



The Wider Issues In Mizoram: Development Policies, Constriction And Privatization Of *Jhum* Farmlands

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Abstract: Intensification of land use and diversification of crop to multiply income generation, are the recent trends. During fieldwork, it was found that livelihood issues are overlooked because, there are ample evidence, where lack of basic needs, poverty and livelihood issues are rampant in rural Mizoram. Case studies of policy beneficiaries – cultivators, piggeries, poultry, fisheries, sugarcane farms and orchard farms and the outcomes of development policies initiated by state. The villagers opined that development policies are not effective, nor able to improve land use activities. The main objective of the study is to show the reproduction of poverty in upland in Mizoram. Why traditional livelihood cannot be altered and improvised for good? Examining the outcomes of privatization of community land is the scope, which the study wants to analyze during fieldwork. Examine the everyday livelihood hurdles. During fieldwork 2022, it was cleared that when community lands for farming got privatized, the outcome is the constriction of *jhum* land share for each household. Constriction of *jhum* land, intensification of land use and diversification of crops have been the emerging trends in the uplands.

Keywords: *Jhum*, Development Policies, Community farmland, Privatization

This paper disseminates the findings on legitimation and promises behind development policies. To unravel these themes on contemporary issues in Mizoram, the study based its analysis and original ways of disseminating facts, based on the fieldwork findings and case study narratives conducted during 2021 – 2022. It unraveled new issues on shifting cultivation, diversification of crops, constriction of *jhum* land, privatization of community land, its outcome and absence of remarkable improvements by development policies, are the aims of this paper, which anchors in the later pages and sections.

Scope, Objective and the Main Research Question: Main scope of the paper is to analyze the gap between success and failure of development policies in Mizoram. Examining the series of development policies formulated and implemented in Mizoram during 1980 – 2022. Peace prevails in Mizoram after two decades of violence (1966-1986). 1986 Mizo Peace Accord ushered peace. Despite the prevalence of peace and much applaud Mizo Peace Accord, there are persisting obstacles facing in the governance. State administrations face obstacles to eradicate rural and urban divide. Poverty and livelihood issues are rampant in Rural Mizoram. Livelihood issues, low productivity from *jhum* farms (for shifting cultivation), dependence of basic needs procured outside of the state are the uphill tasks Mizoram is facing.

The paper aims to examine the emerging patterns of relationships between shifting cultivation, livelihood and constriction of *jhum* land. Constriction of farmland and privatization of farmlands were legitimated by the 2013 Mizoram Land Revenue Act. Traditionally, the nature of land-owning patterns in the uplands of Mizoram were the collective / community land owning system. Land belongs to the community. Farmlands

or *jhum* lands are distributed to every household on an annual basis. *Jhum farming* has been the main source of livelihood since ages.

Main research question pursued during the ethnographic fieldwork and during interview schedules are the following. Why there are no such remarkable achievements of development policies? Why development policies have no substantial impacts for better livelihoods? What are the guiding principles behind the series of development policies inception in Mizoram since 1980s till present? Why such policies to improve livelihood, and sharing of community resources had no remarkable success? What is the ongoing discourse on legitimating and controlling community land and privatized land? What are the natures of politics behind every development policy?

Constriction of Jhum (Community Farmland) & Territorialization

2013 Mizoram Land Revenue Act (2013 MLRA) legalized privatization of community land. Privatization of community land in Sixth Schedule areas sounds odd on all counts. 2013 Portions of the collective / community land for *jhumming* are sold off by village council to well off sections of the Mizo society. They replied, (narratives gathered found during fieldwork 2021), the main reason for selling off community land was due to the dire financial needs of village. Managing basic needs and requirement of basic needs are managed by the village council in Sixth Schedule areas; for instance – village link road maintenance, helping poor households in paying medical emergencies. The main outcome of privatization of community farmland is the constriction of *jhum* land shares. When land size for farming decreases, it directly affects livelihood and income generations. Reproduction of rural poor is one of the outcomes of privatization of community land.

Implementing legislations, imposition of sovereignty and taxations on every inch of the land (Ernst Gellner, 1983, 11-16) is an aspect of modern state making process. During the last two decades, uplands and farmlands in Mizoram hills were brought under the legitimate rules of taxation. The state is promoting private ownership to collect revenues. This practice is a shift from the traditional collective / collective upland owning practices. The emergence of privatization and emergence of private quarries and mining are the new threats emerged after 1986 Mizoram Peace Accord.

