

Post-insurgency Rural Development Strategies in Mizoram: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Rural Development in Mizoram was severely slowed down and affected due to two decades of insurgency (1966-86) and grouping of villages as counter insurgency strategy. The grouping of villages has its permanent repercussions where post-grouping reconstruction measures were not initiated so as to suit the people and the area of the villages that grouped. Although various rural development initiatives were introduced and implemented during post-insurgency period, its impact on rural economy is minimal. The result is that approximately all villages and the State is not economically self-sufficient. The State still depends on almost all essential commodities from outside the state. The present paper focuses mainly on the impact of village grouping as counterinsurgency strategy and the post-independence rural development programmes initiated and its impact on rural Mizoram.

Key Words: Insurgency, Village grouping, Rural Development, Economic self-sufficiency.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mizoram (earlier known as Lushai Hills/Mizo Hills District) is situated on the North East of India located between 22. 19'N and 24. 19' N Latitude 92. 16' and 93. 26' East Longitude covering a geographical area of 21,087 sq. km. It is covered by international borders from three sides, Myanmar in the East and South (404), and Bangladesh in the West (306). Mizoram is highly mountainous and has rugged topography with high ranges trending north south direction. Barring few patches of flat land along the valleys and the area bordering the plains of Cachar and Bangladesh, the topography of Mizoram is composed of steep hills and deep gorges (Singh, 1995). Rural

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development² in the State is not as straightforward as it is in other plain States of India.

Moreover, two decades of insurgency³ severely affected the village economy and development of Mizoram as a whole. The most peaceful State in the North East India now, Mizoram was harshly affected in its development due to eruption of underground Mizo National Front (MNF) in midnight of 28th February 1966 which lasted for two decades. It has disrupted not only the normal administration but also the development efforts as a whole. The grouping of villages as counter insurgency measures further aggravated the socio-economic scenario of Mizoram. This paper focuses on the impact of Village grouping during insurgency and post-insurgency rural development initiatives in Mizoram. The present paper is organized from published and unpublished works, findings of some scholars and field work findings of the author which is required for this paper.

This paper is organized as follows. Section II focuses on grouping of villages and its impact on rural economy, section III discusses the post-insurgency development initiatives, section IV presents the present economic scenario of rural Mizoram and in section V, the author suggested some measures for development of rural Mizoram. All the rural development strategies in Mizoram are not covered in this paper but efforts have been made to highlight the rural development initiatives and its impact in the State, which may serve as highlights for further research and some feedbacks for administrators and policy makers.

II. VILLAGE GROUPING AND ITS IMPACT ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Occurrence of insurgency was the most significant factor which determined the course of political development in Mizoram. It has disrupted the normal administrative system and counter-insurgency measures have again affected the system in the feedback process (Ray, 1982). Insurgency

² Rural Development Sector Policy Paper, World Bank, Washington D.C, 1975, defines rural development as “the strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of the specific group of people--the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas--the group includes small scale farmers, tenants and landless.

³ Online Encyclopedia Wikipedia defined ‘insurgency’ as the state or condition of being in revolt or insurrection; an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict

in Mizoram began in 1966 due to various factors, out of which economic backwardness and development disparity, alarming unemployment, apathy of the Assam Government, the then State Government, to solve the problem of the series of famines and crop failures etc. led to the outbreak of insurgency. The extraordinary situation of sudden rebellion throughout the whole district resulted in the imposition of Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955 to enable the government to make adequate provision for the suppression of the disturbances. The Act under Section 4 empowered magistrates, officers of the Assam Rifles of the rank of Havilder and upwards and police officers of the rank of sub-inspectors and above to fire upon or otherwise use force even to the causing of death, against any person who is acting in contravention of any law or in the disturbed area (*Ibid*). As was expected, the security forces carried out large-scale offensive operations against the MNF. Situation aggravated further when the MNF declared the 'independence' of Mizoram from India in the early hours of March 1, 1966 followed by counter-insurgency measures when the army was asked by the Central Government to deal with the situation. As a counter-insurgency strategy, regrouping of villages was made, which saw the entire rural population of Mizoram (roughly 80% of the total population) uprooted from their homes to be relocated miles away. The Indian Army argued that the segregation and control of the population by this method was necessary for a successful counterinsurgency campaign. General Manekshaw, the Army Chief had suggested the government to hand over the district administration to the army for effective control over MNF and also suggested from military point of view that regrouping of villages should be given priority in order to control the rebels effectively (Jafa, 2008). There were four categories of grouping of villages in Mizoram.⁴

