat level and located in the main town of division and sometimes these are distant for the villagers to reach in an emergency. It was also found that government information providers play a prominent role in providing information even though the delivery mechanisms were not seen as efficient enough to cater to the growing information needs of rural citizens. In turn it is noteworthy that the rural community also has a certain confidence in using government channels than the other private channels.

On the other hand, information provision of ‘Individuals’ who comprised ‘Government Officers’ and ‘Other Individuals’ operate at village level. It was seen that other individuals include ‘Persons of Recognition’ in the traditional belief system.

Recognizing the information providers paved the way to identify how ordinary rural citizens depend upon or consult different channels in looking for information. According to the responses received regarding the channel consulted in obtaining a certain category of information, a ‘Channel Dependency Rate’ (CDR) could be determined against each channel. It was seen that,
ordinary people have been consulting formal as well as informal channels, which were more comfortable, convenient and trustworthy to them.

It was found that most information access systems and delivery mechanisms are traditional. The format used was basically ‘Verbal’ and ‘Printed’. Other forms of delivery through electronic super highway were not even thought to be used in these areas. This was especially due to the highly inadequate infrastructure.

Upon the findings of the research, certain conclusions were arrived as presented below.

A Demand for Information (DI) within rural citizens exists, but it is not strongly focused enough to tap the appropriate information source. This was mainly due to the low Information Literacy (IL) level observed among rural people and due to the categories of barriers identified, hence the achievement expected by the user with the information usage was not being fulfilled.

Information provision / supply (IS) also exists in the rural areas. The study revealed that the supply was not focused or tailored to fulfill the information needs due to the non-identification of actual ‘community information needs’. Therefore a clearly visible ‘Information Gap’ was identified between the Demand for Information and the Information Supply.

Having identified the existence of an Information Gap, it was able to establish the reasons for this situation, through the findings of the study. Reasons identified are;

a) Non identification of community information needs by the information providers upon the basis of community specificity and location specificity.
b) Non identification of the nature of community information. It was also found that this category of information is “Service–oriented” rather than literature oriented thus is, mostly “Non-Bibliographic”. Therefore capturing and delivery of this information through normal library system is difficult and sometimes impossible and an essential requirement emerges through the study for establishment of an effective mechanism to delivery this special information type (Community Information). It was found that these information blocks were accumulated at service points like institutions and individuals. The community information is also not included, catalogued or indexed in general documentation products put out by documentation centres due to its non-bibliographic nature.

c) Due to the fact that, community information is ‘Accumulated’ or ‘Pooled’ at service points, information does not flow to the ‘Information User’ who needs that information as a remedy to fill the information gap.

d) Lack of planning in the information provision also widens the information gap, hence no systematic or uniform distribution of information among communities exists. Considerable overlap, non maintenance of specificity of the information categories, stagnation of information blocks, absence of policy initiatives to increase the awareness among rural citizens and social biases in information provision are resulted due to lack of planning.

e) Inappropriateness of the channels consulted by the citizens creates non achievement of information needs. According to the Channel Dependency Rate (CDR) measured, some of the channels consulted to obtain certain categories of information are not appropriate, so that accuracy, value and dynamism of the information is lost at the very origin of information demand.
f) Barriers to information access are very common in these areas according to the study. Due to these barriers people could not reach the information in time or could not reach at all.

g) Information literacy was seen to be low among rural people regardless of the socio-economic or cultural differences even though language literacy is higher among them. As the Information Literacy level is low, accessing, grasping and using correct information was seen to be difficult to them.

h) Lack of community outreach methods for educating or creating awareness among the rural citizens are seen to be minimal and in some cases almost non-existent pertaining to most of the need categories.

As a consequence of this situation, people are left with no clear idea about the existence of their own information needs, tapping the information resources and usage of information. The situation leads to a gap referred as ‘Knowledge Gap’ resulted by the existing ‘Information Gap’. Due to the circumstances, the available information sources are under utilized too.

Satisfaction level of information needs was also kept generally at a low level and productivity expected in the socio-economic life by providing information has not been achieved. As a consequence their enthusiasm to use information as an entity to remedy their day to day problems apparently is becoming fragile.

