Information Sources Utilized by the Self Help Group members of New Alluvial Zone of West Bengal*

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to trace out the sources of information; extent of utilization of sources and usefulness of these sources to the Self Help Group (SHG) members of new alluvial zone of West Bengal information sources utilized by the SHG members. A total 200 SHG members were selected from 20 credit linked SHG by multistage random sampling method. The result indicated that among all the sources of information, NGO/facilitator, member of the other groups were the main sources of information of the SHG member. The maximum information pertaining to SHG activities was drawn from the sources like member of the other group, NGO/facilitator (informal), training, TV (formal) etc. SHG members perceived that most useful information sources are NGO/facilitator, family member(s) (informal), training, Village Level Worker (VLW).

Keywords: Information source, Self help group, New alluvial zones of West Bengal

INTRODUCTION

Using information is a key issue in the information age. The real challenge of our time is not only producing information or storing information, but getting people to use of this information. Information is a critical resource in the operation and management of organizations. People are organized under the umbrella of Self Help Groups (SHGs) to fulfill different purpose depending on the situation (Sharma and Varma, 2008). SHG is a unique forum that can help people to be visible and ensure more importance in the community (Sharma, 2011). Not only members of the group, other people of the community get benefitted through sharing information and available resources. The SHGs have basically provided access to vast volume of information and helped in their processing, more competently. Thus, if our intention to improve both quality as well as quantity of information, use of information sources and /or channels which are essential for the reception of message cannot be ruled out. Considering above discussions, the present study was concentrated on the sources of information; extent of utilization and usefulness of these sources to the SHG members of New Alluvial Zone of West Bengal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on rainfall, temperature, soil type and topography of land, West Bengal has been divided into six agro-climatic zones, viz. Hill zone, Terai zone, Old alluvial zone, New alluvial zone, Red- Laterite zone, and Coastal saline zone. The New Alluvial Zone is the heart of West Bengal in terms of agricultural productivity, animal husbandry proficiency and has potential to improve in all angles of development for the sustainable livelihood security of rural people. So, the New Alluvial Zone was selected purposively for this study. The New Alluvial zone is comprised of different part of few districts but entire Nadia district is laid in this zone. So, Nadia district was selected purposively. Out of four sub-divisions in Nadia, two sub-division *i.e.* Sadar Krishnanagar and Ranaghat were selected purposively as these two sub-divisions had the highest number of credit linked SHGs at the time of data collection. Ranaghat–I and Ranaghat–II block from Ranaghat sub-division and Krishnanagar-II and Nakashipara block from Sadar Krishnanagar sub-division were selected purposively as these four blocks from two sub-divisions had the highest number of credit linked SHGs at the time of data collection. So, a total of four blocks were

covered under this study. From each selected block, 5 credit linked SHGs were selected randomly. Hence, a total 20 credit linked SHG were covered under this study. From each credit linked SHG, 10 members were selected randomly. Then, a total 200 SHG members were covered under this study.

A list of expected communication sources was prepared during a pilot study conducted in a non sample area of Nadia district with 50 respondents from five credit linked SHGs. SHG members were asked to rate their response on four point continuum interview schedule; most of times (3), sometimes (2), less of time (1) and never (0) for evaluating the sources of information and three point continuum for extent of information drawn from different sources of information; most of information (3), some of information (2) and less of information (1) and usefulness of information sources; most useful (3), somewhat useful (2) and less useful (1). Ranking of different information sources were done as per their Total Rank Order Score (TROS) for importance of information sources, extent of information drawn and usefulness of each sources of information. Total Rank Order Score (TROS) was calculated by using the following formula;

$$TROS = 3 \times N_i + 2 \times N_j + 1 \times N_k$$

Where,

TROS = Total Rank Order Score

N_i = Frequency of respondents quote the information source as most of time, most of information and most useful for importance of information sources, extent of information drawn and usefulness of each source of information respectively.

N_j = Frequency of respondents quote the information source as some times, some of information and somewhat useful for importance of information sources, extent of information drawn and usefulness of each source of information respectively.

N_k = Frequency of respondents quote the information source as less of time, less of information and less useful for importance of information sources, extent of information drawn and usefulness of each source of information respectively.