1. Progressive and Protected Villages (PPV): The first stage of grouping started on 14th January 1967 under the order of Central Government Liaison Officer for Mizo Hills District. Accordingly, 50,000 people
1. Progressive and Protected Villages (PPV): The first stage of grouping started on 14th January 1967 under the order of Central Government Liaison Officer for Mizo Hills District. Accordingly, 50,000 people from 106 villages were re-settled in 19 centres, along Silchar-Aizawl-Lunglei road which started from Vairengte villages covering a distance of 400 km. Further 63 villagers with

⁴ Singh, 1995

a population of 40,000 were reorganized into 17 PPV along the sensitive borders with Burma and Manipur. Each PPV unit was placed under the charge of Civil Officer called Administrative Officer (AO), to represent the Deputy Commissioner to the people of the PPV, from Junior Assam Civil Services and a small office was provided consisting of a few clerks and porters.

2. **New Group Centre (NGC):** The second category of grouping as NGC was done immediately after completion of PPV in 1969. 182 villages into 40 group centres affecting 55,000 populations were brought under re-grouping. The 40 centres were divided into 6 sectors on the three borders of the district. i) Tripura border, ii) East Pakistan(now Bangladesh) border, iii) Lunglei Demagiri Road, iv) Lunglei-Lawngtlai Road, v) Selling-Champhai Road, and vi) Darlawn-Khawbung, North Vanlaiphai-Serchip Road.
3. **Voluntary Group Centre (VGC):** The third category of grouping the VGC started in 1970 and 110 villages were grouped into 26 centres voluntarily, under the supervision of the security forces with all facilities extended to them as in case of other two.
4. **Extended Loop Area (ELA):** Under this category, 63 villages were grouped in 17 grouped centres covering of total population of 40,000 along the border of Manipur in the north and Burma in the east, which was completed by the end of 1969 and the army authority handed over the area to the civil authority by the middle of 1970. There were some positive impacts of village grouping. Although public opinion in general was against grouping and all political parties wanted that the villages should be reestablished in the old sites, the grouped villages continue as such even after a popular government came in power after the election in Mizoram in 1972. There were obvious advantages of populous villages situated on the lines of communication. Administration has, therefore, preferred the people to continue to remain in the group centre, rather than moving back to scattered hamlets away from the main currents of developmental and administrative activities (Ray, 1982). This was which Tarlok Singh⁵ suggested before insurgency broke out, who observed that the economic benefits could not reach the innumerable interior villages having small populations, distant and scattered hills and recommended that these small villages should be reconstituted

⁵ Tarlok Singh, a Member of the Planning Commission, led a Study Team to the Mizo Hills in January 1966.

into large units with road communication which would bring the people easy reach of technical know-how of developmental and financial and other assistance from the government.⁶