Based on the findings of the research study, it was able to build an ‘Ideal Information Flow’ model for the rural communities in Sri Lanka. The model integrates the information user, information demand and information supply to overcome prevailing information poverty by introducing strategic information provision model. The Model is given in Fig.6.18 in Chapter 6.
7.2 Policy Implications

The study clearly brings out the urgent necessity to establish a suitable information access mechanism at grass-roots level to rescue the rural citizen from an information poverty cycle. This requirement could be achieved by the inclusion of the “Information Access Strategy”, into development policy frameworks, as a linking tool between rural citizens and information sources and services. Moreover it is essential that the information access strategy be planned and implemented on the basis of ‘Networked/ Distributed Information Flow’ through an improved information infrastructure.

Even though there are national policies related to information infrastructure, a clear cut ‘information access strategy’ has been formulated to accommodate all citizens in Sri Lanka within a planned information sphere. The government should take policy initiatives to strengthen the information infrastructure by strengthening the electricity supply, telecommunication facilities such as developing post offices, promoting private sector to establish more and more communication booths, tele-centers, internet cafes, etc. The government could use existing institutional frameworks at community level for the purpose, by developing institutional structures, including public libraries, schools and government administrative service points closer to villages etc. and by places of worship at village level (temples, churches, mosques etc.).

CDR values placed upon channels, indicates the necessity to strengthen the existing formal channels like government appointed officers and introducing appropriate channels of consultation at village level, as the priority measures to be taken by the state sector. This criterion can be adopted easily by the divisional level administration by changing the duty tasks and by
creating awareness through the officers, who work closely with the communities.

It was clearly seen that the information provision in these areas is not systematic and has a lot of overlap in provision. Institutional information provision is also confined to their service mandate and the user should be provided with an ‘integrated access strategy’ with the view of making available the information required by them.

As an access strategy, establishment of Community Information Centres (CIC) at village level is recommended. This model is in operation in many developed countries such as Canada, UK, USA, Finland, Australia etc. (eg. Dundee City Council, Scotland; CIC Waterloo, Canada; InterEdu, Finland) and in the African, Arabian and eastern countries like India, Malaysia, South Africa, Zambia, Congo etc. (E-Choupal, Yuvatha, Village Information Centres of Swaminathan Institute; KISSAN India; IPOH Online, Malaysia; Mbendi of SADC, Zambia etc.) etc. This kind of solution will definitely have a higher potential, and easily can be integrated in to the prevailing socio-economic, cultural and political structure in Sri Lanka according to the analysis of attitudes of the government officers who operate in the areas studied. The centres can act as ‘One Stop Shops (OSS) to obtain information from different government, non-governmental and private sources. The CICs also could eventually be developed into grassroots level ‘Service Points’ as well as ‘Information Access Points.’

The modalities that can be considered in planning Community Information Centres are given below.
7.2.1 Potential of Usage of Existing Structures to Establish CICs:

According to the findings of the present study, under mentioned strengths and opportunities embedded in the social/administrative and political structure shall be used in planning a structure for the proposed CIC system.

7.2.1.1 Infrastructure facilities

- Electricity supply had reached at least to a point where the main roads joined the road ways leading to village hamlets which come under the authority of the local government body. Only extension of the electricity to required point of information access is to be established as a minimum requirement.
- Telephone connectivity in Sri Lanka had reached the most of the key points in Divisional Secretaries Divisions, even though it did not reach the all households of the community. Mobile telephone networks had also penetrated the remote areas and it was seen that there is a positive trend in using mobiles by villagers.
- Establishment of ‘Community Radio’ also can be used as a complementary delivery and awareness mechanism to go in line with CIC proposed. Through these channels community outreach programmes also should be organized to minimize the awareness gap. Community radio established in Kotmale is a prototype model.

7.2.1.2 Organizational structure:

- A well established administrative structure (provincial level, divisional level and district level)
that can be used as a local control authority of the proposed information upload and access structure

- The same structure can also be treated as the authority to organize and upload the local and indigenous information (produced locally) to the community information pages
- As physical space for establishment of CICs - Public libraries, schools, community centres, facilities such as clubs/societies/community centres, places of worship (temples, churches, mosques) etc. available at village level can be selected as Points of Access of the community information system.

