Rural Information Provision in Developing Countries -
Measuring Performance and Impact

Prepared for UNESCO, on behalf of IFLA,

by

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<td>2. Locate, obtain and provide information on all subjects of interest to satisfy all information needs</td>
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<td>3. Locate, obtain and provide information in a variety of formats and through a variety of information transfer modes or communication channels</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Offer advice, mediation and referral services and opportunities for the practical application of knowledge gained</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>5. Promote local culture and language; encourage and facilitate the capture, storage and use of indigenous knowledge</td>
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<td>6. Act as a co-ordinating centre for all providers of information and facilitate its dissemination</td>
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<td>7. Provide feedback on community concerns</td>
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<td>8. Act as a focal point for community activities</td>
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<td>9. Facilitate control by the community of the nature and flow of information</td>
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<td>10. Improve the standard of living and quality of life of rural people</td>
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<td>11. Produce well-informed citizens</td>
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Chapter Four
Indicators

Introduction

Information availability
1. Accessibility
2. Volume
3. Subject range
4. Diversity of formats
5. Indigenous knowledge and local information
6. External information sources

Use
7. Visits
8. Membership
9. Consultations
10. Loans
11. Activities

User satisfaction
12. User needs
13. Community needs

Local control
14. Localization of management
15. Finance

Economic and social impact
16. New skills
17. Income generation
18. Health and nutrition

Knowledge base
19. National issues and infrastructure
20. Literacy
21. Examination pass rate
22. Indigenous knowledge

Participation in government and its programmes
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24. Participation in extension programmes

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UNESCO has played a leading role over the past twenty years in supporting the establishment of projects of various types for the advancement of provision of information to rural communities in developing countries. Initially, these projects were intended as follow-up for literacy campaigns to encourage literate adults to continue reading and to improve their reading abilities. Now the time has come to evaluate these projects, to find out whether their objectives have been met and how they might be developed and improved in the future.

The present document is prepared under contract with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) by a working group co-ordinated by Diana Rosenberg (UK). Members of the team include Antoinette Correa and Djibril Ndiaye (Senegal), Kingo J. Mchombu (Namibia), Gloria M Rodriguez (Colombia) and Neil Upali Yapa (Sri Lanka). The main objective of this work is to produce a reference tool for rural library and information professionals mainly in developing countries.

The document suggests ways in which the performance and impact of rural resource centres might be measured. Qualitative and quantitative standards are developed together with technical guidelines and performance measures of all sorts of rural library and information services.

By drawing on the experiences of those working in Africa, Asia and Latin America it is intended that the measures will be applicable throughout the developing world. These indicators need to be tested in the field. Any reports on how useful the process has been in evaluating and improving strategies for rural information provision would be gratefully received by the authors.

The designations employed and the presentation of the material throughout this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO.

Readers are invited to send comments, suggestions or requests for additional copies to the Division of Information and Informatics, UNESCO, 1 rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15, France.

The document is also available on the UNESCO Web site under:

Http://www.unesco.org/webworld

Abdelaziz Abid
Division of Information
and Informatics
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABIPALC Asociación de Bibliotecas Públicos en América Latina y del Caribe (Association of Public Libraries in Latin America and the Caribbean)

ACCT Agencia de Cooperación Cultural y Técnica (Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation) (Francophone countries)

ACFOR Action-Formation-Entrepreneurship SA (Mali)

ACP African, Caribbean and Pacific States (a country group established under the Lomé Convention)

ACRL Association of College and Research Libraries (American Library Association)

AECT Association for Educational Communications and Technology (USA)

AFREDA African Relief and Development Consultancy Association (Tanzania)

AIBDA Asociación Interamericana de Bibliotecarios y Documentalistas Agrícolas (Inter American Association of Agricultural Librarians and Documentalists)

ALP see IFLA-ALP

ASIS American Society of Information Science

ASTINFO Regional Network for the Exchange of Information and Experience in Science and Technology in Asia and the Pacific, supported by UNESCO

BL British Library

C & RL College and Research Libraries

CAR Central African Republic

Cidap Centro de Investigación, Documentación y Aseroria Poblacional (Centre of Investigation, Documentation and Population Advice)

CIFADE Centre d'Information et d'Animation pour le Développement Endogène (Information, Training and Activity Centre for Endogenous Development) (Senegal)

CIRDAP Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific

CLAC Centre de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle (Centre for Reading and Cultural Activity) (in Francophone countries)

CLARC Community Learning and Resource Centre

CODE Canadian Organization for Development through Education

COMLA Commonwealth Library Association

CRDI Centre de Recherche pour le Développement International (Senegal)

CSIR Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (South Africa)

CTA Centre Technique de Coopération Agricole et Rurale ACP-UE (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation ACP-EU)

DEVNET Development Information Network (Nigeria)

DRI Desarrollo Rural Integrado (Integrated Rural Development)

ECA Economic Commission for Africa (United Nations)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EBAD</td>
<td>Ecole des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes</td>
<td>(School of Library Science, Archives and Documentation) (Senegal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eduplus</td>
<td>Groupe Conseil Eduplus Inc. (Canada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enda</td>
<td>Environnement et Développement du Tiers Monde</td>
<td>(Environmental Development Action in the Third World)</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>FID</td>
<td>Fédération International de Documentation (International Federation for Documentation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information System</td>
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<tr>
<td>HASHI</td>
<td>Hifadhi Ardhi Shinyanga (a soil conservation and afforestation project in Tanzania)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAALD</td>
<td>International Association of Agricultural Librarians and Documentalists</td>
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<td>IARIL</td>
<td>International Association of Rural and Isolated Libraries</td>
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<td>IASLIC</td>
<td>Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres</td>
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<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre (Canada)</td>
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<td>IEED</td>
<td>International Institute for Environment and Development</td>
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<td>IFLA</td>
<td>International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions</td>
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<td>IFLA–ALP</td>
<td>IFLA's Advancement of Librarianship in the Third World Programme</td>
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<td>IGESA</td>
<td>Institut de Gestion Sociale Appliqué (Ivory Coast)</td>
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<td>INASP</td>
<td>International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications</td>
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<td>INFORD</td>
<td>Information for Development project (IDRC)</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>ISO</td>
<td>International Standards Organization</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information technology</td>
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<td>IT Publications</td>
<td>Intermediate Technology Publications</td>
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<td>ITU</td>
<td>International Telecommunication Union</td>
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<td>KLA</td>
<td>Kenya Library Association</td>
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<td>LIR</td>
<td>Library and Information Research</td>
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<td>NCC</td>
<td>National Consumer Council (UK)</td>
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<td>NCSS</td>
<td>National Council of Social Services (NCSS)</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>NIDOC</td>
<td>National Information and Documentation Centre (National Library of Nigeria)</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<td>READ</td>
<td>Rural Education and Development, Inc. (USA)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>RLRDP</td>
<td>Rural Libraries and Resources Development Programme (Zimbabwe)</td>
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<td>SCECSAL</td>
<td>Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern African Librarians</td>
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<td>Sida</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Agency</td>
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<td>SIDD</td>
<td>Système d'Information et de Décision sur la Désertification</td>
<td>(Senegal)</td>
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<td>SIG</td>
<td>Système d'Information Géographique (Senegal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>STI</td>
<td>Scientific and technical information</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarea</td>
<td>Asociación de Publicaciones Educativas (Educational Publishing Association)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOSTAN</td>
<td>A Senegalese NGO working in basic education. The word is Wolof for 'blossoming forth'.</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNISIST</td>
<td>Universal System for Information in Science and Technology</td>
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<td>VRR</td>
<td>Village Reading Room</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Background

Botswana Seminar
The inspiration for this publication came from the Botswana Seminar of 1994 (IFLA-ALP 1995b). In June of that year, African librarians and librarians from elsewhere met under the auspices of IFLA, with support from UNESCO, to discuss matters relating to information provision in rural communities in Africa. The aim of the Seminar was to bring together experience and practice in the delivery of information in rural areas. Primacy was given to the analysis of operational rural resource centres, i.e. what had been established and was actually happening on the ground. It was hoped that, by reviewing strengths and weaknesses — successes, problem areas and failures — then possible solutions would emerge.

Need for evaluation
Among the conclusions reached by participants at the Seminar, was the need to stimulate a culture of critical analysis, research and ongoing evaluation of information services to African rural communities. Resolution 8 of the Gaborone Declaration recognized the importance of research and evaluation and ‘the need for varying and appropriate techniques and methodologies for conducting research and evaluation in the area of rural information services’.

The proliferation of experimental rural information delivery systems means that there is now a good deal of data about information provision to rural communities in developing countries. What is not available, is an accepted way of assessing whether or not the provision of information has had any impact on the rural community in terms of its development or even what nature of impact is expected. Nor do we have any standards against which the performance of a service can be evaluated, for example in terms of how well it is doing or how well it is supported. There is a tendency to concentrate on ‘inputs’: to conclude that a service is successful just because it exists, is staffed and has resources in the form of a building and books and staff. Whether the service provides benefits and is relevant to the needs of the community and directly contributes to the development process is not considered. Yet it is only if the ‘outputs’ are defined and measured, that the means and methods of information provision can be improved, redefined or changed. Unless, for example, a rural resource centre can be proved ‘useful’, then the financial support necessary to sustain the service will not be forthcoming.

To move forward from the present experimental stage of rural information provision and to formalize the concept outside the forum of those already committed, there is, therefore, a need for criteria against which the performance of a service can be measured and against which the impact of the provision can be evaluated.
Aims and objectives

IFLA-ALP took up the challenge. Recognizing that the need for evaluation standards for rural information provision was being expressed not only in Africa but in all countries of the developing world, the focus of implementation was widened. In the context of information provision to rural communities in developing countries, objectives were established as follows:

**General:**
- to create a series of standards covering the evaluation of the provision of information;

**Specific:**
- to provide guidelines on setting the goals and objectives of information provision and suggest factors to be considered in developing goals;
- to indicate the methodology and procedure of assessment and evaluation;
- to indicate the criteria by which performance and impact can be measured.

Outcomes

It is intended that the resulting publication will have a number of uses:
- to provide those running services with a standard means of measuring the effectiveness of the service in terms of operations and impact;
- to furnish funders or prospective funders with information on the usefulness of such services to rural and national development;
- to act as a stimulant to those setting up rural information services by providing guidelines on measurable expectations;
- to enable those running services to re-examine and re-define their mission and determine necessary inputs, in terms of buildings, resources, activities, etc.

The publication will be of relevance not only to those directly responsible for offering a rural information service, but to all those — whether local communities, government, or funding bodies — interested in establishing, operating, improving or evaluating such provision.

Methodology

**Working Group**

To co-author the standards, a Working Group of six persons was set up; these are all people who have been closely involved in studying or operating rural information services in Africa, Asia and Latin America. One was appointed co-ordinator, with the task of collecting the background literature; establishing the approach; drafting the preliminary text; organizing a meeting of the Working Group to review, amend, supplement and compile an agreed text; writing and editing the final version. With funding from Sida and UNESCO, work started in August 1996. Working Group members provided data from their respective continents and the literature was reviewed, in order to establish the key sources on which to base the standards. In November 1996 an outline of the proposed publication was submitted to IFLA and UNESCO for their comments. The initial chapters were then drafted and circulated. A Working Group Meeting in Dakar was planned for March 1997 but could not take place until June 1997.
At this meeting, which was essentially a writing workshop, the draft chapters were reviewed, additional indicators written and more material suggested for inclusion. This publication is the result of that meeting.

**Standards**
The creation of standards has long been a methodology used by those in the library profession to establish the fundamental requirements of a library or information service. They are used to stimulate development; they establish the minimum that is worthwhile; they address ways in which the goal of an information service should be developed and measured, the needed resources estimated and the success of the service evaluated. Traditionally library standards have tended to concentrate on inputs — book stock, staff, expenditure; more recently output measures have been given attention. Indicators have been introduced to provide the means of monitoring the achievement of the objectives set. The remit of the Working Group was setting standards for the measurement of performance (i.e. outcomes or effectiveness) and for the assessment of impact of rural information provision. Quantitative or prescriptive standards are ill-suited in the context of information provision to rural communities, where needs and resources can vary widely. What are needed are standards against which individual information provision systems can measure their own progress and development.

**Indicators**
It was therefore decided to establish (on the basis of descriptions, analyses and assessments of existing and operational rural information services) the generic aims and objectives of rural information support systems and to then devise a series of simple and appropriate indicators against which the established expectations could be measured. Using the resulting indicators, those concerned with the provision of information to rural communities in developing countries could measure the effectiveness and impact of their service. Although the indicators themselves would concentrate on outputs and impact, the application of the indicators would reveal where inputs — in terms of staff, facilities or resources — would need to be modified. Such indicators would not be prescriptive or punitive. Rather they would be used to measure and monitor progress, encourage improvement of services and highlight good practice.

Developing indicators which can be applied in different countries of the developing world, over three continents, presented problems. The nature and character of rural information support systems vary widely. Some are a part of established public library systems; others are based on a fixed physical centre, containing a collection of books and information materials but also providing a focus for additional activities; others are more fluid and aim to be co-ordinators of information sources rather than suppliers of information. Furthermore the resources available can vary widely between countries and systems. Yet the remit of the Working Group included establishing standards which would harmonize the evaluation process over different systems in different countries and regions. Concentration on the measurement of outputs and impact means that the origins, administrative organization and mode of operation of any information support system are of little significance; it is information provision and services that are given the importance.

At the same time the Working Group found it difficult to design and develop indicators in the abstract. It was therefore decided to use the concept of the rural resource centre as
the context of application. After all, it is the rural resource centre that has become the most used model for a rural information support system. Examples are found throughout the world. And it is the rural resource centre that therefore is in most need of evaluation standards. However it is hoped that some if not all of the indicators will be valid or can be adapted for use with different models of information support; it is also possible to select and apply only those indicators which relate to local circumstances.

Development of performance indicators or measures is an area in which there has been a great deal of activity since the beginning of the 1990s. They are already heavily used to assess the performance of academic, special and public library services, especially in the West. But no indicators have yet been devised to measure the performance of rural information provision. The Working Group accepted the challenge but fully recognize that the measures proposed in this publication are neither final nor definitive. In the first place they need to be tried and tested in the field; that has not yet been possible. Putting them into operation will immediately suggest modifications. In the second place, given the fact that rural information support systems differ so widely and are still in a state of experimentation, there will probably never be a universally accepted document. It will always need modifying to suit local circumstances. But evaluation criteria, even if they only last for a limited time, are essential if information provision to rural communities in developing countries is to come to maturity. This publication represents a beginning.

Content

The publication starts by summarizing developments in rural information provision over the past 10 years and includes research into information needs; methods and means of information transfer; modes of delivery; the impact of the new information technologies; and the results of evaluations that have taken place.

The next two chapters contain the core of the document. The expectations of any rural information support system are isolated, described and discussed; actual examples from developing countries are provided. What follows are the indicators against which the expectations can be measured. Each indicator contains sections on purpose, measure(s), data required, and method of calculation.

The final chapter contains some ideas on how to use the results of applying the indicators so as to provide more efficient and effective information provision.

Both expectations and indicators are based on the experience and practice of rural information provision, as revealed by the literature, and a comprehensive bibliography of sources is therefore included.

Indicators rely on there being the appropriate statistics available, so some guidelines on the collection of data are provided in Appendix One. The terminology used in this field is in a state of flux, but an attempt to provide some definitions has been made in the glossary provided in Appendix Two.
CHAPTER TWO

RURAL INFORMATION PROVISION: CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT

Context

History
As recently as the 1970s, rural information provision in developing countries was viewed as an extension of urban library services, with the rural population served through a network of branch and mobile libraries, book boxes and books by mail. All services were deliberately focused on literate members of the community and restricted to print materials. This is no longer the case and views on rural information provision have dramatically changed over the last fifteen years. The dismal success rate of rural development projects has probably been the main catalyst (Chambers 1983).

Rural development and information
The importance of rural development to developing countries is not in question. In Africa for example, rural areas support around 80% of the population and in non-oil/mineral producing countries account for some 70% of the national product. In Latin America the situation is different. During the last 25 years, there has been a massive migration to the cities and, in 1995, it was estimated that 73% of the population lived in urban areas; there the impetus is to develop the rural areas so as to maintain existing population levels, halt the exodus and attract back those who have migrated. During the development decades, the rural populace seems to have gained little or lost out through the process of change. Now rural development is seen more and more as a strategy to enable those who seek a livelihood in rural areas to be able to demand and control more of the benefits of development. It involves shifting power downwards and outwards.

One reason for the high failure rate of rural projects could lie within the process of information transfer in the rural sector. Development programmes only reach their full potential if agents transfer their knowledge and techniques and if peoples are motivated to make use of them. People become the principal actors in any change. Their participation and initiative must be harnessed. Those systems designed to effect knowledge transfer by means of the trickle-down effect have proved to be inefficient and extremely expensive. And technical solutions alone do not ensure development. A higher priority must be given to presenting research results in an accessible manner (CTA 1996a). Communication is at the heart of the problem.

It is now accepted that improved communication and information access are directly related to social and economic development. People at all levels of rural society — especially the food-insecure and the organizations that serve and represent them — must be able to access critical information and to communicate their needs. As a result, a great deal of research has taken place into the information needs both of the rural population and of extension agents involved in rural development programmes.
In addition, attention has been paid to the processes of information transfer, the various modes and media involved and the channels that information takes. Information delivery models and strategies have also been reformulated and new types of services introduced, taking into account the results of the research.

**Community information**
The rediscovery of community information services, offered in developed countries for the past 40 years, emphasizing meeting the basic needs of all sections of the community with information derived from all possible sources and delivered orally, has also been influential (NCC/NCSS 1978; Kempson 1986 & 1990). Literature on community information services in developing countries quadrupled in the ten years between 1985 and 1994, dominated by that of South Africa (Anwar 1996).

**Democratization and decentralization**
The 1990s have seen a major institutional revolution taking place in many parts of the developing world. It is now part of a slow but steady process in democratization and liberalization of nations. And it involves the transfer of powers, previously exercised by central governments, to local communities. Such powers involve the creation of elected organs of government, with legal powers and a degree of financial autonomy. The aim is for plans to be formulated at the level where they need to be implemented (i.e. in most cases at village level) and for rural people to fully participate in the generation of ideas, decision-making, programme implementation, resource and benefit sharing, project evaluation and control over all aspects of development. In this new situation of decentralization, information sources cannot remain centralized. The underlying implication is that rural people must have access to the information on which to base their decisions and with which to support their development activities. Genuine decentralization of government will only work if it is accompanied by an information support system.

**Information needs**

**What sort of needs?**
A number of studies have now been carried out on the information needs of rural communities. Some have been library-based, assuming the framework of a rural library as the base for provision (Aboyade 1987). Others are focused on a particular user group, e.g. farmers (Aina 1985; Kaniki 1991; Nwagha 1992) or women (Williams 1981). A few have concentrated on the needs of whole rural communities (Temu 1990; Mchombu 1993). Emerging from these studies is the conclusion that rural communities do have needs, even if these are largely unmet at the moment, and that an overall common content can be detected, i.e. information support for health, basic economics and income generation, self-governance and community self-management, agriculture and environmental renewal. At the same time, some needs have a distinct location-specific content, arising out of the socio-economic conditions and struggles of a given community. Also expressed is a strong need to support primary education and continuing education programmes.
Identification of needs
Information provided must be relevant to village activities and fill the gap between what people know and what they require to know to solve a given problem. Identifying needs can be problematic. Sometimes direct inputs like medicines, fertilizers or books can be expressed as information needs. The process involves both directly asking and examining situations, problems, future plans, tasks in which the community is engaged; only then does the information support required emerge (Mchombu 1995; Sturges 1996a). The priorities of rural people are food and food supply and health. But within these wide areas, the need is for information which will lead towards providing an adequate independent source of food and income, under their own control. It is therefore knowledge specifically on income generation and business skills rather than on agriculture and economic development in general that is required. Where farming is concerned, active farmers usually have enough practical knowledge. What they require is innovative information (generally resulting from research and development work) and timely information, required at a particular time for a specific purpose, e.g. when there is a pest outbreak that must be controlled (Samaha 1993).

Practical application
Information must also be provided side by side with practical opportunities for applying or implementing it; it must have a practical outcome. For instance, rural people regard reading as a means to an end, namely that of acquiring information/knowledge which will enable them to survive. Awareness on family planning or nutrition is of no use unless it is followed by action. Information on how to prevent disease needs to be linked with access to drugs and a clinic. The rural populace do not merely want information about how to make a water pump or where one can be bought, but the water supply itself (Rosenberg 1993; Mutunyatta 1995). There is often confusion between informative communication and organized publicity. For example, there is little use in publicizing the availability of subsidized fertilizer, free tractor service or generous agricultural loans, if information on the steps to take — who to see, where to go, what to do — to obtain the government benefits are lacking. Yet this happened in Nigeria (Aboyade 1981).

