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**Library Advocacy in India in the Light of Education for Sustainable Development – Perspectives of an Emerging Economy**

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**Abstract:**

*India is considered as a world leader amongst the developing countries in terms of economic sustainability and growth. India also has a growing number of literate population due to rapid expansion of secondary and post-secondary education landscape. However, when it comes to education for sustainable development (ESD), India stands more elitist to serve only privileged sections of population. Indian public library system still remains inadequate to fulfil the huge demands from neo functional literates or lifelong learners who mostly belong to under-privileged sections. ESD is incomplete without having adequate equity-based access to public library system which is an essential component of the ESD concept. Here comes the emergence of strong library advocates in the country. In post-independent India, Indian library associations were engaged in public library legislation in few states of India. The public library legislations in different states were resulted from public library movement in the country. When new generation of library professionals took charge of library associations in the country, a dilution of public library movement and library advocacy across the country is observed. Where leadership of library associations was no more seriously engaged in library advocacy in the country, there was also rare existence of Indian civil societies engaged in library advocacy as well as policy advocacy in the relevant fields. Fortunately, Indian National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was established in 2005 by the Central government which eventually formed a Working Group on Libraries. This Working Group on Libraries along with other related working groups of NKC re-established dialogs with national and state actors and other stakeholders through public consultations. Some civil society organizations also have started focusing on library advocacy, as a part of their engagement in ESD. This paper discusses trajectories of various actors and stakeholders in India who are catching up 'library advocacy' to bridge the knowledge gaps in the country. This paper also analyses impact of Indian government's policy frameworks towards building inclusive knowledge societies and their implications in future library advocacy in India.*

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## 1.0 Introduction

Knowledge and digital divides are very prevalent in global south, due to concentration of socio-economic disparities, population explosion, low level of literacy, besides many other socio-economic cultural barriers. India is considered as an exemplar emerging knowledge economy in global south, due to availability of human talents in the country. But major challenges lie in transforming human talents into human capitals as well as transforming other national resources into economically productive social capitals.

Education brings prosperity at very local level and it reflects when a new generation of educated population becomes much more economically active, productive and empowered than preceded ones. Emerging knowledge economy thus ensures transformation of Indian society, particularly middle and lower middle class families across the country, with a dream interweaved to serve globalized world. Many Indian states, although overshadowed by high degree of economic growth in some industrial sectors and in some segments of 'enlightened' population, have many socio-economic challenges before them in order to ensure inclusive growth and inclusive development to the marginalized and socially-excluded communities. Myth of India's economic losses due to population explosion as predicted and perceived few decades ago is now over. Indian industries employ/possess young, talented and productive workforce as opposed to developed world's aging workforce [Nilekani, 2009]. Thus India has witnessed emergence of globalized knowledge-based industries across the country with a penetration of information technology (IT), IT-enabled services (ITES), knowledge process outsourcing (KPO), biotechnology and pharmaceutical firms.

Here comes the role of formal education, vocational education, technical education, lifelong learning and their essential facilitator library and information centres. Several social sectors have champions in outreaching their causes to appropriate forums leading to policy formulation, programme implementation and achievement of goals in phased manner. These social sectors have created a dedicated pool of advocates and champions with strong leadership skills and visions. Now library advocacy in India, although intertwined with other social movements, needs a distinct identity in order to push agendas at various policy forums for strengthening of public library systems and services across the country. Leaderships of library associations and chief executives of India's apex library bodies (such as RRRLF, INFLIBNET, National Library, etc.) are not visible in the different social movements and policy advocacy forums, other than few LIS-related areas, although there is a need for developing collaborative partnerships in enhancing provisions of universal access to knowledge and information. Probably due to long association with government functionaries in their professional career, these eminent library professionals are also not connected with civil society-led community library development projects for marginalised communities.

Thus this paper attempts to look inward. This paper examines various social movements and how library advocacy is intertwined with these movements.

## 2.0 Reflections on Library Advocacy in Different Social Sectors in India

### 2.1 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a concept of the educational process for achieving human development in an inclusive, equitable, secure and sustainable manner. Education is a mean for all round of human development, more specifically “the three pillars of human development”, i.e., economic growth, social development, and environmental protection as proposed by UNDP.