Territorialization basically refers to imposition and legitimation of land and forest resources laws, framed by the experts and imposed by the government authorities, as new laws for improving the population. Disturbing trend such as imposition of series of tax laws, revenues and every inch of brought under legitimation are the process of territorialization, improvement of land, population and implementation of expert's knowledge for improvement (Tooker & Baird, 2020; Murray Li, 2007).

The Reproduction of Poverty

It is imperative to understand livelihood, income generation and reproduction of poverty. Complex social reality, hunger, poverty, destitute and livelihood hurdles cannot be understood just by flapping the pages of official survey reports. These survey reports are filled with percentages, attractive figures and numbers. For instance, The Annual survey reports on statistics and economics by Government are the cases in point (Economic Survey of Mizoram 2021 – 2022, 2023).

Poverty, livelihood hurdles and income generations in uplands must incorporate qualitative data based on field study, field data, social realities of the field and narratives - social reality must also be examined through fieldwork, lived experiences and narratives from the field. Explaining social realities and rural livelihood hurdles with just numbers and percentages look odd on many counts. While conducting case studies, it was recognized that facts on social reality and livelihood conditions in rural do not bind with the official data and government survey reports.

Facts and realities on rural poverty, livelihood hurdles, hardships and everyday struggles of rural livelihood are not well documented and explained in simple terms. Survey, data and reports cannot give a clear picture on livelihood hurdles and reproduction of poverty. It is important to systematically analyze the rural hardships and poverty through a combination of both quantitative data and qualitative data. Hence, narratives, fieldwork notes, case studies, narratives and combination of official data of the government are crucial in studying development policies and politics of distribution. A combination of both qualitative data and

quantitative data provided perfect techniques in navigating and anchoring official data during ethnographic fieldwork.

Livelihood struggles and poverty ought to be understood through combinations of numbers, lived experiences, observations and narratives from both the field and many facets of government reports. The irony of data is, one cannot understand social reality through breaking down of numbers and figures (Wallace, 1971; Lazarsfeld, 1955; Roth, 1966). The objective is to reveal the multi-layered linkages of land, resources and livelihood activities.

The Field, Ethnographic Fieldwork and Case Study Findings

The field is the Aibawk sub-division under Aizawl district. It has twenty-two villages with an average of 270 households. There are twenty villages under the sub-division. The site was selected based on a basic factor. Which is, the livelihood activities of the villagers, and the nature of reliability with the market facilities in Aizawl. Villages are the field sites for conducting the ethnographic fieldwork and case studies. All these villages depend on *jhumming* and it is the main source of income generation. Narratives on livelihood activities like trade and selling of seasonal farm products to the market facilities are recorder through Audio recorders. Open – ended questioners basically on income, livelihood, alternative livelihood and development policies were asked during the field interviews. The average distances of the villages from market facilities of Aizawl are within the range of 15 kilometers.

One of the initial findings in the field was intensification of land use and diversification of crop to multiply income generation, are the recent trends. During fieldwork, it was found that livelihood issues are overlooked because, there are ample evidence, where lack of basic needs, poverty and livelihood issues are rampant. Case studies of policy beneficiaries – cultivators, piggeries, poultry, fisheries, sugarcane farms and orchard farms opined and access the outcomes of development policies initiated by state. The villagers opined that these policies are not effective, did not help in developing and proper functioning of dairy farms, piggery units, poultry farms and failed to eradicate rural poverty, nor able to improve land use activities.

Fieldwork on the villages of Aibawk sub-division was done during March 2022 – December 2022. Village council members were interviewed with open - ended questionnaires. Questionnaires covered themes on livelihood, privatization of community land, crop diversification, markets accessibility and outcomes of development policies. Church elders, policy beneficiaries, quarry owners and orchard farm owners were also interviewed with different sets of open-ended questionnaires.

Case studies were undertaken during January 2023 – March 2023. Case studies of ten households from different villages were conducted. Cases were selected based on beneficiaries of development policies, sugarcane farm owners, orchard farm owners, piggeries and poultry owners. Narratives from households engaging on diversification of crops and households whose main incomes are from Saturday vegetable markets are incorporated in the study. Case studies of selected households, absentia owners of privatized lands in villages, quarry owners, member of village council and policy beneficiaries are interviewed with different sets of open-ended questionnaires.

