

RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND NGO'S – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

“A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.”

James Madison, Former US President, 1822

Information and knowledge are critical for realizing all the human aspirations, such as, improvement in quality of life. In the knowledge society, in which we live today, acquisition of information and knowledge and its application have intense and pervasive impact on productivity gains. People who have access to information and who understand how to make use of the acquired information in the processes of exercising their political, economic and legal rights become empowered, which, in turn, enable them to build their strengths and assets. In view of this, almost every society has made endeavours for democratising knowledge resources by way of putting in place the mechanisms for free flow of information and ideas so that people can access them without asking for it. They are thus empowered to make proper choices for participation in

development process. The efforts made thus far to disseminate information and knowledge through the use of communication technologies such as radio and television, have yielded positive results. Sharing of information, for instance, about the new techniques of farming, health care facilities, hazards of environmental degradation, opportunities for learning and earning, legal remedies for combating gender biases, etc., have, overtime, made significant contributions to the well being of poor people. Democratisation of information and knowledge, by way of creating conditions for sharing among the people, who are partners in development, is critical to the task of equalising opportunities for development. In view of this, the RTI seeks to set up the facilitation process for free flow of information, which forms the basis for a healthy debate on issues of vital importance to every section of the society.

KEYWORDS: Right to information, NGO, Government, Karnataka, public

INTRODUCTION

Every citizen of the country has a right to know what the government is doing in its name to adjudge the performance of the government by getting information on each and every decision being taken by the government. At the first world congress on communication for development, government leaders and major aid agencies like the world bank had rightly admitted that existing models of development have been a colossal failure. Half the world still goes hungry, a billion people cannot read or write and a million and a half children die each year soon after they are born. Speakers from across the world stressed that in countries where freedom of information is law and people begin to ask the right questions, governments are forced to perform. The Supreme court of India and all the High courts in several decisions have upheld clearly the public's right to freedom of information, as embedded in the provisions guaranteeing fundamental rights in the constitution. Various Indian laws provide for the right to access information in specific contexts.

The Right to Information (RTI) is the right to secure access to information held by the government and the corresponding duty upon a public body to make information available. RTI today is universally acknowledged as a fundamental human right, effectively contributing to the promotion of transparency, accountability and public participation in governance –the three key ingredients for good governance as defined by the united nations development programme (UNDP). India has the distinction of being among one of the few nations in the world to have enacted a national legislation on the right to information.

At the community level, the influential land lords, associations of peasant farmers, cooperatives, NGOs, research institutes, religious leaders, finance institutions, political parties, etc, will exert influence over the decisions of the government. At the national level, in addition to the above actors, media, lobbyists, international donors, multi-national corporations, etc. may play a role in decision-making or in influencing the decision-making process. All actors other than government and the military are grouped together as part of the "civil society."

It is foregone conclusion that the community participation is an integral element not only for development interventions but also for good governance. Since governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision. Government is one of the actors in governance. Other actors involved in governance vary depending on the level of government that is under discussion. But the question of the involvement of all sections of society including marginalized sections of the community has remained a challenge to the development practitioners. Among several other factors dissemination of information from top to bottom is a prerequisite to people's participation.

Participation of the citizens in the governance will enhance the quality of governance and hence development. Information is an essential and powerful tool for the people exercise the rights of citizens or make informed choices. The greater the access of the citizens to information, the greater will be the responsiveness of government to community needs. Alternatively, the greater the restrictions that are placed on access, the greater will be the feelings of powerlessness, helplessness and alienation.

Good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of the downtrodden are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. Though the good governance is a myth and very difficult to achieve in its totality. However, to ensure sustainable human development, actions must be taken to work towards this idea with the aim of making it a reality. At the first World Congress on Communication for Development, government leaders and major aid agencies like the World Bank had rightly admitted that existing models of development have been a colossal failure. Half the world still goes hungry, a billion people cannot read or write and a million and a half children die each year soon after they are born. Speakers from across the world stressed that in countries where freedom of information is law and people begin to ask the right questions, governments are forced to perform.