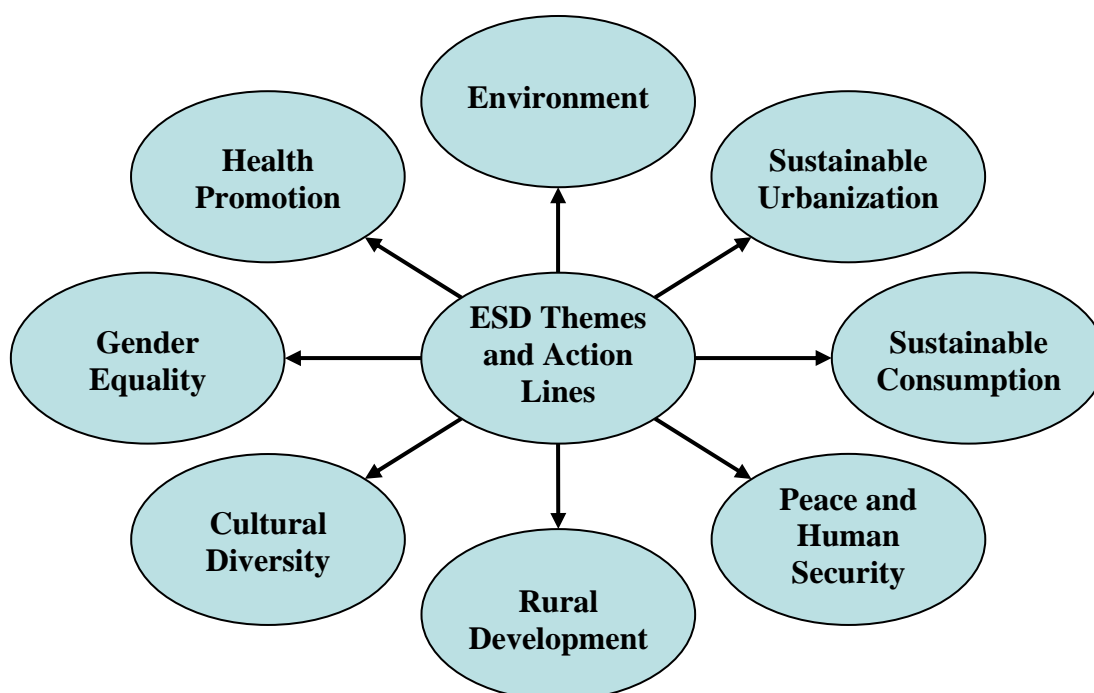
To widespread ESD concept and ESD-related actions in the member countries, United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in December 2002 and declared period of 2005-2014 as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). UNESCO is designated as lead agency for the promotion of the Decade. DESD is celebrated across the world including in India by taking appropriate actions ranging from of policy formulation, legislative changes, standard setting, sensitization and awareness raising of various stakeholders and affected communities.

ESD is greatly promoted through IEC (Information, Education and Communication) materials. IEC products are very effective tool for sensitization, outreach and awareness raising of various stakeholders including affected communities. IEC products also serve as documentary supplements for campaign, lobbying, advocacy works across the ESD domains.

To formulate focused action plans and implementation strategies, UNESCO divides ESD domain in eight areas or themes [[www.unesco.org/en/esd/](http://www.unesco.org/en/esd/)]. These are:

- Sustainable Urbanization
- Sustainable Consumption
- Peace and Human Security
- Rural Development
- Cultural Diversity
- Gender Equality
- Health Promotion
- Environment

These themes cover all specialised activities interlinking sustainable development with human development, livelihood development, environment protection, climate change mitigation, human rights and several other key issues. Figure 1 depicts a pictorial representation ESD and its focal themes. These themes are supplementing each other in order to achieve overall human development in all countries. Among these focal themes, some themes are already promoted in India. There is strong presence of advocacy, campaign, lobbying and outreach activities in India for the themes like environment education, health promotion, gender equality, rural development and sustainable urbanization. Other themes such as sustainable consumption, peace and human security and cultural diversity, are relatively new to the country thus need more concerted efforts to promote them with activities like policy formulation, standardization, outreach, sensitization and awareness raising.



**Figure 1: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and its Focal Themes**

National Knowledge Commission recognizes importance of knowledge sharing platforms for diffusion of subject-based knowledge and information to the practitioners, grassroots workers, policymakers, legislators, academicians, students as well as common citizens. Some civil society organizations, in collaboration with NKC and respective union ministry, have taken charge to create and maintain national portals on ESD and MDG themes. These portals have become a collaborative platform on the respective subject in addressing development challenges and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These portals systematically archive all important documents pertaining to the subject/ theme, such as policy papers, research reports, research papers, media articles and self-learning study materials. These portals empower registered users to upload their documents relevant to the subject/theme. These portals also have Web 2.0 features, such as blog, wiki, RSS feeds and social book-marking through social networks for enhancing interactivity with the end users and for real time information diffusion. The important knowledge portals, conceived by NKC and implemented by its partner organizations, are:

- **India Biodiversity Portal** ([www.indiabiodiversity.org](http://www.indiabiodiversity.org)), developed and maintained by Consortium of Partners that includes Alternative Law Forum, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), French Institute of Pondicherry, National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) and some other civil society institutions.
- **Teachers of India** ([www.teachersofindia.org](http://www.teachersofindia.org)) – a portal for Indian Education, developed and maintained by Azim Premji Foundation, Bangalore.
- **India Environment Portal** ([www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in](http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in)), developed and maintained by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi.

