Making Knowledge Work for the Rural Poor

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The concept of an Information Village
Reaching the “poorest of the poor” – January 1998

Information

Value Adders

Knowledge
(Locale Specific and Demand Driven)

Supported by
International Development Research Center
## Communication resources in surveyed Pondicherry villages (1998)

<table>
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<th>Village</th>
<th>Households</th>
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<th>Population</th>
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</table>

* = not working

poverty = annual household income < 16,000 Rupees (≈ $400)

Source: M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, June 1998
Information Linkages in Rural Systems (1998)

External
- Govt. Dept.
- KVK
- Univ.
- Company
- Govt. Dept.
- Radio TV

Supra Local
- AO
- BDO
- Market
- Input supplier
- Bank Credit

Local
- Other farmers
- Farmer
- Other farmers

Strong Linkage
- Green lines

Weak Linkage
- Blue lines
The Hub and Spokes Model

(Villianur (hub))

Nallavadu
Veerampattinam
Periyakalapet
Embalam
Koonichampet
Kalitheerthalkuppam

Information
Knowledge

(Locale Specific and Demand Driven)

Spread spectrum

VHF

Thirukanchipet
Pillayarkuppam
Poornangkuppam
Kizhur
Moorthykuppam
Information Village Research Project
- Important news from local newspapers
- Meteorological report / Wave Height Map
- Vegetable prices at various markets including farmers market
- Bullion prices
- Acquisition / Purchase price of paddy / crop varieties
- Bio-Fertiliser & Pesticide stock at go down
- Details of paddy (seed) at go down
- Employment News
- Govt. announcements / entitlements / training details
- Health Information
- Education (Entrance examination questions & answers, scholarship details etc.)
- Agriculture Information (Farmer’s Dairy – Animal Husbandry / Agriculture)
- Important / Emergency Telephone Numbers
- National / International postage rates
- Group insurance details
- Agricultural wages fixed by Social welfare department
- Information on Citizen Charter, Legal rights, Potential Fishing Zone map etc.
- Microenterprises information / training, historical information on village etc.
Info gathered using high-tech but delivered through low-tech
## Potential Fishing Zone Details

**Partnership:** Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services

<table>
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*INCOIS*
Bridging the Digital Divide – a powerful Tool for bridging the gender divide

Partnership: District Rural Development Agency, Banks, District Information Center

Micro-enterprise for women

Some 12 women from Embalam and Veerampattinam, who had earlier undergone training, have started their own shell-article making unit.

For Vaishnavi, a resident of Nallavodu near Pondicherry, a mother of four children, feeding six hungry stomachs with just one small income has always been a problem. Her husband, the only breadwinner of the family is a fisherman and his income isn’t large enough to run the household.

“It is difficult to feed six mouths with my husband’s income. That is why I thought I could learn a skill to reduce his burden,” says Vaishnavi. One of the trainees at a five-day micro-enterprise training programme organised by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF).

Hailing from a family of fishermen, Vaishnavi is a housewife and doesn’t even go out to sell fish that her husband brings home. Though she joined the training programme, she is apprehensive about her husband allowing her to run an enterprise after the training, which began on February 24.

Like Vaishnavi, some 50odd women and young girls from the coastal village of Nallavodu, are also taking the women to Cuddalore and show them where the raw material can be purchased and also how to collect and clean locally available shells. We also help from set up micro-enterprises if they are interested after the training. The Foundation will also help market the items,” says Kasturi, another trainer.

Since they are micro enterprises not much initial investment is needed. “Each woman has to spend 100 or 200 rupees, for buying the shells. They don’t have to wait for a bank loan after the training,” explains Rajasekaranpandiy, a social scientist, with MSSRF’s Information Village Research Project, under which this programme is being organised.

This particular shell-making programme is being funded by the Friends of MSSRF in Japan.

A lamp shade made at the training programme and are learning to make various household utility articles using shells - something that is easily available on the seashore. The women make curios, lampshades, garlands, showpiece items, flower vases and other stuff from different kinds of shells.

These women of Nallavodu are trained by a group of four women - K. Sundari, B. Kasturi, R. Dhanalakshmi, and D. Darshini - from Embalam, who had themselves undergone a similar training earlier from volunteers of the Sevasangam Trust.

Varnam Thirumurugan, a manager of the Trust, says, “It is essential that we train women in the coastal areas to have an alternate livelihood during lean periods.”

Women from coastal villages will also be taught to make candles, candlesticks and fruit juices among other things. The programme adds value to time and labour - the two inputs that are available in plenty in villages, he adds.

