CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION
5.0 Introduction

The emphasis of the present study is on information as a key resource in all the development processes and its role in improving the quality of human life. In the present-day information-intensive society, every individual needs to have access to information that is pertinent to all spheres of life. The role and value of information in modern society has been increasingly recognised, which has become apparent even in the rural settings. In fact, the need for information relating to all aspects of life is felt more acutely by the rural masses. It is, therefore, very crucial to provide the rural populace with appropriate information for individual as well as national progress. Against this backdrop, the present study was carried out to assess the volume of information flow and access in the rural areas of the two North Eastern states of Meghalaya and Nagaland.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The findings of the study may be outlined as below:

(i) Villagers in Meghalaya and Nagaland need more information pertaining to all aspects of life.
(ii) The interpersonal (IP) communication sources and channels are more effective than the non-interpersonal (NIP) communication sources and channels in meeting the information needs of the villagers. It has been found that the villagers, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds, use IP sources and channels to a greater extent than NIP sources and channels. This has been primarily because of the ready availability and accessibility of the interpersonal sources and channels to the villagers. Thus, the hypothesis that 'interpersonal communication among members of a social system serves as an important source and channel of information flow and access' has been proved to be true.

(iii) The non-interpersonal communication sources and channels considered in the study do not have constant touch with the villagers and are not readily available when needed. This is why information flow and access through these sources and channels have been inadequate in information dissemination to the villagers.

(iv) It has also been found that for most of the purposes, the extent of use of various information sources and channels do not vary across socio-economic variables though it varies in certain cases. The
variations are indicated mostly in the extent of use of NIP sources and channels, which indicates that the villagers use NIP sources and channels only to a limited extent. Therefore, the hypothesis that ‘use of information sources and channels vary across socio-economic variables’ has been partially rejected.

(v) There are no differences on information flow and access and the extent of use of various information sources and channels across geographical variations for most of the purposes though negligible differences exist for certain purposes. Therefore, the hypothesis that ‘information flow and access vary across geographical variations’ has been partially rejected.

(vi) The total volume of information flow and access through both interpersonal and non-interpersonal sources and channels in the villages for various purposes are found to be very low.

(vii) Poor communication infrastructure existing in the villages remains a major drawback in information flow and access in the villages.
5.2 Suggestions:

The findings of the study have necessitated certain suggestions as follows:

(i) It is suggested that there should be a Village Information Centre (VIC) in every village through which integrated and concerted information services can be provided to the villagers.

(ii) The study also strongly suggests the need for an integrated rural information system established specifically for the purpose of providing information tailored to meet the requirements of rural masses of the North Eastern states. Such need can only be ignored at the cost of individual as well as national progress. In this regard, a model for the North Eastern Integrated Rural Information System (NEIRIS) has been proposed.

5.2.1 Organisational Structure, Functions and Services of NEIRIS

As shown in the Figure 1, the NEIRIS can be set up under the auspices of the North Eastern Council (NEC) which will be the apex of the hierarchy responsible for planning, coordinating and funding the system. The NEC would also take up the tasks of selectively collecting,
evaluating, organizing, consolidating and archiving all relevant data and information pertaining to developmental issues concerning rural areas that can be transmitted to the respective states. The concerned states can further repackage and transmit all data and relevant information to the concerned districts. Each district will identify each information package in terms of suitability, demand and specific allocations at each block within its jurisdiction. All prepackaged data and information made available at the block level will be reorganized, stored, publicized and disseminated through the Village Information Centre (VIC) which will assume direct contact with the end users – the villagers. This way, the rural masses can be provided with useful, timely, valuable and accurate information to ensure individual as well as national progress.

The Village Information Centres will report directly to the state coordinating body without going through various hierarchical levels whenever necessary, so that any breakdown in the system can be identified and corrective measures adopted accordingly. This will ensure transparency in the system. It is also crucial that the VIC be established on the lines of standard practices as that of any organisation involved with
the organisation and dissemination of information. A sound organizational, financial, and manpower infrastructure with greater emphasis on the village level can ensure optimization of available information resources.

The success of an integrated system such as the one proposed depends to a very great extent on the existence of an efficient and affordable telecommunication infrastructure connecting all the villages. Any appreciable success in this regard will contribute immensely towards achieving all round development, especially the much needed rural development.

5.2.2 Manpower resources

NEC: As the apex body responsible for the implementation of the proposed NEIRIS, the NEC must set up a separate division directly under the supervision and control of a senior administrator not below the rank of Joint Secretary. A minimum supporting staff strength of at least 10 trained and experienced information professionals would be required. An
Information Scientist or a Documentation Officer having at least 8 years of experience in the field may directly supervise the team.

**STATE:** At the state level, the Rural Development Information Centre (RDIC) may be headed by a Director having at least 12 to 15 years of experience as Information Scientist or Documentation Officer in handling information systems and services. An adequate supporting staff must be recruited from the information profession, with emphasis on prior experience in similar organisations.

**DISTRICT:** The work at the district level can be handled by an Information Scientist recruited from any information-based organisation. Sound knowledge of computer applications and at least 8 years of prior experience in handling information products and services at the block level may be insisted. The Information Scientist may be supported by Information Officers and Information Assistants as may be required.

**BLOCK:** An Information Officer of the rank of Class I Gazzetted officer having at least 5 years of experience in a similar organisation or
related field experience as Information Assistant can handle the work at the block level. At least 5 supporting staff may need to be recruited at this level in order to ensure adequate coverage of all the villages under the block.

VILLAGE: An Information Assistant of the rank of a Class II gazetted officer with a minimum qualification of Master’s Degree in Information Studies, Documentation Science, or Library and Information Science preferably with knowledge in computer applications may be recruited and posted at each village. At least two Field Assistants belonging to the respective villages and having a minimum qualification of Higher Secondary Certificate may be recruited to actually implement the field work at the grassroots level.

In order to ensure speedy disposal of projects and to also maintain transparency in all matters, the village information centre must also be authorized to report and put up proposals directly to the concerned wing of the state when warranted, so that bureaucratic red-tapism may also be avoided in the working of the system.
5.2.3 Pay structure

The salary and allowances payable to the personnel recruited by NEIRIS would be governed as per the pay and salary admissible in the case of all central government employees serving within the union of India.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

The present study was an attempt to assess the volume of information flow and access in the villages covering a wide range of factors. It was an attempt at the macro level leaving a lot of rooms for further researches at the micro level.
Fig. 1. Model for North Eastern Integrated Rural Information System (NEIRIS)