Zomia Upland and Shifting Cultivation

James C Scott (2009) theorized the uplands of south Asia as 'Zomia'. Uplands of Mizoram have common features with uplands of other parts of Southeast Asia. In these uplands, Scott (2009) provides the new ways of reading histories and understanding these uplands as part of historical patterns, which was a tactics against taxation, against centralization and political strategy by inhabitants in the uplands of Southeast Asia (Scott, 2009, 14). It represents, areas of isolation, habitats for small bands of tribes, tended to carry out shifting cultivation with or without hunting and gathering (Scott, 2009). Upland bands of small tribes are constantly on move looking for farmlands to practice *Jhummas* in order to constriction of farms in southwest Bangladesh (van Schendel, 1992, 99-104). Scott further argues the reason why permanent agrarian settlements were rare in uplands of South Asia was due to state evasive tactics and to thrive under non-state spaces (Scott, 2009, 63).

A common sight in rural Mizoram is the practice of shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivators confined to hilly zones and sloppy hills. Colonial and post-colonial governments have seen shifting cultivation from negative points of view due to its less productivity and more harm to the environment (Boserup, 1965; Sahlins, 1968; Geertz, 1963). Each year, spatial changes of farmlands and burning of *jhum* farms are the common sights in hill slopes. Shifting cultivation is the main source of income and provide basic livelihood for rural sector of Mizoram. The erstwhile Lushai District Superintendent Mc Call during 1893 gave effort to introduced permanent farmlands with cash incentives by terracing the hill slopes through water maintenance by storing up required water in the terraced slope farms. It did not work out. It was a failure to alter traditional practice of shifting cultivation and in the next *Jhum* season natives protested and did not try to even till the soil on the slopes of the hill (Lianzela, 2004).

Previous studies on practice of shifting cultivation in Mizoram focused mainly on income, generation form *jhum* and livelihood issues related to environment. Previous studies found that 60% of households in the whole Mizoram depend their livelihood on shifting cultivation (Sati, 2019; Garbyal, 1999). Shifting cultivation is cyclical in nature of shifting cultivation is closely associated with ecological, economic and cultural beliefs (Grogan et.al, 2012). Each year, household changed their *jhum farm* from one cultivable land to another cultivable land due to soil-nutrient decays. Shifting cultivation requires a fallow period for a minimum of ten years, so that soil fertility can be retained. After harvest, the farm had to be burnt down and left unharmed for a fallow period of ten years, so that fertility of soil, nutrients of soil and nature return itself. Due to annual shifting sites of *jhum* area, every village in Mizoram needs vast amounts of *jhum* area to farm, whereby by 80% of the *jhum* were usually left untouched during the fallow period.

Each year, before cultivation starts, village council (under Sixth schedule of Indian constitution) distributes *jhum* lands to every household of the village. Land is still managed by the village council. It is a form of collective ownership recognized by the Sixth Schedule laws. New forms of private ownership had already emerged alongside with collective ownership of land (de Maaker, 2020; B; Karlsson, 2011) in Meghalaya, which also has Sixth schedule provision.

Privatization of community land is a dangerous trend in the Sixth Scheduled areas of Northeast India. Many outcomes such as migration to cities looking for jobs and taking up hard labor jobs are some of the main outcomes. These patterns have already been happening in the rural sites of Northeast India. Livelihood issues produced another sort of burdens. Development policies have not been able to make remarkable changes on these ongoing poverty and livelihood issues.

Politics of Distribution, Governmentality and New Patterns on Shifting Cultivation

Rationalizing, developing, improving and modernizing are the pillars behind every development policy. All these are contemporary sites of struggle (Murray Li, 2007) and there is always an evitable gap on what is attempted and what is accomplished. Development policies are usually bound to be abandoned and got replaced by another expertise recommended development policy (Escobar, 1994). Development policies are guided by political choices, ideologies and expert's knowledge (Escobar, 1994). The goal to improve livelihood and productivity are often guided by ideologies and application of expert's knowledge. Examining the nature of development policies, policy makers often categorize between tradition and modern, peripheries and center and the gap between undeveloped and developed.

James Fergusson (2015) in his text "Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution" mentioned that development policies in southern Africa is a model of policies of redistribution, based on the principle of equal sharing of natural resources. Ferguson wrote, 'new modalities of distribution are associated with both kinds of political obligations, even as they are also bound up with new ways of thinking and rationalities of poverty' (Ferguson, 2015, 14). Politics of distribution in Mizoram involves free cash incentives to beneficiaries. It was designed to transform livelihood. Since 1980 – till today, different Politics of Distribution by different governance and ministries have been implemented in Mizoram. During fieldwork, respondents were asked with a simple question, "identify any policies that had changed your lives" in the last three to four decades. New government comes, new Politics of Distribution, wiping the previous Politics of Distribution and implementing a newer Politics of Distribution with a catchy policy title.