However, the grouping of villages had its adverse impinge on the socio-economic life of the people. The general humiliation, loss of freedom and of property, and, very often, injury and death involved in this process of so-called ‘grouping of villages’ were incidental to the military operations in Mizoram, as perhaps they are to internal wars anywhere. It appeared to many then, as it would appear to many more acutely now, that the policy of ‘grouping’ was tantamount to annihilation of reason and sensibility and certainly not the best policy to follow against our own ethnic minorities (Jafa, 2008). Although regrouping of villages done with the basic object of eliminating the underground elements as interior villages were under their control, yet it failed to effect physical elimination of the underground movement. It naturally disturbed the traditional village harmony based on homogeneity and attachment to village land and the masses of the village communities who were left to fight their survival with the traditional system of *jhum* cultivation became poorer (Nunthara, 1996). From morning to evening people had to endure the pangs of a regimented life. Their “Thalawmbawka” huts, near the sites, where *jhumias* used to stay at night, were dismantled. They had to compromise with their freedom. The man-land affinity was burnt which disturbed the geopolitical order of the area.⁷ Once self-sufficient village economy, mainly through *jhum* or shifting cultivation, had to depend on relief and temporary employment as little economic activity could be carried out under strict supervision and watchful security forces. The planning and development process, in true sense, in Mizoram started only with effect from the Seventh Five Year Plan, when the State launched her development programme for the first time under conditions of peace.

III. POST-INSURGENCY RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN MIZORAM

Post-insurgency rural development strategies of the government have been mainly towards attaining economic self-sufficiency through agricultural development and many other segments which have potentials for local propagation and production and to protect the land from degradation, to

⁶ Ray, 1982

⁷ Singh, 1995

protect burning of forests for *jhuming*, encouraging permanent cultivation in achieving sustainable development in eco-friendly manner vis-à-vis to find out alternative way of livelihood for the *jhumia* families. Some of the major rural development programmes initiated by the Government of Mizoram apart from the centrally sponsored schemes are:

1. New Land Use Policy (NLUP)

The NLUP was launched with effect from the year 1990-91, put the following objectives to be achieved: i) to put an end to the practice of wasteful shifting cultivation ii) to induce the *jhumia* families to take up an alternative permanent means of livelihood under either agricultural, industrial or animal husbandry sectors on a land allotted to them for the purpose; iii) to take up wet rice cultivation in all the potential flat lands in order to promote self sufficiency in food production; iv) to augment the afforestation drive; v) to provide marketing outlet for produces obtained from the NLUP programme. (GOM, 1990)

The target group under the project includes *jhumia* families who solely depend on shifting cultivation for their livelihood and also those families other than *jhumia* families, having no permanent means of livelihood. Under NLUP, alternative occupations were made available to beneficiaries in three sectors, viz, agriculture, animal husbandry and veterinary and industries sectors. Each beneficiary was allowed to choose one trade from out of the above sectors. Each family was given a plot of land measuring two hectares each. Each beneficiary was sanctioned an amount of Rs. 30,000 in installments over a period of three years. The beneficiaries are required to sign an undertaking before receiving any assistance.

Performance of NLUP

Although the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram rated the success of NLUP at 40%⁸ of its avowed objectives, it failed during the decade period (during 1990-91 to 2001-2002) of programme implementation in its main objective to put an end to the practice of wasteful shifting cultivation and to achieve self- sufficiency in food grain production. Even after sanctioning more than Rs. 146 crores under the scheme, not much tangible results had been achieved as was expected (Lianzela, 2003).

Many people complained that expenditure of money in this manner has resulted in patronising corruption. No proper soil testing, survey, no well

⁸ Presbyterian Church of Mizoram had rated success at 40% of the objective of NLUP (Minute, Matter of Dissolution of MIP and Launching of NLUP, 5 February 2010).