- **India Energy Portal** ([www.indiaenergyportal.org](http://www.indiaenergyportal.org)), developed and maintained by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi.
- **India Water Portal: Safe, sustainable water for all** ([www.indiawaterportal.org](http://www.indiawaterportal.org)), developed and maintained by Arghyam, Bangalore. India Water Portal has several subsets such as India Sanitation Portal (<http://indiasanitationportal.org>), Conflicts Water Portal (<http://conflicts.indiawaterportal.org>), Schools Water Portal (<http://schools.indiawaterportal.org>), Hindi Water Portal (<http://hindi.indiawaterportal.org>) and Kannada Water Portal (<http://kannada.indiawaterportal.org>) for reaching out more specific user groups based on language and theme.
- **India Development Gateway** (InDG) ([www.indg.in](http://www.indg.in)) – a portal for rural and social development, developed and maintained by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Hyderabad.
- **Sakshat** ([www.sakshat.ac.in](http://www.sakshat.ac.in)) – a portal for Indian higher and technical education, developed and maintained by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi.

The concept of ESD is greatly promoted in India by different organizations along with appropriate contents. Many ESD efforts are in receipt of corporate supports as many themes directly or indirectly linked with industries, their sustainability and future orientations. People's support and participation in ESD-related activities are noticeable across sections of the society due to their linkages with promotion of livelihood options, community development and inclusive growth. Advocacy, lobbying, campaign and outreach activities in ESD areas are greatly visible across the country. As ESD activism promotes policy advocacy and lobbying both with the governments and industries, library advocacy will be surely benefited from ESD's champions and success stories.

## 2.2 Inclusive Education

India has witnessed a height of advocacy, lobbying, campaign, and even judiciary activism in the areas of inclusive education, right to education and education for sustainable development (ESD) before these are being formally adopted in different legislative forms. Different international standards and instruments in the said areas were also in place where India was a signatory as UN member country, but there were limited consensus among legislators, policymakers and educational administrators to implement important aspects of those. Several social movements were initiated at the grassroots level to sensitize beneficiaries of inclusive education as well as policymakers and legislators. There were also community-led policy-seeking exercises to initiate dialogues within the national and state governments and shaping up necessary legislations for transforming inclusive education space. The *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act* or Right to Education Act (RTE) was passed by the Indian parliament on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2009 and it came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. India became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child at the time of its introduction. The Act describes the modalities of the provision of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India. This is one such Acts that is associated with a long social movement

with a rigorous process of lobbying, campaign and advocacy by the groups of activists, social workers, practitioners and other stakeholders.

To supplement mandates of right to education, Government of India initiated a flagship programme named 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' (SSA) for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in making free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age group [[www.ssa.nic.in](http://www.ssa.nic.in)]. This is a national programme interlinked with UNESCO's Education for All programme at the global level. SSA is targeted at expansion of inclusive and vocational education without compromising their quality. SSA reaches out to school dropouts, marginalized communities and nomads through a dedicated network of education providers across state and district level. SSA also utilizes facilities and infrastructure of existing schools in districts for achieving its targets.

The RTE Act as well as SSA have made provision of 'No School without a Library' along with other basic infrastructures in a school. Universalization of primary education essentially will enhance social demand for universal access to information and knowledge. Thus this Act has paved way for another social movement 'every village a library', or 'every village a knowledge resource centre' in a refined form, for fostering universal access to information and knowledge.

Public libraries have been facilitating socio-economic empowerment of communities by supplementing formal education, vocational education, adult education, self learning and lifelong learning processes. The country needs to establish more than 600,000 rural public libraries across the country, particularly in remote and underserved areas in order to meet the target of 'every village a library' [Pyati, 2009]. Similarly, the RTE Act has mandated all schools to maintain a school library to supplement teaching and learning process. After modernization of existing public and school libraries and establishment of new ones across the country, these libraries will substantially contribute to India's dream of inclusive knowledge societies.



## 2.3 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

During United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, 189 world leaders made historic promise to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are international development goals for improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries [[www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)]. MDGs are placed in actions in collaboration with all UN agencies, several international NGOs, national legislators, policymakers and development practitioners in various countries having below average human development index. The eight MDGs are:

1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
2. Achieve Universal Primary Education
3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
4. Reduce Child Mortality
5. Improve Maternal Health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases
7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability
8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Several international campaigns are in existence for promoting MDG actions targeted at most affected communities in the developing and least-developed countries. These campaigns aim at engaging stakeholders in whole life cycle of the focused actions starting from conceptualization to implementation of action plans. Important campaigns are:

- Campaign to End Poverty by 2015 ([www.endpoverty2015.org](http://www.endpoverty2015.org))
- Petition to End Hunger ([www.1billionhungry.org](http://www.1billionhungry.org))

In India several MDG related interventions have been planned and implemented in collaboration with UN agencies, international donor agencies, government agencies and civil society organizations. MDGs are now a mere five years away. India still has a long way to go before any of the MDG targets are achieved by 2015. As per the MDG Monitor ([www.mdgmonitor.org](http://www.mdgmonitor.org)), most goals fall short of the halfway mark and goal four is off track. If efforts are focused towards these goals then there are possibilities of some success with four and bringing lagging ones back on track.

