

## Assessing Information Needs of the Organization

It is important to find out about the people who will use the resource centre. This includes finding out what information they need, what information is provided by other organizations, and how far their needs for information are being met. This is known as carrying out a needs assessment.

After the resource centre has been established, a needs assessment should be carried out every one or two years, to ensure that the resource centre continues to meet the information needs of its users.

A needs assessment looks at:

### 1. Who the users will be

Their age, sex, educational level, literacy level and type of work they do

### 2. What their information needs are

- ❖ What main subjects they need information about
- ❖ What other subjects they need information about
- ❖ What they will use the materials in the resource centre for (in order of priority)
- ❖ Which activities the materials will be most useful for
- ❖ How important local/national/regional/international information is
- ❖ What formats of materials will be useful:
  - articles (for writing reports and getting new ideas for activities)
  - books and other documents (for getting a comprehensive picture of a topic)
  - personal advice (to help plan activities)
  - training manuals (to assist with a training activity)

- videos (for training and health education)
- abstracts of published articles (to keep up-to-date on new developments and know what to follow up)
- newsletters (to find out what new developments are taking place in the subject area, and what other organizations are doing)

### **3. What materials are available**

What other sources of published and unpublished materials exist

How much materials cost, and whether health workers can afford to buy them

What gaps there are (in terms of subject, type of material, such as training manual, reference material), language, format (such as book, audiovisual), and educational level

What other sources of information exist:

- government services and departments
- non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- mass media (newspapers, radio, television)
- e-mail and Internet services

### **4. How information can be disseminated**

What methods for disseminating information would best suit resource centre users (such as resource lists, current awareness bulletins or document supply services)

How feasible these methods are

## **Information Need & Objective**

A needs assessment can be carried out by interviewing people individually, organizing a focus group discussion (a structured discussion with a small group of potential users) or by asking

potential users to complete a questionnaire. Interviews and discussions are better, as they provide an opportunity to meet people and discuss their needs. If a questionnaire is used, it should be made easy for people to complete. This can be done by listing the most likely answers, so that people only need to tick a box or circle a word.

Information processing beyond doubt is the dominant industry of the present century. Following factors states few common factors that reflect on the needs and objectives of the information processing –

- Increasing impact of information processing for organizational decision making.
- Dependency of services sector including banking, financial organization, health care, entertainment, tourism and travel, education and numerous others on information.
- Changing employment scene world over, shifting base from manual agricultural to machine-based manufacturing and other industry related jobs.
- Information revolution and the overall development scenario.
- Growth of IT industry and its strategic importance.
- Strong growth of information services fuelled by increasing competition and reduced product life cycle.
- Need for sustainable development and quality life.
- Improvement in communication and transportation brought in by use of information processing.
- Use of information processing in reduction of energy consumption, reduction in pollution and a better ecological balance in future.
- Use of information processing in land record managements, legal delivery system, educational institutions, natural resource planning, customer relation management and so on.

## Need for Information Systems

Managers make decisions. Decision-making generally takes a four-fold path –

- Understanding the need for decision or the opportunity,
- Preparing alternative course of actions,
- Evaluating all alternative course of actions,
- Deciding the right path for implementation.

**MIS** is an information system that provides information in the form of standardized reports and displays for the managers. MIS is a broad class of information systems designed to provide information needed for effective decision making.

Data and information created from an accounting information system and the reports generated thereon are used to provide accurate, timely and relevant information needed for effective decision making by managers.

Management information systems provide information to support management decision making, with the following goals –

- Pre-specified and preplanned reporting to managers.
- Interactive and ad-hoc support for decision making.
- Critical information for top management.

MIS is of vital importance to any organization, because –

- It emphasizes on the management decision making, not only processing of data generated by business operations.
- It emphasizes on the systems framework that should be used for organizing information systems applications.