Politics of Distribution especially in Mizoram are mainly “understood as political promises to distribute free cash incentives to beneficiaries”, and as “*mantras* for winning ballots”. Politics of Distribution by design are perfect tools to transform lives of poor (Fergusson, 2015, 1994; Murray Li, 2007; Escobar, 1994). Politics of Distribution are the outcomes of experts’ knowledge and its implementation to improve the population (Murray Li, 2007). Politics of Distribution are also strategic tools for state to prove that development policies could win ballots and remain in power.

During fieldwork and case study, beneficiaries of development policies – past and present - were asked with three simple open-ended questions. For what purpose the family received the policy? How much was the sum assured? Did the state disburse the promised sum assured? Has the policy changed your livelihood? Responses were evaluated from the fieldwork and case study of beneficiaries. A common response from the beneficiaries was that none of the development policies has transformed their lives for better, once and for all. Nor the state disbursed assured sums on time. Delays and late distribution lessen the meanings of development policies. Hence, an official from NLUP and an official from SEDP implementation Board, rightly opined that Politics of Distribution are simply formulated and implemented without even having an earmarked capitals, funds and without even having the required capitals and assurances from financial institutions

Traditional practice of shifting cultivation has been consolidated due to the implementation of land reforms laws enacted by the state. Such implementation of new legitimization can be seen as an act of enforcing legitimate control and showcasing of state’s power (Tooker & Baird, 2020; Murray Li, 2007). Expanding the laws to peripheries and implementing laws with experts’ knowledge produces consequences on customary land-owning systems.

Implementation of land reform laws is a sign of expansion of territoriality of the state. The social, religion, cosmological dimensions of shifting cultivation and contestation of upland livelihoods have produced mixed reactions to the legitimacy of state. These are simply the consolidation of modern state machineries (Anderson, 2018). Territorialization of the state is basically understood as expansion of control mechanisms, taxation and imposition of legal elements towards the peripheries produces conundrum effects on political, national, economic and geographical changes in agrarian societies (Tooker & Baird, 2020). Expansion and implementation of rational laws are embedded in discourse of improvement and development.

Governmentality is a process of attempting to shape human conducts and improvise welfare of the population. Implementation of new laws by government is an act of control. It is an act to showcase state power and its legitimacy. Expanding the laws to territories, modernizing and rationalizing the traditions are the signs of postcolonial continuity in Southeast Asia (Murray Li, 2014). Most of the blue prints of development policies in postcolonial territories do not break away from categorizations of moral choices and political choices of the past and present. There is always some continuity. Development policies display language of hope, goals, effectiveness and beneficial values. Neoliberal governmentality (Ferguson, 1994, 4-8) is part and partial of development policies with objectives to optimize welfare and life of population through more legitimization and control. The presence of categories such as poor, underdeveloped and livelihood issues are the guiding principles for knowledge, discourse, language, frameworks and implementation for development policies.

The enactment of 2013 MLRA is the case in point. The act weakens the traditional community land ownership. One of the outcomes of the land revenue act is the legitimization for privatization of community land, where few rich can privatize *jhum* farms and sharpen the class divide in Mizo society. Another case, in Mizoram for expansion of state machineries has been the implementation of series of development policies - Politics of Distribution - since 1981 – till present. In Mizoram, governmentality, territorialization and implementation of politics of distribution has been a process of state making and improvement of population, with aims to improve infrastructure, state machineries and the population.

History of Development Policies in Mizoram

The most often heard comments in Mizoram are – “Mizoram is very rich with resources. Virgin soils are all over the hills, plenty of land, flora, fauna and rich vegetation” (Fieldwork narratives, 2021). Field responses also confirmed that no remarkable achievements on development policies are the ongoing hurdles. Since 1980s, series of development policies have been implemented to eradicate poverty and improvise production of basic needs.

1981 – 83 “Garden Project – Six Basic Needs” project launched under Brigadier Thenphunga Sailo’s (Retd) political party Mizoram Peoples Conference (MPC) as pilot project in Aibawk sub-division. The policy ended in the sub-division and it never came back as a development policy.