UN Solution Exchange India ([www.solutionexchange-un.net.in](http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in)), an Initiative of the United Nations Country Team in India, facilitates communities of development practitioners in addressing challenges of MDG intervention programmes across the country. Solution Exchange utilizes this UN-sponsored space where development practitioners exchange each other's solutions to the day-to-day challenges they face. Solution Exchange member communities also collaboratively involve in policy advocacy and political lobbying to sensitize legislators, policymakers, bureaucrats and government officials of union, states and local governments on burning issues related to MDGs, ESD and human development. Solution Exchange activities are specifically designed for intervening and achieving MDGs across states of India as well as in South Asia. Solution Exchange is divided into 13 communities or e-mail-based discussion forums as shown in Table 1. Each community serves at least one MDG. On the other hand, one MDG can have one or more Solution Exchange communities, as indicated in Table 1, for the achievement of specific goal by year 2015. Table 1 also shows that Solution Exchange India serves several ESD themes in order to achieve thematic priorities of each theme.

**Table 1: Solution Exchange Communities in India**

Sl. No.	Name of Community	Related MDG	Related ESD Theme	Facilitating Agency	Launched in
1	AIDS	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Health Promotion	UNAIDS	July 2005
2	Climate Change	Ensure environmental sustainability	Environment; Sustainable Urbanization; Sustainable Consumption	UNDP	October 2009
3	Decentralization	Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger	Peace and Human Security; Rural Development; Sustainable Urbanization	UNDP	July 2005
4	Disaster Management	Ensure environmental sustainability	Sustainable Urbanization; Environment	UNDP	April 2007
5	Education	Achieve universal primary education	All ESD themes	UNESCO & UNICEF	August 2005
6	Food & Nutrition Security	Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger	Rural Development; Sustainable Consumption	FAO and Nutrition Foundation of India (NFI)	June 2005
7	Gender	Promote gender equality and empower women	Gender Equality	UNIFEM and UNICEF	June 2005
8	ICT for Development	Develop a global partnership for development	All ESD themes	UNESCO and UNDP	November 2006
9	Maternal & Child Health	Reduce child mortality; Improve maternal health	Health Promotion	WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA	April 2005
10	Microfinance	Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger; Promote gender equality and empower women	Peace and Human Security; Rural Development; Gender Equality	UNDP and ILO	October 2006
11	Water	Ensure environmental sustainability	Environment	UNICEF and UNDP	June 2005
12	Work and Employment	Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger	Peace and Human Security	ILO and UNDP	October 2005
13	Karnataka (Bilingual)	All MDGs	All ESD themes	UNICEF Hyderabad	November 2008

#### 2.4 Right to Information (RTI) or Freedom of Information (FoI)

The freedom of information or right to information is a fundamental principle in a democracy to empower citizens with government and governance related information. The right to information ensures universal access to government-held information and public domain information. India's RTI movement was an attempt to bring inclusive growth and development at the doorsteps of marginalised communities and other backward communities through social welfare schemes of



the national and state governments. There were rampant corruptions, misuse and drainage of public exchequers that needed check and balance as well as social audit by the stakeholders and beneficiaries. India's *Right to Information Act 2005* ensures transparency and accountability in functioning of all government departments and organizations – from central to state and local level [<http://righttoinformation.gov.in/>]. RTI Act has mandated to voluntarily disclosure of information, which should be available through websites of respective government body. After implementation of RTI Act in the country, several NGOs are engaged in sensitization and awareness raising of common citizens for its widespread use across the country. This Act is reported to have good impact in effective programme delivery of different flagship schemes across the country such as, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGS) for enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas; effective delivery of public utility services such as postal services and so on.

RTI activists are widely dispersed across the country in helping out RTI applicants in filling right applications for seeking necessary information from government departments. RTI activism has expanded horizons of provisions of public-domain information and government-held information. As domain of RTI advocacy is closely related to domain of library advocacy in India, India's library advocacy programme needs to collaborate with leaderships of RTI. Their success stories will not only give right direction to library advocacy programme, this collaborative expertise will produce champions in each state of India.

### **3.0 Library Advocacy in India – Institutional Framework**

#### **3.1 National Mission on Libraries**

Indian National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was established in 2005 by the union government which eventually formed a Working Group on Libraries [Dasgupta, 2007]. This Working Group on Libraries along with other related working groups of NKC re-established dialogs with national and state actors and other stakeholders through public consultations.

NKC envisaged a transformation of India's public library system through a newly formed institution called "National Mission on Libraries". Although this was strongly recommended by the NKC through its letter to the Prime Minister of India dated December 2006, the formation of "National Mission on Libraries" is still on hold by the union government. NML was envisaged as a prelude to a regular body "National Commission on Libraries".

India has already experienced some sorts of innovations and rejuvenations through several National Missions. For example, National Mission for Manuscripts had initiated commendable tasks of conservation and preservation of documentary heritage collections through a series of innovative approaches. That includes bibliographic control of manuscripts heritage available across the country in manuscript libraries, archives, religious institutions and personal collections. Similarly, National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities is engaged in preservation of priceless antiquities, historically important monuments and heritage buildings. All these Missions are also involved in mapping of valuable resources hitherto invisible to the knowledge of subject experts.

