

Re-imagining Community Engagement in University Libraries Toward Sustainable Development Goals

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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 global goals set by the UNGA in 2015, addressing issues like poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. Libraries play a crucial role in achieving these goals by educating and engaging communities through their services. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) emphasizes the importance of access to information in achieving the SDGs. Community Engagement Practices (CEP) in libraries aim to connect libraries with local communities, address community needs, and foster collaboration. Libraries promote information literacy programs and serve as spaces for teaching, learning, and research support.

Objectives of the Study

- a) To understand the community engagement practices in university libraries that contribute to the realization of the SDGs.
- b) To identify the strategies employed by university libraries in delivering community engagement practices.
- c) To explore the challenges encountered by university libraries in implementing community engagement initiatives.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to the 38 Central and State University Libraries of North-East India, as listed on the University Grants Commission, New Delhi official website (<https://www.ugc.gov.in/>). Four university libraries were excluded either due to the unavailability of contact details or non-functioning status. Additionally, private and deemed universities were not considered.

The four universities excluded from the study are: Arunachal Pradesh University, Dhanamanjuri University, Manipur University of Culture, and Sikkim National Law University.

Rajiv Gandhi University	Assam University	Tezpur University	Assam Agricultural University	Assam Science & Technology University
Assam Rajiv Gandhi University of Co-operative Management	Assam Women's University	Bhattadev University	Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya	Kumar Bhaskar Varma Sanskrit & Ancient Studies University
Cotton University	Dibrugarh University	Gauhati University	Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University	Bodoland University
Madhabdev University	Majuli University of Culture	National Law University and Judicial Academy	Rabindranath Tagore University	Sri Sri Aniruddhdeva Sports University
Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences	Central Agricultural University	Manipur University	National Sports University	Manipur Technical University
North Eastern Hill University	The National Law University of Meghalaya	Mizoram University	Nagaland University	Sikkim University
Khangchendzonga State University	Tripura University	National Law University Tripura	Maharaja Bir Bikram University	Central State

Methodology of the Study

A survey questionnaire was developed and administered online to the respective librarians or individuals in charge of all 34 Central and State universities, resulting in the receipt of 24 completed questionnaires, representing a response rate of 70.58%. Among the 24 respondents, 7 responses were from the Central University libraries, and 17 responses were from the State University libraries. Subsequently, the completed questionnaires were scrutinized, tabulated, and analysed to draw conclusions.

1 NO POVERTY



SDG 1 aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030. It focuses on ensuring basic needs are met, reducing vulnerability, and promoting sustainable economic growth for all.

Libraries Contribution: From the study, it is observed that 37.5% of university libraries have provided skill development training to support self-employment, while 25% have offered job-oriented training sessions through partnerships with NGOs and university departments. However, the majority of university libraries (54.16%) have yet to take any initiative to support SDG 1.

2 ZERO HUNGER



SDG 2 aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030, ensuring access to sufficient, nutritious food for all, particularly vulnerable populations.

Libraries Contribution: The analysis reveals that 75% of university libraries have not implemented community engagement initiatives to address hunger and food security issues. However, 20.83% have provided information literacy programs for farmers, 12.5% offer training, and 4.16% organize awareness programs.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



SDG 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, focusing on reducing maternal and child mortality, combating diseases, and achieving universal health coverage by 2030.

Libraries Contribution: The analysis reveals that 37.5% of university libraries have organized health camps and 50% have initiated health literacy programs, but 41.66% have not contributed to SDG 3.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive, equitable quality education, promote lifelong learning, provide universal primary and secondary education, eliminate gender disparities, and enhance literacy and numeracy skills globally.

Libraries Contribution: The analysis shows that 83.33% of university libraries prioritize quality education, offering open access resources, book exhibitions, and local learning centres. However, only 16.67% offer dual library timings and 8.33% engage in community engagement activities. Some libraries also organize outreach programs for adopted villages and school children, demonstrating a broader commitment to community engagement and education.

5 GENDER EQUALITY



SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. It focuses on ending discrimination, violence, and harmful practices while ensuring equal participation in leadership.

Libraries Contribution: 83.33% of university libraries provide safe spaces for female users, while 41.67% offer women's empowerment programs. However, awareness programs on third-gender equality are less common, and 12.5% lack community engagement.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



SDG 6 aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, focusing on clean water access, improving water quality, and efficient water use by 2030.