Needs of extension workers
Extension workers are also found to have unmet information needs. In particular they lack proper links with research centres, outside their parent bodies, and have nowhere to store information (Mchombu 1993). Knowledge is lost as soon as extension services are withdrawn (Ndiaye 1995).

Lack of awareness
Most of the research on rural information needs in developing countries has been undertaken in Africa and Asia. But in Latin America, there is a recognition that a major obstacle to the establishment of information services in rural areas is an unawareness of both the basic needs of rural people and their information requirements (Rodríguez 1997).
Information transfer

Indigenous knowledge
It used to be thought that development consisted of the dissemination of modern, scientific and sophisticated knowledge to inform and uplift the rural masses. Rural people’s own knowledge tended to be despised and ignored. This is no longer the case and the existence of indigenous knowledge, side by side with external information, is acknowledged as important in the development process. It is now accepted that any attempt to communicate modern scientific and technical knowledge to rural people must take due cognizance of their beliefs and culture (Aboyade 1981). Rural people are strong in information about farming practices and the environment. Theirs is an adaptable system because it is based on observation and therefore continuously updated and corrected. The mobilization of rural people’s knowledge is necessary. Ways have to be found of linking the indigenous and exotic knowledge systems, so that each complements the other. The full participation of rural people in the process of introducing new ideas and in the design and implementation of development projects is essential. This not only ensures the incorporation of indigenous knowledge but fosters the development of a third knowledge system, the knowledge created by rural people as they take part in the development process (Mchombu 1993; Karlsson 1995).

An example of what happens when the communication of information alien to traditional practices is attempted comes from Nigeria. There extension workers could not understand why farmers would not adopt a new variety of maize, which could have multiplied their yield several fold. Eventually it was accepted that the farmers practised inter-cropping and the method proposed did not permit this. A farmer, therefore, preferred to ensure the general supply of a variety of foods he and his family usually consumed rather than stake everything on one single crop. The agricultural scientists realized that they must work on developing crops which would be high-yielding in a mixed cropping environment (Aboyade 1981).

Traditional communication systems
There is already an indigenous information transfer system in existence in rural communities. Information is constantly circulating. Providers of information must take into account the traditional ways of communication and even utilize some of their methods. Exchange of information takes place where people meet, e.g. market places, health clinics, bus stops, village meetings, schools, churches, mosques. Person-to-person communication is the most effective, via priests, local dignitaries, age-group leaders, friends, neighbours and parents. There are acknowledged ‘information gatekeepers’, elders of the community or those holding positions in the village authority structure. They are the recognized leaders of thought. These people often have to demonstrate by their own examples that it is in order to adopt new ways of doing things. They also provide avenues for discussing and explaining the implications of suggested innovations (Aboyade 1981). Outsiders like extension workers or primary school teachers also rely on personal contact and demonstration and act as ‘gatekeepers’ (Mchombu 1993).
Media of communication
Experiments with communication media confirm that printed media only meets with limited success. When high rates of illiteracy are present, print-based systems are anyway definitely unsuitable. Visual (e.g. posters), audio (radio, cassettes) and mixed media (e.g. film) have had varied success. Most effective are media which manage to mirror or incorporate traditional systems, like theatre, song and group discussion. Indigenous knowledge has always been transmitted very effectively through teaching, apprenticeship and storytelling (Lundstrom 1985; Rosenberg 1987).

External information
External information to rural communities is at the moment fragmented between several government ministries, non-governmental agencies and parastatals. Most of the agencies supply information as part of a larger package of inputs and services and within a narrow subject field. The supply of information is dismally low. All this leads to a serious gap in the exchange process and also in the information transfer chain that links rural communities with other knowledge centres both within and without their own country (Mchombu 1993). Since most people in rural areas earn their livelihood through farming, a considerable amount of research has been carried out on the way information is transferred to farmers and other end-users.

One study (Samaha 1993) showed the need for a mechanism that associated the producer of information, the documentalist, the extension specialist and the extension worker. The participants in such a network do not operate in isolation but need to exchange information with each other. Primary (research) information has to be produced, organized and then repackaged in a form understandable by the end user. This extension material must then in its turn be organized and finally communicated to the farmer. Considering the type of information needed and its specificity to local and particular conditions, clearly any mechanism of information transfer must be conceived not only at the national level but especially at the local level. Information services for the end users have to go where the users are.

A more recent study (Ramirez 1997), which mapped and analyzed in depth farmers’ communication networks in the Philippines, Peru and Ethiopia, developed and extended the same argument. At the moment farmers only gain limited agricultural knowledge from the research system; their primary source of information is other farmers. There, therefore, needs to be an information support system which is demand-led and in which farmers are the decision makers. Extension workers must take on the role of being information brokers and facilitators; research and extension activities must be better integrated and a framework provided for consultation with all the different actors in the information transfer chain.

Information delivery and support systems
Rural resource centre
The results of research into information needs and information transfer has a number of implications for rural development. The importance of the active participation of the rural people themselves at all levels of project design and implementation is now acknowledged. Extension workers must be aware of the need to find out what people
already know before introducing new ideas. Such innovations must be relevant to needs. New information is more acceptable if traditional modes of information transfer are used. The fact that the information needs of rural people are largely unmet coupled with the existing gaps in the information exchange and transfer process has also led to the emergence of the information centre concept as a key rural development strategy. Such a centre located in a rural area will not only provide sources of information but advice and guidance as well. Information formats will be accessible by those who cannot read as well as the literate and newly literate. It will co-operate with and assist other agencies involved in information provision. It will link indigenous knowledge with external knowledge. It will repackage information and act as a centre for information sharing. The community itself will have a crucial and active part in the establishment and maintaining of the centre and its information services (Giggey 1988; Adimorah 1991; Kantumoya 1992; Mchombu 1986; Ndiaye 1994; Monego 19%; Chifwepa 1997).

Most countries in the developing world are now experimenting with the concept of rural information centres and services. Some are in the formative stage, others are pilot projects and yet others now exist as established programmes, with as much as ten years of experience. The general conclusion reached is that such centres will best serve the purpose of providing information to disadvantaged communities (Berlyn 1997), even if such aspects as roles, services, ownership and sustainability remain areas that require further discussion.

Rural information provision in developing countries
The IFLA-ALP Seminar on Information Provision to Rural Communities in Africa held in 1994 made reference to rural information provision taking place in the following African countries: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Comoros, Congo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. It is estimated that around 500 multi-purpose community centres exist in South Africa, mostly urban but being extended into rural areas, and there is a project underway to review their services and potential (Benjamin 1997). In Latin America (UNESCO 1988; IFLA-ALP 1995a; Morgan de Goni 1995; Rodríguez 1997), activities have been recorded from Bolivia, Chile (Nunez Navarrete 1993), Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba (Barreda Montes de Oca 1995), Ecuador (Rodríguez Orrego 1986), Mexico (Sperry 1992), Peru (Paredes Estela 1987; Acku Quinde 1996; Mirez Ortiz 1995) and Venezuela (Instituto ... 1985). Likewise in Asia (Torrijos 1994), information services directed at rural communities have been developing in China (Bo Ruoshi 1996), Indonesia (UNESCO 1993), Laos, Pakistan, the Philippines (Polestico 1993), Thailand (Varavarn 1995) and Vietnam (Torrijos 1996).

Public libraries and rural resource centres
Many of the centres have had their origins in the public library services of the country concerned. Examples are Botswana, Ghana and Uganda in Africa, Colombia, Cuba and Venezuela in Latin America. In Venezuela, the rural library service is coordinated by the network of state/public libraries and integrated into the national system. Similarly in Cuba, the national system of public libraries covers the whole country and has placed considerable emphasis on providing appropriate services even
in the remotest areas. There is, however, general agreement that the traditional activities of the public library, i.e. reference and lending services, are inadequate and different methods of information delivery are required in rural areas. In other countries, government departments have been a major actors. Departments of Adult or Non-formal Education have been the driving force in, for example, Tanzania, Thailand and Indonesia. There are examples of collaboration with public libraries: in Colombia in 1991, El Fondo de Desarrollo Rural Integrado, DRI, joined forces with Colcultura, the national network of public libraries, in initiating a project of book provision in libraries in rural areas.

**NGOs and rural resource centres**

Sometimes local NGOs have been instrumental in rural information provision. In Madagascar an NGO working in the general area of rural development set up a section on documentation whose mission is to develop rural libraries (Raonizafirarivo-Rakotomahazo 1995). In Zimbabwe an NGO, the Rural Libraries and Resources Development Programme (RLRDP), has been set up specifically to establish and develop libraries and information services as a means to empowering rural people and is now associated with some 45 libraries (Sibanda 1994; Moyo 1995). In Indonesia, an NGO has co-operated with two government organizations in setting up a resource centre. In India two foundations — the Machwe Foundation and the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation — started a programme to set up village libraries in 1992. Supported by the British NGO, Books for Change, by 1996, 548 libraries had been set up in 9 states (Village ... 1996). In Bolivia the Centro Pedagógico y Cultural Portales was created in 1968 with the objective of improving the learning process and stimulating cultural activities in Bolivia. It has played an important role in the development of library services in the rural areas of Cochabamba (Rodríguez 1997).

International organizations and INGOs have often provided the ideas, impetus and finance for starting a centre. In 1987, the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned a guide for the setting up of a Rural Learning Resource Centre (Giggey 1988) and subsequently mounted three workshops (COMLA 1990 & 1991). UNESCO, from 1990 onwards, has both commissioned studies on the planning of rural community information services and assisted governments in setting up innovative pilot community information projects in rural areas throughout the developing world (Torrijos 1994; Abid 1995). CODE assists in the establishment and support of community library facilities in the rural areas of five developing countries (CODE 1996). The CLAC programme began in 1986, when member countries of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation (ACCT), a Francophone organization, mainly financed by France, Belgium and Canada, decided to establish centres for the promotion of reading and other cultural activities in rural Africa. READ (Rural Education and Development, Inc.) is a non-profit corporation based in USA and dedicated to establishing libraries in the villages of Nepal (Monego 1996). (NB. Not to be confused with READ Educational Trust which supports school library provision in South Africa.) In reality most, if not all, rural information provision services rely on support from donor agencies to continue their activities.

**Differing objectives of rural resource centres**

Although the broad aim of all rural information support systems is the same — that of contributing to the standard of living, quality of life and general well-being of the
whole community — there are distinct differences in emphasis within the specific objectives of each programme and its central activities. Some are designed towards the promotion of literacy and support for new literates. This is the case for all the community libraries supported by CODE; it was also the main reason for setting up the Village Reading Room programme in Botswana. The promotion of reading and a concentration therefore on the provision of print materials to the exclusion of other information sources is very common. It is the main objective in Zimbabwe’s Rural Libraries and Development Programme, Operation Public Reading in Mali and the rural library programme in Chile. It is in the promotion of reading that the CLAC programme has scored most success. In Indonesia, the main objective was to establish a centre where extension workers and other resource persons could meet to exchange experiences and consult different types of information for quick problem-solving. The control of the local community over a centre also differs. In some cases it is seen as crucial that local people manage their own information provision; in others, the centres are managed as part of a national network.

In practice, therefore, there is a tendency for rural information centres to ignore the results of research into information needs and transfer methods and to revert to the model of print-based libraries.

**IT and rural information provision**

*Relevance of the Internet and electronic technologies*

Everyone in the information business is rapidly becoming part of a global system. The advances in computing and telecommunications are forcing all parties in the information chain to look again at ways of accessing information and the media through which it is supplied. One conclusion of the recent conference on the role of information for rural development in ACP countries (CTA 1996) was that the new information technologies, especially those of electronic networks and digital storage and transfer, have greatly increased possibilities for information transfer and communication on both North-South and South-South axes. These modern technologies offer new and multiple perspectives, such as faster and better focused access to information and the setting up of networks for direct and unmediated communication between various parties.

The Internet has incredible potential for Africa where people are so dispersed and other means of communication are either impossible, too ineffective or costly (Adeya 1996). It brings both new information resources to and opens new communication channels for rural communities. It offers a means for bridging the gaps between development professionals and rural people, by initiating interaction and dialogue, new alliances, interpersonal networks and cross-sectional links between organizations. It can create mechanisms that enable bottom-up articulation and sharing of local knowledge (Richardson 1997).

There is a definite need, at developing country level, to watch the evolution of technologies, to enable the maximum benefit to be drawn from them. The technologies are with us and spreading fast. Now is the time to act in support of Internet knowledge and communication systems in the developing world. The recent
establishment by the Netherlands Government of an International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) should help. It has a mandate to assist developing countries keep abreast of developments in the field of information and communication technologies (Formation ... 1997).

**ECA’s African Information Society Initiative**

One recent development is the ‘African Information Society Initiative’ launched by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), IDRC, UNESCO and the World Bank, with the objective of making Africa part of the Information Society. A conference held in South Africa (CSIR 1996) specifically examined the relevance of IT to rural information provision and the needs of the poor, the illiterate, women and youth (Emberg 1996; Amuako 1996). The central concern is to develop programmes and to draft projects which will help to achieve equitable and relevant information services and systems. It is felt that the technologies which can bring empowering information to isolated communities are already there. The rapid introduction of modern technology may prove to be a cost-effective solution, where developing countries lack economic resources to invest in gigantic information delivery systems. What is now needed are agents to introduce those technologically based information services which will benefit the rural areas.

**Experiences from the West**

In the West, from the 1980s onwards, considerable research was undertaken concerning the possibilities and practicalities of using information technology in rural areas (e.g. Clark 1980; BL 1988, 1989; Lancer 1993; Martin 1993). In the UK, a number of pilot projects were established. Some concerned the use of Teletext to provide basic directional information, which was considered to be the greatest information need. Others set up networks of terminals in places with public access like shops, schools and garages, using modems to access a central processor which would select remote databases according to the information required by users. These networks did not hold information itself (apart from local information) but acted as gateways to other information providers’ working databases. The concept of the multipurpose community telecentre was initially introduced in the Scandinavian countries some 20 years ago, as a means of improving access to telematics in rural and isolated areas. The concept spread to other European countries and telecentres are now also common in remote areas of Australia, Canada and USA. Facilities vary but normally aim to offer access to data processing and telecommunication services, including information services, on-line data bases, library facilities, fax, e-mail, word-processing, DTP.

**Use of the new technologies**

Services offered through electronic means will only be of value if they meet the needs of those living and working in rural areas, both the producers and consumers of information, whether at the level of decision-support information or practical ‘how-to’ information. Any services must also take into account the modes and means of information transfer that have been proved most effective. The new generation of electronic connectivity is not an end in itself to solve all communication problems; Internet is not a panacea for rural development. The new technologies should be seen as a rapid-action tool to support, consolidate and hasten the spread of dialogue within
Possibly the optimal use of the new technologies will be access to electronic networks by researchers and extension workers, to allow access to current information and to plug this present gap in the information chain. The new information technologies also allow for easier repackaging of information. There is, in addition, the opportunity to create databases of local knowledge and experiences and for this information to be shared. But care must be taken that the use of the new technologies and the Internet is integrated into the human context and that they are used primarily as a communication process tool. Their spread must benefit the most economically insecure. Contents of messages need to be in direct response to local geographical, cultural, socio-economic and linguistic needs (Stichele 1997). Otherwise the new technologies may prove to be a means of oppression rather than empowerment.

Examples of IT use in rural areas of developing countries

As yet IT does not feature largely in rural information provision in developing countries. Its possibilities are still to be explored. The ECA Initiative has proposed a number of pilot projects so that experience can be gained of the impact of telecentres in the context of rural and remote areas. One such project aims to develop teleservice centres in community rural libraries in four African countries. These centres will be equipped with fax, telephone and Internet access and locally based Intranet applications will be applied as a means to generate and disseminate community information as well as to access relevant national, regional and international sources. One hopeful sign for the future is that Brazil has already set up such centres, all of which are self-supporting; it aims to have set up 3,000 by the year 2004 (Emberg 1996).

An experience of the potential of electronic networks in agriculture comes from Latin America (Armendariz Sanchez 1996). He argues that formal local networks holding public domain information generated by government institutions (e.g. on prices, production, exports), whilst much needed to improve the information flow between rural communities in the Region, have not had much success, because of lack of political and institutional support. More feasible is the use of existing databases and networks, those provided by research organizations, which offer to decision-makers the information necessary to make a competitive industry out of agriculture.

An example of the creation of local databases to promote local development is found in Senegal (Ndiaye 1997). The SIG (Système d'Information Géographique) project is in the process of creating a geo-database combining biophysical and socio-economic information, superimposed on a cartographic base. Its objective is to assist and support the decision-making process in the district of Keur Momar Sarr. The general population has been involved in all aspects of the project, especially in the collection and integration of socio-economic data; it is expected that the latter will be updated by the local people. The SIDD (Système d'Information et de Décision sur la Désertification) project has the aim of providing the local government of Linguère with an information system accessible via the Internet. It will allow access to virtual book and map libraries, a series of databases and an 'institutional kiosk'. When fully functional, local government officials, those concerned with running technical public...
services and NGOs will be able to obtain the information they require to better comprehend and deal with questions concerning desertification, something which menaces the Linguère region.

South Africa is a country that has recently accepted the need to democratize access to scientific, engineering and technology information. There, satellite technology is seen as a solution to the difficulties of wiring up rural and economically disadvantaged communities. CSIR is one of the organizations that is developing services for satellite transmission to community-based kiosks using touch-screen technology (Hamilton 1997). One such 'one-stop information kiosk' uses orthophoto maps (which can be used by anybody, whether formally educated or not) to provide data on medical services, schools and other services (Mackie 1996). This way of using the new technologies minimizes the difficulties related to the prevalence of illiteracy and limited IT skills in rural areas and, because it is easily accessible and interactive, appears to offer the best prospect of supporting personal and community development.

Many other examples of the growing experimentation with and adoption of IT to further rural information provision exist. In Malaysia, a 1996 Seminar on Rural Library Services had as one of its topics of discussion 'The Information Super Highway to the Rural Regions' and promoted the idea of library networks to make information equally accessible to the 60% of the ASEAN population who live in rural areas. In Zambia, a local Internet service provider enables rural health centres to communicate with each other, share information, report diagnostics and seek medical advice (Stichele 1997). Research has been completed (Opiyo 1997) into the use of palmtop computers for holding the medical information and diagnostic help required by medical workers in rural areas of Kenya. This option is considered more relevant, quick and flexible, without being very expensive. The amount of indigenous knowledge available on the Internet is now increasing (Marrewijk 1996), which should encourage the necessary two-way flow of information and the integration of the two knowledge systems.

In short, the opportunities offered by the new technologies are endless. But what is now needed are more practical examples on the ground and monitoring and evaluation to show which are the more successful.

**Evaluation of rural resource centres**

To date the evaluations of rural resource/information centres, with a few exceptions, have tended to be superficial and reliant on hearsay or anecdote. Instead of examining performance or impact, they have looked at the number of documents acquired or staff employed, i.e. inputs rather than outputs. Examples of effectiveness tend to come from speeches made at opening days; and of impact from the establishment of more income generating projects or use of new cropping methods, which may or may not be related to the use of information provided through the Centre.
Some evaluations
Examples of in-depth evaluations are those of RLRDP in Zimbabwe (Sibanda 1994); of the community libraries supported by CODE in Tanzania, Lindi and Mtwara (AFREDA 1995a) and Mbinga (AFREDA 1995b); of the Village Reading Rooms in Botswana (Mutanyatta 1995); and of CLACs in four countries of Francophone Africa — Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Niger (Eduplus 1995). All were evaluations of a total programme, rather than an individual centre. And although attempts were made to assess performance and impact, other aspects such as policy formulation, management structures, resource inputs and staff training were also considered. The methodologies were fairly similar: questionnaires, interviews, group discussions, survey of stock and readership records, with structured and semi-structured interviews with all stakeholders being given most emphasis.

Achievements
All the reports came out with fairly positive conclusions. It was felt that RLRDP was filling a vital gap in the provision of development information and that the communities appreciated the services. In Botswana, the study showed that the VRR service was well established in the community. In Tanzania the CODE-supported community libraries significantly managed to attract and promote readership within the communities they served. The CLAC programme had successfully created a network of 144 centres in 12 countries and had proved strong in providing reading materials.

Areas for improvement
Sustainability was specifically addressed by the RLRDP evaluation. At the moment it is heavily dependent on external material and financial resources; input from the communities, although there, is fairly minimal. Even though it was recognized as a problem, no credible solution was offered. The dependency problem was also addressed in the CLAC evaluation. It recommended that, when new CLACs were developed, there be a fixed 6-year period, during which the country concerned would gradually take charge. In addition, it suggested the sharing of responsibilities for both management and finance between ACCT and national and local partners be clearly laid down from the start and embodied in a manual.