National Mission on Libraries (NML) is proposed to undertake rejuvenation and revitalization of public library systems and facilities across breadth and width of the country to make information and knowledge accessible to all citizens. NML will also help in overcoming information poverty in order to reach the goal of creating an inclusive knowledge society. Libraries in India need to make a paradigm shift from their present strategy of collection or acquisition of knowledge to strategy of knowledge access. Action plans and values of NML are depicted in Figure 2. Ministry of Culture in consultation with NKC has proposed 10 point agendas for NML as listed below [PIB, 2007]:

1. Develop libraries and information services
2. Advise the government on libraries and information sector
3. Set standards for collection, services and technical processing
4. Encourage public private participation
5. Interact with state governments
6. Conserve cultural heritage
7. Review and assess LIS education and in-service training needs
8. Support R&D and technological development
9. Ensure access to all publications including government and institutional public documents
10. Set up a system for monitoring the working of public libraries.

In 2007 NKC proposed immediate setting up National Mission on Libraries for a period of three years, which may lead to the formation of the a permanent body National Commission on Libraries. Till today nothing has happened except holding few consultative meetings by officials of Ministry of Culture with group of eminent library professionals, representatives of user groups and academicians. This delay indicates that Government of India is not fully prepared/ convinced for supporting public libraries and other knowledge access facilities across the country. As described in section 2.0 of this paper, ongoing social movements should also be integrated to pressurising and lobbying with the government in achieving 'Every Village a Library' and 'No School without a Library' mottos. Thus, library associations in India need to collaborate with network of civil society groups, pressure groups and campaign organizations in order to achieve an inclusive library infrastructure across the country including setting up an apex body 'National Commission on Libraries'.



**Figure 2: Values and Action Plans of Proposed National Mission on Libraries**

## 4.0 National Consultations for Promotion of Library Advocacy in India

### 4.1 “Libraries on the Agenda!”: Library Advocacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century India

The International Seminar “Libraries on the Agenda”, organized by Max Mueller Bhawan New Delhi and supported by National Knowledge Commission during 13-14 March 2008, was first event in India of this kind having key theme of ‘library advocacy’ [Daum & Seth, 2008]. This seminar gathered eminent library professionals and chief executives of important library organizations. There was a consultative workshop within the seminar for strategizing advocacy for Indian libraries as well as formulating an action plan for the National Mission on Libraries as well as National Commission on Libraries. Workshop had deliberations on (a) branding and marketing for changing image of libraries in India; and (b) developing standardised ICT infrastructure for libraries in India. In this workshop a discussion took place on modalities of proposed National Census of Libraries in India (this is now carried out by Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation) and Indian Institute of Library and Information Science (an accreditation body for LIS education in India). This workshop proposed several library advocacy campaigns for different social segments with slogans like ‘Each Village a Library’, ‘No School without a Library’, ‘Roots to Research’ and ‘READ India’. The mottos ‘Each Village a Library’ and ‘No School without a Library’ are mooted to be achievable by year 2010. ‘Roots to

Research' will facilitate access to knowledge and learning at local level to both basic and advanced users. 'READ India' stands for Read, Empower, Administer and Develop India – an overarching slogan for transformation of public library services across the country. This seminar recommended many other action lines to put libraries on the agenda. Following examples are derived by the author out of above recommendations:

- (a) While planning an international mega sports event in the country, e.g. Commonwealth Games 2010 at Delhi, planners and decision makers should be influenced to establish community libraries in the games villages. After the mega event, these libraries should be handed over to future residents of games villages.
- (b) While planning a shopping mall, a community library can be set up – particularly for children of mall visitors and visiting young adults. New ambience of this library will surely attract them to the world of reading and books.
- (c) While planning a residential township, developers should be influenced to establish at least one community library to encourage all residents using library as a community information access point as well as a host of cultural activities round the year.

So, libraries need to transform along with transformation of urban spaces and urban minds.

#### **4.2 Library Advocacy track in International Conference of Academic Libraries 2009**

The International Conference of Academic Libraries 2009, organized by the Delhi University Library System (DULS) during 5-8 October 2009, was another major event in India where international and national leaders attempted to promote library advocacy concept in the South Asian region. This conference had drawn internationally renowned library advocates including IFLA President Ms Ellen Romana Tise, Indian National Knowledge Commission Chairperson Mr. Sam Pitroda, OCLC President Jay Jordan, NKC Working Group on Libraries Chairperson Ms. Kalpana Dasgupta beside many other personalities. There was also an attempt to bring library advocates among university vice-chancellors and other top educational administrators, who were involved in a brainstorming session in the conference on the issues of future role of academic libraries. In its prelude, organizers of ICAL 2010 observed that "the libraries of the developing nations are faced with serious crisis of establishing its identity. The conference intends to coin an Advocacy theme 'Right to Read' which involves providing all possible facilities to the user community. This is due to lack of inter-personal relationship between the exchequers, users, and partners and between the informed citizens. While many of the developed nations have brought the libraries in the forefront of nation's activities, the developing nations especially India requires to develop an advocacy model based on best practices that are indigenous based on cultural, social and economic conditions" [DULS, 2009]. The findings of the satellite group meeting are accorded in the Table 2 [DULS, 2009].