prepared scheme/plan was made and the scheme in many instances has appeared as mere populist measure to catch vote for the party.⁹ About 20 thousand *jhumia* families, out of the total of 60 thousand, were expected to settle on about 21 thousand hectares of land, thus reducing the area under shifting cultivation to the size of 56.7 thousand hectares in 1992-93. This reduction in net area affected shifting cultivation was quite insignificant. It has been noticed that most of the beneficiaries under the scheme have built their houses and brought consumer durables and they still continue with the old technique of slash-and-burn method to produce food grain in their field, though relenting a little (Agarwal, 2003). There were allegations of too much political interference in the selection of beneficiaries, apparent lack of coordination between the government officials, the voluntary organizations and the Village Councils, the funds involved and the amount which actually reaches the beneficiaries, mismanagement of the use of fund, and also the lapses in its design (Das, 2004). According to the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, the poor achievement of the NLUP were due to (i) schemes chosen arbitrarily, (ii) high value schemes have been given precedence over marketability of products (iii) poor monitoring and (iv) purchase of raw materials, tools, animals, etc. by a Central Committee-the inputs never reached in time (Lianzela, 2003). The programme thus, failed to produce tangible results as was expected in the decade period of implementation. With the change in government, NLUP was discontinued from the year 2001-2002 with subsequent introduction of another major project known as Mizoram Intodelhna Project during 2002-2003 under MNF Ministry headed by Zoramthanga.

Revival of New Land Use Policy

With the basic aims and objectives of NLUP intact, it is revived as a flagship programme for all-round development in Mizoram from 2009-2010. It is a core component of the development strategy for poverty alleviation in rural and urban areas of the New Government in pursuance to election manifesto under the Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla.

The procedure this time has been extended to 52 trades to be implemented by various development departments such as Industries Department (29 trades), Horticulture Department (9 trades), Veterinary Department (5 trades), Agriculture Department (4 trades), Soil and Water Conservation Department (3 trades), Fisheries, Sericulture and

⁹ Lianzela, 2003

Environment & Forest Departments (1 trade each) under the umbrella of NLUP Implementing Board.

The number of households to be covered in next five years is 1.2 lakh with an average annual coverage of 24 thousands and the quantum of assistance this time is Rs. 1.10 lakh (average). A base-line survey has been made and the number of eligible families for NLUP assistance is 1.60 lakh out of total number of 2.8 lakh families surveyed. A detailed action plan of the NLUP project (both physical and financial) was made and the total funding of the project is Rs. 2907.90 crore to be approved and financed by the Government of India and Planning Commission of India finalized annual plan of 2010-11 for Mizoram at Rs. 1500 crore and Additional Central Assistance of Rs. 70 crore for projects of special interest (GOI, 2010).

The Prospects of NLUP

- (a) **Jhum Control and Livelihood Opportunities:** It is expected that NLUP Programme as designed will progressively wean away farmers to alternative livelihood activities. Moreover the farming community with the benefit of plan intervention will be able to increase their income substantially in view of increased productivity, economics of scale and availability of markets. The project envisages creating sustained livelihood activities to an estimate 1, 20,000 households over next 5 years.¹⁰ Projected impact on income is shown in the table 2:

TABLE 2 *Projected Impacts on Income from NLUP*

<i>Sl. No</i>	<i>Land Use System</i>	<i>Annual Income(Rs)</i>	<i>Return to Labour Rs./ day</i>
1.	Initial Situation	5,626	23
2.	Jhum-Agro forestry mixed G.(0.5 ha)	27,000	68
3.	Jhum –passion fruit/turmeric (0.5 ha)	19,340	56
4.	Jhum-lowland irrigated crops (0.2 ha)	13,190	37
5.	Jhum-orange/broom grass (0.5 ha)	28,280	85

Source: GOM, (2010a)

⁹ GOM, 2010a

- (b) **Food Security & Self Sufficiency:** NLUP programme focused on increased production of essential items like paddy, pulses, oil seeds, vegetables fruits, livestock, fisheries etc for food security and progressively attaining self-sufficiency for many items which have potentials for local propagation and production. Successful Implementation of NLUP programmes will augment the State revenue by dispensing with the need of importing such items valued Rs. 40.50 crores annually.
- (c) **Afforestation:** Programmes being eco-friendly and attuned to soil and water conservation would encourage of forestation on a large scale with the benefit of environmental protection and over a period time opening up scope for carbon economy.