By Deepa H. Rameshkrithinathan

Photos: T. Slingaranvelu
## Monthly Savings Report

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Sustainable Livelihoods for All: The Micro Enterprise cum Micro Credit Revolution

Partnership: District Information Centre and Rural Artisans
Software & Hardware Training
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<td>Waste Paper Mart</td>
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etc…
Interactions on Nature Cure and Herbal Remedies
Partnership: SEVA (NGO)
Knowledge of Animal Husbandry through Touch Screen Databases

Partnership: Rajiv Gandhi College of Veterinary & Animal Sciences (RGCOVAS)
Partnership: Centre for Science, Society and Culture
Every village a knowledge centre: There is a need for developing a master plan coupled with a business plan for extending the benefits of ICT to all the 600,000+ villages in India by 2007, which marks the 60th anniversary of our Independence. The master plan should help to link technology-knowledge-rural women and men in a symbiotic manner. The investment needs will have to be estimated and business plans prepared. A National Alliance for ICT for Poverty Eradication may be established for launching the Every Village a Knowledge Centre movement. Such an alliance should include the private sector, cooperatives, NGOs, R & D institutions, women’s associations, mass media and appropriate government agencies.
National Alliance for Mission 2007
Platform for partnership

General Body

Steering Committee

Task Forces

Connectivity & Space Applications
Content and Application
Policy
Management of Knowledge Centers – ICT SHGs
Resources

Web of Partners
Major Outcomes

• The National Alliance for Mission 2007 representing a coalition of the concerned, will facilitate and accelerate the spread of the rural knowledge centre movement and will function, like the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), without a legal structure.

• At the village level, on the basis of local dynamics a committee will be formed in consultation with the Gram Sabha for managing knowledge centers. This committee will help to organize training, building capacity, peer-to-peer learning among the knowledge workers and local entrepreneurs. These may be Panchayats, Self-help groups, common interest groups, human networks and community-based organizations.
Major Outcomes

• There are numerous ICT tools – Internet, Cable TV, Radio, Cellphone and vernacular press. The National alliance doesn’t believe in the absolute superiority of any particular tool, rather in using an appropriate mix of these tools that would benefit the people the most.

• The constitution of a Steering Committee for Mission 2007 comprising governmental and civil society organizations and the media, private sector, professionals and academia.

• The Mission will be implemented on the principle of social inclusion, social relevance and gender equity. Transaction costs will be kept low and sense of ownership will be created by fostering the growth of an ICT-SHG movement.
National Alliance Founding Members

M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai
NASSCOM Foundation, New Delhi
OneWorld South Asia, New Delhi
Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU)
Tata Sons Limited, Mumbai
Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore
Dr B R Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU)
Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
State Bank of India, Mumbai
Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management, Kerala
Madras Institute of Development Studies
Development Alternatives, New Delhi
Indian Institute of Technology-Madras
International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
Department of Agriculture, Maharashtra
National Foundation for India
Indira Gandhi National Open University …..
Facilitating multistakeholder partnerships between CSOs, Govt. agencies, research institutes, academic institutions, corporates.....

May 2004...... 40 organisations......
October 2004.....80 and counting
January 2005.......100 + and counting......
“We have not only lost lives, but also our livelihood. It may take months, perhaps years for us to recover. Our future is totally dark.” – Fishermen at Periayakalapet
Delivering relief materials in an organized way
Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy for Rural Prosperity [NVA]

ICT-enabled knowledge flow
Lab to Lab, Lab to Land, Land to Lab, Land to Land

State Level Hub (MSSRF)
Data Managers (both connectivity and content)

Web based interactive portal

Block level hub

Data Users (Rural families)

Satellite

Data Generators & Providers

Lab to Lab, Lab to Land, Land to Lab, Land to Land
suitably blending the information derived from earth observation satellites with ground derived and weather related information, locale-specific community advisory services can be provided. Community based vulnerability and risk related information, provision of timely early warning and dissemination of severe weather related information can lead to reliable disaster management support at the village level.
India Meteorological Department (IMD) has brought out two atlases on the “Tracks of storms and depressions in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea” for the period of 1877-1970 and 1971-1990. As per the analysis of the data for the last 100-year period, there have been 1318 cyclonic storms and 551 super cyclonic storms. From the data, we found Nagapattinam [with 5.5] is the most vulnerable site in Tamil Nadu [Probable Maximum Storm Surge].
National Center for Medium Range Weather Forecasting

District Level Value Adders (integrated advisory system with the help of research institutes, policy makers and meteorological department)