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Research questions:

1. What are the problems with rules and policies with respect to RTI in Karnataka and what changes are being demanded by citizens, community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations?
2. Do various actors have the capacity or do they lack capacity to undertake research and incorporate research into policy?
3. What are the factors that influence actors to play a key role in the success or failure of the process of influencing?
4. To what extent has the demand for changes and policy advocacy been successful? What implications did it have on the use of RTI in the state?
5. What factors within the context affect the success or failure of using research evidence to advocate for changes in policy and practice?

Review of Literature

The advantages of community participation in development have been attributed to programme efficiency, effectiveness, self-reliance, coverage, and sustainability. For example public action can be used to check school and health sector absenteeism. According to a World Bank study 35-40% of the PHC workers and 25% of the primary school teachers were found absent from their departments during a surprise visit made in 2003. The proximate and informed agency of concerned parents and local residents is required to tackle this problem, because the system of centralised school inspection has proved ineffective in rural areas. There are, however, limitations and obstacles associated with people's participation in the development process. These include (but are not limited to) the fact that eliciting participation from communities takes time and thus may delay programme implementation which may prove more costly to develop alternatives. The funding agencies and NGO are often reluctant to relinquish power and control

over the development process and community expectations of the programme may be exaggerated and thus may not be realized.

In the context of rural India social obstacles may include a mentality of dependence, culture of silence, domination of local elite, or gender inequality (Oakley, 1991). Any effective development intervention must take into account the unique economic, political, and cultural aspects of a society (G. Sen, and C. Grown: 1987). The success and sustainability of an intervention is determined to a great extent by the degree to which the community takes ownership over it.

The state of Karnataka has been the foremost among others in introducing Decentralised Governance for the benefit of the citizens. One of the most discussed aspects of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has been the conducting of Gram Sabha Meetings at the village/ward levels. The principle behind village level assemblies has been to facilitate peoples' participation in decision-making and to enable local planning to meaningfully meet the felt needs of people. It is in these assemblies that information flow between the elected leaders and the local citizens should take place, such that the range of development initiatives that are available is made known to the people. Development interventions can assist by enabling the empowerment of women to demand control and monitor public services through their own organisations, augmented by decentralisation.

Local government is a critical domain to decentralisation. There is much evidence that the poor functioning of local services in India relates to the centralised, hierarchical and non-participatory nature of their management. Local democracy is undermined by the social inequalities like caste, gender, etc. The lack of representation of women in governance is one illustration of this. The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian Constitution have attempted to redress this situation and shift the political opportunity structure away from traditional beneficiaries. These legislative reforms aim to revitalise representative institutions through regular mandatory elections and reservation of seats for women and oppressed classes. These reforms have provided an opportunity for correcting the failures of local governance in rural India. Several studies on Karnataka have demonstrated how the implementation of the Panchayat Raj system reduced absenteeism and avoidance of responsibility among teachers, health workers and other government employees in rural areas. **Crook and Manor** noted that "all manner of government employees were now made to work because they were for the first time under the supervision of the questioning public mind". But it would be naïve to expect much from civil society unless capability deprivations and inhibiting social norms are addressed from other angles.

Whether it is selection of a beneficiary or implementation of a programme, the process is sought to be transparent and mutually accountable. This, indeed, is understood to be a qualitatively different step in achieving the goal of good governance. The experience, it can hardly be emphasized, has not been to the extent of fulfilling the desired outcome (Babu 2002 & 2005, Aziz et.al. 2002).

There have been academic scholarship and concerned debates among people in general, policy makers and administrators in particular over the issue of whether or not the Gram Sabhas have succeeded in maturing as an institutional process facilitating transparency or accountability. Instead, they have tended to be partisan and a result of elite capture. However, if there is a lacuna, it is the absence of transparency concerning the delivery of the state supported services

through the PRI Institutions. Consequently, novel innovations have encountered conventional hurdles. An easily accessible chain and means of communication is yet to be in place for the benefit of the poor and other marginalized sections of the society. This has been the experience, by and large, in other States as well. In the light of such an experience it has become necessary to demonstrate the potential of other means of communications.

Karnataka is one of the states that took the initiative to enact its own Right to Information (RTI) legislation while the Central RTI Act was still in the making. The Karnataka Right to Information Act (KRIA) was enacted in 2000, and came into effect in July 2002 when the Karnataka Right to Information Rules were notified. Despite some of its lacunae, KRIA does provide reasonable scope to set in place a system through which citizens can access information that they want from the government.