2. Mizoram Intodelhna Project (MIP)

During 2002-2003, the Government of Mizoram launched a major programme known as Mizoram Intodelhna Project which may be translated as a project for self-sufficiency in Mizoram funded by Government of India for its effective implementation. On 26th March 2002, the detailed project report was submitted to the Planning Commission of India for approval and release of funds. Subsequently, Planning Commission has agreed to release Rs. 15.00 crores as Additional Central Assistance to the Government of Mizoram. The main purpose of MIP is the enlistment of the rural poor especially the shifting cultivators. Its main concern is also in attainment of self-sufficiency in food production, food security, and better livelihood for the cultivators as a whole. The objective of the project is to develop in low land areas and terraces in the upland areas and to develop piggery for diversification on farming system. The MIP targets the shifting cultivators in selected villages only covering all the rural development blocks in the state (GOM, 2003). The MIP has failed to produce tangible results in its objective in achieving self-sufficiency in food production and in control of jhum cultivation in Mizoram.

3. Development of Agriculture

To increase production and in control of jhum cultivation, various works are being undertaken by the Agriculture and Minor Irrigation Department of the Government of Mizoram mainly to create potential areas for crop production and to increase yield potential per unit area by adopting new technologies, replacement of low yield local varieties of crops with high yield, construction of irrigation facilities for maximum production per unit area covering all the districts during 2002-2003.

Food grain Development: Under this scheme fresh flat lands as well as land improvement are done by dozer, tractor, power tiller, or manual labour, certified seeds of paddy, oil seeds, maize, pulses etc are introduced and made available to the farmers for sale at subsidized rate.

Fertility Management: Organic farming was introduced in the state as a result of which use of chemical fertilizers was discouraged and the bio-fertilizers are distributed to the farmers free of cost in order to encourage the farmers in its uses. A bio-fertilizers production unit was set up at Neihbawi Farm in 2001.

Plant Protection: Plant Protection chemicals are made available to the farmers at subsidized rate with Mautam or famine to occur in a very near future. The Government of Mizoram has formulated a comprehensive programme of Bamboo Flowering and Famine Combat Scheme (BAFFACOS), with an aim to reduce poverty among farmers during famine period as famine visits Mizoram at regular intervals during the flowering of *Melocanna baccifera* and *Bambusa tulda*. The occurrence of the past famines is due to the out break of rats, thereby causing a famine in the state. The programme of BAFFACOS adopted to achieve intensified and diversified cropping system, mechanization of agriculture, and connectivity for market linkage and Rodent Control Programmes for which total outlay of Rs. 3,300.00 lakhs was approved during 2005-2006.

Control of Jhum Cultivation: Under development component total area of 213 hectares of potential area has been developed for wet rice cultivation and 144 hectares of hillside slope, 132 hectares land improvements has also been developed for terraced cultivation. Moreover, a total length of 63 kms of Potential Area Connectivity has been constructed at different locations wherever necessary. Soil conservation has been made to do away with the old practice of shifting cultivation in Mizoram which gives priority for terrace conservation under run-of scheme for creating farms. The terracing above 5 to 25% slope as it is the safest for conservation of soil and moisture. The broad targets for land reclamation and development in Mizoram in the Eighth Plan (1992-97) were 8400 hectares with a financial outlay of Rs. 400.00 lakhs.

4. WDPSCA and NWDP

The Watershed Development Project in Shifting Cultivation Areas (WDPSCA) and National Watershed Development Project (NWDP) are

under implementation in Mizoram. The WDPSCA scheme was launched in 1994-95 in the North Eastern States and continues during Ninth and Tenth Plan with an objective to protect and develop the hill slopes of jhum areas through soil and water conservation measures on watershed basis, to mitigate all effects of shifting cultivation by introducing appropriate land use. A total of 3, 808, 00 hectares has already completed covering 8 projects as on September 2003 during Tenth Plan. The National Watershed Development Project (NWDP) scheme was launched in 1990-91 by the Government of India with an objective of conservation, development and sustainable management of natural resources, enhancement of agricultural productivity, restoration of ecological balance and creation of sustained employment opportunities for the rural community including the landless. In Mizoram, a total of 20 and 36 numbers of project with an area of 17,666 hectares and 44,475 respectively has been treated with a total expenditure of Rs, 3,236 lakhs during Eighth and Ninth Plan period. With the implementation of WDPSCA and NWDP schemes, the potential for horticulture, species, vegetables and fodder expected to increase to a substantial extent. A Food Park is being developed at Chhingchhip village near Aizawl.

Besides, the Government of Mizoram is implementing various other programmes such as Accelerated Maize Development Programme, under Technology Mission, Sustainable Development of Sugarcane Based Cropping System and Oilseed Production Programmes, Integrated Dairy Development Programme, Development of Sustainable Base for Pig Production, Rural Entrepreneurship Development Programme etc. However, the planned development strategies had very modest impact on the rural people and the State as a whole. In spite of the huge developmental expenditure incurred, the State is still backward with inadequate transport facilities, scarcity of drinking water, very expensive price of essential commodities, lack of marketing facilities etc. Still today about 3 lakhs work force in Mizoram are engaged in low productivity jhum practice and it is estimated that an average area of 2.00 lakhs acres of forest cover are annually destroyed by slashing and burning of trees for jhum land in Mizoram¹¹, yet failed to produce sufficient food crops. The following section portrays the present economic scenario of rural Mizoram.

¹¹ Official website of Mizoram Govt.

IV. PRESENT ECONOMIC SCENARIO OF RURAL MIZORAM

The geographical location, poor condition of road networks, remoteness of the market, poor infrastructural facilities, no broad gauge rail road and waterways to transport goods to outside world, slow growth of alternative employment avenues, lack of industries, deficiency in natural resource management, inappropriate programmes and policies initiated and poor implementation of development programmes are some of the evils towards development in Mizoram. Despite its abundant natural forest resources, favourable climate and a fertile land, the state remains backward. It has been stated that, “during the sixty years of planned development, India have made impressive progress in developing agriculture and industry, science and technology, health and education and the infrastructure for a wide range of services”. But it is sad to note that this statement has no relevance so far as Mizoram is concerned. Mizoram is still virtually where it was at the time of attainment of Union Territory. No doubt, the rest of the country has made impressive progress, but Mizoram is still far behind even in building up the requisite infrastructure (Hluna, 2010). The land is fertile and favoured by monsoon. Its forests are abundant green. But in spite of its natural resources, Mizoram remained socio-economically backward. The situation in respect of allied sector is in no way better. The potential in animal husbandry, a common subsidiary activity, is grossly under utilized and meat, eggs, fish come from outside the state (Das 2004). The region is at an infantile stage in the field of industry. Whatever industry, it may be called; at present is only small-scale industry, fed by indigenous agricultural produce covering only a small market zones (Pachau 1994). Agriculture still remains under-developed and the primitive method of jhum predominates, while only 5% of the total area is under cultivation. Paddy continues to remain the chief food crop and the staple food of the Mizo. It occupies almost 50% of the total cropped area and more than 88% of the total area under food grains. In spite of the fact that the rice being the most important crop occupying the largest share in area and production, is still not self sufficient in rice production where about 75%¹² of rice alone comes from outside the state.

The share of agriculture alone in the net domestic product (NSDP) is merely 30% at current price during 1998-99. As per the Agriculture

¹²In reply to the Assembly House Members, Agriculture Minister of Mizoram, H. Lian-sailova said that the production of rice could substantiate only about 25% of the States requirements (*Virthli*: March 2010: 1)

Census (1995-96), there were 65,919 operational holdings with a total operated area of 85,000 hectares. Out of the total number of holdings 42.04% is marginal 39.0% small, 17.83% semi medium 1.11% medium and 0.01% large holdings. Mizoram an agrarian economy still imports a large quantity of food staff, fruits, vegetables, fish and livestock like pig, cattle, goat, poultry essentially required for the over all food supply of the people. Large quantities of such items are presently imported from other states particularly neighboring states of Assam, Tripura and Manipur. Some quantity is also imported through informal boarder trade from Myanmar. As per the Trade and Commerce Department, Mizoram, the value of Import of Agriculture, Horticulture and Livestock’s items etc during 2008-2009 was Rs.4,04,91,1730.00 i.e. Rs. 40.50 crores. (Official Website of Mizoram Government).