**Table 2: Observations of special track on “Library Advocacy; Marketing and Promotion” at ICAL 2010**

<i>Present Status</i>	<i>Desired Status</i>	<i>Means to Enhance Status</i>
At present advocacy, marketing and promotion are not conspicuously visible	To bring into reality these new concepts of partnership, marketing and promotion, synergy of the Department of LIS and library should be effected and financial support from corporate bodies be sought.	The above efforts should be made with due publicity for value added services and strategies of academic libraries with the help of agencies like Friends of Library Association.

## **5.0 Enhancement of Library Advocacy through Participation of All Stakeholders**

### **5.1 Building Legacy of Public Libraries in India**

Legacy of some public libraries across the states is well established among the communities they served. Many public libraries in India have been serving their communities for more than hundred years. These are now part of their living culture and shaping up socio-cultural identities. Legacy of these public libraries now needs to be well documented to showcase inspiring stories associated with them. While one community gets connected with their living heritage and local cultures through a public library, the community members will automatically support the public library over the generations. Now, library advocacy programme of the country should highlight legacy of public libraries across the country.

Legacy of a public institution like a public library can save it from any kind of deterioration by the management of that institution. For example, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) in New Delhi holds high level of legacy among top historians, academicians and social scientists of the country as well scholars from abroad. Recently, there is an ongoing controversy on present administration of NMML. Several renowned scholars became concerned about its mismanagement and losing academic integrity. They have formed a forum to save NMML and are engaged in lobbying, campaign and advocacy to save this institution from any kind of deterioration and mismanagement. They even wrote some media articles to highlight their concerns and sent representation to the Prime Minister of India.

This way if legacy of a public library builds properly, it brings positive changes in the organization as well as keeps this public library on the right track. We need developing friends of public library forums (such as “Friends of National Library of India”, “Friends of State Central Library, Kolkata”, “Friends of Delhi Public Library”, etc.) to engage them monitoring and evaluation of public library services as well as staff performance. There should also be proper mechanism to address grievances of its members, readers and other regular visitors.

## **5.2 Community Ownership of Public Libraries**

A public library is essentially established to serve its local communities. It should be a platform for disseminating public information and community information. It becomes a platform for cultural activities and cultural exchanges involving local communities including marginalized communities. It also helps in establishing cultural identity of its surrounding localities. There are many public libraries in rural and urban areas democratically managed and run by community members. Thus, state-sponsored as well as NGO-run public libraries should establish a sense of ownership among the local communities. A public library's governing body should induct some regular library members as they are active stakeholder and know strengths and weaknesses of that particular library. When community ownership of public libraries is ensured, library services can be expanded to the non-member communities and bridging knowledge gaps can be made possible.

Few NGOs such as READ India, Room to Read - India, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in collaboration with international donor agencies such as International Development Research Centre (IDRC Canada) and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are engaged in establishing few thousands community libraries across the country – particularly at the level of reaching the unreached. These community libraries, in addition to facilitating access to knowledge, have host of many other relevant activities such as adult education, vocational education, public health awareness raising, environmental awareness raising, formation of self-help groups, skills up-gradation, etc. Room to Read–India has established more than 3300 community libraries since 2003 till date in collaboration with local NGOs.

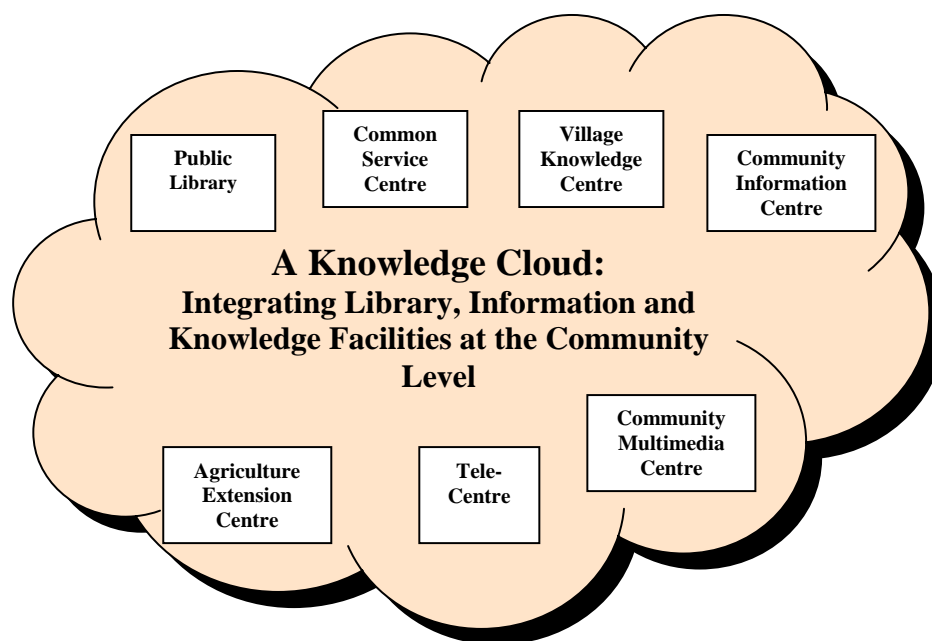
Many Indian companies have established community libraries at different industrial towns, where they have presence, out of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) mandate.