Right to Information Act 2005, which became effective in October 2005, empowers every citizen to ask any questions from the Government or seek any information; Take copies of any government documents; Inspect any government documents. The state of Karnataka has been the foremost among others in implementing the Right to Information Act. The Right to Information Act has enabled the citizens across the country to question the actions of the Government. This provision requires public officials to provide copies of public documents to anyone who has a right to inspect them. In effect, therefore, **the right conferred on the citizen is an exhaustive one**. It allows him to assess and examine every government decision, to study the reasons recorded by the government for taking a particular step, and to utilise information so to address various issues related to governance and make governance people's friendly. Many say that this legislation is a weapon against corruption.

Despite its weaknesses, the Karnataka RTI legislation is still considered as relatively progressive compared to similar laws in other states. The challenge, therefore, for both civil society groups and the government, is to ensure effective implementation of the law to secure citizens' right to information. Many organisations working in the field of RTI Act felt that there is a need to increase the awareness of government staff as well as among the general public especially the common people about the Right to Information Act. Once the public and the bureaucracy are sensitive to the RTI Act, as enshrined in the preamble **to the Act "democracy requires an informed citizenry and transparency of information"** and adds these **"are vital to its functioning and also to contain corruption and to hold Governments and their instrumentalities accountable to the governed"**

Though over the period of time the working of bureaucracy is improving which has resulted in reduction in corruption. In its new report, the Transparency International also recognizes the fact that India has become a more honest nation as compared to other countries. One of the key reasons is because of movements like the Right to Information, which has pushed the government to deliver. Globally aid agencies, that have poured in money in the past to ensure development but failed to do so, are now banking on these movements to make sure that funds reach people.

Non-governmental organisations, consumer & human rights groups, and members of local residents' associations have been actively working on the right to information cause in Karnataka. Meetings to appraise one another on their efforts to procure information under KRIA revealed that they all had faced (and continued to face) similar barriers to information. These included: reluctance on the part of government officials to provide information, considerable

delays in cases where information was provided, and numerous lacunae in the provisions of the Act itself. In spite of all these constraints few local level organisations are striving hard to spread awareness about the right to information Act, its pros and cons. Several other organisations are making use of the RTI Act to bring the society free from corruption and enable the vulnerable section of the community to share the fruits of development programmes. Such organisations are also aiming at reducing corruption among the bureaucracy and thereby making administration people friendly. It is also true that a few organisations especially the individuals are also misusing the RTI Act for their personal gains.

Salient Features of Right to Information Act, 2005:

Right to information (RTI) is inherent in democratic functioning and a precondition to good governance and realization of all other human rights, including education and health care that have intense and pervasive impact on all the human activities. Specifically, the main objectives of the law on RTI are: to operationalise the fundamental right to information; to set up systems and mechanisms that facilitate people's easy access to information; to promote transparency and accountability in governance; to minimize corruption and inefficiency in public offices and to ensure people's participation in governance and decision making.

RTI is based on the key concepts: i) The right of the public to access the information and the corresponding duty of the Government to meet the request, unless specifically defined exemptions apply; (ii) The duty of the Government to proactively provide certain key information even in absence of a request. The Act promises to make the right to information more progressive, participatory and meaningful, as it encourages the common citizen to enthusiastically participate in the whole process of governance. The citizens are not only free to ask for information from the Government, but also have the right to get it. The scope of the Act extends to all authorities and bodies under the Constitution or any other law, and inter alia includes all authorities under the Central Government, State Governments and Local Bodies. The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) substantially funded, directly or indirectly, by the public funds also fall within the ambit of this Act. A duty has been cast, in section 4 of the Act, on every public authority to suo motu provide to the public with the information as prescribed therein, so that the public has to take minimum recourse to the use of this legislation for obtaining information.

The procedure of securing information as provided in section 6 of the Act, prescribes a procedure, which is very simple. A citizen has to merely make a request to the concerned Public Information Officer (PIO) specifying the information sought by him. The fee payable is reasonable and information is to be provided free of cost to citizens living below the poverty line. To assure that the information sought is provided quickly, section 7 of the Act, makes it mandatory for the PIO to provide the information within 30 days. If the information requested concerns the life or liberty of a person, it has been made mandatory to provide it within 48 hours of the receipt of the request. The Act provides for penalties in case of failure to provide information in time, or for refusing to accept application for information, or for giving incorrect, incomplete or misleading information, or destroying information and so on. In addition, the Information Commission has also been empowered to recommend disciplinary action against the government servants.

The Act establishes a two-tier mechanism for appeal. The first appeal lies to an officer within the organization who is senior in rank to PIO. The second appeal lies in the Information Commission.

Methodology:

Since several organisations are working for the betterment of people by using RTI Act, it is high time to take stock of the efforts of such organisations, their efforts, modus operandi, their achievements and failures along with their experiences. Such an exercise will not only help the organisations but also provide suitable insights to the government to strengthen the RTI Act for the development of the society through good governance.

The present study attempts to understand the above issues with the following objectives:

Objectives:

To document the initiatives of the NGOs in disseminating the information of the developmental programmes using RTI Act.

In order to understand the implications of RTI Act as professed by the NGOs, it is proposed to know the role of selected NGO's which is working at the taluk level in Karnataka. After understanding the organisation and its strategies, a detailed plan of action will be evolved to assess its implications. Keeping the above objectives in mind, the study will employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. A structured questionnaire will be used to collect the quantitative data. As a part of qualitative method, the participative exercises are employed especially focused group discussions and drawing of timeline, etc. In addition to the primary data collected through the above methods, the necessary secondary information will be collected from the government departments, documents and reports both published and unpublished

Significance of the study:

Of the major forces which have, of late, led to a re-thinking on issues that affect economic development, at least three of them are most important.

These are:

- (i) sharing of knowledge and communication strategies for dissemination of information;
- (ii) involvement of NGOs in designing of policies and implementation of schemes; and
- (iii) adoption of citizen centric approach to development.

We may briefly outline the significance of these factors, particularly in the context of the emerging development scenario.

Research methods to be used :

The study involves descriptive and analytical research.

Sampling:

By using non-random judgemental sampling, a NGO at taluk level will be chosen.

Sources of secondary data:

The research programme relies on books, articles, reports, annual reports, journals and magazines, news papers, CD rom information, internet information and so on.

Need of RTI Act:

Increasing demand by NGOs for participation in development activities.

In the backdrop of inefficient implementation of development programmes, the NGOs/self-help groups have demanded at various fora, for creating conditions for democratic governance. It has been alleged, and that not without a basis, that the Implementing agencies have frequently indulged in corrupt practices leading to diversion of resources from public use to private purposes. And, that the entitlements of the poor have not been assured, mainly in respects of food grains, jobs, health care facilities, basic education, etc. Poverty of all forms has thus been perpetuated, which is a major drag on the overall development of the country.

There are umpteen numbers of cases which demonstrate that the role of NGOs in exposing corruption and in providing necessary feed back for designing policies and effective implementation of the programmes has been commendable. For instance, NGOs have exposed the inclusion of fictitious names in the list of beneficiaries, under the schemes like subsidised food grains, employment guarantee scheme for Poor, domestic gas (LPG), medicines, reservation of seats in private schools for the children from the poor families, etc. Prior to the implementation of RTI Act 2005, at least eight Indian States had enacted the laws on freedom of information since 1997. People, in these states took recourse to the various provisions of transparency norms to obtain information held by the public bodies. The NGOs also conducted social audits of the schemes, particularly the poverty alleviation programmes, the outcomes of which have resulted in appropriate reforms in governance of the projects. This forms the basis for replicating these experiences throughout the country. In view of commendable contributions of NGOs in carrying out the programmes in partnership with the public bodies, the RTI Act has envisaged for providing a framework for promoting interface between the citizens and the Government, such that informed decisions could be taken at all levels by the functionaries of the governments. And, the projects should be executed under the sunshine to allow for reasonable scrutiny by the citizens.