Personal interview method and focused group discussion (FGD) was applied for data collection at the respondents' doorstep with the help of a pre-tested structured interview schedule.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Free flow of information is the key for proper functioning of any organization. Information sources or channels have a great role in free flow of information. Therefore, an attempt has been made to judge various kinds of sources/channel, extent of information drawn from each source/channel and usefulness of these information to the activity of SHGs. Table 1 explores different sources or channels of information used by SHG members of Nadia district of West Bengal. All the sources have been broadly classified into formal source and informal source with the consultation of the previous research findings. The same table clearly indicates that NGO/facilitator, member of the other groups were the main informal sources of information. The findings seem to be logical because NGO/facilitators were directly associated with the SHG members. NGO/facilitator used to help in SHG formation and passed the relevant important information to members of SHG related to their SHG activities. As per formal sources of information concerned, training ranked first. Television, exhibition and programme officials were the other most quoted formal sources of information. Training of the SHG members in various fields like goattery, poultry, wool knitting etc was enough to provide the latest technical know-how with convening reasons. Television and exhibition provide the wide coverage with rationality.

Figure 1 clearly depicted that from both formal and informal sources of information, NGO/facilitator of the SHG, members of the other group and training got more importance than the other source of information. It was also found that members of the SHG gave importance to both the formal and informal sources. But Kadian (98) reported that farmers of Himachal Pradesh preferred different informal sources of information like friends, programme officials, progressive farmers where as Meena (97) reported that farmers gave more importance to the different formal sources like radio and animal fair.

SHG members of Nadia district did not extract equal information from each source of information. Table 2 clearly depicts that the relative importance of each source of information in terms of the extent of information drawn from each source. It was found from

Table 1: Sources/channel of information used by the self help group members (N = 200)

Sources of information	Frequency of respondents in different preference				Total rank order score	Rank order
	Most of times (3)	Some times (2)	Less of time (1)	Never (0)		
Informal sources						
Member of the other groups	62	82	54	2	404	**2** (II)
Family member	31	104	60	5	361	**6** (XI)
Friend	41	75	81	3	354	**7** (XII)
Relative	47	77	69	7	364	**5** (X)
Neighbour	49	96	46	0	385	**4** (VI)
Local Leader	62	78	55	5	397	**3** (V)
NGO/Facilitator	77	77	35	11	420	**1** (I)
Formal sources						
Bank	26	74	93	7	319	**8** (XV)
Programme official	56	83	38	23	372	**4** (VIII)
VLW	46	86	62	6	372	**5** (IX)
Training	67	72	54	7	399	**1** (III)
Exhibition	59	73	60	8	383	**3** (VII)
Radio	27	94	67	12	336	**7** (XIV)
TV	57	86	54	3	397	**2** (IV)
Newspaper	39	83	71	7	354	**6** (XIII)

(**Note**: Values in parenthesis indicate the overall rank of information sources/channels)

Table 2: Extent of information drawn from different sources/channels of information by the self help group members (n = 200)

Sources of information	Frequency of respondents in different preference			Total rank order score	Rank order
	Most of information (3)	Some of information (2)	Less of information (1)		
Informal sources					
Member of the other groups	87	93	20	467	**1** (I)
Family member	53	113	34	419	**5** (IX)
Friend	57	82	61	396	**6** (XII)
Relative	38	113	49	389	**7** (XIV)
Neighbour	70	95	35	435	**3** (IV)
Local Leader	60	111	29	431	**4** (VI)
NGO/Facilitator	70	99	31	439	**2** (II)
Formal sources					
Bank	25	128	47	378	**8** (XV)
Programme official	74	87	39	435	**1** (III)
VLW	46	107	47	399	**5** (X)
Training	77	78	45	432	**2** (V)
Exhibition	56	113	31	425	**4**(VIII)
Radio	55	86	59	396	**7**(XIII)
TV	65	97	38	427	**3** (VII)
Newspaper	48	102	50	398	**6** (XI)

(**Note**: Values in parenthesis indicate the overall rank of extent of information drawn from different sources/channels)

the same table that SHG members drew maximum information from the different informal sources like members of the other groups, NGO/facilitators and neighbors. Programme officials, training, TV and exhibition were found to have more importance than other formal sources. Members of the SHG perceived that member of the other groups, NGO/facilitator, programme official, neighbours were found to have more importance from both the informal and formal sources (Fig. 2). They also perceived that sources like bank, radio, newspaper and friend used to provide very less information as per their need. It seems that major criteria for consulting a source of information by the respondents was the extent of knowledge gained from that source.