This way establishment of a network of public libraries is made possible in different states, where non-government entities have taken leaderships without any intervention of state government or respective state library association.

Leaderships of state library associations should take note of this and should strategically collaborate with all these non-government entities in order to expand public library services to the marginalized and socially-excluded communities.

## **5.3 Knowledge Clouds at the Community Level**

In the last few decades we have seen several community-based, community-oriented and community-led initiatives for bridging knowledge gaps, knowledge divide and digital divide at the community level, particularly in the rural areas. Proposed “Knowledge Cloud”, as shown in Figure 3, is an integrated approach to combine library, information and knowledge utilities and facilities at the community level. The library, information and knowledge facilities available in the rural and semi-urban areas across the country are rural libraries, community libraries, village knowledge centres (VKC), community information centres (CIC), community multimedia centres (CMC), common service centres (CSC), telecentres, Krishi Vigyan Kendras or Agriculture Extension Centres (KVK) etc. These are being established and run by different government departments, NGOs and academic institutions, while some of them run with public-private partnership (PPP) model.



**Figure 3: A Knowledge Cloud integrating library, information and knowledge facilities at the community level**

Every individual entity has distinct functionalities and mandates. The Knowledge Cloud maintains the individual entity's mandates and supplements the others. For example, if a village has a rural public library but missing services of other essential entities, the rural public library can enlarge its activities to that extend. Similarly, if a Krishi Vigyan Kendra is available in a village that does not have a rural public library, KVK can provide basic library services to the villagers. This way they can outreach public library services to the all common citizens living in rural and semi-urban localities. The Knowledge Cloud can develop a mechanism to borrow books from nearby libraries to be served through non-library entities such as tele-centre, CMC, CIC, KVK and CSC. This will provide a kind of inter-library loan services, although to be used by non-library entities and their clientele. This way knowledge gaps at the community level can be bridged and all kind of facilities are optimally utilized. The knowledge clouds help in expanding information and knowledge ecosystem around the local communities, including marginalized communities in the country. The 'Knowledge Cloud' concept should be promoted during the library advocacy and campaign programme in order to reduce duplications of efforts of similar activities in the name of one or other and enhance opportunities for the communities they strived to serve.

## **6.0 Role of Professional Bodies in Library Advocacy in India**

Although library advocacy is relatively new concept in India, library associations along with eminent library professionals and academicians had been involved with various public policymaking and public library legislation initiatives across the country since the independence in 1947. Many state level library associations took active role in policy advocacy and campaign for systematic library development across the states. So far 18 Indian states have their public library legislations for establishing and maintaining public libraries across the respective state, including creating a hierarchy of state central library, district libraries and rural/community libraries. Here,



state government generates necessary funding for public library development in the state through library cess and other kinds of taxes. Staff salary, library development and document procurement budget is met by the state government.

Unfortunately, out of 28 states only 18 India states (about 64.3%) have state public library acts, which is a formal recognition of responsibility taken by the respective state government. Table 3 shows a list of state governments having successfully passed public library act along with year of enactment.

Low penetration of public library services is inevitable in the states that do not have state public library legislations. These state governments are not taking enough interventions to bring inclusive knowledge society in the respective state, as public libraries facilitate access to knowledge and information to the local communities. This can also be seen as a failure of leadership of respective state library associations as well as national library associations for taking necessary initiatives of library advocacy, lobbying and campaign for state level public library legislations.

On the other hand some state governments, although having public library legislation in place and long traditions of public library movement, are not always giving proper attentions in terms of expanding public library services to neo-literates, lifelong learners, vocational learners and members of marginalized or excluded communities. Public libraries in some states stand more elitist to serve only privileged sections of population. There is a need for another kind of library movement for outreaching public library services to the first generation literates, school pass-outs as well as school dropouts from under-privileged sections. Leaderships of library associations need to collaborate with champions of other social movements for formulating appropriate strategies of library advocacy and campaign in the policy forums and legislative platforms.