During 1990 – 1998, Mizoram Congress implemented ‘New Land Use Policy’ I & II (NLUP) as livelihood improvement scheme. No significant changes on production. Fieldwork and case study beneficiaries pointed out that the policy was a political tool to win ballots. Government changes by 1998. During 1999 – 2008, ‘Mizoram *Intodelhna* (Self-reliance) Project’ (MIP), was implemented by the Mizoram National Front (MNF). Main objective was to reduce dependency of basic needs, procured from outside of Mizoram. The goal was to enhance production of basic needs and produce basic commodities in Mizoram. Beneficiaries informed that they got only the first installment. The promised second and third installments were never got disbursed. During the run up to the 1998 elections, MNF politicians promised on Social Economic Development Plan (SEDP) as a game changer of livelihood. Promising 2- 3 lakhs Rupees. Advertised extensively in Television News Channels, visual social media platforms and print medias. Irony is that the depth, length, breadth and promises are the main contents in today’s media on varieties of formats - print, e-content and visual medias, all are on the same boat facing the rough waters of politics.

Mizoram congress came back to power on 2008. During 2010-2018, Mizoram congress implemented New Land Used Patterns (NLUP) – III, with an objective to introduce permanent farming system. After winning the elections NLUP III was implemented by the Mizoram congress government. During case study, it was disheartening and found that NLUP III beneficiaries were based on congress party affiliations. Until 2012, the promised sum of two lakhs Rupees was never disbursed in full, as promised during the election campaigns. Late disbursal of funds and partial disbursal of funds were the factors behind the failures of NLUP III.

SEDP under MNF is the ongoing development policies on play. At the field, village elders did not even spoke a positive tone on SEDP. SEDP beneficiaries and case study were discussed with open-ended interview schedules. They complained SEDP is disturbing and annoying. Promised sum of three lakhs rupees, prior to elections and disbursing only 25 thousand rupees, after winning elections. Such gaps between promised sum and disbursal of lesser funds, sums up the nature of aggrandizing voters.

Free cash incentives and winning ballots acquired unacceptable linkages during the elections – dace of democracy. During fieldwork, it was found that politics of distribution, development policies and winning elections are closely linked. Three basic components of winning elections in Mizoram are as follows - come up with tall promises of free cash incentives, catchy/ title/ nice sounding development policies and promote / advertise these policies at print media, visual media and social medias.

Privatization of Community Land, Constriction of *jhum* land and Diversification of Crop

At the field, village council members clarified that privatization of community lands are mainly due to collective issues and financial shortages faced by the village. Urgent requirements of funds, livelihood issues, poverty and helping the poor families during financial emergencies and paying educational fees for good student from poor families are the main factors for selling off of community farmlands to well off Mizo families. Three decades ago, village council members clarified, average *jhum* farm areas given to every household were 5 - 6 acres. At present, 2.5 – 3 acres of *jhum* farmlands are the average sizes of farmland distributed to each household. Decreasing *jhum* farm size for shifting cultivation affected livelihood, lesser harvest, and income generation.

This new phenomenon of privatization of community farmlands is not binding as per the Sixth scheduled constitutional dictums, where farmland, forest and resources are collectively owned and shared by the village community (See Sixth Schedule Areas, The Constitution of India, pp. 305-307). Private land ownership is granted only for residential purposes in the villages as per constitutional norms in the Sixth Scheduled areas. State have been legitimating and land privatizing law - 2013 MLRA that legitimizes privatization of land. At present, three forms of land ownership are found during fieldwork. First, lands own by the community. Second, private lands for residential purposes. Third, privatization of community lands and its aftermath, which is community land were sold and now owned by affluent families.

Privatization of community land is a disturbing trend. It is not a good sign for rural Mizoram. This trend is creating wide gulf between the rich and poor across Mizoram. It also resulted to emergence of absentee landowners. Issues such as constriction of land and widening gulf of land owning between absentee landowners and shifting cultivators are the recent trends in uplands of Mizoram. Privatizing community land is a threat for generations to come. Privatization of community land is logically anti-thesis to Sixth Schedule constitutional provisions. Private ownership of land is not an option in Sixth Scheduled areas. Lands and resources have to be owned collectively as per constitutional dictums on scheduled areas. The 2013 MLRA changes all constitutional assurances and dictums.

Income, Market Accessibility and Obstacles

Agricultural diversification is strongly influenced by price policy, and technological improvements. Agricultural diversification gives more employment opportunities, more harvest and better market facilities (Lone, 2013). Diversification of crops improved livelihood and quality of life for smallholders. It accelerates productivity and rain-fed areas benefited more as a result of agricultural diversification (Gulati et.al, 2004). Land ownership in the hills put a distance between upland and lowland. It is in this context their forms of agriculture, social structures, and much of their culture, can be understood as political choices and neoliberal market conditions often helped upland cultivators (Murray Li, 2014). Earlier, rice, ginger, maize and sugarcane were the main crops for *jhumming*. Now, available *jhum* spaces are utilized and harvested with different high yielding vegetables. