1 Introduction

Background of the study

Information is an indispensable resource for overall development and a necessity for the improvement in the quality of life in all human society. It is the major resource for policymakers, planners, decision-makers, scientists, research and development organizations, technologists, economists, executives, researchers, professionals, business houses, and the general masses. Informed citizens are in a better position to analyse and find solutions to day-to-day problems and can make sound judgments and deliberate effective decisions.

1.1 Information Literacy

Information literacy is not only about finding information but it also involves evaluating what we find—to determine the information that we find as good or bad, relevant or trustworthy. Paul G. Zurkowski first coined the term "information Literacy" in 1974 when he was the then president of the Information Industry Association to describe the techniques and skills known by the information literate for utilising the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems. Thus, according to him, people trained in the application of information resources to their work can be called information literates. They have learned techniques and skills for utilising the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems Zurkowski, (1974).

According to UNESCOs Information For All Programme IFAP, (2008), Information Literacy is the capacity of people to recognize their information needs, locate and evaluate the quality of information, store and retrieve information, make effective and ethical use of information and apply information to create and communicate knowledge". 
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<td>Recognize a need for information</td>
<td>Determine the extent of information needed</td>
<td>Recognise a need for information and to determines the extent of the information needed</td>
<td>Recognizing information needs</td>
<td>Locating and evaluating the quality of information</td>
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<td>Distinguish ways in which the information gap may be addressed</td>
<td>Access the require information effectively and efficiently</td>
<td>Find information effectively and efficiently</td>
<td>Critically evaluate information and the information seeking process</td>
<td>Storing and retrieving information</td>
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<td>Construct strategies for locating information</td>
<td>Evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate elected information to his/her knowledge base and value system</td>
<td>Manage information collected or generated</td>
<td>Using information in an effective and ethical way</td>
<td>Applying information to create and communicate knowledge</td>
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<td>Locate and access information</td>
<td>Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose</td>
<td>Apply prior and new information to construct new concepts or create new understanding</td>
<td>Applying information to create and communicate knowledge</td>
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<td>Compare and evaluate information obtained from different sources</td>
<td>Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose</td>
<td>Use information with understanding and acknowledge cultural, ethical, economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information</td>
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<td>Organize, apply and communicate information to others in ways appropriate to the situation</td>
<td>Understand many of economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally</td>
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<td>Synthesis and build upon existing information contributing to the creation of new knowledge</td>
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Sources: (SCONUL, 1999), (ACRL, 2000), (ANZIIL, 2004), and (UNESCO, 2008)
1.2 Rural Development

Rural development simply means a strategy designed to improve the social and economic life of the people in a rural setting and in particular it focuses on the rural poor consisting of small and marginal farmers, labourers, rural artisans and the weak and vulnerable people.

Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of specific group of people, the rural poor. It involves the extension of benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas, such as small farmers, tenants and landless. World Bank, (1975).

Rural development recognises, however, that improves food supplies and nutrition, together with basic services such as health and education, cannot directly improve the physical well-being and quality of life of the rural poor, but can also indirectly enhance their productivity and ability to contribute to the national economy. It is concerned with the modernisation and monetisation of rural society and with its transition from traditional isolation to integration with national economy World Bank, (1975).

1.3 Statement of the Problem and Rationale of the Study

In the present-day information-intensive society, there is an overwhelming proliferation of information flow and access in the urban areas. However, most of the rural populace, particularly in a developing country such as India, is yet to enjoy the benefits of modern advancements in information and communication technologies. Perhaps this problem is more acute in the rural settings of the north eastern part of India which occupies a strategic place in the process of an all-round national development. In this region, majority of the people live in rural settings and are still being deprived from accessing
information pertaining to various spheres of life—education, health care, economics, politics, agriculture and farming, environment and many developmental benefits extended by the government as well as non-governmental organisations.

It is essential to revitalise rural people by providing them information which they implicitly and explicitly need. Reaching the rural masses with valuable and appropriate information is the key to success for any attempt at bringing an all-round national development. In a democratic country such as India, where we talk in terms of equality, justice and rights, duties and responsibilities, liberty and individuality, self-esteem and improved living conditions, the benefits of right to information has to be fully explored. In this regard, it is imperative to assess the information literacy level of the rural populace and, thereby, concerted efforts towards enhancing the information literacy level and effective utilisation of information resources by the rural people could be facilitated.

The necessity for information communication on various Rural Development Programmes needs no emphasis. Unless the villagers have access to relevant information various development Programmes, any attempt to successful implementation of such Programmes will be a remote possibility. In the recent past, much importance has been given towards the overall development of the rural populace by launching different various Rural Development Programmes meant for the rural people in order to bring about a planned-change in a social system. In this context, it is to be noted that information communication relating to various Development Programmes from the generation point to the end-users cannot be viewed in isolation, as it constitutes an integral and fundamental part of the system. In fact, information flow through various communication sources and channels and its accessibility to the users play a very crucial role in the effective implementation of such programmes. In other words, the accuracy, the speed and the effectiveness, with which information on various Development Programmes is
communicated to the end-users, to a great extent, will determine the level of successful implementation of such programmes.

In Meghalaya, eighty percent of the population lives in rural areas (Census of India, 2011). However, no such study has been conducted so far where information literacy is considered as a major component in the process of implementing various Rural Development Programmes in Meghalaya. Therefore, the present study was an attempt firstly, to assess the information literacy level of the rural people living in Mawtneng and Umkei villages under the Umsning Block of Ribhoi District of Meghalaya. Secondly, the study was an attempt to communicate the consolidated and repackaged information to the villagers under study. Thirdly, the present study assessed the impact of information literacy on various Rural Development Programmes and the utilisation status of information resources by the villagers under study. Further, the study also generates a knowledge-base to be linked with future knowledge creation.

1.4 Operational Definitions

The definitions of the terms and concepts used in this study are as follows:

Information Literacy- “the capacity of people to recognize their information needs, locate and evaluate the quality of information, store and retrieve information, make effective and ethical use of information and apply information to create and communicate knowledge” UNESCO, (2008).

Development Programmes- “those Rural Development Programmes which were launched by the Central Government of India meant for the rural people and were operative in the villages under study”.