These evaluations offer some interesting comment on what is expected from a rural resource centre and what is being actually achieved. The assessment of Village Reading Rooms in Botswana (Mutunyatta 1995) found that rural people need and demand far more than the supply of reading materials supporting the newly literate and those in formal education. Instead what is more suited to rural society is a grassroots information service, more responsive to basic needs, an information service which is multipurpose and of a developmental nature, i.e. a resource and community centre rather than a library. Evidence from Thailand (Varavarn 1995) reaches a similar conclusion. The experience of promoting literacy and reading habits has led to a new model of information support, which also includes acting as a resource and information centre for the community and becoming a venue for community activities.

The evaluations of community libraries in Tanzania as well as those of the Botswana and Zimbabwe programmes also reveal that the concentration on provision of print-
based material has benefited school children, who are the main users, to the detriment of the adult population. This is an inevitable result of there being more such available print material suited to educational needs. The CLAC evaluation was very critical of the way that centres had concentrated on serving the reading needs of the educated few, particularly school children. It stressed that the main objective of the programme — the support and promotion of indigenous development — could not be achieved by this one activity alone.

**Need to develop indicators of performance and impact**

Evaluations such as those commissioned for Botswana and by CODE of its community libraries were carried out by professionals. The expertise and money required for such comprehensive assessments is rarely available to individual resource centres. Yet these also need to be able to monitor their usefulness and progress. What they require is a set of standards against which their performance can be measured. In this way, it will be ensured that the information service remains effective and that it responds to the needs of the community which it services.

The development of indicators has recently been encouraged (Kempson 1990b; Menou 1993). The computer conference, which Menou edited, examined the benefits of information, indicators and assessment methods and established a framework for impact assessment. A hypothetical case study was made of a rural community resource centre. A similar methodology was promoted at the recent conference on *Empowering Communities* (Griffiths 1996). CODE has introduced a system of Results-Based Management, whereby performance is measured against indicators (CODE 1996). It has established two main objectives for its community resource centre programme: that a large % of children up to the age of 15 and adults with six or fewer years of education use printed material more independently for educational, informational and recreational purposes; and that a sustainable, effective and expanding resource base is established to support the promotion of a literate environment in developing countries. Indicators must show: whether there have been increased opportunities to access relevant materials; how effective centres have been in securing resources; whether centres have engaged in strategic planning; whether centres exhibit accountability.
CHAPTER THREE

EXPECTATIONS

The following twelve expectations of rural information provision are drawn from a variety of sources: the results of research undertaken on information needs and the information transfer process; the stated aims and objectives of support systems set up in rural areas, whether they be rural libraries, reading rooms, information/resource centres, community facilities or other information provision programmes; the activities of these programmes, data produced as a result of their evaluation. They only concern outputs and outcomes: expectations of the performance and impact on the community of such support systems. They represent an ideal — what research and practice suggests should be ultimately attained through the establishment of an information support system, such as a rural resource centre.

1. Locate, obtain and provide information for all members of the rural community

Individuals within rural communities can be differentiated by a number of characteristics. There is age (children, young people, adults), sex (male and female), education (those who are not literate, those who have achieved completion of primary school, those who have a higher level of formal education, those who participate in non-formal education programmes), economic activities (farmers, business men, government officials), social class (wealth or lack of it, caste), physical or mental disability. All normally form the target population of any system of rural information provision.

Evidence available shows that this is not always the case; information only reaches certain sectors of the population. The evaluation of Botswana’s Village Reading Rooms (Mutunyatta 1995) revealed that they were mainly used by primary school children and teachers. The assessments of community libraries in Tanzania (AFREDA 1995a & b) concluded that there was a low urge to use the library services in Mbinga District both by adults and children, whilst those in Lindi and Mtwara were patronized by children and adult literates, but not by non-literate adults or women. Similar results are found in the CLAC evaluation (Eduplus 1995). One of the recommendations was that attempts must be made to address all potential users, especially women, new literates and school leavers. The Botswana evaluation also suggested that extension workers tend to target information at those who have the ability to implement innovations, rather than the poor, illiterate or other weak elements in the society.

The success of the Cajamarca library movement in Peru has been attributed to the careful attention it has paid to defining its target population (Espino Relucé 1987). The emphasis is on meeting the needs of the adult peasant, both male and female; school children deliberately are not given priority. The result is that male and female peasants are the main users.
Expectation 1: provide information for all

Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Niger
In these countries, pupils from primary and secondary schools and their teachers represent 90% of the CLAC clientele. There are, on average, only 200 members for every 6,000 inhabitants. Members are predominantly male (Eduplus 1995).

Bolivia
The majority of users of the 16 rural libraries in Cochabamba are children and school children. Most of the reading materials is related to the school curriculum (Tames 1992).

Botswana
The primary objective of the VRRs is to promote reading habits amongst rural communities in general. But the evaluation (Mutunyatta 1995) revealed that, although the VRRs were perceived as a service for all the community, actual use was mainly limited to school children. Ordinary villagers were infrequent users.

Madagascar
The Support Cell for Rural Training — an NGO working in the area of rural development — is developing village libraries as a solution to the problem of information provision to rural communities. The objectives are:
- to help the peasant educate himself, to be informed and to open himself to the world at large;
- to help the free flow of information into the rural world;
- to initiate an informational emancipation;
- to help ensure that acquired educational skills are retained.
(Raonizafirarivo-Rakotomahazo 1995)

Tanzania
The CODE-supported community libraries are specifically aimed at new literates: children up to the age of 15 and adults with six or fewer years of education. But one evaluation (AFREDA 1995b) showed that existing libraries were highly under-utilized by both adults and children, while the other (AFREDA 1995a) concluded that the response of adults had not been as encouraging as that of children. In particular there was a low usage by women, who were reluctant to acquire information through reading.

Thailand
Since 1972, a system of village reading centres has been established to provide news and information at the grass-roots level and to provide opportunity for reading by new literates (Varavarn 1995).

Venezuela
In Amazonas State, the rural libraries, both fixed and boat mobiles, concentrate on providing support for school students and teachers. This is seen as the main priority, because school libraries do not exist (Medina de Silva 1996).

Zimbabwe
The evaluation showed that the majority of library users are school children and school leavers. However (unlike Tanzania) women comprise more than 80% of the ordinary community library users and appear to be in the majority in literacy groups which use the libraries (Sibanda 1994).
2. Locate, obtain and provide information on all subjects of interest to satisfy all information needs

Subject areas in which information needs of rural communities tend mostly to be found have been described, amongst others, by Mchombu (1993, 1995) and summarized by Abdelaziz Abid (1995):
- health and diseases (e.g. nutrition, treatment of common diseases like malaria, sanitation);
- basic economics (e.g. profit/loss, marketing, supply and demand, income generation);
- agriculture (e.g. new methods of farming; supply of fertilizer and other farm inputs);
- environmental renewal (e.g. soil exhaustion, scarcity of firewood);
- self-governance, leadership and community self-management (e.g. information support for village leaders as well as information to motivate the masses; information on government policies concerning rural development, etc.);
- literacy and basic education.

Information provided should keep redundancy to a minimum and concentrate on specific needs, e.g. there is always a struggle to earn cash, therefore income generation and business skills are important. Agricultural practices should be affordable and easily practised. It must be recognized that information needs vary between different rural communities depending on economic and social conditions. Needs must be continuously monitored.

Supply of material which is relevant and appropriate to needs seems to be a problem everywhere. The Rural Libraries and Resources Development Programme (RLRDP) of Zimbabwe report that collections are too small and not relevant (Sibanda 1994). In Thailand, an assessment of village reading centres reported that there was not enough material to provide villagers with opportunities to read regularly (Varavarn 1995). In Botswana, materials held were most suited to the needs of primary education (Mutunyatta 1995).

Support and follow-up to literacy is an objective which nearly all rural information provision aims to satisfy. Sometimes, as in the Community Centres supported by CODE, it is the chief aim (CODE 1996). But everywhere there is an inadequate supply of relevant material in local languages. In West Africa, for example, whilst it is true that there have been significant efforts to raise the literacy of the rural population in local languages, the use of these languages as a vehicle of scientific, technical and cultural information transfer is still weak. And any effort to use these languages must simultaneously be supported with a programme of raising levels of literacy, which in spite of everything, remain very low (Ndiaye 1995). In Botswana, the use of Setswana is encouraged, but the use of other local languages is also wanted and at present lacking (Mutunyatta 1995).
### Expectation 2: satisfy all information needs

**Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Niger**  
The book collections of CLACS are predominantly made up of French language publications from the West. These do not correspond even with the needs of the school-age users. African literature is scarcely represented and authors from the developing world are rarely found (Eduplus 1995).

**Botswana**  
Part of the explanation for the low use by ordinary villagers of VRRs and their high use by school children, is that the collection is biased towards satisfying primary school educational needs. The requirements of ordinary villagers are for Setswana language materials (37%), income generation (16%) and agriculture and livestock keeping (7%) and these were not well represented in the collections. There is, therefore, a need to target ordinary villagers with relevant types of materials (Mutunyatta 1995).

**Colombia**  
The standard rural collection comprises 380 volumes, selected in accordance with the needs of the rural community. Subjects covered include: community participation, appropriate technology, agro-industry, marketing and trade, income generation, environmental renewal, health, nutrition, hygiene, self-government, popular culture (Colcultura 199?).

**Cuba**  
In the 'silent zones' of the Province of Santiago de Cuba, where access is extremely difficult, 'itinerant' libraries play an important role in maintaining literacy (Delgado Pérez 1996).

**Latin America**  
There is a lack of relevant reading materials suited to rural needs. Even when materials are specifically produced, very little attention has been paid to their distribution. There is a lack of communication between rural libraries, which could be a strategic location for the use and distribution of reading materials, and the agencies that produce the materials (Morgan de Goni 1985).

**Tanzania**  
Adults (AFREDA 1995a) claimed that, apart from some story books and novels in Kiswahili, most of the books and literature available in the community libraries were of no interest or were inappropriate to their requirements.

**Thailand**  
The Thai experience has shown a need not only to provide the means of access to information via village libraries but to also improve the amount and quality of printed material available (Varavarn 1995).

**Zimbabwe**  
The evaluation of RLRDP (Sibanda 1994) revealed that communities were disappointed at the quality of books received from donations and that their libraries had a serious shortage of adult reading materials. They needed books in the vernacular and for specific projects like agriculture, sewing and health. The few books on these subjects in the vernacular are now out of date. They also required books to solve specific problems. A recommendation of the report was that RLRDP should be actively involved in the publication and production of reading materials.
3. Locate, obtain and provide information in a variety of formats and through a variety of information transfer modes or communication channels

For many information provision programmes, promotion of the reading habit is the main objective. There is a concentration on print materials. Encouragement of the culture of readership is considered to be the catalyst for improving living standards and the quality of life. Yet research on media formats has shown that printed information has limited success in the transfer of information. And reading alone is not a need unless it is also linked to a utilitarian purpose. The sort of daily problem-solving information wanted by rural communities can be drawn both from conventional and non-conventional sources: books, resource persons, grey literature, government publications. It can be delivered in a variety of formats and instructional techniques: audio-cassette, film, poster, radio, stories, discussions, oral advice (Mutunyatta 1995). At the moment, there is also much thought being given to the use of electronic media and how such tools as the Internet and local/regional networks can be utilized to improve information provision to rural areas.

Traditional modes and media of communication — meetings, storytelling, music, dance — can successfully be adapted to the transfer of new information through discussion and reading groups, debates, exhibitions and theatre. Messages passed through village elders and other information gatekeepers are more likely to be accepted. Audio-visual approaches are rich in learning possibilities. The themes of cassettes can be defined and controlled by the rural people themselves; interactive radio and demonstrations allow the horizontal exchange of information and sharing of ideas (FAO 1994a). Oral communication and audio-visual approaches have been widely tested within the countries of West Africa: CLACs in Francophone countries; the audio libraries in rural Mali; the radio clubs of Niger (Ndiaye 1994). In Sierra Leone, one of the key functions of a rural community resource centre was that of being a live information promoter, regularly staging events which involved drama, songs, storytelling etc. (Dillworth 1992).

The siting of rural information services also has important implications on use. Within rural communities information exchange takes place wherever people congregate: places of worship, public meetings, market places, bus stops, schools, health centres. In addition in agricultural communities, long daylight hours of work are the norm. Information facilities which are static, like a resource centre, may not be used. Instead it is advisable to be flexible in siting, using multiple places to reach different groups with different messages. For example, notice boards at bus stops, posters and exhibitions at market places, verbal communication at meetings (Mchombu 1993). It seems especially difficult to reach women. The siting of resource centres in primary schools has been a method used throughout the developing world, mainly because it is a low cost option. But the research carried out in Botswana revealed that the use of primary schools definitely inhibited adult use. The hours and furniture were unsuitable; parents saw themselves as competing with their children for the same facilities (Mutunyatta 1995).
Expectation 3: provide information in a variety of formats, means and modes

Botswana
A group of adult educators and extension workers use ‘folk theatre’ to communicate information to rural villagers. Drama is used to depict the problems facing the audience. After the performance the audience, actors and extension workers divide into groups to discuss the presented problems and possible solutions (Storm 1982).

CLACs (Francophone Africa)
As well as providing book libraries, these centres aim to include educational games; a collection of pertinent audio-visual programmes; and a variety of non-reading activities: story telling, debates, exhibitions, dance, music, theatre (ACCT 1991; Lebry 1995).

However it is instructive to note that the CLACs evaluation found that 70% of the audio-visual material was non-functional and that cultural activities were limited and one-off (Eduplus 1995). Providing print materials is much the easiest option.

Guatemala
Audio-cassette tapes on a variety of topics (e.g. health, nutrition, animal husbandry, education, human interest stories) were played at an outdoor laundering place which served as an informal information centre for women (Storm 1982).

Latin America
Where rural people are illiterate, it is not possible for them to use directly information provided in written form by extension workers and others. In these cases, the most effective form of communication is the audio-visual (films, videos, slides, etc.). However there are still many doubts and uncertainties on how visual images are interpreted (Montaña de Mayolo 1993).

Mali
The Rural Audio libraries use cassettes to distribute information relevant to the improvement of practice and conditions in the areas of hygiene, health, animal husbandry, environmental protection, agricultural production and scientific and technical information. These give communities access to modern know-how and to traditional knowledge in their own languages. The network reaches 146 villages. Collective listening sessions are organized (Diakite 1995).

Philippines
The community has been encouraged to share its knowledge and skills with the children enrolled in local elementary schools. The aim is to interface the improvements that parents learn from their community work with the formal elementary school syllabus and so accelerate the dissemination of technologies to improve rural life (Polestico 1993).

Tanzania
An investigation into information communication in a soil conservation and afforestation project in Shinyanga concluded that information was best transferred through indigenous communication systems like village meetings. Film proved a popular medium, but most people required face-to-face discussion with someone more knowledgeable and experienced before they would make a judgement or try out an idea (Otsyina 1993). This finding was confirmed in another study (Mchombu 1995). The source of information most relied upon by rural people is the village headman, followed by friends and kinsmen, rather than modern sources of information.
**Expectation 3: provide information in a variety of formats, means and modes (continued)**

**UNESCO Rural Centres (Benin, CAR, Chad, Congo, Togo)**
These ‘discussion’ centres aim to synthesize traditional and modern systems of information and communication. Activities include talks; interdisciplinary ‘round tables’ including decision makers, members of the rural community and the organizers of rural centres; exhibitions; exchange of knowledge and experiences; presentation of information; long-term action; and development of rural media, using local languages (Mathey 1996).

**Venezuela**
Reading aloud and group reading sessions compensate for the lack of reading materials. Complementary activities, such as games, sports competitions, film shows and discussions are also favoured in Amazonas (Medina de Silva 1996).
4. Offer advice, mediation and referral services and opportunities for the practical application of knowledge gained

Information may not always be available in a format which is appropriate for rural users; it may not be available in any format which can be collected and stored. Information provision to the rural community therefore involves playing a much more pro-active role than that normally expected of a traditional library service. This was pointed out over ten years ago by a Nigerian study (Aboyade 1987). It is increasingly recognized as an expectation. In Sierra Leone, the stated functions included those of playing a mediating role by constantly striving to translate collected information into a more appropriate form for the communities which will used the information (i.e. repackaging) and acting as a search and find centre, in order to provide an on-request service covering a wide range of information required by the communities served (Dillworth 1992). Colombia’s recent outline definition of rural libraries includes that of serving as an intermediary between the community and other institutions so as to help in the solution of community problems (Colcultura 1997).

The conversion of information into action and the part the provider of information should play in this process is a more controversial expectation. It is rarely included as an objective of the information support systems that have been established. Provision of information is considered to be enough. Yet research and evaluations of provision (Aboyade 1987; Mutunyatta 1995) reveal that information may lead to frustration if some of the actions recommended are beyond the reach of rural people. An information service must be prepared to assist individuals and groups with the action indicated by the information retrieved. Assistance is required to convert acquired knowledge into practical income generating activities or tangible learning experiences. Similarly in Thailand, it was found that a drawback of the Village Reading Centres was the limited ability of readers to apply information. Suggested ways of implementation include discussion groups, links with relevant government programmes, classes and courses, e.g. in dressmaking (Varavarn 1995).
Expectation 4: offer mediation and referral services

Botswana
The VRR evaluation (Mutunyatta 1995) concluded that many of the non-users of the libraries wanted a service which combined information provision with assistance to convert the acquired knowledge to practical income generating activities.

India
The village libraries in India not only aim to provide information to support skill-related training but also provide the skill training (Village ... 1996).

Indonesia
The Community Information Centres aimed to help the poor by giving them not just information but guidance and assistance to improve their living conditions. Efforts were made to establish credit unions and to provide instruction on nutrition and health, combined with a health fund to finance nutrition and health care (UNESCO 1993).

Southeast Asia
According to the model proposed for Southeast Asia, the mechanics of information transfer should focus on:
- resource files maintenance
- information giving
- referral
- follow through
- escort
- outreach
- advocacy
(Kibat 1991).

Thailand
With help from UNESCO, the Thai Library Association has established a pilot project on the development of a community information service. An innovative aspect is the way in which the notion of brokering has been introduced. Information staff not only provide conventional information services in libraries but play a vital role in identifying and bringing to users expertise from a wide range of agencies operating at the community level (Torrijos 1992).
5. Promote local culture and language; encourage and facilitate the capture, storage and use of indigenous knowledge

The existence of indigenous knowledge and its importance to the development process is now widely acknowledged. It is deeply embedded in the cultural structures of the community. Yet it has been generally discouraged both by colonialism, which has attempted to replace it, and by extension workers, who tend to put greater reliance on Western knowledge. The role of an information provider is not merely to document local culture and to encourage the use of local languages; it must also enable the blossoming of local cultures and popular traditions. A rural resource centre must promote the rescue, understanding, diffusion and protection of the indigenous knowledge base.

**Expectation 5: promote local culture and language**

**Botswana, Malawi, Tanzania**

In these countries, research revealed how traditional knowledge had been undermined during colonial rule and by the post-independence African elites. Even so, rural people were able to come up with good examples of the usefulness of indigenous knowledge and with ideas on how it could be incorporated into the mainstream of the total knowledge system, e.g. by recording memories of elders, by including traditional technologies in the primary school system, by having a place where traditional artefacts could be preserved (Mchombu 1995).

**Botswana**

The promotion of local culture is usually a stated objective of rural library programmes. For VRRs, objectives were:

- to act as centres for storing Setswana literature and promoting Setswana language;
- to act as centres for the promotion of culture, where discussion groups, traditional songs and dances and meetings would be organized (Legwaila 1995).

The evaluation of VRRs showed that these objectives were difficult to meet. English language reading material predominated and languages other than Setswana were also wanted (Mutunyatta 1995).

**Cuba**

Libraries serve as venues for 'decimistas' (poets who improvise ten-line stanzas, whilst playing the guitar) and also encourage research into and the salvaging of peasant oral traditions (Barreda Montes de Oca 1995).

**India**

One of the four objectives of the Village Libraries in India Programme is to provide a platform for documenting traditional knowledge. Books written by villagers are published (Village ... 1996).