SHG members perceived that all the information sources had some beneficial effect but level of usefulness was different and this differentiation is mainly due to several factors like accessibility, education level of the members etc. Rank of all information sources is presented in the Table 3 and this ranking was done on the basis of the perception of SHG members regarding the usefulness of each sources of communication. Among informal sources of information, NGO/facilitator, family members, neighbors and local leader were provided more useful
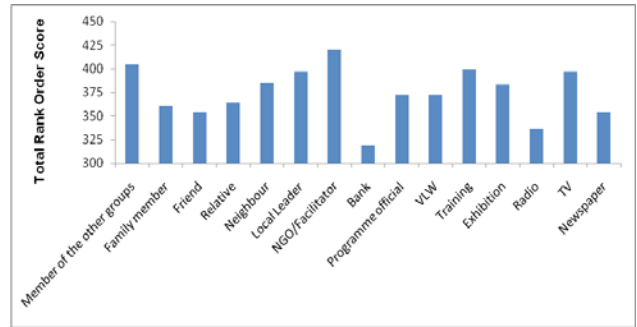

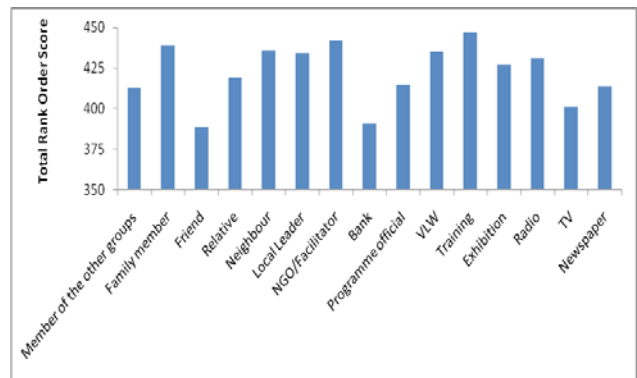**Fig. 1: Sources/channels of Information Used by the SHG members**

Fig. 2: Extent of information drawn from sources information by the SHG members

Table 3 : Usefulness of information sources/channels as perceived by the self help group members (N=200)

Sources of information	Frequency of respondents in different preference			Total rank order score	Rank order
	Most useful (3)	**Somewhat useful (2)**	**Less useful (1)**		
Informal sources					
Member of the other groups	46	121	33	413	**6** (XII)
Family member	73	93	34	439	**2** (III)
Friends	49	91	60	389	**7** (XV)
Relatives	53	113	34	419	**5** (IX)
Neighbours	68	100	32	436	**3** (IV)
Local leader	72	90	38	434	**4** (VI)
NGO/facilitator	73	96	31	442	**1** (II)
Formal sources					
Bank	30	131	39	391	**8** (XIV)
Programme official	63	89	48	415	**5** (X)
VLW	72	91	37	435	**2** (V)
Training	79	89	32	447	**1** (I)
Exhibition	58	112	29	427	**4**(VIII)
Radio	210	182	39	431	**3**(VII)
TV	48	105	47	401	**7**(XIII)
Newspaper	59	96	45	414	**6** (XI)

(**Note**: Values in parenthesis indicate the over all rank of usefulness of information sources/channels as perceived by the respondents)
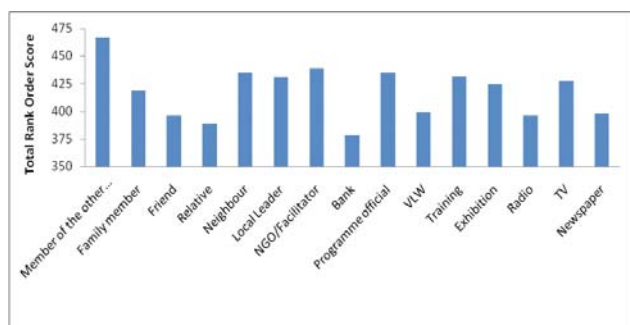
Fig. 3: Usefulness of information sources/channel as perceived by the SHG Members

information as perceived by SHG members. However, sources like friends, member of the other groups, relatives from whom maximum information had been drawn were provided less useful information related to SHG activities. As far as the formal sources of information concerned, training, VLW, radio and exhibition were provided more useful information as perceived by SHG members.

Figure 3 clearly depicts that among both informal and formal sources of information, training, NGO/facilitator, family members and neighbours were provided more useful information as perceived by SHG members. These findings are relevant because these informal and formal sources contained high intensity of influence in matters of understanding the messages and conviction which lead to acceptance of useful information about group activities.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it has been concluded that NGOS/facilitator, members of the other groups, local leaders, training and TV were the main sources of information to the SHG members for smooth functioning of their group activities. The maximum information was drawn by the SHG members as per their need from both formal and informal sources of information like members of the other group, NGO/facilitator, training, TV etc. They also perceived that the sources like NGO/facilitator, family members, training, VLW, etc were supplied more useful information than the other sources of information. It was also concluded that informal sources of information got more importance by the SHG members than the formal sources of information.

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