India: Exposing corruption in the food ration distribution system

The Government of India spends Rs 26,000 crore annually on food subsidies to 6.5 crore people living below the poverty line. The system works by providing highly subsidised food rations to poor people who must present their ration card at privately run ration shops under the Public Distribution System (PDS). Unfortunately, considerable corruption surrounds the PDS welfare programme. Rations are often siphoned off because ration shop dealers make false entries into their records books to show rations are distributed, and then take the rations and sell them on the open market. A closed system of record-keeping allowed the problem to exist.

In March 2003, using the Delhi Right to Information Act 2001, a local NGO (called Parivartan) applied for four months worth of records of all shops in a particular district. After months of campaigning, the information was made available to the applicants. Following an audit of the records, Parivartan found that out of a total of 182 families interviewed, 142 did not receive a single grain of wheat during the month of June 2003. 167 families did not receive a single grain of rice. Out of a total of 4650 kgs of wheat supposed to have been distributed to the people, only 595 kgs had actually been received.

Citizen-Centric Approach to Development

An equally important concern of the development planners has been to evolve Citizen Centric Approach to development, as people live in diverse socioeconomic and geographic conditions. The approach to fit for all sizes, particularly in respect of poverty alleviation programmes, has failed. Without obtaining necessary feedback from the people about their socio-economic aspirations and the manner in which the accepted goals are to be realized, it is not possible to design and implement schemes that may eradicate poverty and liquidate illiteracy. The RTI therefore empowers every citizen to take charge of his life and make proper choices, on the basis of freely available information and knowledge, for effective participation in political and economic processes or activities.

Briefly, RTI has been implemented in response to the major challenges of development, mainly the urgency for democratisation of information and knowledge which are vital for equalizing opportunity for development, increasing NGOs participation in decision making and democratic governance and for evolving citizen-centric approaches for addressing the concerns of every member of the society.

In the following paragraphs, an attempt is made to present the salient features of the Act and to examine the extent to which the stated objectives of the RTI Act are realized.

Promotion of Citizen-Government Partnership

The RTI Act provides a framework for promotion of citizen-government partnership in carrying out the programmes for welfare of the people. The principle of partnership is derived from the fact that people are not only the ultimate beneficiaries of development, but also the agents of development. The stakeholders' participation leads to better projects and more dynamic development. Under the RTI regime, citizens' participation has been promoted through (a) access to information and involvement of affected groups/communities in design and implementation of projects; and (b) empowerment of local government bodies at village level through the involvement and cooperation with NGOs/self help groups. The pro-active disclosure of information has enabled the beneficiaries, mainly through NGOs, to assume a central role in design and execution of projects. RTI has instilled a wider sense of ownership in the development activities. Besides, access to information has enabled the people to participate in economic and political processes through a dialogue between people and the government officials or public campaign on public policies. For instance, information obtained under RTI, in respect of utilization of funds allocated under rural employment guarantee scheme, has been used by NGOs for campaign in favour or against the political leaders during recent elections in some States, with a desirable impact on political process. Almost all the welfare projects, particularly at Village and Panchayat levels, are being designed and developed in cooperation and support with the NGOs or

affected persons, with a view to raising the satisfaction level of people.

Reduction in Corruption

Lack of transparency and accountability encourage the government officials to indulge in corrupt practices, which result in lower investments due to mis-use or diversion of funds for private purposes. As a result, the government's social spending yields no worthwhile benefits, because, for instance, the teachers do not teach, doctors and nurses do not attend health centres, ration card holders do not receive subsidized food grains and the promised jobs are not provided to the people. In the process, it perpetuates poverty and harms the poor. It creates an environment of distrust between the people and the government, which impinge upon the development and jeopardize democratic Governance. Under the RTI regime, there is unprecedented transparency in

the working of public departments. As a result, there is better understanding of the decision making process and greater accountability of government. This has led to reduction in corruption in the country as evident from the following:

- i) The Transparency International (TI) has consecutively reported in the last two years that perceived corruption in India (a score of 3.5 out of 10) has declined at the rate of about 15-20 per cent per year, due mainly to the implementation of the RTI Act.
- ii) The Centre for Media Studies in collaboration with TI has recently accomplished an all India survey study (un-published) of the poor below the poverty line. The views of the poor have been elicited in respect of all the flagship programmes that have been implemented for alleviation of poverty. At least 40 per cent of the respondents have reported that corruption has declined.
- iii) It has also been observed that wherever NGOs are actively involved in the development activities, the perceived corruption is abysmally low.

