

Information seeking behaviour of the beneficiaries of BAIF from Rural Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

Farmers in general, get information from several sources for better adoption of practices. However, all the farm information sources have not the same impact in convincing the farmers to accept the innovation. Attempts were also made to know the ability of the respondent to use channels and sources for receiving information about various development programmes. The findings on the preferred media channels and their frequencies put forth that, among the media channels, preference was highest for Radio and Television (39.56 per cent) with a frequency of once in a week, where as 38.67 percent preferred Newspapers and Magazines with a frequency of once in a week (1.33 per cent), once in a fortnight (3.11 per cent) and once in a month (34.22 per cent). The study revealed that, the respondent beneficiaries preferred Extension Personnel of BAIF, Village Extension Workers and mass media like Newspapers and Radio/ Television. Among the sources, all the respondent beneficiaries preferred the extension personnel of BAIF. It was experiential that, the extension personnel of BAIF were the only institutional sources with whom the respondent beneficiaries had regular contacts at varying frequencies. This might be the reason for all the respondent beneficiaries preferring the extension personnel of BAIF as a source for getting the periodical guidance for development and welfare programmes.

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In a vast country of a billion-plus like India, it is just not possible for the Government to live up to its promise of a truly Welfare State. There are vast areas concerning development and welfare that are left uncovered due to paucity of funds. It is in this scenario that NGOs step in and justify their existence in India. It is widespread belief that the NGOs are more successful in reaching the poor in poverty reduction and this resulted in rapid growth of funding for NGOs by government and external donors. As far as government funding is concerned, there are over 200 government schemes initiated by the central and state governments through which NGOs can have direct access to resources for rural development.

Mahatma Gandhi was probably the first among our leaders to promote rural development in India. In 1946, Mahatma Gandhi visited Urulikanchan, a small village near Pune. He established the Nature Cure Ashram and entrusted the responsibility of the ashram and rural upliftment to his trusted disciple Manibhai Desai. During his long association with the rural people, Manibhai studied their problems and designed suitable programmes to tackle the complex problems of unemployment, underemployment, community health, hygiene, sanitation and other social evils. BAIF believes that the focus of the programme should be on the rural family rather than on a village, because the village as a whole has a

heterogeneous character in respect of socio-economic status. If this important fact overlooked, a few well-do families of the villages invariably grab the benefit of development. As a result, the development agency becomes instrumental in widening the gap between the rich and the poor with following specific objectives:

- To study the Personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of the beneficiaries of BAIF.
- To study the information seeking behaviour of the respondent beneficiaries of BAIF.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Ahmednagar, Nashik and Pune Districts of Maharashtra, where various development and welfare programmes are implemented by the BAIF for their beneficiaries. Therefore, it may largely represent the rural Maharashtra. These three Districts are also adjoining to each other. One Tahsil from each District was purposively selected for the study on the basis of above criteria *viz;* Haveli from Pune District, Trambakeshwar from Nashik District and Akole from Ahmednagar District. Five villages from each Tahsil were purposively selected where; more number of beneficiaries and the different development and welfare programmes of the BAIF were undertaken in these selected villages.

The respondent beneficiaries who were the beneficiaries of BAIF's development and welfare