**Table 3: Indian States having Public Library Legislation**

Name of Indian State	Whether having public library legislation in the state	Year of Act
Tamil Nadu	Yes	1948
Andhra Pradesh	Yes	1960
Karnataka	Yes	1965
Maharashtra	Yes	1967
West Bengal	Yes	1979
Manipur	Yes	1988
Haryana	Yes	1989
Kerala	Yes	1989
Goa	Yes	1993
Mizoram	Yes	1993
Gujarat	Yes	2000
Orissa	Yes	2001
Uttarakhand	Yes	2005
Rajasthan	Yes	2006
Uttar Pradesh	Yes	2006
Chhattisgarh	Yes	2007
Bihar	Yes	2008
Arunachal Pradesh	Yes	2009
Assam	No	-
Himachal Pradesh	No	-
Jammu and Kashmir	No	-
Jharkhand	No	-
Madhya Pradesh	No	-
Meghalaya	No	-
Nagaland	No	-
Punjab	No	-
Sikkim	No	-
Tripura	No	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 out of 28 states</b>	-
<i>Source: Indian LIS Professionals, 2010</i>		

### 6.1 Limitations of Library Advocacy in Indian Context

The author has identified several limitations of library advocacy and campaign work towards achievement of universal access to knowledge and information through a network of public libraries and academic libraries in India. Some of the limitations are enumerated below based on personal reflections of a few library professionals in India:

- a) It is being observed that various social movements such as Right to Information (RTI), Right to Education, MDGs, Food Security and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) have strong leaderships in terms of their lobbying, campaign, advocacy and outreach skills in order to reach political consensus on these burning issues. They also have strong negotiation skills

to deal with the policymakers, legislators, politicians and bureaucrats who are responsible for policy formulation, programme design and implementation in the country and states. These social movements have created a dedicated team of activists in their respective field – who are engaged with the grassroots-level practitioners and beneficiaries at one side and policymakers, national planners and bureaucrats on the other side. National and state library associations do not have a dedicated team or working group on library advocacy to lobbying and campaigning with the governments and enterprises for the betterment of library services across the country. Voices of national and state library associations are un-heard at the national and state-level policy forums or national planning commission or state planning boards leading to diminishing of dreams of thousand of book lovers, friends of libraries and library professionals. The new leaderships in library associations should learn the necessary skills of lobbying, campaign, advocacy, outreach and negotiations from the activists and champions of other social movements.

- b) Leaderships of most state and national-level library associations are drawn from academicians, academic and special librarians. Librarians working in public libraries are under-represented in the boards of library associations leading to becoming a voiceless face of the profession. There is no active library association for public libraries in existence at the state-level and national level. This situation creates a void for their causes such as professional development, status and service conditions. There should have induction of public librarians on the boards of national and state library associations in order to bring their voices to policymaking and national planning exercises for strengthening public library services across the country.
- c) There are few library advocacy civil society groups in existence in the country. The civil societies were the backbone of many social movements including Right to Information (RTI) and Right to Education movements. If strengthened, library advocacy civil society groups could bring ICT-enabled public library services as well as new public library facilities at the grassroots level across the country with increased supports from the corporations and international donor agencies. This segment can be explored more and civil societies to be attracted in innovative library advocacy programmes in partnership with existing library associations.
- d) Instead of pressurising and lobbying with state and union governments to strengthen public library services and facilities across the country, present leaderships of few state library associations, having close associations with ruling parties of the states, are engaged in negative advocacy against the public and school libraries. For example, there was an instance of downgrading professional status of public libraries' librarians and school librarians to make it at par with clerical cadres at the time of recent pay revision, earlier which was at par with the school teachers. This was done in a state in eastern India in consultation with the respective state library association. This kind of negative advocacy is not only harming professional career of public and school librarians in the respective state, but also budding and student library professionals are demoralised since they are losing their voices and respect within the society.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

Emerging and globalized knowledge economy in India has created new opportunities to young generations. Concepts like education for sustainable development and inclusive education have created an atmosphere for inclusive growth and development, including empowerment of women and marginalized communities. Although India has achieved economic sustainability and growth due to good performance of some industrial sectors, many types of indicators such as human development index, e-readiness index and social development indicators are not very favourable to India's public policy frameworks.

Former President of India Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam coined a term "Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas" (PURA), which is now essence of the India's inclusive growth strategies and as a building block for inclusive knowledge societies in India [Abdul Kalam, 2000]. PURA supplements several social missions such as 'Information for All', 'Education for All', 'Health for All', 'Every Village a Library/ Knowledge Centre', 'No School without a Library', which have been thrusts for the United Nations, Government of India and policy advocacy groups. Now leaderships of state and national library associations need to tap the existing enabling environment of public policymaking.

Changing realities of twenty-first century and changing global orders need to be taken seriously to understand new dimensions of social movements and social changes [Murthy, 2009]. Expansion of boundaries of human capitals and social capitals can create global opportunities to hitherto voiceless and less-visible communities. Thus new-age library advocacy in India needs further collaboration with champions of social movements. Eminent living social thinkers and promoters of knowledge economy in India, namely, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Mr. Sam Pitroda, Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, Mr. Nandan Nilekani and Dr. N.R. Narayana Murthy, can be made brand ambassadors for library advocacy programmes in India. This will definitely boost visibility and popularity of agendas of library advocacy programmes across the country.

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