According to the 1990 Survey Report of the Rural Development Department, 52 per cent of people today in the state were living below poverty line. It is a paradoxical situation that, more than ever the threats of poverty loom large in the hearts of the working class despite the fast growth in developmental expenditures since 1972 (Thangchungnunga, 2003). With the existing structure of Mizoram economy, precarious state of agriculture slow growth of alternative employment avenues in rural areas, lack of industries, poor communication facilities, there is low possibility of absorbing the fast expanding labour force. The cultivable land and other traditional rural enterprises have a limited scope for supporting the fast emerging population. This has forced more people to seek their fortunes in the urban areas, which have its own repercussions on the economy (Thansanga, 2003). Table: I show the total area of land utilisation in Mizoram.

TABLE II *Land Utilisation in Mizoram*

2006-07

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Area under</i>	<i>In ‘000Hectare</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
1	Forest	1593.700	75.57
2	Not available for cultivation	134.040	6.37
3	Other cultivated land	79.230	3.76
4	Fallow land	207.543	9.84
5	Net shown area	94.187	4.46
6	Total	2108.7	100

Source: Directorate of Agriculture and Minor Irrigation, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl

The total geographical area of the state is 21, 08,700 hectare in which 9.84 percent is under fallow land and only 4.46 percent is under net shown area. Although the administration was geographically closer to the rural people due to grouping of villages, it failed to create sustained impact on the lives of the rural people. This can be easily blamed for insurgency. But rural bureaucracy is hitherto entrenched to the rural people. The following table: II shows the responses on whether block level bureaucrats are visiting the villages regularly. 75 percent of the respondents says 'no', 4.17 percent responded 'yes' and 20.83 percent falls in the category 'do not know'.¹³

TABLE III *Showing Responses on whether the Block Level Bureaucrats visits the Village People regularly*

<i>Number of Respondents - 240</i>			
<i>Block Functionaries</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>No. Responding</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
BDO,	Responding 'Yes'	10	4.17
EOs,	Responding 'No'	180	75
VLWs	Do not know	50	20.83
Total		240	100

Source: Questionnaire and Interview Schedule

The message from the above table replicates the non-availability of the rural bureaucracy in the villages. Many remote villages were not visited by these functionaries although it was found that the villagers heard about these functionaries. There is lack of motivation and belongingness of all rural bureaucrats at the state and block level. This is because almost all bureaucrats are on deputation from development departments who likes to go back to their parent departments.¹⁴

The post-insurgency major rural development programmes of both Central and State Sponsored Schemes initiated such as Integrated Rural

¹³Total of 120 beneficiaries + 120 non-beneficiaries of rural development, covering all the four blocks of Lunglei District of Mizoram through questionnaire and interview schedule was made during 2003-05.

¹⁴Based on Personal Interview with Dr. R. Lalmalsawmi (DD,Vety.), Directorate of Rural Development, Aizawl on 23.10.2005

Development Programme, Swarnajayanti Gram Sworojgar Yojana, Border Area Development Programme and New Land Use Policy, Mizoram Intodelhna Project etc. failed to produce substantial outcomes and the State is far away from attaining economic self-sufficiency. Inequality in economic status in Mizo society has been very much evident. While launching New Land Use Policy by dissolving the Mizoram Intodelhna Project, the Chief Minister of Mizoram Lal Thanhawla sounded a warning that if the present trend of widening gap between the rich and the poor is not reversed, there may be discontent amongst the poorer sections leading to social tensions, disharmony and violence to the extent of causing bloodshed in Mizoram.¹⁵

