CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 NEED FOR THE STUDY

Information, which is available in different formats – print, non-print and electronic in different categories – primary, secondary and tertiary and in different channels – formal and informal, plays a vital role in the overall development of a nation as a basic resource. It has long been recognized as an essential ingredient for the progress of civilization and society for all the times.

Women an important component of a society – a least beneficiary in view of their illiteracy, limited exposure to the outside world, poor communication and expression abilities and very limited or no access to information sources find it very difficult to use the information they require. The most essential step under the circumstances is to understand completely the information seeking behavior of economically weaker women in their socio-economic and cultural contexts. Women are mainly reached by indirect methods, usually through extension services. Even if the information is made available to the woman, the willingness of her to change, her ability to interpret and use information and the credibility of information are the key factors in making any impact of information on their well being.

Access to information would certainly enhance the capability of the individuals to make better use of the resources at her command, take considered decisions and improve her quality of life. But women suffer from certain inherent problems viz., poverty, illiteracy, locational remoteness, male dominated families where she is denied exposure and access to information, which is crucial for her development as well as her family. Women lag behind in every sector. Obviously the nation cannot move ahead keeping the major portion of its population in dark. As a result, International organizations, various state and central Governments, NGO’s and many corporate sectors are making efforts to provide information support to economically weaker women. Considering the vastness of the country and enormity of the task, the efforts are not sufficient. These are only sporadic and piece meal works. As such information support is awfully inadequate [1].
For providing the necessary support, a proper information infrastructure need to be developed which includes – developing information products, services and information dissemination mechanisms. India lacks such products and services to meet the exact requirements of the weaker women. Added to this is the problem of dissemination mechanism. The dissemination mechanism is not well established. On the other hand it is totally scattered, handled by designated officials of different departments who are not specialized in dissemination of information. As a result the available information often does not reach the end users at proper time. Thus there exists a gap in the information needs of women and information supply [2].

Information gaps exist everywhere – between different groups of people and are difficult to overcome. This can be due to various reasons: language, content, literacy, education, physical location, economic factors and socio-cultural norms etc. Hence to bridge this information gap, these need to be minimised or removed and support has to be extended. There are many examples of information support programs. But these cannot be taken as blue prints to be copied elsewhere. A tailor made approach reflecting the locally appropriate mechanism can give fruitful results. This necessitates LIS professionals to ascertain the awareness, use of and satisfaction with the existing programs offered by various agencies among women and critically examines the existing programs in order to plan, develop and provide information support to the economically weaker women.

Such studies help in understanding and thereby planning for the development of weaker women. Due to lack of adequate knowledge of the information needs and gathering habits of the economically weaker women, information support through various services often do not correspond with their needs and consequently remain under or unutilized.

A literature search made on LISA+ [3], LISTA [4], Emeraldsight.com [5], and subject bibliographies [6-12] indicates that number of studies have been reported from abroad including India. Majority of the studies conducted by developed countries highlight on health care support [13-14] – food and nutrition, AIDS, fighting breast cancer, menopause disorders, etc. Studies also have been conducted to support women with information on safe sex, use of condoms [15], security [16], gender enabled technology [17], small-scale enterprise [18], consumer products [19], housing [20], gender discrimination [21], etc. On the contrary, the literature from developing countries reveal that studies on information support to women with regard to
community information – general health problems, use of fertilizers and manures, food and agriculture [22-25], small scale enterprises [26], use of IT and gender responsive technology [27-28], etc.

Tadasad and Yallappa [29] identified low level of awareness of various types of information by rural community in general. Ibohal singh and Lahiri [30] and Swarnalatha devi [31] highlighted on rural and urban community’s attitude towards local newspaper, health information and agricultural information. Sen [32] observed a very weak women member base of rural libraries and other agencies. Basu and Dasgupta [33] call for a non-user study at a wider perspective. Singh, Pandey and Suman [34] stressed for providing women with information support. Sharma’s [35] study examined information needs and sharing pattern among women, noticed that majority of women to get their information through mass media. Results of a survey by Kumbar and Biradar [36] reveal that among the public awareness of mass media is high compared to the public library. Musib’s [37] study of villagers surrounding a public library identified the fact that different groups require varied information.

A research project [38] by the Women’s Policy Research and Advocacy Unit [WOPRA] of the National Institute of Advanced studies looks into various aspects of women’s access and control over resources, Physical mobility, sexuality and other areas that are not often researched. The study has also revealed certain lacuna in the existing programs, and suggested to initiate a state-wide advocacy process with parallel interventions at the grassroots and the state-level.