**Latin America**

In the Caracas Declaration on Public Libraries as an Instrument of Development and Social Change in Latin America (1982) the third point reads: Promote the rescue, understanding, diffusion and protection of the national, autochthonous and minority cultures for the affirmation of national identity as well as the knowledge of and respect for other cultures.
Expectation 5: promote local culture and language (continued)

Peru
The network of rural libraries in Cajamarca is concerned with the reinstatement, revitalization and reinforcement of the Andean indigenous knowledge base. The available books were not found useful, therefore a separate project was set up to produce published material based on the local culture. The Rural Encyclopaedia is a series of books written in the style of the people and based on their experiences. Topics for books are those agreed by the local communities. Examples are ‘The family in Cajamarca’; ‘Supernatural phenomena’; ‘Dyes and fabrics’; ‘The people of this land’. 40 titles have been published. The books provide an alternative to school, empower people and promote self-training (Acku Quinde 1996).

Senegal
In Senegal, there has been a collection of traditional knowledge about trees and wood. The result is a wealth of information relevant to pharmacopoeia, human food and construction. It has been used in radio broadcasts and TV; for future use it is stored on video, slides and cassettes (Ndiaye 1995).

Venezuela
In Amazonas, rural communities are characterized by the predominance of illiterate adults, most of whom speak only their own native language. It is therefore crucial that the culture of the community is respected and valued. To ensure this, a new element was introduced into the training of librarians — reflection on the role of the librarian as an intermediary between two cultures (Medina de Silva 1996).
6. Act as a co-ordinating centre for all providers of information and facilitate its dissemination

A co-ordinating centre is required both because of the fragmentation in the delivery of external information between various agencies and because extension workers lack the resource back-up and skills in information retrieval to extend their knowledge. A resource centre therefore needs to be an information exchange centre and clearing house, a repository of development related information from agencies operating in the district and a publicity agent for information providers and development agents, including government. Innovative results can be publicized; locally-adaptable research can be repackaged and digested. It is envisaged that the use of IT, in particular to link up rural resource centres with the information provided by external networks and databases and to generate databases of local information, will considerably enhance the delivery of this expectation.

In Senegal, demands for the establishment of resource centres arose when the evaluation of a rural development programme concluded that knowledge was lost as soon as the extension services were withdrawn (Ndiaye 1995). The Community Learning and Resource Centres that have been set up in Vietnam since 1993 aim at starting a process where government agencies and departments work effectively together, by facilitating co-operation and teamwork (Torrijos 1994). In Venezuela, priority was placed on the establishment of a database of community information to connect together all those working as information providers. It includes details of institutions offering services and support, addresses of resource persons able to give advice and information on government rules, regulations and programmes (Abdelaziz Abid 1995). Government departments in South Africa understand the need to offer their services and information directly to communities. They recognize that a single centre of information for welfare, safety, health, housing, public works and local government would be of great use, particularly if its data was available electronically via a network (Benjamin 1997).

Expectation 6: act as a co-ordinating centre

Botswana
A VRR objective is to promote co-operation amongst extension workers and the community. However most extension workers found that the materials held in stock were not relevant to their work. The main items were fiction and continuing educational material. In addition very few village extension workers had been involved in the introduction of VRRs to the community (Mutunyatta 1995).

CLARCs (Laos, Philippines, Vietnam)
The premise on which these UNESCO-supported centres are based is that they should provide a means for rural people to be aware of the government programmes which exist to address the problems of rural, depressed and isolated communities and the agencies set up to develop these programmes (Torrijos 1994). In Vietnam, the establishment of CLARCs has convinced local and national authorities of the cost-effectiveness of resource sharing and inter-ministerial co-operation (Torrijos 1996).
**Expectation 6: act as a co-ordinating centre (continued)**

**Cuba**
The STI needs of professionals like agronomists, physicians, sanitary engineers and technicians working in rural areas have been met by the establishment of networks which have regional bases and which work in co-ordination with the country's specialized central libraries (Morgan de Gotii 1985a).

**Indonesia**
Here the primary aim was to establish centres where extension workers and other resource persons could meet and exchange experiences. Each centre is equipped with different types of information for quick problem-solving. It is also intended as a place where librarians, resource persons and extension workers can promote the reading habits of members of the community (UNESCO 1993).

**Latin America**
Traditional development models have not been successful. It is necessary to think in terms of a multi-disciplinary co-operative approach, involving researchers, librarians, extension workers and farmers. In providing agricultural information, it is important to initiate a new type of network, devoted to assembling together all kinds of extension materials, printed and audio-visual. It is important that this network processes and interchanges all the information generated by technicians, NGOs involved in technology transfer and indigenous agricultural knowledge (Montaño de Mayolo 1993).

**Malawi**
The trust placed by farmers in extension workers, especially when seeking new knowledge, is supported by a number of studies. There is therefore a need to assist extension workers become more effective as disseminators of information, by providing information materials which they can consult to expand, supplement and update their knowledge. There is very little evidence to suggest that a farmer could or would use a library service directly (Sturges 1996a).

**Senegal**
An evaluation of the TOSTAN project concluded that the role of the professional librarian is to provide those who already provide information to rural people (social workers, primary school teachers, literacy instructors) with the resources and basics of information management, rather than engage in the information communication itself (Corrêa 1995).

To improve the dissemination of agricultural information, it was proposed to set up CIFADEs (Information, Training and Activity Centres) in rural areas and these would lead to a national network affiliated to RESAGRS agricultural documentation network (Ndiaye 1995).
### Expectation 6: act as a co-ordinating centre (continued)

#### Tanzania
According to the investigation into information communication in a soil conservation and afforestation project in Shinyanga, extension workers lacked regular sources of information. They were not satisfied with the odd journal or seminar and wanted a more reliable and regular exposure to information to broaden their outlook (Otsyina 1993).

The importance of extension workers in the transfer of information was revealed by interviews with users of community libraries (AFREDA 1995a). Adults said that they had access to information on issues like animal husbandry or gardening from other sources e.g. extension workers. Hence they did not want to learn through reading. The extension workers, for their part, found that the language of relevant books was too difficult. Their need for information was not being met by the libraries.

#### Venezuela
The librarian must be capable of programming activities with a variety of institutions and persons, such as medical doctors, nutritionists, extension workers and on a variety of subjects, e.g. handicrafts, cooking, etc. (Ramos de Mora 1991). By collecting, organizing and promoting information generated by public and private institutions outside the community, the library can bridge the gap between the community and the outside world (Medina de Silva 1996).
7. Provide feedback on community concerns

Rural people are both users and creators of knowledge. But more often than not, external information provision is in the hands of information providers with rural communities being passive receivers. The fact that scientific information models are imposed from outside makes it difficult for rural people to incorporate, adapt and take advantage of external technologies and ideas. Instead they should be involved at the conception of development programmes and participate in their development at every stage.

Resource centres can provide forums of information exchange in areas like education, literacy, health, agriculture and technology. They can be points where new projects are discussed. They can collect and store data for village planning programmes. Establishment of community media assist in promoting community concerns.

<table>
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<th>Expectation 7: provide feedback on community concerns</th>
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<td><strong>Bolivia</strong></td>
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<td>The Centro Portales collaborate in the production of a community newspaper, which is created by the rural people. Meetings and discussions on such subjects as water supply, nutrition, child care, pit latrines, traditions are organized in the libraries and then written down and converted into books (Tames 1992).</td>
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| **Latin America**                                     |
| Small farmers have developed over the centuries very important production systems, which are sciences in their own right. Peasants are not ignorant and have a lot to show the Western scientists. Information flow must be in two ways (Altieri 1993). |

| **Malawi**                                            |
| Information is usually carried to the farmer, rather than the farmer communicating his needs (Mchombu 1993). One group of farmers living near a Rice Research Centre was interested in improving their rice growing techniques, but did not know how to approach the Centre for help. Another group of fishermen was disturbed by low catches from Lake Malawi. A nearby government unit had studied fish migration patterns, but did not know that fishermen were concerned and did not therefore share their knowledge. |

| **Tanzania**                                          |
| The investigations into information communication in a soil conservation and afforestation project in Shinyanga concluded that projects failed, even if indigenous knowledge was used, unless they had active farmer participation. The input of farmers was required in both the planning and the implementation phases of a project (Otsyina 1993). |
8. Act as a focal point for community activities

The link between information and its practical application is reinforced when a resource centre also is a venue for community activities. These may take the form of training, e.g. literacy, non-formal education, tailoring or dress making, or of recreation, drama or dance. The provision of information becomes integral to the community.

**Expectation 8: act as a focal point for community activities**

**Bolivia**
Local libraries are venues for different activities: health campaigns, classes in hygiene and nutrition, mother and baby clubs, youth clubs, etc. (Fundación Simón I Patiño 1996).

**CLACs (Francophone Africa)**
Various activities take place, apart from the reading and lending of books. These include the watching of films, group activities and activities with schools such as reading and debating clubs and cultural activities such as theatre, dance and music. Because of their diverse activities, the CLACs have considerable impact on the community (Lebry 1995).

**Cuba**
The extensive use made of agronomists, family doctors, technicians, teachers and others to improve the programmes offered by the library make it a meeting point for the community (Delgado Pérez 1996).

**Thailand**
The new model of a library initiated in 1991 aims not only to be a resource and information centre but become a venue for community activities (Varavarn 1995).

**Zimbabwe**
The Popular Education Unit of RLRDP aims to promote oral community knowledge and organize activities such as locally designed adult literacy, pre-school and informal study groups, theatre programmes, etc. At Donkwe Donkwe, a sewing club for women operates under the auspices of the library (Moyo 1995). The evaluation acknowledged that many community projects had grown up around libraries, but recommended that each should develop a culture section (Sibanda 1994).
9. Facilitate control by the community of the nature and flow of information

Control of access to information is often a reflection of a power relationship. It is therefore important that the rural community are involved in the planning and management of information provision and are in charge of the choice of materials, staff and services. If rural communities have one of their own members co-ordinating the information transfer/exchange process, then this should facilitate a two-way mode of information communication and aid the rapid in-flow of information.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's 1987 guide (Giggey 1988) was the first to advocate the involvement of the community in its own information provision service. And the advice has been followed by many of the services subsequently established. The RLRDP in Zimbabwe stress that rural libraries and information centres will make a meaningful impact to rural development only if they are designed and managed by the rural people themselves. The ideal situation is when a Centre is controlled by a committee composed of elected and ex-officio members of the community (Moyo 1995). Where this is not the case, as in Botswana, it was found that there was very little commitment to the reading rooms by headmen and village chairpersons, those who held positions of influence in the community (Mutunyatta 1995).

Local control is also important for future sustainability. It is only the resource and information centres set up through self-help programmes that have potential for future sustainability. Rural libraries in China can no longer rely on state subsidy and those that rely on such appropriations do not survive (Bo Ruoshi 1996). Sustainability demands an on-going commitment that lasts after the initial launch.

The network of 600 rural libraries in Cajamarca, Peru provide an excellent example of self reliance. They operate without a fleet of vehicles and without any permanent premises. Library workers are farmers or ex-farmers. They do not rely on foreign volunteers, consultants or specialists (Acku Quinde 1996).
**Expectation 9: facilitate community control**

**Ecuador**
A participative approach is fundamental, not only to select and motivate the communities which will benefit, but also to guarantee the responsibility of the people in the running of the service (Rodríguez Orrego 1986).

**Peru**
In Cajamarca, the community first agrees to the creation of the rural library. The librarian must be elected by the community in a general assembly. The librarian and the people from the community select the first 25 books for the Centre. Administrative bureaucracy is avoided as much as possible, The programme is developed according to the rhythm and life of the peasants in the field (Mires Ortiz 1995).

**Nepal**
In READ projects, villages are self-selecting. It is their responsibility to establish a local committee that is ethnically, politically and sexually diverse, write a proposal with detailed construction costs, establish a timeline for building and payments, choose a library site, select a leader for the project, find a means to support the library after it is built. The villagers develop their own charter, open bank accounts, design and supervise construction and select a librarian. READ emphasizes creating the means for future support of the libraries, so that a mechanism to ensure sustainability from local sources is set in place (Monego 1996).

**Tanzania**
In the CODE-supported centres, each community is involved in the planning and construction of its centre. Women, children and local schools take turns in collecting the necessary water for the construction. A local Management Committee handles day-to-day management. However there is little evidence of any self-initiated programmes to promote services. The evaluation (AFREDA 1995a) concluded that there is a need to make communities more involved in the planning of libraries so as to enable them to participate in the choice of service provided and to be more responsible in handling minor management affairs.

**Zimbabwe**
Three of the four main objectives of RLRDP are aimed at encouraging local community control:
- to encourage full participation of rural people themselves in the design, implementation and management of rural libraries and information centres;
- to rely upon local expertise and experience by providing rural people with the training in library management and information storage skills;
- to encourage and facilitate the development of rural libraries and resource/information centres through self-help programmes that have potential for future sustainability (Moyo 1995).

Most rural libraries are run by an elected Library Management Board. Committee members usually represent other community interests, e.g. health workers. The communities are represented by four members in the task committee, who are all women. However the evaluation recommended that more support should be solicited from government, if sustainability was to be achieved (Sibanda 1994).

**Venezuela**
In Amazonas, there is a strong link between the community and the library service. The creation of the service is a community decision. The community leader and the Council of Elders select the name of the service and the person to be in charge. The librarian must be bi-lingual (i.e. local Indian language as well as Spanish) and be an Indian (Medina de Silva 1996).
10. Improve the standard of living and quality of life of rural people

It has been noted that the provision of relevant and appropriate information, in every aspect of that word, is now seen as an essential part of rural development. Therefore a result of the establishment of information support systems must be an escape from poverty. Better access to the information needed to effect development should provide rural people with more opportunities to engage in income generation, to improve productivity, to gain more wealth in land or animals, with better nutrition and standards of hygiene, with freedom from disease. A village which has benefited from the setting up of a resource centre may reveal this in a better quality of housing and in the ownership of tangible assets like tools, beds, cooking utensils and clothes.

**Expectation 10: improve standards of living**

**Brazil**
In the sertão, a vast desert area in the north-east of Brazil, conditions of life are harsh. Some small-holders have been advised by an NGO called Caatinga. They have been given access to reliable information on how to store the small quantities of rainfall, basic irrigation, crops that flourish in desert conditions and economic foodstuffs for goats and chickens. Information on such low cost solutions have transformed their lives. For instance, a modest water-storage tank on one small holding has saved the women of the family from walking five kilometres, several times a day, to fetch water from the nearest pump (Spiller 1997).

**Chile, Colombia**
The overall goal of a project setting up rural libraries in Nuble Province in Chile is to improve the quality of life in the rural community and to contribute to the development of the country (Nuñez Navarrete 1993). The programme in Colombia has a similar goal: to contribute to the transformation of real living conditions (Colcultura 1997).

**Cuba**
The *Plan Turquino* is one of the focal points of the library service. It aims to halt the exodus of the rural population from the mountain areas into the cities, by creating easier living conditions (Barreda Montes de Oca 1995).

**Madagascar**
The village libraries appear to have been a source of change in the lifestyle of the small village communities. Some readers have followed and practised new systems of planting which have opened up new sources of revenue. Groups of women have applied sewing and cutting techniques learned from documents (Raonizafirarivo Rakotomahazo 1995).

**Peru**
In Cajamarca, reading is guided through various stages, until what is read about is put into practice and generates change in the community. The improvement of the living conditions of the inhabitants of the rural sectors of Cajamarca is the expected impact (Paredes Estela 1987).
Expectation 10: improve standards of living (continued)

Tanzania
The establishment of CODE-supported libraries is based on the conception of improving general living standards in the communities served by encouraging a culture of readership (AFRED A 1995a).

Uganda
The development objectives of the proposed rural library service in Uganda emphasized improvements in standards of living:
• to stimulate creativity and economic production of rural people through exposing them to information on modern methods of production e.g. farming and animal husbandry;
• to promote better living standards by availing rural people of information on hygienic living, improved diet, appropriate technology, etc.;
• to improve well-being of rural women, by availing them of information on small scale income generating, home economics and family planning;
• to contribute to government efforts to raise living standards of rural people through increased awareness (Krogh 1992).

Venezuela
A key objective in extending library services to rural areas is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in rural areas by providing information on productive activities like agriculture and animal husbandry, appropriate to the locality and to the needs of the small farmer with few resources. Libraries are expected to become factors of development and social change (Instituto Autónomo Biblioteca Nacional 1985).
11. Produce well-informed citizens

Chambers (1993) has argued that some of the disadvantages of the rural population arise from their isolation and powerlessness: isolated because they are illiterate, have no access to newspapers or radio, have little advice from extension workers; powerless because they are ignorant of such matters as law and without legal advice are easily exploited. With access to information and the knowledge and skills gained from information, rural people are able to control more of their lives, to have more choice and to demand and use more services.

**Expectation 11: produce well-informed citizens**

**Brazil**

A analysis of information provision in Brazil concluded that access to information is restricted to the well-off and that a society which does not have access to real information becomes politically stagnant. The great mass of the population is vulnerable to manipulation; there are no mechanisms for establishing connections between real life and political life. An unprejudiced source of information committed to improving the lives of all — in the form of a public library — would be an answer (Spiller 1997).

**Chile**

Rural libraries must design strategies so that the population can become informed on such matters as housing schemes and health services and can obtain copies of civil and military documents (Nuñez Navarrete 1994).

**Tanzania**

Through using a CODE-supported library, it is envisaged that the community will both improve its literacy levels and also have a source of information on general life issues, political, economic and social (AFREDA 1995a).

**Uganda**

An expected result arising out of the Rural Library Services project was a better informed and more knowledgeable rural population that is conscious of its human rights (Krogh 1992).

**Zimbabwe**

The first objective of RLRDP is:
- to provide technical skills, pre-school, academic and adult education, and recreational and other appropriate and relevant reading materials aiming at improving the quality of life of rural people.

One impact that is common wherever RLRDP supports a library is that the pass rate for both primary and secondary school students has improved and that school authorities attribute this to the availability of relevant reading materials. School leavers and community members involved in private studies also report success due to their use of libraries (Moyo 1995).
12. Facilitate the participation of rural people in development programmes and in the national life of the country

With an information provision, which allows for both feedback from the rural community and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and which also aids extension workers in their search for relevant technical know-how, development programmes will have a better chance of success. Information which is appropriate and valid energizes the rural community to help itself and makes it better able to take part in decision-making at the local level and to contribute to governance in general. Literate people can better harness government programmes and agencies for their own development. Possibilities are created for every individual to play an active role in society. Local authorities are supported in the decentralization and planning process. Rural people are enabled to contribute to the overall development of their country.

**Expectation 12: facilitate participation in development activities**

**Uganda**
As a result of the Rural Library Services project, it was expected that the government mass education programme would be both better supported and complemented (Krogh 1992).

**Peru**
The trilogy of book-reading-peasant is the central axis which has motivated the rural library movement in Peru. The reading materials encourage their awareness as citizens. When they have in their hands copies of the Constitution, the Civil Code, etc., they recognize that they are a part of civil society and have both rights and obligations as members of the community (Paredes Estela 1987).

**Vietnam**
A basic reason for establishing a community learning and resource centre (CLARC) is that rural community dwellers will be better informed and better prepared to take an active part in their own development and the collective development of their communities and the nation as a whole. One surprising result is that the resource mobilization skills acquired by villagers have been applied not only to government agencies but also to the private sector. Another change is that village broadcasting stations now include broadcasts prepared with the active participation of the youth of the community. Most significant is the increased understanding of community members that they can improve themselves, that there are government agencies that can help them and that community actions have a greater impact than individual ones (Torrijos 1996).
CHAPTER FOUR

INDICATORS

Introduction

The twenty four indicators that follow are designed to measure whether a rural information support system is meeting expectations, both in output performance and impact. The potential ability of the service to meet needs may be measured through analysis of subject content/format of materials held or activities offered. Such a service is provided for use by the rural community. One measurement of performance is therefore the use that is made of the service. A low use indicates that needs are not being met; an increasing or high use indicates that requirements are being satisfied. Even if information is provided and accessed, it is not necessarily acted upon. The impact of an information service is revealed in the behaviour of members of the rural community. Indicators of impact can be found in the observation of the actions or perceptions of the rural population. For both performance and impact, indicators that are applied at regular intervals can monitor an increase (or not) of take-up.

The following characteristics apply throughout:

• a rural resource centre model of information provision is envisaged as the context of application. However indicators could be used in or adapted for other models;

• indicators have been created to measure all the major expectations of rural information provision. However each Centre will set its own objectives, what it wants to achieve. Without knowing the objectives, it is difficult to know what should be measured. The objectives will determine which indicators need to be applied;

• indicators of staff or facilities are not covered. However the application of the measures of performance and impact will have direct implications on such resources, e.g. on staffing levels and training, on the nature buildings and facilities;

• recognizing the levels of expertise and of data collection available in rural areas, indicators have been kept as simple as possible. Even so, some indicators or some measures within an indicator are more complex than others and their application requires fairly detailed information, which will require a considerable effort in data collection. Although designed to be used as a set, one complementing the other, application of those indicators or those measures within an indicator which do not require a great amount of statistical data, will still provide some assessment of both performance and impact;

• when the measurement of the general overall performance and impact of a service is required, this purpose will be met by the application of the following eight indicators, with those on visits, consultations and user needs being carried out each year:

7. Visits
9. Consultations
10. Activities
12. User needs
13. Community needs
16. New skills
19. Literacy
22. Indigenous knowledge

- the most important part of any assessment is using the results to improve rural information provision. Chapter Five considers this issue and gives guidance on the interpretation of results;

- many of the indicators require identical data. Guidance on the statistics that any service should collect and methods of collection are provided in Appendix One;

- the methods of calculation proposed for each indicator are not restricted to purely numerical calculations; they include judgements, in which the achievements of a centre are checked against various criteria, resulting in a verbal summary of performance.