Libraries Contribution: Among the university libraries' community engagement practices supporting SDG 6, 91.67% of libraries provide safe drinking water facilities, prioritizing access to clean water. Additionally, 29.17% of libraries offer information on water usage and sanitization practices, aiming to raise awareness and encourage responsible consumption. However, 8.33% of university libraries have reported no specific contribution to SDG 6, highlighting potential areas for improvement.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



SDG 7 aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. It promotes renewable energy, energy efficiency, and expanded infrastructure for equitable energy access.

Libraries Contribution: North-East India's university libraries are actively supporting SDG 7, with 79.17% offering lighting and electricity facilities, sustainable community spaces, and information on sustainable energy use. However, 20.83% report no specific contribution, indicating potential areas for improvement.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



SDG 8 aims to promote sustained, inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all, focusing on improving global labor standards, innovation, and equal economic opportunities.

Libraries Contribution: The study reveals that 66.67% of university libraries assist job seekers with document scanning and internet access, while 54.17% support employment clubs with networking facilities and resources. However, 16.67% lack specific support programs for SDG 8.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) aims to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation to drive economic growth, technological advancement, and environmental sustainability worldwide.

Libraries Contribution: University libraries significantly contribute to SDG 9 by providing collaborative entrepreneurship training and ICT services, with 45.83% actively involved and 54.17% offering minimal to no cost services, promoting technological access and innovation.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



SDG 10 aims to reduce inequality within and among countries by promoting inclusive policies, ensuring equal opportunities, reducing income disparities, and eliminating discriminatory practices to achieve social and economic equity.

Libraries Contribution: The analysis reveals that 54.17% of university libraries have contributed to SDG 10 by providing resources for community members with different abilities, while 66.67% create safe and inclusive environments. 20.83% have implemented homebound services for differently abled and elderly individuals, but 20.83% have not specified their contributions.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



SDG 11 aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable by improving urban infrastructure, housing, transportation, reducing environmental impacts, and fostering equitable opportunities for all in urban areas.

Libraries Contribution: University libraries support SDG 11 by safeguarding invaluable documentary heritage in 58.33% of libraries and digitizing the cultural heritage of communities in 54.17% of libraries, fostering preservation and accessibility. Additionally, 33.33% of libraries provide spaces for cultural activities, promoting diversity and inclusion. However, 25% of libraries report no specific community engagement.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



SDG 12 aims to ensure responsible consumption and production patterns by reducing waste, promoting resource efficiency, sustainable practices, and encouraging businesses and consumers to make environmentally conscious choices.

Libraries Contribution: The study reveals that 54.17% of university libraries contribute to SDG 12 by facilitating inter-university information sharing, while 29.17% promote a new sharing economy by offering various materials for loan and infrastructure, including books, music, movies, tools, instruments, and appliances. However, 37.5% of libraries report no community engagement in these areas.

13 CLIMATE ACTION



SDG 13, Climate Action, aims to combat climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing climate resilience, promoting sustainable practices, and supporting global efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate-related impacts.

Libraries Contribution: The study shows that 50% of university libraries are promoting SDG 13 through environmental awareness events, while 33.33% host "Green Book Clubs" focusing on sustainability and eco-conscious living. However, 41.67% of libraries lack specific community engagement practices related to SDG 13.

14 LIFE BELOW WATER



SDG 14, "Life Below Water," aims to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas, and marine resources by reducing pollution, protecting ecosystems, and addressing the impacts of climate change and overfishing.

Libraries Contribution: The study reveals that 20.83% of university libraries provide access to data and knowledge for marine conservation, while 33.33% of libraries conduct awareness programs to reduce water pollution. However, the majority of libraries (58.33%) have no specific community engagement practices with SDG 14, suggesting potential for improvement in marine life preservation initiatives.

15 LIFE
ON LAND



SDG 15 aims to protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests, combat desertification, halt biodiversity loss, and prevent land degradation for a healthier planet and resilient ecosystems.

Libraries Contribution: The analysis shows that 33.33% of university libraries contribute to SDG 15 by preserving indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity, while 37.5% educate the community on environmental conservation. However, 50% report no community engagement practices, suggesting potential for sustainable land use.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



SDG 16 promotes peaceful, inclusive societies, justice for all, and accountable institutions. It focuses on reducing violence, corruption, and ensuring equal access to justice and strong governance systems.