A report entitled ‘Participation of Women in Household Work and other Specified Activities in Karnataka’ [39] released by the Government of Karnataka, highlights some interesting trends with respect to women and work in the state. A significant number of women were found to be engaged in ‘household economic activities’. Rural women are found to be more active than urban women in household economic activities. Most women who are involved in household economic activities reported on the need for working capital or better access to credit. The findings are based on a sample survey, which covered the entire State, including interviews of over fourteen thousand persons in urban and rural areas. The report recommends the provision of support through right information to women as a means to establish structural and functional linkages between the informal and formal sectors.

Devi [40] feels there is a need for strengthening communication about the details of schemes, loan component, etc. Printed booklets in Kannada should be
supplied to Grama Panchayats, SHGs, NGOs and other local organizations for dissemination of information. She also opines that the schemes also lack in monitoring and evaluation from time to time.

Thus the following can be observed from the review of literature.

1. There is a need for conducting extensive exploratory studies in wider geographical proximity in different settings.
2. No specific studies exclusively on economically weaker women.
3. Nothing much is reported on the awareness and use of information support programs offered by various agencies.
4. There is a lack of studies on critical evaluation of information support mechanisms.
5. The treatment given in earlier studies on these aspects is very inadequate, in view of the present emphasis laid by Government, non Government organizations, corporate sectors on empowering women.

Against this backdrop, it is felt necessary to study these aspects in the present study. Hence, it was proposed to examine information needs of economically weaker group of women in Karnataka state. The study also proposed to examine the awareness and use levels of the economically weaker women as regards information support programs (information products, resources, services, channels and dissemination mechanisms) initiated by various agencies, their perception about information support programs, their information source use behavior and constraints faced by them.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

“Information Support to economically weaker group of women in Karnataka State: A Study”

1.3 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The scope of the present study is limited to the study of Information support to economically weaker group of women in Karnataka State. For the spatial coverage the selection of sample respondents have been made from thirty districts of Karnataka State. From each district one taluka (block), from each taluka (block) two villages have been selected for this study. From each village 30 respondents have been
selected. Thus Total 60 villages and 1800 respondents have been chosen for this study.

The present study is mainly based on the primary data collected from sample respondents and the following limitations have been identified.

The present study is explorative in nature and restricted geographically to the sample population of economically weaker group of women identified using the sampling method in the state of Karnataka. Further it is restricted to the extent of assessing the information needs, awareness and use level and analysis of existing information support programmes. The limitations of the methodologies adopted also apply to the study.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Primary objective of the study is to examine the information support to economically weaker group of women in Karnataka State. Specifically the objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the information needs of economically weaker group of women.
2. To assess the awareness level of people as regards the information support programs.
3. To find out the use level of people as regards the information support programs.
4. To identify, the existing information dissemination mechanism and information support existing in the Karnataka State.
5. To give suggestions improving the existing information support programs.

1.5 HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study

1. Information needs and gathering habits of economically weaker women have no bearing on their economic status.
2. Information needs and gathering habits of economically weaker women have no bearing on their educational qualification.
3. Information needs and gathering habits of economically weaker women have no bearing on social category to which they belong to.
4. Use of library has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.
5. Use of library has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.
6. Use of library has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women which they belong to.
7. Use of Radio has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.
8. Use of Radio has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.
9. Use of Radio has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women which they belong to.
10. Use of Television has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.
11. Use of Television has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.
12. Use of Television has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women which they belong to.
13. Use of Newspapers has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.
14. Use of Newspapers has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.
15. Use of Newspapers has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women which they belong to.
16. Use of Periodicals has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.
17. Use of Periodicals has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.
18. Use of Periodicals has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women which they belong to.
19. Use of Women related literature has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.
20. Use of Women related literature has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.
21. Use of Women related literature has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women which they belong to.
22. Use of Human resources has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.

23. Use of Human resources has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.

24. Use of Human resources has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women which they belong to.

25. Use of Institutional resources has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.

26. Use of Institutional resources has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.

27. Use of Institutional resources has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women which they belong to.

28. Use of Internet and E-resources has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.

29. Use of Internet and E-resources has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.

30. Use of Internet and E-resources has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women which they belong to.

31. Awareness and use of Government programmes has no bearing on the economic status of economically weaker women.

32. Awareness and use of Government programmes has no bearing on the educational qualification of economically weaker women.

33. Awareness and use of Government programmes has no bearing on the social category of economically weaker women.
1.6 REFERENCES


39. Karnataka (Govt. of) participation of women in household work and other specified activities in Karnataka: A report. [Available at: www.devinit.org/India.html (Accessed on 17-06-2010)].