A. Indicators of information availability
1. Accessibility
2. Volume
3. Subject range
4. Diversity of formats (print, audio-cassette, video, poster, slide, electronic e.g. CD-ROM, databases, Internet, etc.)
5. Indigenous knowledge and local information (e.g. proportion of local knowledge to total information available; recording of indigenous knowledge; generation of local knowledge, e.g. collection of statistics on health, population, agriculture)
6. External information sources (how many different sources of knowledge known for each subject area — formal and informal, local and outside, personal contacts with experts, etc.)

B. Indicators of use
7. Visits
8. Membership
9. Consultations
10. Loans
11. Activities

C. Indicators of user satisfaction (i.e. information obtained through individual and group interviews and discussions with users and non-users of the service)
12. User needs
13. Community needs

D. Indicators of local control over information flow
14. Localization of management
15. Finance
E. Indicators of economic and social impact
16. New skills (e.g. new agricultural or animal husbandry techniques, new business skills)
17. Income generation (leading to higher standards of living)
18. Health and nutrition

F. Indicators of knowledge base
19. Awareness of national issues and infrastructure
20. Literacy
21. Examination pass rate
22. Indigenous knowledge

G. Indicators of participation in government and its programmes
23. Participation in government
24. Participation in extension programmes
INDICATOR ONE: ACCESSIBILITY

Purpose
• to show how easy it is to access the Centre, with reference to distance, hours of opening and number of seats.

Measures
• percentage of target population who live within 5 km of the Centre;
• percentage of opening hours which correspond to hours of leisure;
• number of seats per number of visits per hour.

Data required
• number of target population;
• number of target population who live within 5 km of the Centre;
• number of hours the Centre is open per week and per year;
• leisure hours of each category in the community;
• number of seats in the Centre;
• number of visits made to the Centre per year.

Method of calculation
• percentage of population who live within 5 km of the Centre
\[
\frac{\text{Number of target population who live within 5 km of the Centre}}{\text{Total number of target population}} \times 100
\]

• percentage of opening hours corresponding to hours of leisure
\[
\frac{\text{Number of opening hours corresponding to hours of leisure per year}}{\text{Number of opening hours per year}} \times 100
\]

• number of seats per number of visits per hour
\[
\frac{\text{Number of seats}}{\Sigma \left( \frac{\text{number of visits per year}}{\text{number of hours open per year}} \right)}
\]

Notes
• in a rural area, 5 km is considered the average distance a person is willing to walk to visit an information centre;
• in calculating leisure hours, it is necessary to take into account the time when people usually retire for the night and to allow for seasonal differences (e.g. less leisure in times of planting and harvesting);
• if no records of visits made to the Centre are maintained on a regular basis, then it would be possible to count visits over a period of two representative weeks in the year, e.g. one in the planting season and one in the dry season, and multiply by 26 to give an estimate of the total number of visits per year.
INDICATOR TWO: VOLUME

Purpose
• to show the total amount of informational materials available and their currency.

Measure
• number of informational materials per head of target population;
• percentage of items added to the stock of the Centre each year.

Data required
• number of the target population;
• total number of items of informational material held by the Centre;
• number of new items added to stock each year.

Method of calculation
• informational materials per head of target population

\[
\text{Number of informational materials} \div \text{Number of target population}
\]

• percentage of new information materials

\[
\frac{\text{Number of new information materials added in one year} \times 100}{\text{Number of information materials in stock at end of year}}
\]
INDICATOR THREE: SUBJECT RANGE

Purpose
• to show the range of subjects covered.

Measures
• percentage of informational material held in each subject area and in local language(s).

Data required
• total number of items in stock;
• number of items of informational material held in each subject area and in local language(s).

Method of calculation
• percentage of total information material by subject/language

\[
\frac{\text{Number of items within subject, e.g. agriculture} \times 100}{\text{Total number of items in stock}}
\]

Notes
• a list of ‘subject’ groupings is included in Appendix One. Groupings are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Material written in local languages will be found within other groupings.
INDICATOR FOUR: DIVERSITY OF FORMATS

Purpose
- to show the quantity and variety of informational formats held by the Centre.

Measures
- a list of the various formats held;
- percentage of informational materials held in each format.

Data required
- total number of items in stock;
- different formats in which informational materials are held;
- number of informational materials in each format.

Method of calculation
- a list of the variety of formats held

Consult checklist of formats (cf. Appendix One) and tick those held.

- percentage of informational materials held in each format

\[
\frac{\text{Number of informational materials in each format, e.g. videos}}{\text{Total number of items in stock}} \times 100
\]
INDICATOR FIVE: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND LOCAL INFORMATION

Purpose
• to show the availability of indigenous knowledge and local information within the Centre.

Measures
• a list and count of items either based on indigenous knowledge or of local information held in the Centre, by subject and by format;
• the percentage of items either based on indigenous knowledge or of local information held in the Centre.

Data required
• total number of items in stock;
• numbers of items based on indigenous knowledge or of local information, by subject and by format.

Method of calculation
• a list and count of items either based on indigenous knowledge or of local information held in the Centre, by subject and by format;

Consult checklists of subjects and format (cf. Appendix One) and enter numbers of items based on indigenous knowledge or local information held in each category.

• percentage of items based on indigenous knowledge or of local information

\[
\frac{\text{Number of items based on indigenous knowledge and of local information}}{\text{Total number of items in stock}} \times 100
\]

Notes
• indigenous knowledge is traditional knowledge; local information relates to what is currently happening and may refer to local events or be the collection of statistics of population, agricultural output, etc.;
• the list and count of items based on indigenous knowledge or of local information will give the total number of items of this nature required in the second calculation.
INDICATOR SIX: EXTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES

Purpose
• to show the variety of external information sources, including resource persons, used by the Centre.

Measures
• a list in each subject area of external information sources used.

Data required
• the specific names of every external information source used in each subject area.

Method of calculation
• list of external information sources

Consult the list of subjects (cf. Appendix One) and, under each subject, enter the name of any external information source consulted to provide information for or assistance to users of the Centre over the past year.
INDICATOR SEVEN: VISITS

Purpose
- to show how many people use the service in relation to the total population;
- to show which groups within the community use the service the most.

Measures
- visits made to the Centre per head of target population;
- percentage use by different categories within the target population;
- visits made to the Centre per head of categories within the target population.

Data required
- number of the target population in total;
- number of target population by categories, e.g. school pupils;
- number of visits to the Centre per year;
- number of visits by category, e.g. school pupils, to the Centre per year.

Method of calculation
- visits per head of population
  \[
  \frac{\text{Number of visits per year}}{\text{Total number of target population}}
  \]

- percentage use by different categories within the population
  \[
  \frac{\text{Number of visits per year within a category, e.g. school pupils}}{\text{Total number of visits per year}} \times 100
  \]

- visits per head by categories within the population
  \[
  \frac{\text{Number of visits per year within a category, e.g. school pupils}}{\text{Number of school pupils within target population}}
  \]

Notes
- this indicator is key to any evaluation. All measures are important and should be calculated each year;
- visits to the Centre include attendance at any of its activities, whether these are located physically in the Centre or elsewhere.
INDICATOR EIGHT: MEMBERSHIP

Purpose
• to measure the commitment to the information service of the rural community through a comparison of membership with the target population both as a whole and by groups.

Measures
• percentage of total target population who are members of the service;
• percentage of various groups within the total target population who are members of the service.

Data required
• number of the target population;
• number of target population by various categories, e.g. school pupils;
• number of population registered as members of the information service;
• numbers of persons within various categories of the population registered as members of the information service.

Method of calculation
• Percentage of population who are members of the service

\[
\text{Number of members} \times \frac{\text{100}}{\text{Number of target population}}
\]

• Percentage in groups within the population who are members of the service

\[
\text{Number of members within a category, e.g. school pupils} \times \frac{\text{100}}{\text{Number of school pupils in target population}}
\]
INDICATOR NINE: CONSULTATIONS

Purpose
- to show the use of informational materials both by the population as a whole and by groups within the population;
- to show demand in each subject area and in each format;
- to show whether materials held are in accord with demand.

Measures
- consultations of informational materials in the Centre per head of the target population;
- consultations of informational materials in the Centre per head of various groups within the target population;
- percentage of informational materials consulted in each subject area;
- percentage of informational materials consulted in each format;
- comparison of materials and consultations in each subject area;
- comparison of materials and consultations in each format.

Data required
- number of the target population in total;
- number of target population by categories, e.g. school pupils;
- number of consultations of informational materials, in total and by categories, over a year;
- number of items of informational material consulted by subject and by format over a year;
- number of items of information material held in each subject area and in each format.

Method of calculation
- **consultations per head of population**

\[
\text{Number of consultations of informational materials per year} / \text{Number of target population}
\]

- **consultations per head by categories within the population**

\[
\text{Number of consultations within one category per year} / \text{Number within category in target population}
\]

- **percentage of materials consulted in each subject area**

\[
(\text{Number of consultations per year in one subject area, e.g. agriculture} \times 100) / \text{Total number of consultations}
\]

- **percentage of materials consulted in each format**

\[
(\text{Number of consultations per year in one format, e.g. videos} \times 100) / \text{Total number of consultations}
\]
• comparison of materials and consultations in each subject area

% of total materials held which are in agriculture : % of consultations in agriculture

• comparison of materials and consultations in each format

% of total materials held which are videos : % of consultations which use videos

Notes
• this indicator is key to any evaluation and the measures on general use and use within subject areas should be calculated each year;
• an example of an instrument which can be used to collect data is provided in Appendix One; a record of the number and nature of consultations made in the Centre is kept over two weeks of the year, one in the planting and the other in the dry season. The figures are then multiplied by 26 to give the statistics for the year.
INDICATOR TEN: LOANS

Purpose
• to show the use of informational materials (as opposed to membership or visits) by the population and by categories within the population;
• to show the demand in each subject area and/or format;
• to show whether materials held are in accord with demand.

Measures
• percentage of the target population who have material on loan;
• percentage of various categories within the total target population who have material on loan;
• percentage of informational materials loaned in each subject area and in each format;
• comparison of materials and loans in each subject area and in each format.

Data required
• number of the target population in total;
• number of target population by categories, e.g. school pupils;
• number of persons, in total and by categories, who have items of informational material on loan at a particular point in time;
• number of loans per year;
• number of loans per year in each subject area and in each format.

Methods of calculation
• percentage of target population who have materials on loan at a particular point in time.

\[
\text{Number of persons with material on loan} \times 100 \\
\text{Total number of target population}
\]

• percentage of categories within the target population who have materials on loan at a particular point in time

\[
\text{Number of school pupils with materials on loan} \times 100 \\
\text{Number of school pupils in the target population}
\]

• percentage of total loans made per year by subject area or format

\[
\text{Number of loans made per year in agriculture} \times 100 \\
\text{Total number of loans per year}
\]

• comparison of materials held in subject area/format and loan

\[
\% \text{ of materials held in agriculture : } \% \text{ of loans per year in agriculture}
\]
Notes

- when counting the number of persons having material on loan at a particular point in time, it is advisable to sample two or more days (according to season or term time/school holiday) and average by dividing the total by the number of days.
INDICATOR ELEVEN: ACTIVITIES

Purpose
• to show the percentage of the population that participate in informational activities organized by the Centre e.g. storytelling, study groups, discussions, question and answer sessions, theatre, dance, exhibitions, training courses;
• to show which activities are given the most support.

Measures
• attendance at the Centre activities per head of target population;
• attendance at the Centre activities per head of categories within the target population;
• percentage of attendance at specific activities.

Data required
• number of the target population in total;
• number of target population by categories, e.g. school pupils;
• total number of persons attending activities per year;
• number of persons attending activities per year according to category;
• number of persons attending each type of activity per year.

Method of calculation
• activity attendance per head

Number attending all activities per year
Number of target population

• percentage of attendance by category, e.g. adult women

(Number of adult women attending activities per year x 100) / Total number attending activities per year

• activity attendance per head by category

(Number of adult women attending activities per year) / Number of adult women in target population

• percentage attending specific activities, e.g. discussion groups

(Number attending discussion groups per year x 100) / Total number attending all activities per year

Notes
• this indicator is key to any evaluation;
• it will be necessary to record for each activity (and in a way appropriate for that activity) the total number attending and the number within each category, e.g. women. In normal circumstances, this can be done by a head count. If large numbers attend, then estimates of attendance can be made.
INDICATOR TWELVE: USER NEEDS

Purpose
• to show if the Centre is meeting the information needs of its users.

Measure
• percentage of users showing satisfaction with the services and activities of the Centre;
• reasons for level of satisfaction achieved.

Data required
Interviews with all users of the Centre for two weeks (one in dry season and one in planting season) and with those attending five consecutive activities during the year. Questions will be asked on how satisfactory the visit to the Centre or the activity has been. A suggested interview framework is provided in Appendix One.
• number of persons interviewed in total and within categories;
• answers to questions asked.

Method of calculation
• percentage of users expressing satisfaction

\[
\frac{\text{Number of each answer expressing same level of satisfaction}}{\text{Total number of persons interviewed}} \times 100
\]

• percentage of users in one category expressing same level of satisfaction

\[
\frac{\text{Number of school pupils expressing same level of satisfaction}}{\text{Number of school pupils interviewed}} \times 100
\]

• reasons for level of satisfaction achieved

Summary of reasons given for levels of satisfaction

Notes
• this indicator is key to any evaluation;
• this indicator is limited to assessing satisfaction amongst users. It does not measure satisfaction in the community as a whole, i.e. users and non-users.
INDICATOR THIRTEEN: COMMUNITY NEEDS

Purpose
• to show how the rural community as a whole perceives the Centre.

Measure
• views expressed by members of the rural community on the services and activities of the Centre.

Data required
Utilization of a village meeting to obtain views about the Centre, its role and impact on community life. A suggested discussion framework is provided in Appendix One.
• numbers attending the village meeting;
• numbers within groups attending the village meeting;
• views expressed by those attending the meeting.

Method of calculation
• summary of attitudes

Assess general awareness about the Centre, expectation of its role and reasons for use, non-use and cessation of use.

Notes
• this indicator is key to any evaluation;
• the way the meeting is run is important. Ideally someone who is neutral should chair, so that all ideas are allowed to emerge. Critical views should be encouraged because they will provide a basis for future improvement.
INDICATOR FOURTEEN: LOCALIZATION OF MANAGEMENT

Purpose
• to show the degree of involvement of the local community in the design, implementation and management of the Centre.

Measure
• the 'ownership' of the Centre by the local community.

Data required
• origins of the Centre;
• membership and terms of reference of the Management Committee;
• records of the meetings of the Management Committee;
• accountability of the person-in-charge of the Centre to the local community.

Method of calculation
Look for evidence of the following and judge to what extent the criteria have been achieved:
• the idea for the Centre arose from members of the local community;
• members of the local community assisted in the building of the Centre;
• members of the Management Committee are elected by the local community from the local community;
• members of the Management Committee are representative of the various groups in the community. This can be calculated as a percentage:
  \[
  \frac{\text{Number of persons from a category, e.g. adult women, on Committee}}{\text{Total number of persons on Committee}} \times 100
  \]
• the Management Committee has decision-making powers;
• meetings are held regularly;
• meetings are well-attended;
• an annual report and an annual action plan are prepared;
• decisions made by the Management Committee are implemented;
• the person-in-charge is accountable to the local community.
INDICATOR FIFTEEN: FINANCE

Purpose
• to show the level of concern the community has in sustaining the Centre.

Measures
• percentage of cash income generated by the Centre;
• percentage of cash income derived from government;
• percentage of cash income derived from the local community.

Data required
• total cash income of the Centre per year;
• cash income of the Centre per year received from:
  - the Centre’s own income-generating activities;
  - from the local community;
  - from government (central and local).

Method of calculation
• percentage of cash income generated by the Centre per year
  
  Cash income generated by the Centre per year $ \times 100$
  Total income per year

• percentage of cash income derived from government
  
  Cash income received from government per year $ \times 100$
  Total income per year

• percentage of cash income derived from local community
  
  Cash income raised by local community per year $ \times 100$
  Total income per year
INDICATOR SIXTEEN: NEW SKILLS

Purpose
• to show that the services and activities of the Centre have contributed to the adoption of new and/or improved skills by the local community.

Measures
• evidence of new and/or improved skills which have been adopted by the local community over a period of time;
• the number of new and/or improved skills where adoption has been influenced by services or activities of the Centre over a period of time;
• the services and activities of the Centre which have had most impact on the adoption of new skills.

Data required
• the new and/or improved skills practised in the local community;
• the connection between a new skill and the Centre.

Method of calculation
Assess and summarize the data collected as follows:
• itemize all new and/or improved skills introduced and implemented in the local community over a period of time;
• from the opinions of practitioners, summarize the perceived origins of new/improved skills and note the number and areas where the Centre has been influential;
• where the Centre has been influential, note which type of service or activity has had the most impact.

Notes
• this indicator is key to any evaluation;
• information on new and/or improved skills may best be obtained by observation, discussion with village leaders, discussion with Management Committee members;
• information on the connection between new and/or improved skills and the Centre may best be obtained with those practising a new/improved skill and asking how they came to learn about it.
• if an extension worker is identified as the source of new skills information, then there is a need to find out if the extension worker has used the Centre as a source of information for teaching the new skill.
INDICATOR SEVENTEEN: INCOME GENERATION

Purpose
• to show that the services and activities of the Centre have contributed to the growth of income generation in the local community.

Measures
• evidence of new income generation activities in the local community, developed over a period of time;
• the number of new and/or improved income generation activities influenced by the services or activities of the Centre;
• the services and activities of the Centre which have had most impact on income generation.

Data required
• the new and/or improved income generation activities in the local community;
• the connection between a new income generation activity and the Centre.

Method of calculation
Assess and summarize the data collected as follows:
• itemize all new and/or improved income generation projects developed in the local community over a period of time;
• from the opinions of the owners, summarize the perceived origins of new/improved income generation projects and note the number and areas where the Centre has been influential in providing information, advice, etc.;
• where the Centre has been influential, note which type of service or activity has had the most impact.

Notes
• information on new and/or improved income generation activities may best be obtained by observation, discussion with village leaders, discussion with Management Committee members;
• information on the connection between new and/or improved income generation activities and the Centre may best be obtained by discussing with the owners of new enterprises about how they gathered information and guidance on their projects;
• if an extension worker is identified as the source of information on income generation, then there is a need to find out if the extension worker has used the Centre to increase his knowledge in this area.
INDICATOR EIGHTEEN: HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Purpose
- to show that the services and activities of the Centre have contributed to the improvement of health and nutrition standards in the local community.

Measures
- evidence of improvement in the health and nutrition of the local community over a period of time;
- sources of information on health and nutrition used by the local community;
- percentage of informational materials on health and nutrition held by the Centre which show high to medium use.

Data required
- number of the target population in total;
- number of children and adults in target population;
- number of children vaccinated each year in local health centres;
- number of children treated for diseases each year in local health centres;
- number of adults treated for diseases each year in local health centres;
- sources of information on health and nutrition;
- number items of informational material held by the Centre on health and nutrition;
- number of items of informational material on health and nutrition which show high to medium use, as evidenced by wear and tear.

Method of calculation
- evidence of health and nutrition improvement

\[
\frac{\text{Number of children vaccinated per year}}{\text{Number of children in target population}} \times 100
\]

\[
\frac{\text{Number of children treated for disease per year}}{\text{Number of children in target population}} \times 100
\]

\[
\frac{\text{Number of adults treated for disease per year}}{\text{Number of adults in target population}} \times 100
\]

- sources of health and nutrition information

Analyze and categorize the various sources and show the relative role played by different services and activities. Indicate where and how the services and activities of the Centre have contributed.