V. SUGGESTIONS

Lack of good communication facility is the major problem face by the rural population of the State. Lack of road transport facilities, the farmers of the remote villages cannot market their products even to the block headquarters. Regulated markets and cold storage facilities in the State are inadequate. Although the agro climatic condition of the region is conducive, dairy, poultry, fishery etc. has not been developed as a means of livelihood. Veterinary services in the rural areas are inadequate. The efforts of the government in developing small-scale industries are not quite satisfactory and also this sector has a direct link with road transport, power etc. Middleman's share has been one of the main reasons behind increasing food prices at the retail level. How to eliminate the middleman and thus cut costs and to reach the actual profit to the rural development beneficiaries were generally not taken into consideration while implementing rural development schemes.

Therefore, effective implementation of development initiatives is vital. Designing and implementing people-centric schemes by harnessing the available natural resources of the State through participatory development strategy and grassroots planning is desirable. More infrastructure development ensuring better link roads, market-connectivity, cold storage facilities, irrigation are required. Initiatives for more farmers' cooperative societies should be encouraged, which will help in eliminating the middleman. Making jhum cultivation scientific, understanding of the technical factors involved while implementing development programmes,

¹⁵Speech of Mizoram Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla at the meeting on Matter of Dissolution of MIP and Launching of NLUP in Mizoram (GOM, 2010b)

timely supply of appropriate inputs, flow of assistance, marketing of outputs, strict and continuous monitoring are essential. Bureaucracy needs to be very active and work on the field in reaching the remote villages and see that they do not look at the problems from the office. Demonstrations at regular intervals to impart technical know how and skill to the farmers through training, tours, audio-visuals, seminars to aware and in involving the farmers to join actively in the programme is needed for which trained, skilled, specialized, efficient, impartial and more importantly motivated bureaucracy is required.

Providing gainful and productive employment opportunities is essential for which capacity building focusing on development of skills and training is extremely important. Local means and production suited to the genius of the people needs to be identified and explored. Industrial development programmes announced by the government from time to time lack efficiency in management and there is lack of proper coordination among various agencies in implementation of the programme (Laskar, 2010). Therefore, small-scale industries based on local resources like agricultural products, bamboo and other forest products needs to be identified with special packages of incentive for educated youth to take those enterprises. Involvement of Non-Government Organizations (NGO) in providing loans in such sectors as floriculture, small-scale industries like development of weaving and knitting, horticulture etc. and help in the marketing of those products, will ensure employment to a sizeable number of poor people. Development initiatives for the rural people and autonomy should go together. The local self-government institutions--the Village Councils are not as viable as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) due to lack of financial autonomy. Therefore, empowering the rural people by strengthening of local self government system through PRIs as per the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act at the Village and District level with certain modifications in ensuring the existing traditional values will guarantee financial autonomy, reservation of women and the decision making power (Sinha, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The massive development initiatives undertaken by both the Central Government and the State Government, so far benefited only a small elite section of the society in the State and the rural marginal section of the society is largely deprived. Most of the rural development plans

and strategies were not made in accordance with the needs of the newly uprooted groups of villages. The strategies of rural development by the Central Government such as IRDP, DWCRA, NREP, RLEGP were made for the whole of the nation and there was no systematic and sustained development initiatives were made especially for the displaced people and for their newly settled villages in the State. The result is that almost all villages and the State was not self-sufficient just after grouping and the trend continues till today. Insurgency being a deviation of the past, the State has great future to look ahead for which a corruption free responsive administration is necessary. The development projects and schemes should be prepared to fit in a methodical and inclusive plan which promises to benefit the poor people. At the same time people's participation for successful implementation of schemes and their hard work without waiting for help from the government every time, is also essential for development of rural Mizoram towards achieving economic self-sufficiency.

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