### 7.2.1.3 State sector initiatives:

Initiatives taken to establish ‘Nana Sala’ (Knowledge centres) established at district level through E-Sri Lanka program launched by ICTA, to popularize ICTs among general public and ‘Vidatha’ centres established at divisional secretariat level to provide industrial information to satisfy ‘specificategic’ information needs are positive steps taken towards information provision to general citizens. Even though these two programs cater to different objectives, the same can be used to disseminate community information using OSS strategy and easily be integrated with the motive of disseminating government information and services. Using these initiatives as a mechanism for information control and delivery would be a strong and practical solution to the issue at hand. Information access failure due to different barriers will be disregarded and could be overcome through provision of electronic and wireless information provision.
7.2.2 New Policy Changes Required:

7.2.2.1 Infrastructure:

- Electricity supply should be extended at least to each Point of Access at every village where the Centres are proposed to establish.
- Internet connectivity is to be established in a cost effective method to connect the CICs in an island wide distributed network.
- The telephone facilities should be compulsorily supplied at least to the Points of Access.

7.2.2.2 Human Resources:

- Staff to manage the Centres – Participatory approach would be more appropriate.
- Training the officers and youth in the community to maintain the system

7.2.2.3 Sustainability:

Strategy to ensure the sustainability of the system –
- educating and training the technical staff within the locality
- encouraging the participatory management within the local human resources.

7.2.3 Basic Operational platform:

The model proposed can be efficiently implemented using the flexibility of digital information delivery through E-Government Portal Access strategy, as in other countries. The strategy gives the user an access to all information sites in the community network in One
Stop Shop access model. The idea is connecting the citizens to whatever the information he/she needs by entering only once into a ‘community gateway’ through an ordinary Personal Computer that can be accessed at any Access Point described above, even though a complicated portal strategy runs behind the user interface.

7.2.4 Advantages that can be achieved from the model proposed:

- The citizen is effectively connected to the information sources and services with minimum cost and effort through the One Stop Shop (OSS) model.
- The OSS model will be perfectly active with modern e-governance portal initiatives which are used integrating all products and services in the community information arena, to be accessed in one sitting on one portal.
- Information access failure due to basic barriers will be disregarded and overcome through provision of electronic and wireless information provision.
- The information literacy barrier will be eliminated through well designed community awareness or outreach programs educating people of the information availability related usage.
- Enable the ordinary citizens, especially youth, to use smart but appropriate ICTs and thereby upgrading their confidence in usage of modern systems.
- Opportunities available for the ordinary citizen to volunteer and participate in building community pages in the proposed OSS space.

Therefore identification of mechanisms within the socio-economic, socio-political structure that exists within the rural areas would be a potential solution to bridge the information gap.
that exists among rural communities in Sri Lanka. Hence the findings of the present study could definitely provide a base to plan better access mechanism to divert the citizen from the information poverty cycle they are caught in.

### 7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

The present study looked into the information needs of rural citizens from a community/user perspective (study of user genera), treating the individual as the focus of the study under general situations. Specific studies on the same domain would be necessary to be conducted to fulfill specific needs such as information needs of specific communities (ethnic, religious, senior/adult citizens, young learners, patients etc.) information needs of occupational groups (seasonal crop growers, fishery related industrialists, micro and cottage industrialists etc.), and information needs pertaining to critical conditions (breakout of epidemics, health hazards and natural disasters) etc.

The study formulated an information behavior model that generalizes the situations faced by an ordinary rural citizen. Nevertheless the channels, situations and barriers may take different forms in specific situations and occasions, such as in hazardous situations, in gender contexts / ethnic biases, prevailing in different occupations etc. Similarly information supply conditions, level of satisfaction and information transfer systems may display specific behaviours. These unexplored premises provide openings to break new research ground.

The study recommends Community Information Centres (CICs) to be established at village level. The centre will be the access point of ‘community inquiry’ and ‘community service’, but research can be further developed into their use as counseling and advocacy centres for many community based problems, distance learning centres for adults and youths, meeting centres
to unite the community and centre of information transfer and exchange. Therefore further research is needed regarding the establishment, implementation and broadening the scope of CICs at village level.


http://library.humboldt.edu/~ccm/friendship/khulthan.html .


King , K.(1997). Growing up, but will the informal sector mature?  


Lanka – Challenges of a Society in Transition. 16-18 December. Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo :Colombo: 22.