Future of RTI: Tasks Ahead

A major challenge is to develop capacities for access to information. The capacities of both the public authorities (i.e. the duty – bearers) and the citizens (i.e. the claim holders) may have to be enhanced, for which a two pronged strategy would be needed.

First, a comprehensive information management system (IMS) should be developed by each public authority for storage and retrieval of data and information that may be shared with anyone who seeks to inspect and use the information for development purposes. Not only the institutional capacity but also the individuals associated with various public activities should also be trained and equipped with facilities to cope with the demand for sharing of information.

Second, in order to properly manage the demand for information from the NGOs, in general, and the citizens, in particular, a concerted effort would be needed to create mass awareness among the people to promote information literacy. A multimedia approach should be adopted to educate and train people as to how to decide and select what information should be sought for and that from where and how? Besides, they should be educated as to how to make best use of information for effective participation in economic and political processes. This alone can ensure cost-effective use of the provisions of the RTI Act. Right to Information Act provides a broad framework for Government and Citizens' interface to design and monitor relevant projects, contain corruption, ensure accountability and to mutually share the responsibility for development. Under the Act, the public authorities are required to adopt open and transparent procedures and methods of delivery of services. They ought to reveal what they do, how they do and what are the outcomes of the policies, programmes and public expenditures. In a democratic society, the citizen, NGOs and media have the right to know as to how they are governed and they also have right to exercise their options to indicate how they ought to be governed and served by the Government. It is important, therefore, to ensure the following:

Promote Information Literacy

The Act empowers every citizen to seek information and to gain ideas and acquire new knowledge to improve quality of life as well as to participate in the effective governance of public authorities. The issue is how to promote information literacy among people to enable them to decide what to ask for, how to ask and how to make good use of information, so that they can

effectively participate in the process of development, including control of corruption. The issue of promotion of information literacy among both educated and not so well educated citizens is

critical, because the people and the government functionaries share the responsibility of expediting the process of development. Accordingly, under Section 26 of the Act, provisions have been made for advancement of understanding of the public through education and training programmes. A multimedia strategy for promotion of information literacy should be designed by all the public authorities, including educational institutions, in collaboration with media agencies so as to ensure greater interface between the stakeholders. The task is challenging, as less than 10 per cent of the poor have some awareness about the law on RTI and the manner in which it could be used by them to claim for their entitlements. The potential of IT resources and widespread educational institutions of all types and levels should be exploited to promote information literacy.

Concluding Remarks

RTI has enabled people to participate in the process of development, which has resulted in reduction of corruption. It has just begun to happen for the first time for establishing an open and participatory governance system that protects and promotes the socio- Economic interests of every citizen, particularly the poor, who are receiving the benefits of development as per their entitlements. As the functioning of public authorities becomes more transparent and ensure proactive disclosure of the policies, programmes and their outcomes, there would be greater participation by people in every sphere of development. It is important therefore to enhance the capacity of public authorities as well as the citizens to develop awareness and understanding of information, to make its effective use for the benefits of citizens. In effect, endeavours should be made to increase the effective demand for improvement in delivery of services. Only about 10 per cent of over 300 million population of the poor are aware of the RTI, as a tool for reaping the benefits of assured entitlements. It, therefore, calls for making concerted efforts by the Government, NGOs and media for creating mass awareness among the people, particularly to educate them, as to how to seek information and how to make the best use of such acquisitions of wealth of knowledge in every day's life. The role of NGOs is critical in respect of both to constantly exert pressure for maximum disclosure of information relating to public activities and to participate in designing and implementation of socio-economic programmes. The task is challenging but easy to cope with provided of course mass media like radio and TV channels are utilized to reach the target population. In view of diversity of situations in which people live in different parts of the country, a multimedia approach should be adopted to promote information literacy and to democratize knowledge, which, in turn, are vital for people's empowerment, ensuring the reach of entitlements to the beneficiary groups and for equalizing opportunities for sharing the benefits of development.

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