- percentage of informational materials on health and nutrition showing use

\[
\frac{\text{Number of materials on health and nutrition showing high to medium use}}{\text{Number of materials on health and nutrition held}} \times 100
\]
Notes
• data on vaccinations and treatment should be fairly easily available in local health centre records. If reliable and up to date statistics on infant mortality, nutrition and deaths from disease are available locally, then these statistics can be used to provide more reliable indicators of health standards over time in the community;
• an examination the physical state (e.g. worn or dirty pages, repairs undertaken, loose bindings) of information materials held by the Centre on health and nutrition will reveal those that have received high to medium use;
• knowledge of the main sources of information on health and nutrition may best be obtained by and through discussions with individuals representing various categories in the community;
• the percentage of persons vaccinated or treated for disease, if measured over time and at regular intervals, will show improvements (or deterioration) in health and nutrition levels.
INDICATOR NINETEEN: AWARENESS OF NATIONAL ISSUES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Purpose
• to show that the services and activities of the Centre have contributed to the awareness of national and local issues in the local community.

Measures
• analysis of: types of issues discussed in village meetings; number of organized groups in the community; channels of communication used by organized groups;
• evidence of a link between all of the above and the Centre.

Data required
• records of deliberations at village meetings;
• list of organized groups in the local community;
• ways in which organized groups communicate with the local community;
• links between the Centre and village meetings and organized groups.

Method of calculation
Analyze and assess the data collected as follows:
• if:
  - issues discussed at village meetings relate to national and local development programmes, e.g. on the environment, agriculture, health;
  - issues discussed at village meetings relate to national and local politics;
  - groups are organized in the local community around development issues;
  - there is active communication within the community on issues discussed;
  it can be concluded that the community is becoming more informed and better aware of its rights.

• if the Centre:
  - keeps records of village meetings and group activities;
  - gives relevant information to organized groups;
  - facilitates the meetings of organized groups;
  - assists in recording the decisions taken at village meetings;
  it can be concluded that the Centre has a positive impact on increasing awareness of national and local issues.
INDICATOR TWENTY: LITERACY

Purpose
- to show that the services and activities of the Centre have contributed to the acquisition, maintenance and use of literacy.

Measures
- how many and what types of literacy activities are organized by the Centre each year and how many persons attend;
- how many literacy materials are produced by the Centre each year;
- percentage of literacy materials held by the Centre which show high to medium use

Data required
- number and types of literacy activities organized by the Centre per year;
- number of persons attending literacy activities organized by the Centre per year;
- number of literacy titles produced by the Centre per year;
- number of literacy materials held by the Centre;
- number of literacy materials which show high to medium use, as evidenced by wear and tear.

Method of calculation
- promotion of literacy by the Centre
  Analyze and assess the data collected, as follows:
  - if the Centre:
    provides an increasing number of literacy materials;
    publishes an increasing number of literacy materials, e.g. books, pamphlets, posters;
    organizes literacy classes which are well attended;
    organizes discussion groups/reading clubs, which are well attended;
    offers access to radio and TV programmes supporting literacy;
    organizes different types of literacy activities with different categories;
    has links with official government literacy programmes;
  it can be concluded that the Centre has a positive impact on the promotion of literacy.

- percentage of literacy materials showing use

Number of literacy materials showing high to medium use x 100
Number of literacy materials held

Notes
- this indicator is key to any evaluation;
- an examination of the physical state (e.g. worn or dirty pages, repairs undertaken, loose bindings) of literacy materials held by the Centre will reveal those that have received high to medium use;
- in this context, literacy activities and materials are defined as those aimed at persons 16 years of age or older who cannot read, write or compute well enough to perform as an independent adult.
INDICATOR TWENTY-ONE: EXAMINATION PASS RATE

Purpose
• to show that the services and activities of the Centre have contributed to improving the academic performance of school pupils.

Measures
• percentage pass rate in national examinations within the target population of the Centre per year;
• visits to the Centre by school pupils per number of school pupils in the target population per year.

Data required
• number of children attending local schools who pass national examinations each year;
• number of children attending local schools eligible to attempt national examinations each year;
• visits to the Centre by school pupils per year;
• number of school pupils in the target population.

Method of calculation
• percentage pass rate

\[
\text{Percentage pass rate} = \frac{\text{Number of school pupils passing national examinations per year}}{\text{Number of school pupils eligible to attempt national examinations per year}} \times 100
\]

• visits per head

\[
\text{Visits per head} = \frac{\text{Number of visits to the Centre made by school pupils per year}}{\text{Number of school pupils in the target population}}
\]

Notes
• statistics on pass rates are usually maintained and publicized by local schools. It is important to use the figure of those eligible to attempt examinations rather than those who actually attempt, as it is a common practice not to allow the weaker pupils to take examinations, in order to increase the pass rate.
INDICATOR TWENTY-TWO: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Purpose
• to show that the services and activities of the Centre have contributed to the continued/revived use of indigenous knowledge in the local community.

Measures
• number of: local handicrafts produced; of songs, stories etc. generated from oral traditions; of initiatives using indigenous practices;
• number of activities organized by the Centre promoting indigenous knowledge;
• percentage of indigenous knowledge materials held by the Centre which show high to medium use.

Data required
• details of: local handicraft production; songs/stories generated from oral tradition; initiatives using indigenous practices; all in the local community;
• list of activities, organized by the Centre, together with numbers attending;
• percentage of indigenous knowledge materials held by the Centre which show high to medium use.

Method of calculation
• evidence of indigenous knowledge use

Analyze all activities taking place in the local community, which show the application and use of indigenous knowledge. If such activities are present and increasing, then indigenous knowledge remains a living force in the community.

• promotion of indigenous knowledge by the Centre

Analyze and assess the data collected, as follows:
- if the Centre:
  arranges for indigenous knowledge to be incorporated in the curriculum of local schools;
  organizes traditional story telling for children;
  has learning groups on traditional handicrafts;
  holds exhibitions of indigenous handicrafts and practices;
  tapes songs, music, stories, etc.
  discusses with the local community knowledge which needs to be recovered or revived;
  and such activities are well attended;

it can be concluded that the Centre is promoting the use and development of indigenous knowledge.
• percentage of indigenous knowledge materials showing use

Number of indigenous knowledge materials showing high to medium use x 100
Number of indigenous knowledge materials held

Notes
• this indicator is key to any evaluation.
INDICATOR TWENTY-THREE: PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT

Purpose
• to show that the services and activities of the Centre have assisted the local community to increase its input to the government decision-making process.

Measures
• number of requests submitted to government, originating in the local community per year;
• input by the Centre to the requests made.

Data required
• list of requests made to government each year;
• nature of the input made by the Centre to each request.

Method of calculation
Analyze and assess the data collected as follows:
• an increasing number of requests covering different areas of government and representing the interests of various groups is evidence of the ability of the local community to be part of the decision-making process;

• if the Centre:
  - has compiled dossiers of information on the subject of the request;
  - has assisted in formulating the request;
  - has advised on to whom and/or where to send the request;
  it can be concluded that the Centre has assisted in bettering the community’s ability to participate in the process of government.
INDICATOR TWENTY-FOUR: PARTICIPATION IN EXTENSION PROGRAMMES

Purpose
- to show that the services and activities of the Centre have strengthened the participation of the local community in extension programmes.

Measures
- numbers of persons attending extension activities (e.g. meetings, talks, demonstrations) per year;
- percentage of extension activities where organization has been assisted by the Centre;
- percentage of extension materials held by the Centre which show high to medium use.

Data required
- number of extension activities held in the local community each year and numbers of persons attending;
- number of extension activities which the Centre has assisted in organizing;
- number of extension materials held by the Centre;
- number of extension materials which show high to medium use, as evidenced by wear and tear.

Method of calculation
- number of persons attending extension activities per year
  Consult the records of extension workers, extension agencies and the Centre, to find out the number of persons attending activities.

- percentage of extension activities assisted by the Centre per year
  \[
  \frac{\text{Number of extension activities assisted by the Centre per year} \times 100}{\text{Total number of extension activities held per year}}
  \]

- percentage of extension materials showing use
  \[
  \frac{\text{Number of extension materials showing high to medium use} \times 100}{\text{Number of extension materials held}}
  \]
CHAPTER FIVE

APPLICATION OF INDICATORS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Introduction

Why evaluate?
The purpose of any evaluation is to improve. The process enables us to find out what we are not doing and what we should be doing, as well as what we are doing well and should continue. Thus the negative findings are as important as the positive. Indicators are the diagnostic tool that enables evaluation to take place.

When indicators are applied to the services of a rural resource centre, they are likely to raise a number of issues in the search for options for and strategies of rural information support. For example:

- do the objectives of the Centre reflect community needs? Or do they need revision?
- what type of staff should be employed in the Centre?
- what materials should be held and where should they come from?
- what sort of information support has the most impact on the well-being of the community?
- what physical facilities are required?

Centre objectives

Four areas in particular are likely to be subject to review. The first is the stated objectives of the Centre. Ideally the objectives of a service should be in tandem with the needs of the targeted groups in the community. Application of the indicators will reveal whether there is a match with the information needs of the community or whether the objectives need to be reviewed and updated to keep them in line with these needs. For example many Centres stress the promotion of reading habits, whilst communities usually express this need in a more utilitarian and specific way, e.g. the learning and improvement of English. In the same way, it is not usually general information on economics that is required, but on income generation and business skills. And out of the application exercise, those activities which will best succeed in implementing the objectives will be revealed and thus enable the Centre to formulate guidelines or manuals on the policies and practices which should be given emphasis in the future.

Information sources and transfer

The second is that of information sources and the means by which information is transferred. Information is drawn from conventional and non-conventional sources, including resource persons, grey literature, government publications, repackaged information. It can be provided within the Centre or obtained through local networks and even the Internet. It can be in audio or visual form as well as in print. It can be delivered not just through books, but through group discussions (where there is a two-way exchange of messages) or orally in the form of advice. Book information, on which many existing Centres base their services, is unlikely to meet the needs of all target groups in the community. Such Centres are likely to score low on indicators of
availability, use and impact. It will be necessary for them to evolve and expand into a
more grassroots type of information service, moving into in-house production of tailor-
made materials, strengthening opportunities to apply knowledge and co-operating with
the work being carried out by all other developmental agencies operating in the
community. The way forward is most likely to be one of partnership — between the
local community, library services and extension agencies.

**Physical location**
The third is that of physical location. Placing a Centre in the local primary school is a
low-cost option, making use of existing facilities. But for many communities, this has
turned out to be unsuitable. And many existing Centres remain restricted to the four
walls that enclose their collection of informational materials. Users are expected to
come to the Centre to find information. Yet information communication is not new to a
rural community. It is already in existence. A Centre needs to be able to provide
information through the channels that are already in use. Imagination is required.
Perhaps information kiosks can be set up at markets or bus parks. Relevant information
packs can be provided to village meetings, covering matters under discussion. Reading
places for popular newspapers and magazines can be found outside of the Centre, e.g.
in a shop. Staff from the Centre can attend extension activities and take available
information with them.

**Staffing**
Above all, the evaluation process is likely to impinge on the level of staffing. Most
existing Centres are run by assistants whose training is limited to carrying out simple
operational tasks like maintaining security, shelving, cleaning. Often such staff are not
paid or receive a small honorarium. If a Centre is to become not just a place for reading
but a multipurpose forum which actively provides information leading to community
development, then the staff running the Centre will need to be of a higher educational
level and be trained in a different way. They will need to be facilitators as well as
information managers. At the same time, to ensure that the Centre moves in line with
community needs, there must be leadership and real participation in the management of
the Centre by the community.

**INDICATOR ONE: ACCESSIBILITY**
The overall aim of this indicator is to show how easy it is for the local community to
reach and gain access to the Centre. It looks at the location of the Centre, the hours that
it is open and seating provision.

**Distance**
First we need to know the total population in the community which the Centre aims to
serve. The second step is to find how many live within 5 kilometres of the Centre and
then work out what percentage this is of the total population. For example, if the total
population is 5,000 people and the number who live within the 5 km radius is 1,000,
we can find the percentage by dividing 1,000 by 5,000 and then multiplying by 100 to
get the percentage:

\[
\frac{1,000 \times 100}{5,000} = 20\% \text{ of the population live within } 5 \text{ km of the Centre}
\]
In this example, the number of people who live within the 5 km radius is only 20% and those who live beyond are 80%. Most people are therefore likely to find it difficult to come to the Centre and use the services offered. But if it was found that the percentage of people living within the 5 km radius is high, for example more than 50%, this would mean that the majority of the population can easily reach the Centre to use its services.

The conclusion here is that the larger the percentage of people who live within a 5 km radius, the better will members of the community be able to make use of the Centre. The percentage of people within the 5 km radius should therefore be as high as possible.

If a high proportion of the population live more than 5 km from the Centre, then the system will not be able to target the information needs of the whole population. It will be necessary to rethink where the Centre is sited or to consider providing additional services in supplementary locations, like book boxes, information kiosks, poster displays.

**Hours of opening**

We need to find out the times of the day when people are free and have the leisure time to use the Centre. For example, if, in a rural community, people regularly work from 7.30 AM until 2.30 PM every day (except one day for attendance at a church or mosque service), it would mean that people have three hours of leisure per day, six days a week, from 3.00 PM until 6.00 PM, when darkness sets in. If the Centre opens three days a week, from 9.00 AM until 5.00 PM, then the hours when opening hours correspond to hours of leisure will be 6 hours per week.

To calculate leisure hours, one may need to take into account seasonal differences. Longer hours may be worked during times of planting and harvest, shorter hours in the dry season before planting begins. Hours of darkness may also vary between seasons. Therefore it is best to do the calculations over one calendar year. It is also important to remember that groups in the community may have different leisure patterns. Women, for example, usually have less hours of leisure than men in most rural communities. Thus it might be useful to look at the hours of leisure for women differently. Another group which might use the Centre differently are school pupils, who may be in school but go to the Centre as a part of their lessons.

Let us take a simple example, based on the data given in the first paragraph. The leisure hours of the community which correspond to the opening hours of the Centre are 6 hours per week. Over a year (i.e. multiplied by 52) the figure is 312 hours. The Centre is open three days a week from 9.00 AM to 5.00 PM, i.e. 24 hours a week and 1,248 hours a year. To find the percentage of opening hours corresponding to hours of leisure, we need to divide 312 by 1,248 and multiply by 100:

$$\frac{312}{1,248} \times 100 = 25\%$$

In this example, for 75% of the time that the Centre is open, members of the community are working in the fields. For only 25% of the time that the Centre is open are members of the community free for leisure activities.
The conclusion here is that the higher percentage of leisure time that people are free and the Centre is open, the greater the likelihood that they will actually make use of its services. To be used, a Centre must open at the times people are at leisure. If less than 50% of the opening hours do not correspond to leisure hours, then opening times need review. In some farming communities, it may be necessary to change the opening hours according to the season and to the amount of leisure time available to potential users at different times of the year.

**Seating**
By comparing the number of seats with the number of visits, it is possible to find out if the Centre can accommodate those who wish to use its services.

To find out the average number of persons visiting the Centre during any one hour, we need to divide the number of visits per year by the number of hours open per year. For example, if the total number of persons visiting the Centre per week is 60 (i.e. 3,120 per year) and the Centre is open 24 hours a week (i.e. 1,248 hours per year), then the average number of visits per hour is 2.5. The Centre has five seats. For the ratio of seats to visitors per hour:

5 seats ÷ 2.5 visitors, i.e. 2 seats to 1 visitor

In this example, the seat ratio is acceptable, as it is unlikely that a visitor will be unable to find a seat, even allowing for more use during peak periods. However a higher ratio of seats to visitors, e.g. 5 seats to 1 visitor, would indicate low usage, perhaps indicating poor siting, inappropriate opening hours or irrelevant materials. More investigation would be needed. An over-usage of seats, e.g. 1 seat for 5 visitors, may indicate the need for a bigger facility. However the situation could, perhaps, be ameliorated by longer opening hours or better time-tabling of when the Centre is open. Certainly, again, more investigation would be required.

**INDICATOR TWO: VOLUME**

This indicator measures whether there is enough informational material available for the number of potential users and whether it is kept up to date and refreshed.

**Amount of material**
By dividing the total number of information items in the Centre by the number of the total target population, we can find out the number of items available to any one user. For example, if the Centre holds a total of 1,000 items of informational material and the total target population is 5,000, then:

\[
\frac{1,000}{5,000} = 0.2 \text{ items available to one user}
\]

Interpretation of the results is straightforward. If we find that, as in this example, there are very few items available for each potential user, e.g. 0.5 or less, then the number of items are too few by comparison with the number of potential users. It may mean that action needs to be taken to accelerate the acquisition of new items. That said, the
number of informational items per head of the target population is likely to be tiny. What is important is that the collection shows growth each year and the ratio increases.

**New material**
The maintenance of a simple accessions register will reveal the number of new items added to the Centre during the year, as well as the total number of items in stock. By dividing the number of new items acquired by the number of the total stock, we can find the percentage of the total stock which is newly acquired in any one year. If the total stock is 1,000 at the end of the year and 200 items were added during that year:

\[
\frac{200}{1000} \times 100 = 20\% \text{ of the collection is new material, added in the previous year}
\]

A healthy Centre should be adding new materials to its collection every year. A high proportion (e.g. 20% or more) can indicate that the information offered is being kept up to date and relevant. A low percentage or even 0% indicates a dead collection and a Centre that has ceased to develop. A low or decreasing percentage of new acquisitions indicates that the acquisition policy needs some review.

However it must be established that new material has been selected according to user needs and is not made up of irrelevant donations.

**INDICATOR THREE: SUBJECT RANGE**

Ideally a Centre should have items in the different subjects relevant to and reflecting the community’s information needs. This indicator measures the range of subjects (including local languages) covered and shows the relative balance of subjects within the collection.

We need the total number of items held by the Centre. Then we need the number of items in each subject area and to work out what percentage this is of the total. For example, if the total stock is 1,000 items and the number in the subject field of agriculture is 20, we can find the percentage by dividing 20 by 1,000 and then multiplying by 100:

\[
\frac{20}{1000} \times 100 = 2\% \text{ of the collection is in agriculture}
\]

The percentage of items in a subject area should reflect the demand for information in that subject area. If a community has a strong agricultural base, we would expect the percentage of items in agriculture to be bigger than in other subject areas which are not so central to the community’s survival. In the above example, if the Centre is serving an agricultural community, the result of 2% is very small and would indicate that more materials on agriculture need to be acquired.
An ill-balanced collection, where one subject predominates, is also revealed. If for example 800 of the items were fiction:

\[
\frac{800}{1000} \times 100 = 80\% \text{ of the collection is fiction}
\]

then, fiction is being collected at the expense of other subject areas.

Of course, it must be recognized that only materials that are available can be collected; therefore a perfectly balanced collection is a virtual impossibility. Items in local languages or those produced and published locally are always in short supply; school books published in the West are more easily available. Even so, application of this indicator points the direction the collection development should be following.

**INDICATOR FOUR: DIVERSITY OF FORMATS**

Research has shown that information can be successfully transferred in very many formats. Verbal and visual formats (e.g. audio-cassettes, videos, posters, maps) are often more successful for rural people, who find it difficult to both read and find time to read printed material. A Centre which holds information in many different formats is able to offer many ways of accessing information.

**Variety of formats**
The list of the various formats held by the Centre provides an indication that the Centre is aware of the many formats available and is attempting to provide information in a variety of these to suit user information-seeking habits. If only one or two formats are held, then more diversification is required.

**Amount of items within each format**
If we know the total number of items in stock and the number of items within each format, then we can work out the percentage of informational materials held in each format. For example, if there are 1,000 items in stock and 950 of these are books, then:

\[
\frac{950}{1000} \times 100 = 95\%
\]

and the collection is revealed as being predominantly a collection of books.

Generally speaking the higher the percentage of items which are in non-book formats the better, bearing in mind that most rural communities prefer to seek information in non print formats. In the above example, the Centre is unlikely to be satisfying information needs. If, over the succeeding years, the percentage of books in the collection decreases and continues to decrease, then this will show that action has been taken to acquire more information in other formats.
INDICATOR FIVE: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND LOCAL INFORMATION

The aim of the Centre should be to ensure that it has materials which are based on the knowledge of the community (or similar communities elsewhere) or relate to the locality. The collection and dissemination of this type of information indicates that a Centre is responding to the particular community in which it is based. It is generating information, not merely passively accepting what has been produced elsewhere.

Using checklists, the number of items based on indigenous knowledge or local information, by subject and by format, is revealed.

The percentage of items based on indigenous knowledge or local information in the total stock of the Centre can also be worked out. For example, there may 20 items based on indigenous knowledge, all audio-cassettes of local folk stories. The percentage of items in the collection would therefore be:

\[
\text{Percentage} = \frac{20}{1,000} \times 100 = 2\% 
\]

An interpretation of the results would conclude that the subject coverage and format is too limited and that there should be a concerted effort to increase the number of such items of information. Items based on local information should also be generated. Care must be taken to ensure that items are not clustered in the same subject area and format.