Libraries Contribution: The study shows that 62.5% of university libraries contribute to SDG 16 by developing collections of laws and legislations, while 29.17% partner with law and public libraries for legal resource dissemination and community outreach. However, 33.33% report no specific community engagement.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



SDG 17 aims to strengthen global partnerships for sustainable development by promoting cooperation between governments, businesses, and civil society, and mobilizing resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Libraries Contribution: Analysis of the study reveals that 37.5% of university libraries contribute to SDG 17 by partnering with governments and others to facilitate collaboration for legal and societal advancements. Similarly, 37.5% of libraries provide information and updates about the SDGs, fostering awareness and advocacy for sustainable development goals. However, 41.67% of libraries report no specific community engagement.

Strategies used for Community Engagement Practices

In response to the question, 33.33% of surveyed libraries prioritize outreach programs, while 12.5% focus on identification and collaboration in different projects. Additionally, 25% of libraries form partnerships with local organizations and external stakeholders, while 66.67% prioritize collaborations with educational institutions and rural libraries, emphasizing intra-institutional cooperation. Furthermore, 16.67% of libraries have no specific community engagement initiatives.

Ways of Community Engagement Practices

University libraries provide community engagement activities in two different ways: offline (for 37.5% of libraries) and online (for 37.5% of libraries). Additionally, 25% of libraries use both online and offline platforms.

Offline Tools for Community Engagement Practices

In response to the question, university libraries employ various offline tools for providing community engagement practices, including newsletters (40%), pamphlets (26.67%), and newspapers (33.33%). However, 33.33% of libraries report no specific offline tools for CEP.



Online Tools for Community Engagement Practices

Social media is a prominent platform utilized by 80% of university libraries, while websites/blogs are utilized by 66.67% of libraries. In addition to social media and websites/blogs, online discussion forums are used by 20% of libraries to enhance digital discourse. It has been observed that 13.33% of libraries employ alternative methods such as email for community engagement practices.



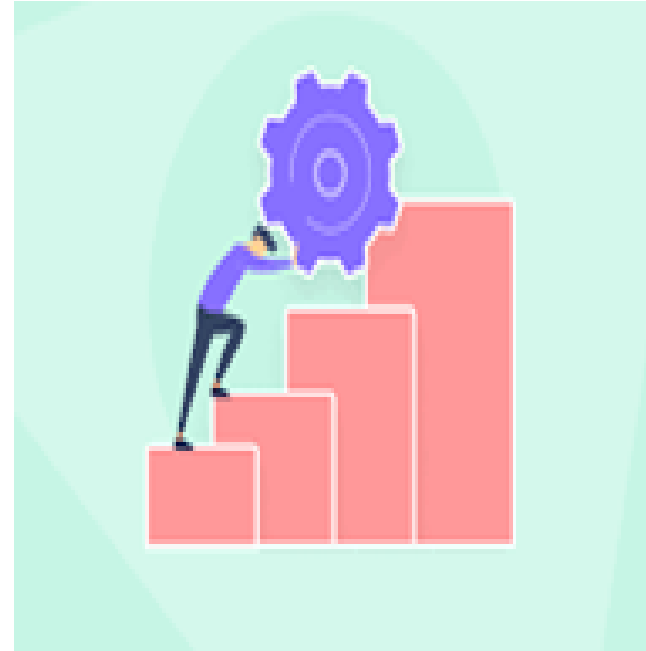
Social Media Tools used for Community Engagement Practices

The data reveals varied social media usage among university libraries for community engagement practices. Facebook and WhatsApp stand out as popular choices, with 91.67% and 83.33% responses respectively, whereas 25% of libraries use Instagram, and 16.67% of libraries use Twitter and Telegram each.



Challenges faced by Libraries in Community Engagement Practices

North-East India's university libraries face challenges in community engagement, with 83.33% lacking funds, 75% lacking human resources, and 54.17% lacking facilities. Inconsistent policies and lack of sustainable education complicate planning processes. 45.83% of libraries have concerns about community awareness and participation, while 41.67% have not faced challenges in implementing Community Engagement Programs (CEP). Strategic investment is needed for effective solutions.





University libraries in North-East India are actively contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through innovative community engagement practices. They address poverty, hunger, education, gender equality, and environmental sustainability through initiatives like job training programs, health literacy campaigns, and entrepreneurship training. However, challenges like limited funding, inadequate facilities, and low community awareness hinder their progress. Collaborative efforts involving governments, local organizations, and the community are essential to overcome these obstacles and drive progress towards a more equitable future.

Questions?

Thank you very much