Block Level Information Resources Center

Rural Knowledge Centres

Rural Families

India Meteorological Department
Agriculture Scenario

- More than Rs.60 million worth of agricultural crops have been washed away in Nagapattinam District.
- More than Rs.600,000 worth of horticulture crops have also been damaged. 26 agricultural villages have been affected in 4 taluks of Nagapattinam District.
- The seawater intrusion has polluted the surrounding subsoil water source through seawater entering into the rivers (upto 10 km inland).
- An analysis of 264 soil samples in 46 villages [5 taluks] in Nagapattinam district 11 days after the Tsunami attack revealed salt level (EC) of the soils in the affected areas has risen to 22 dsm from <1.0 dsm.
Kuzhivuduchan Rice Field after Inundation of Sea water
Place: Kovilpathu, Vedharanyam Taluk

KUNTHAZHI
Place: Thoduvai, Sirkaizi Taluk
Ham Radio and Hambulance

Exodus from Nagapattinam

By G. Srinivasan

TIRUVARUR, DEC. 30. Today, there was a mass exodus from Nagapattinam to Tiruvarur and other places with confusing news making rounds about fresh tsunami attack at Nagapattinam.

Following the official warning, people in coastal areas of Nagapattinam were asked to go to safer places. Elsewhere in the state, flash news in satellite channels that there might be fresh attacks and that there might not be one confused the people totally. Those in places like Thanjavur took vehicles and rushed to Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam to get their relatives back to safer places like Thanjavur.

Thousands started flooding Tiruvarur today, from where people started moving back to Nagapattinam only yesterday. The Thanjavur Collector, J. Radhakrishnan, who was at Nagapattinam, told _The Hindu_ that nearly 1000 people from Akkarapet, the worst affected area and where army was involved in relief operations, were moved to safer places.

Army started clearing the way by breaking open boats that block movement of relief to the other side. "We have moved the people to two to three km away following the warning given about fresh tsunami attack," the Collector said.

The Tiruvarur Collector, P. E. Kambram, said that the 22 centres set up for refugees in Tiruvarur district continued to function.

Following the warning of fresh tsunami attack, the people in coastal areas of Muthupet in Tiruvarur district, Adhirampattinam, Mallippattinam, Mallipattinam, and Sethuvapathy in Thanjavur district were moved to safer places and lodged.

According to V. Palaniappan, a HAM radio operator who was coordinating communication about missing people from Nagapattinam to states like Kerala, Karnataka, and Andamans, clothes and food were in surplus in Nagapattinam and Vallankanni.

One can see heaps of clothes on Tiruvarur-Nagapattinam Road untouched by the people as most of them have not returned. In Vallankanni, items are wasted. The condition should be on areas like Nagore, Thanjavur, Poompuhar, and Sirkali where the people are in need of help, he said.

People can adopt village and reconstruct them after things settle down. That will be the real help to the affected people," he added.
Beyond Tsunami: Agenda and Action

- **Ecological Rehabilitation** [establishment of **bio-shields** along the coast involving raising plantations of mangroves, salicornia, atriplex, causarina, bamboo and other appropriate salt tolerant species (halophytes)]
- **Agronomic Rehabilitation** [developing a detailed strategy for helping farm families affected by seawater ingress]
- **Livelihood Rehabilitation** [establishing coastal **biovillages** with concurrent attention to sea based and land based livelihood opportunities]
- **Information Empowerment through a Network of Knowledge Centres** [connectivity, content, capacity building and care and management]
Bioshield - Mangroves are a group of trees and shrubs growing in muddy substratum in the places where river water mixes with seawater
Specialized Root System

Grow in Rows and Act as a Barrier
Saved Life and Property During Tsunami in the Pichavaram region

MGR Nagar

Killai fisher colony

Pichavaram

Mangroves

Bay of Bengal

2004

T.S.Pettai

Saved Life and Property During Tsunami in the Pichavaram region
Multiple Micro-enterprises for livelihood security - Biovillage
Networking of Coastal Knowledge Centers
Organizational Considerations

- Social Mobilization and Need / Demand Assessment
- Community Participation
- Connectivity
- Content
- Hub and Spokes Model
- Management, Monitoring and Evaluation
- Services [Multipurpose Centre]
- Partnership
- Capacity Building
- Sustainability
Conclusion

- Managing technology and connectivity
- Managing content creation, gathering, validation and dissemination
- Managing delivery of content on time
- Managing for improving the well-being of the whole community
- Going beyond ICT, content and knowledge center giving a human touch to the whole programme