The higher the percentage and the number of informational materials based on indigenous knowledge or local information and the more subjects and formats covered, the better. This also indicates that the external and indigenous knowledge systems are working together. Given the importance of indigenous knowledge and local information to the needs of a rural community, one would expect to see this type of information increase as a percentage of the total stock each year.

INDICATOR SIX: EXTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES

The number and variety of external information sources, including resource persons, used will increase the likelihood of the Centre being able to provide relevant information. Referral and aid in the practical implementation of information is accepted as an important role for a Centre. However well stocked a Centre may be, it will be necessary to use external sources to provide this sort of assistance.

The data collected for this indicator will reveal the number of external information sources which have been used and the subject areas for which they were consulted. The list will enable the Centre to assess which subject areas are well served and which are weak, with reference to external sources. If a subject area is important in the community and no external sources are being used, then likely external sources must be found for the future.

It is a good thing to have a strong network of external information sources, where difficult queries can be referred for information and advice. However if the number of
external sources used is very large, this might show that the Centre has a low ability to immediately respond to questions from its user community, because its own collection is weak. Then the policy of acquisition needs investigation.

**INDICATOR SEVEN: VISITS**

A Centre aims to serve all the rural population. This indicator shows how much the Centre is visited and used by different categories in the community. It also shows how well individuals within a category make use of the Centre. It is central to any evaluation process, as it indicates the use made of the Centre by the local community.

**Visits**
The number of visits made per year by each person in the community is worked out by dividing the number of visits by the total number in the target population. Given a target population of 5,000 and 60 visits per week (i.e. 3,120 per year), then:

\[
\frac{3,120}{5,000} = 0.6 \text{ visits per head of the population per year}
\]

If the Centre is meeting the information needs of the community, then one would expect the visits per year to increase year by year. An average of one visit per head of population would be an acceptable target. If visits per head decrease, then the Centre is losing its relevancy. The reasons would need to be investigated and measures to remedy the situation applied.

**Visits by different categories**
This shows which categories within the local community use the Centre the most. The calculation should be done for all categories in the community, school pupils, men, women, youth, extension workers, etc. The percentage is worked out by dividing the number of visits within a specific category by the number of visits within the year. For example, if 2,080 of the visits were by school pupils, then:

\[
\frac{2,080}{3,120} \times 100 = 67\% \text{ of visits are made by school children}
\]

School pupils are therefore the user majority but not overwhelmingly dominant. Others do also make use of the Centre. However if the number of visits by women were found to be 31, then:

\[
\frac{31}{3,120} \times 100 = 1\% \text{ of visits are made by women}
\]

And it would be clear that the Centre was not meeting their needs. The Centre would need to review its stocks, services and activities, so as to increase use by women. The results of the indicator would call for discussion with women’s groups to find out why women were not using the Centre and to ask for suggestions on how the Centre could change its strategy to meet their requirements.
Visits per head by category

It is useful to know how well the Centre is serving a particular category of user. The results reveal the rate of saturation within the category. Again it needs to be calculated for each category within the population. For example, if there are 1,500 school children in the population and they make 2,080 visits per year, then:

\[
\frac{2,080}{1,500} = 1.4 \text{ visits per school pupil per year}
\]

So, although visits by school pupils make up 67% of the total number of visits, each school pupil makes less than two visits to the Centre each year. A higher figure might be expected and there would therefore be a need to investigate whether the range and relevance of materials could be improved or, maybe, the opening hours adjusted. If it was discovered that extension workers were making on average 26 visits per head per year, then it could be concluded that the Centre was meeting their needs and that adults within the community, both men and women, were also benefiting indirectly from the services of the Centre.

INDICATOR EIGHT: MEMBERSHIP

This indicator finds out how many people in the community have made a commitment to the Centre by taking out membership. We can find the percentage of people in the community who are members of the Centre and the extent to which people in different categories in the community have taken up membership.

The results may be interpreted in the same way as for Indicator Seven. If it is found that a low percentage have taken up membership, this may call for starting campaigns in the community to popularize the Centre. Again, if it is found that a low percentage within a particular category are members, then something needs to be done to encourage more people from that category to join the Centre. In general, the higher the percentage of persons who are members the better. And an increasing percentage of members each year indicates the continuing relevancy of the Centre.

However, it should be noted that in some Centres, everyone in the community is an automatic member. Registration is only required when material is loaned. And if there is a charge for membership, this further decreases the value of the indicator as a measure of commitment and value perception.

INDICATOR NINE: CONSULTATIONS

Consultations are different from visits, in that an item or items of informational material are actually used. The aim of this indicator is to measure the actual use of information materials by the population, by groups within the population, by subject and by format. It is complementary and supplementary to the indicator on visits and, as an indicator of use, it is central to any evaluation process. It also needs to be combined with the indicator on loans, in order to give a complete picture of the use of materials by the community. The most important measures are the rates at which the population and categories within the population actually consult informational materials.
Consultations in general and by category
An analysis of consultations reveals to what extent the informational sources provided by the Centre are used and by which categories within the population. We need the number of consultations and the number of the target population. For example, if the target population is 5,000 and there were 1,040 consultations of information material in any one year, then:

\[
\frac{1,040}{5,000} = 0.2 \text{ consultations per head of the population per year}
\]

When compared to the 0.6 rate for visits, this shows that many people use the Centre for other purposes than obtaining information, maybe for study or for meeting friends. The low figure could indicate that the material held by the Centre is not very relevant to local needs.

If the number of consultations by women were 2 and there was a population of 1,500 women in the community, then:

\[
\frac{2}{1,500} = 0.001 \text{ consultations per head of women per year}
\]

When this extremely low figure is viewed together with the result that only 0.6% of the visits made to the Centre are by women, then it becomes very apparent, that the Centre is not meeting the needs of women at all and action is called for.

This indicator needs to be applied for all categories in the community.

Consultations by subject and format
Two measures relate to the use of informational materials, according to both their subject and format. They assist the Centre to identify the subject areas (or formats) which are consulted most often and indicate whether the stocks of the Centre are sufficient. For example, if there are 156 consultations of agricultural material over the year, then:

\[
\frac{156}{1,040} \times 100 = 15\% \text{ of the consultations are in agriculture}
\]

We already know that only 2% of the stocks of the Centre are items which relate to agriculture. Therefore:

2% of stock : 15% of consultations

In this case, there is a demand for information on agriculture and the Centre needs to increase its holdings, as there is an imbalance between supply and demand. If, however, the holdings in a particular area represent a high percentage of the total, but the percentage of use is low, then either there is little demand for that subject area or the type of materials acquired are not the right ones for the community in question. The same will be true of measures of format.
INDICATOR TEN: LOANS

Loaning is only an important indicator of use, if providing material on loan is a key objective of the Centre. Often in rural areas, material is consulted and read in the Centre. That said, information on loans provides an additional measure of the use the local community is making of the Centre and may be analyzed in the same way as for visits and consultations.

Loans in general and by category

The number of persons with material on loan at a particular point in time is counted. With this information, we can calculate the percentage of the population who have material on loan. For example, if the target population is 5,000 and 200 persons have material on loan, then:

\[
\frac{200 \times 100}{5,000} = 4\% \text{ of the population have material on loan at any one time}
\]

150 of the persons with material on loan are school pupils. Given a population of 1,500 school pupils in the community, then:

\[
\frac{150 \times 100}{1,500} = 10\% \text{ of the school population have material on loan at any one time}
\]

We would expect the percentage of persons with material on loan to increase each year. If the percentage decreases, then the Centre would need to investigate the reasons. Perhaps the stock is growing old and users no longer find it relevant or interesting. It is important to find out whether loans are increasing or decreasing within specific categories within the population. It could be that the total percentage increases, but that this is made up mostly by school pupils; and that the percentage of loans by adult men or women is actually decreasing.

Loans by subject and format

Measuring the percentage of loans made within a specific subject area (or format) and comparing the loans with stock are also important indicators of use. The subject with the highest percentage of loans has the highest demand within the community and this should be reflected in the number of items stocked. However it could also mean that one group, for example school pupils, are interested in borrowing, whilst adults prefer to obtain information through discussion, by watching videos, etc.

For example, if a total of 2,400 loans are made in a year and 240 of these are items concerning agriculture, then:

\[
\frac{240 \times 100}{2,400} = 10\% \text{ of all loans are in agriculture}
\]

We already know that only 2\% of the collection of the Centre are items that relate to agriculture. Therefore:

\[
2\% \text{ of stock : } 10\% \text{ of loans}
\]
In this case, the results would indicate that more material that can be loaned should be acquired in agriculture.

**INDICATOR ELEVEN: ACTIVITIES**

This indicator is key to any evaluation and, like those for visits and consultations, should be carried out each year. Activities are an important method of information transfer in rural communities. Activities also enable information to be practically implemented. Activities are crucial to the role of the Centre as a co-ordinator of information transfer and dissemination and a focal point for community life. The aim of the indicator is to measure attendance at the various activities offered: overall attendance, attendance within various categories in the community and attendance at different types of activity.

**Level of attendance**

The number of persons attending activities divided by the target population, gives us a rate of attendance per head. For example, if 400 people attend activities, then:

\[
\frac{400}{5,000} = 0.08 \text{ activity attendance per head of the population}
\]

This is low, but may not be spread evenly throughout the population. If 300 of those attending activities are women, then:

\[
\frac{300 \times 100}{400} = 75% \text{ of those attending activities are women}
\]

and

\[
\frac{300}{1,500} = 0.2 \text{ activity attendance per head of women in the population}
\]

From this we can conclude that women are the main category who attend activities, but that the number of women who attend could still be improved. So more activities relevant to their needs may be offered. On the other hand, the activities offered are obviously not meeting the needs of other categories and investigation is required. Maybe there are insufficient activities. Alternatively we need to find out the reasons why most of the community do not attend. We may find that the subject, or the time, or the place, are not suitable and we shall need to change whatever is causing most people not to attend.

In short, if very few people attend activities or if one category dominates, then activities need to strengthened by widening their appeal or by providing more of them. Evaluations show that maintaining a programme of activities is not easy; one would expect the number of persons attending to increase each year and for the activities on offer to gradually reach all categories of the target population.
Specific activity attendance
It is interesting to compare how different activities compare in attendance. We can find out the percentage of those attending literacy classes, study groups, discussions etc.
For example, if 40 attend study groups and 100 attend discussions, then:

\[
\frac{40 \times 100}{400} = 10\% \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{100 \times 100}{400} = 25\%
\]

and it can be concluded that the way that study groups are organized needs to be investigated and their scope changed. A high percentage attendance indicates that the activity is popular within the community and is proving a useful way of transferring information.

However low attendance figures may not always mean that an activity is unpopular, and, therefore, not useful. This could simply mean that the number of persons for whom the activity is relevant is small — for example, adult literacy classes in places where literacy is already high. Literacy classes are unlikely to attract as many people as video shows; but they are also very important and have to be continued even if the percentage attending is low.

INDICATOR TWELVE: USER NEEDS
This indicator measures whether the information needs of users have actually been met, by asking them that question. It is key to any evaluation and should be calculated on an annual basis. To collect the necessary information, the best approach is to ask users, on exit, questions relevant to whether or not their visit to the Centre was satisfactory. A suggested interview framework is provided.

User satisfaction
We need to analyze the answers to questions on satisfaction, by finding out the percentage of answers expressing the same degree of satisfaction. For example, if 120 people are interviewed and answers to the question ‘were you satisfied with your visit today?’ are 40 answering ‘yes’, 60 answering ‘somehow’ and 20 answering ‘no’, then:

\[
\frac{40 \times 100}{120} = 33\% \quad \text{expressed total satisfaction with their visit}
\]

\[
\frac{60 \times 100}{120} = 50\% \quad \text{expressed that some needs were met, but not all}
\]

\[
\frac{20 \times 100}{120} = 17\% \quad \text{expressed a lack of satisfaction}
\]

In this example, the majority of users left only partially satisfied and a significant number were totally unsatisfied. However the fact that one third of users left totally satisfied reflects well on the Centre. The exercise needs to be repeated for each question asked.

The interpretation of data is easy. Where a large percentage of users show a high satisfaction with the Centre, it means that expectations are being met. If users are not
satisfied or only partially satisfied, then their expectations are not being met. The information available or the way it is made available will require investigation. It is possible for informational material numbers and use to be quite high, but for users to still be unsatisfied and to feel that more is required. Users quite often have good ideas on how a service can be improved to meet their needs.

Reasons for levels of satisfaction
The suggested point of exit survey asks a number of other questions. An analysis of these will give further information on reasons why the Centre is visited. It will be possible to relate satisfaction to category of user; or to relate satisfaction to the activity undertaken in the Centre. For example, the results may show that school pupils find the Centre easy to use, but women do not; or that those who come to study are generally satisfied, but those who come to find information are not. In these cases, women need further training in how to use the Centre and the information materials held need to be more relevant to community needs.

INDICATOR THIRTEEN: COMMUNITY NEEDS

A Centre must meet the information needs of all potential users. This indicator aims to find out how the community as a whole feels about the Centre and the views it holds on the way the Centre should offer its services. Community participation in the running of a Centre is important to enable the community to claim ownership and make their voice heard.

The measure is qualitative rather quantitative. From the views expressed at the meeting, it should be possible to summarize levels of awareness, reasons for use/non-use, popular and unpopular services, problems in using the Centre, future directions of the Centre. What the community wants is what the Centre should aim to deliver. The implications on policy and practice emerge from the views expressed. Comparison of views over the years will indicate whether levels of satisfaction are increasing or decreasing.

It is important to count the numbers attending the meeting and to know into which categories they fall. For example, if the majority of those attending are adult males, then only the views of that group would be adequately represented.

INDICATOR FOURTEEN: LOCALIZATION OF MANAGEMENT

Localization of management is measured by the extent to which members of the local community are directly involved in the establishment and the management of the Centre. A locally elected committee (or similar organ), representing all categories within the community, the decisions taken by the Committee, the level of implementation of decisions made are some of the criteria suggested as indicators of localization. It is necessary to compare local practice against the indicators and judge how far integration has been achieved. The process is one of assessment rather than measurement. Even if the impetus for the Centre came from the outside, the application of this indicator will measure how far control has been passed into the hands of the local community.
In interpreting this information, if management committee meetings are held regularly, and the committee is an elected one, and there is a good record of implementation (at least 70% of the decisions are acted upon), this would be a positive indication that there is localization of management of the Centre. If further criteria were met, then the situation would be even stronger. But if the opposite were found, then it would indicate that action needs to be taken to increase control of the Centre by the community.

The higher the degree of localization, the more likely it is that a Centre will both meet local information needs and be sustainable.

**INDICATOR FIFTEEN: FINANCE**

The sources from which the Centre receives money to pay its staff, upkeep its buildings and facilities and acquire materials indirectly indicate whether the community itself is concerned to maintain the Centre and therefore its future sustainability. We need to know the annual cash income (not donations in kind) of the Centre and then work out the percentage that arises from the local community, from the activities of the Centre and from government, both central and local. In cases where the local community owns the Centre, it may be difficult to differentiate between local community support and Centre activities.

For example if the Centre has a total income of the equivalent of US$ 2,000 per year, out of which US$ 1,000 has been granted from central government, US$ 750 has been donated by the community (from individuals and local societies) and US$ 250 has been generated by the Centre, then:

\[
\begin{align*}
1,000 \times 100 &= \frac{50\%}{2,000} \text{ dependence on central government} \\
750 \times 100 &= \frac{38\%}{2,000} \text{ dependence on the local community} \\
250 \times 100 &= \frac{12\%}{2,000} \text{ dependence on Centre activities}
\end{align*}
\]

If most of the funding comes from outside the community and the Centre, this indicates a heavy dependence on funds which may eventually dry up; the future sustainability is in doubt. A relatively high percentage of self-generated income is the healthiest situation and is a good indicator of future sustainability. This together with a smaller input from the local community and the government should be the eventual aim. However, if the percentage of income derived from government and the local community is constant over a number of years, this represents ongoing support and commitment and a higher percentage is acceptable.

In the above example, the level of dependence on central government funds is too high. Emphasis needs to be placed on self-generation of income, so that the reliance on government subsidies is reduced.

85
INDICATOR SIXTEEN: NEW SKILLS

The adoption of new or improved skills assists in improving economic and social conditions in the community: a new farming technique may mean the production of more food; a new type of stove will reduce the amount of firewood needed to cook. Therefore it is important to measure whether the Centre has contributed in any way to this process and which service or activity has made the most impact. This indicator is central to any evaluation.

The data will be qualitative rather than quantitative and collected by observation and through discussions. A count can be made of all new skills/innovations introduced into the community over a period of time. Through discussion it may be possible to establish what role the Centre has played in the introduction of these new skills and ideas. In some cases, the Centre may be the originating place, but, in other cases, the Centre may have played a supporting role, such as providing information to back up extension services in the community. All such cases need to be documented, so as to be able to identify which activity or service has made the impact.

If no new/improved skills are evident, then there is a need for the Centre to accelerate its learning environment. It has an important role that is at present lacking in the community. If most new skills knowledge came from outside the Centre, then the latter needs to review how it might provide better referral services or learning environment.

INDICATOR SEVENTEEN: INCOME GENERATION

If the rural population can generate more income, then the quality of life in the rural area is enhanced. In many developing countries this is the key to decreasing migration from the countryside to the towns. If it can be proven that a Centre has made an impact on income generation, then the community and donors will be more willing to support its continued existence. The Centre becomes more sustainable.

The application of the indicator is similar to that on measuring the adoption of new skills.

If no new/improved income generation activities are evident in the community, then there is an obvious need for the Centre to increase its activities towards income generation activities. If most ideas on income generation have come from outside the Centre and its impact is low or non-existent, then it needs to review its strategy on how to provide services which help people to increase their incomes. Specifically it needs to acquire more information relevant to economics and income generation. It may also need to improve its co-operation with extension workers, community development officers and adult literacy workers.

Where it is shown that the Centre has made an impact on income generation activities, the emphasis should be on identifying which activities or services have made the impact and how this impact can be increased even further by promoting similar services and activities.
INDICATOR EIGHTEEN: HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Good standards of health and nutrition are important to the economic and social well-being of a rural community. This indicator aims to show whether there is a link between improved standards in health and nutrition and the services provided by the Centre.

Evidence of health and nutrition improvement
If no reliable and up to date statistics are available, it is suggested that the records of a local health centre are used to provide the numbers of children being vaccinated and the numbers of adults and children being treated for disease. An increase in the percentage of those being vaccinated will indicate better health; a decrease in those treated for disease will also indicate better health and nutrition levels in the community. However, such data needs to be interpreted carefully: a decrease in treatment for disease may not necessarily indicate an improving level of health; it could be the result of the local health centre running out of drugs.

The results of this measure now have to be used with the following two measures, to find out the impact, if any, of the Centre.

Sources of health and nutrition information
Through discussions with members of the community, we can find out whether the Centre has played any role in providing health information, which the community was able to act upon. If there are indications that the Centre is not playing any role in providing impact-bearing health information and most information about health and nutrition is coming from sources other than the Centre, then the Centre can follow this up with discussions with health workers and take steps to improve its provision of health information services. In these circumstances, there is a need for the Centre to review its involvement in the provision and co-ordination of health information.

If health and nutrition standards are not improving in the community, the Centre needs to review the level and type of services offered.

Use of health and nutritional informational materials
It is possible to work out the percentage of materials, held by the Centre and which are relevant to health and nutrition, that show high to medium use over a year. If the Centre holds 30 items on health and nutrition and 25 of these have been well used, then:

\[
\frac{25}{30} \times 100 = 83\% \text{ have been used by the community}
\]

If health and nutrition standards are improving and, as in this example, there is a corresponding heavy use of the informational materials held in the Centre, then it may be deduced that the Centre has had a positive impact on health and nutrition by providing relevant information.
INDICATOR NINETEEN: AWARENESS OF NATIONAL ISSUES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

If people in the rural areas understand how government works and how decisions are made, then they are more able to control their lives, take advantage of opportunities offered and make their needs known. This indicator aims to test whether the Centre has contributed to increasing an awareness of local and national issues in the local community.

The measure uses qualitative rather than quantitative data and the process is one of assessment and judgement. First data is collected to find whether there is evidence that there is a knowledge of local and national issues. For example the records of village meetings are checked to see what issues are discussed and solutions proposed. Then, if such knowledge is present, links between the activities and services of the Centre and the growth of the knowledge are sought.

For example, if village meetings show evidence of addressing national issues, then through discussions, it should be possible to find the source of the information on the national issues. Also the level of communication within the community, as facilitated by the Centre, would indicate that the Centre is playing a positive role in such communication. If it is found that the community has communicated its views through radio and newspapers to provide feedback on government and local government programmes, then the role of the Centre in enhancing outward communication from the community requires investigation.

If results are negative, both in the growth of awareness within the community and in the impact of the Centre, then the Centre needs to review its activities and take a more proactive role in community life. Links that are found between the Centre and the growth of awareness need to be continued and strengthened.

INDICATOR TWENTY: LITERACY

The end objective of literacy is to assist members of the local community to develop and improve their problem-solving skills. The indicator aims to show the involvement of the Centre in the acquisition, maintenance and use of literacy. (It does not, however, measure whether the acquisition of literacy has achieved its end objective.) It is key to any evaluation of the impact of the Centre.

Relevant data is provided by counting: the number and types of literacy activities organized by the Centre each year and the number of persons attending; the number of literacy materials held by the Centre; the number of literacy materials produced by the Centre; and the extent to which literacy materials held by the Centre are used by the community.

If there are several activities of different types and attendance is high, this is a good sign. (NB. We must relate the number attending to the number of people in the community who require literacy classes, i.e. those who do not have primary education. A high attendance may be numerically quite small.) It shows that the Centre is having
an impact. If the number of activities is few (or none at all) and attendance is poor, this means that the Centre is not having an impact on the acquisition of literacy.

The production of literacy materials by the Centre would be evidence of an even greater impact. Locally produced materials satisfy local needs and their content is relevant and appropriate.

If the number of literacy materials held is high and increases each year, then the Centre is providing the necessary reading material to support literacy acquisition. New acquisitions are important if literacy is to be maintained. However we also need to find out whether the materials held are being used. This can be done by looking at their physical appearance. If the Centre holds 40 items of literacy material and 35 of these show wear and tear, then:

\[ \frac{35}{40} \times 100 = 88\% \] are in constant use

This figure shows that the Centre is being used by new literates. But if the materials are not being used and a figure of 20% or 30% is the result, then, even if the Centre stocks literacy materials, these are not having much impact. Perhaps they are old or irrelevant to needs, in which case alternative titles need to be sought and acquired.

**INDICATOR TWENTY-ONE: EXAMINATION PASS RATE**

Pass rates in examinations can be used as a measure to indicate that the rural population of the future will be literate, better informed and better able to sustain a higher quality of life. This indicator aims to show that the Centre, through its support of the school curriculum, is improving the performance of school pupils.

The good performance of children in national examinations is vital to the local community. All parents want to see their children do well at school. If the figure rises this is welcomed. If no child in the community passes national examinations, then this is considered a big misfortune. We can find the percentage of children passing national examinations, by dividing the number who have passed with the number who were eligible to take the examination. If 25 pupils were eligible to take the primary leaving examination and 5 passed, then:

\[ \frac{5}{25} \times 100 = \text{pass rate of 20%} \]

To link performance in national examinations with the Centre requires finding to what extent the Centre is used by school pupils. In applying the indicator on visits, we have already calculated that if there are 1,500 school children in the population and they make 2,080 visits per year, then:

\[ \frac{2,080}{1,500} = 1.4 \text{ visits per school pupil per year} \]
We concluded that a higher figure might be expected and there would therefore be a need to investigate whether the range and relevance of materials could be improved or, maybe, the opening hours adjusted.

This is an indicator where the results have to be compared and contrasted year on year. Acting on the above results, the Centre discussed with the five pupils who passed whether they had used the Centre and how it had contributed to their success. Discussions were then held within the community to find out how best to help students. As a result, more copies of key texts were acquired, the Centre adjusted its opening hours to suit the times pupils were free to study and provided more seats. The next year the pass rate jumped to 40% and the visits per school pupil per year rose to 3.

In short, if the pass rate percentage increases each year and there is an increasing usage of the Centre by school pupils, then it can be deduced that the Centre and its services are assisting in improving academic performance.

**INDICATOR TWENTY-TWO: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE**

The maintenance and use of the indigenous knowledge system is essential to both the development and the identity of rural people. It is important that the indigenous knowledge system is seen and treated as a living force, which creates opportunities, rather than something only relevant to the past. This indicator aims to measure the Centre’s contribution to the revived use and legitimisation of indigenous knowledge in the community. It is key to any evaluation of the impact of the Centre.

There are a number of activities that can be monitored to show evidence within the community of indigenous knowledge use. The production of local handicrafts is one. Another is the practice of generating new songs and stories from oral traditions. Yet another is an increased awareness of cultural heritage. Other examples may also be appropriate. Such data can best be gathered through observation or discussions with members of the Centre’s Management Committee.

We then need to assess to what extent the Centre is promoting the use of indigenous knowledge, through activities like traditional storytelling, exhibitions of indigenous handicrafts and practices, learning groups, discussions on the recovery or revival of community knowledge, etc. If the number of activities is high and the activities are well attended, then the Centre is promoting the use and development of indigenous knowledge. If the number of activities is few or they are non-existent, then the Centre cannot be said to have an active involvement in this area.

The number of materials on indigenous knowledge held by the Centre and evidence of their use is also a measure. The latter can be found out by physically examining such materials for wear and tear, in the same way that literacy materials were examined. If the Centre holds 20 items of indigenous knowledge material and 15 of these show wear and tear, then:

\[
\frac{15}{20} \times 100 = 75\% \text{ have been consulted frequently}
\]
Such a Centre is supporting in the development and revival of indigenous knowledge awareness and use. If the Centre, on the other hand, holds very few such materials or those that are held show little use, this would be a sign that the Centre is not involved.

If there is evidence of an increase in indigenous knowledge use and this increase is accompanied by relevant activities organized by the Centre and by the heavy use of indigenous knowledge materials held in the Centre, then it can be deduced that the Centre is contributing to maintaining the indigenous knowledge system. Such a deduction can be backed up through discussions within the community and with, for example, individual producers of handicrafts, to find out if they have received any relevant information, advice or inspiration through the Centre. If there is little evidence that indigenous knowledge is being maintained in the community or if its maintenance cannot be linked to the activities of the Centre, then the Centre would need to review its programme of activities and, if appropriate materials were not available, even create information sources.

INDICATOR TWENTY-THREE: PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT

A community which has a strong knowledge base will have the confidence and interest to take part in the government decision-making process. Development then is in accordance with the needs of the rural people, there is a greater take-up of government programmes and development is accelerated. This indicator has the aim of showing whether the Centre has aided this process.

First we need to find out whether the community is making any input to the decision making of government. One way is to find out whether there have been any requests made to government originating in the local community over the past year. This data can be obtained in discussion with members of the Centre’s Management Committee, so long as this Committee truly represents all interest groups present within the community. If this is not the case, then discussions will need to be had with the various interest groups present in the community.

We then need to investigate whether the Centre has made any input to the requests. Discussions will reveal the way in which the Centre was involved. Perhaps it put together a dossier of information on the subject of the request or the person in charge of the Centre helped to write the request.

If there is a high level of participation in government and take-up of government programmes and the Centre’s contribution is established, then the Centre is playing a positive role in assisting the community to participate in government. The ways in which it has succeeded in supporting the community should be noted, so that these activities can continue to be part of the programme of the Centre in the following years.

If there is apathy towards the government, the Centre needs to investigate how it might provide information to stimulate action in the future.
INDICATOR TWENTY-FOUR: PARTICIPATION IN EXTENSION PROGRAMMES

One way in which the knowledge base of a community is strengthened is through extension programmes. If the Centre can encourage participation in extension programmes, then it will be having a positive impact on rural development.

A high level of participation in extension activities is a measure of the support accorded to such activities by the local community. There is therefore a need to find out the number of such activities that have taken place over the last year and the number of persons attending. If numbers attending are high or show an increase year on year, then support is increasing.

Out of the total of extension activities, the number which the Centre has facilitated can be counted and a percentage worked out. If there have been 20 extension activities and the Centre has facilitated half of these, then:

\[
\frac{10 \times 100}{20} = 50\% \text{ of activities have been assisted by the Centre}
\]

This shows that there is a fairly high collaboration between the Centre and the extension services, with many activities jointly organized or initiated by the Centre to answer the information needs of the community. If the Centre organizes or helps to organize a high and increasing percentage of extension activities, then it can be concluded that it is assisting in encouraging the participation of the local community. But if it is found that there is very little linkage between the Centre and the extension services, with 10% or less of activities facilitated, then the Centre would need to approach extension agents and discuss how it might assist in their programmes.

A Centre is usually the place where extension agents deposit their materials, so that they can be consulted by the local community. The number of extension materials stocked by the Centre can be counted and, by checking their physical state, it is possible to assess whether they have actually been used. This is done in the same way as for literacy and indigenous knowledge materials. A large number of extension materials with a high percentage showing use would indicate that the Centre is assisting in the implementation of extension programmes. If there are few extension materials, then the Centre would need to take steps to acquire what is available or encourage extension workers to produce and deposit relevant publications. If we find that the Centre does have some extension literature, but that it is very little used, then there would be a need to promote the materials, possibly with the help of extension agents and adult literacy workers.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
(NB. The English version of a document is cited. If a publication is also known to be available in French or Spanish, then this is indicated at the end of the citation.)


Rodríguez, G. M. (1997) Overview of rural library services in Latin America. 3 p. (Unpublished communication)


APPENDIX ONE

DATA COLLECTION

Statistical data required

A number of indicators require identical statistical data, e.g. the number of persons in the target population, in order for calculations to be undertaken. Other indicators require data peculiar to themselves, e.g. details of local income generating activities. Sometimes the data refers to the local rural community as a whole; more frequently it arises from the activities of the Centre and therefore must be collected on a regular and standard basis by the Centre, e.g. number of items of informational material held by the Centre or number of visits made to the Centre.

Below are listed the types of data required, grouped according to whether they refer to the local community or to the Centre. Data marked with an asterisk (*) is necessary for the calculation of more than one indicator.

Local rural community
- number of persons in the target population of the Centre;*
- number of persons in each category (e.g. school pupils) within the target population of the Centre (a checklist of categories is provided later in this Appendix);*
- population densities in the target area of the Centre;
- leisure hours of the local rural community;
- number of children in the target population vaccinated/treated for disease;
- number of adults in the target population treated for disease;
- number of children attending local schools who pass national examinations;
- number of children attending local schools who are eligible to sit for national examinations.

Centre
- number of items of informational material held by the Centre;*
- number of items of informational material by ‘subject’ area held by the Centre (a checklist of ‘subject’ areas is provided later in this Appendix);*
- number of items of informational material by format held by the Centre (a checklist of formats is provided later in this Appendix);*
- number of items of information material added to the stock of the Centre;
- number of visits made to the Centre;*
- number of visits by category made to the Centre;*
- number of persons attending activities organized by the Centre;*
- number of persons by category attending activities organized by the Centre;*
- number of persons attending each type of activity organized by the Centre;*
- number of consultations made in the Centre;
- number of consultations by category made in the Centre;
- number of items of informational material consulted by subject and by format;
- number of persons having items of informational material on loan;
- number of persons by category having items of informational material on loan;
- number of loans made by the Centre;
- number of loans by subject and by format;
- number of members of the Centre;
- number of members by category of the Centre;
- hours of opening of the Centre;
- number of seats in the Centre;
- cash income of the Centre;
- cash income of the Centre by source (from own income generation; from the local community; from central and/or local government).

**Collection methods**

- **time periods**
The data required must be drawn up at regular intervals, for example annually. The time period to be covered is stated in each indicator and in the majority of cases is annual. In such cases, for the sake of comparability between measurements, the data must be drawn at the same point in the year every year, e.g. at the end of the calendar year or at the end of the financial year.

For some indicators, data is required for a period other than a year, e.g. number of persons with items of informational material on loan on a particular day and interviews with users to find out about levels of satisfaction. The required time period is indicated in each indicator. In rural areas, it is important to remember that there may be significant usage differences between the planting (wet) season and the dry season. So it is recommended that data is collected during both periods.

- **approaches to data collection**
Data can be collected in various ways, direct and indirect, systematic and unsystematic. The indirect, systematic approach produces the most reliable statistics with the least effort:

**Indirect, systematic**
- published statistics, usually collected by government. Sometimes NGOs, working in a rural area, also collect statistics on local population, health, agricultural production. Records are maintained by schools and health centres. It is from these sources that one would expect to gather data on target population, population densities, examination results, statistics on vaccination and treatment for disease;

- records maintained by the Centre on holdings, services and activities. Collection of data by the Centre in a regular and systematic way is an essential prerequisite to the use of indicators. The following records are recommended:
  - accessions register, with each new item added to stock being given a running number. This automatically provides the total number of items held, plus the number added during the year;
  - shelf arrangement (or shelf list) by subject and/or format. An item (or card) count provides the number of items held by subject or format;
  - register of members;
- record of visits. Maintain a daily record of each visit made to the Centre, by category. Summarize at the end of each week, month and year. Count the number of persons attending each activity;
- record of consultations. During two weeks of the year, record and analyze (by category, subject and format) consultations made in the Centre and extrapolate to provide an estimate of consultations made each year;
- record of loans. At the end of each day, analyze loans made by subject/format. Summarize at the end of each week, month and year. Twice a year count the number of persons, in total and by categories, who have material on loan;
- record of income and expenditure. Maintain accounts which indicate the source of income and prepare an annual statement.

**Direct, systematic**

- user satisfaction. During two weeks of the year, ask those visiting the Centre about their experiences in using the Centre. For five consecutive activities organized by the Centre, also ask those attending whether their expectations were met;
- community satisfaction. During a village meeting, initiate a discussion on the Centre and its role and impact on community life.

**Indirect, unsystematic**

- observation. Much valuable data can be obtained by random, casual observation. The person in charge of the Centre can learn which are the new or improved skills that have taken root in the community and who have succeeded in starting new business ventures. It is also from observation of wear and tear that the use of items of informational material in the areas of health and nutrition or indigenous knowledge can be calculated. Leisure hours in the community can also be arrived at through observation;
- estimation. If, for example, population statistics are not available or those that are available are very out of date, it may be necessary to estimate the data, for example by using average number of dwellings per village and average number of persons per dwelling. Another necessary estimation is for the number of annual consultations, in which case the number of actual consultations during two weeks of the year are multiplied by 26.

**Direct, unsystematic**

- informal discussions, with members of the Management Committee of the Centre, village leaders, group leaders, practitioners (e.g. of new skills), owners (e.g. of new income generation projects) and extension workers, are recommended for the collection of the data required for many of the indicators measuring impact, especially those measuring economic and social change.

**Collection instruments**

**Category checklist**

- school pupils (male and female separately)
- youth (male and female separately)
- adults (male and female separately)
- extension workers and government officials
Subject checklist
The Centre will arrange its collection according to user needs. Often shelf arrangement
is based on the Dewey Decimal Classification, although this rarely accords with rural
community needs. Below are some possible ‘subject’ groupings. It should be noted
that some groupings may not be mutually exclusive and care should therefore be taken
when collecting data.

Academic (school) books
Fiction
Economics
Government
Health
Agriculture
Environment
Religion
Literacy
Indigenous knowledge
Local languages

Format checklist
Print
• book
• pamphlet
• journal
• newspaper

Audio-visual
• video
• cassette
• slide
• film
• poster
• map

Electronic
• diskette
• CD-ROM
• network
• Internet

Consultations data collection form
This is an example of a form which can be used on a daily basis to collect statistics on
consultations made in the Centre. At the end of the two weeks of collection, the totals
will need to be summarized by category of user, by subject and by format.
CONSULTATIONS

Week: [i.e. One or Two] One
Day of week: [i.e. Monday, Tuesday, etc.] Wednesday

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>SUBJECTS</th>
<th>FORMAT</th>
<th>LANG.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School pupils</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension workers or</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government officials</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
User needs satisfaction. Point of exit interview framework
All visitors to the Centre or to a Centre activity will be asked the following questions as they leave. The interviewer will fill in the responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINT OF EXIT INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(circle whichever answer(s) applies)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Category
   - School pupil Male/Female
   - Youth Male/Female
   - Adult Male/Female
   - Extension worker or government official

2. Why did you come to the Centre today?
   - To borrow/return a book or other item?
   - To look for information?
   - To sit and study?
   - To attend an activity?
   - To read a newspaper/magazine/book?
   - To meet a friend?
   - Other (what?)

3. How many items did you use in the Centre today, but not borrow?
   [ ] (number)

4. Did you find the Centre easy to use today?
   - Yes / No / Somehow

   Why?

5. Were you satisfied with today’s visit?
   - Yes / No / Somehow

   Why?

6. Were you satisfied with:
   - Number of seats Yes / No / Somehow
   - Lighting Yes / No / Somehow
   - Level of noise Yes / No / Somehow
   - Times of opening Yes / No / Somehow
   - Location of Centre Yes / No / Somehow
Community needs satisfaction. Group discussion framework

Use a regular village meeting as a forum to initiate a discussion about the Centre. Try and generate responses to the questions posed in the framework.

NB. Remember to count the numbers attending the village meeting and how many persons within in each category, e.g. male adults, are there.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP DISCUSSION FRAMEWORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the existence of the Centre and its services/activities known?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the community’s expectations of the Centre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are the reasons for using the Centre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the reasons for not using the Centre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What are the reasons for ceasing to use the Centre?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX TWO

GLOSSARY

Capacity building
A process which develops individual and community abilities, leading to social enrichment and community upliftment.

Communication
The process through which information is exchanged between source and receiver.

Community media
Media owned and controlled by a geographic community or a community of interest and which is accessible to its community through their representatives, e.g. a local newspaper.

Empowerment
A process which enables people to understand, act in and control their environment.

External knowledge
Information supplied from sources which are based outside the rural community.

The terms exogenous knowledge and exotic knowledge are used in the same sense.

Impact
The extent to which the services or activities of a rural resource centre affect the local community.

The terms outcome or higher order effect are used in a similar sense.

Indicator
A quantitative (ratio, percentage, etc.) or qualitative expression of the use or value of an aspect of a rural resource centre. Indicators contribute to the process of evaluation, by providing ways of assessing current performance.
Indigenous knowledge
Information originating in the rural community, either passed down from one generation to the next, as part of the community’s cultural heritage or developed through experimentation, trial and error.

The term传统的knowledge is used in the same sense.

Information channel
The means through which a message is transferred from its source to a recipient. Channels may be one-way or two-way, the latter allowing information exchange.

Information gatekeeper
Someone who acts as an intermediary between the source of a message and its recipient. In rural communities they are often part of the authority structure, elders in the community or even extension workers, primary school teachers and religious leaders.

Information need
A need for information arises when the amount of know-how possessed by an individual is inadequate to cope with problems arising from different rural development situations. The individual may or may not be aware of such inadequacy.

Information seeking behaviour
Strategies employed by individuals to acquire information. It may include the selection of sources and channels to meet their need and the preference for messages on particular subjects.

Information source
An individual, institution or media from which a message originates.

Information support system
A mechanism to assist the transfer of information, through co-ordination and organization of its delivery channels. A rural resource centre is an information support system.

Informational material
Any media which carries a message, whether in print, audio, visual or electronic format.
**Item**
Used to express the way in which the amount of informational material is counted. One item equals: an individual book or pamphlet; a subscription to a journal or newspaper; an individual non-book material (e.g. a video, a CD-ROM); a set of non-book materials (e.g. a set of slides, a database).

**Local information**
Information that relates to what is currently taking place in the community, e.g. statistics of population, distribution of seed, new health services, etc.

**Performance**
The services provided or activities carried out by a rural resource centre.

The term *output* is used in a similar sense.

**Repackaging**
The conversion of available information into a form which the end user can understand and assimilate.

**Rural community**
A group of people who live in a rural locality under the same administrative unit. They have common ideals and needs.

The term *village* is used in the same sense. As is the term *local community*, although this could equally refer to an urban community, according to the context.

**Rural development**
A complex process aimed at improving the living conditions of rural people by addressing rural poverty and its causes. It is multi-sectoral in scope, including improvements in agriculture, health, education, nutrition, income distribution. It requires the active participation of the community.

**Rural information system**
The information supplied to a rural community by government and non-governmental agencies and the information and knowledge possessed by rural people as part of their cultural heritage.
**Rural library**
A place which collects, stores and disseminates informational materials in accordance with the needs of the community and for the use of the community.

The terms *community library*, *village library*, and *village reading room* are used in the same or similar sense.

**Rural resource centre**
An organization which offers a range of development services, including information services, to a specific community and with a large degree of community involvement. It is a place where community-defined needs are linked with development resources. It enables members of a community to find information, to learn, to discuss and share knowledge, to produce information, to organize and work on projects, to enjoy culture and leisure, with the objective of improving their own well-being and that of the community and nation.

The terms *community resource centre*, *rural community resource centre*, *multipurpose community centre* and *rural information centre* are used in the same or similar sense.

**Target population**
The total community which a rural resource centre is intended to serve.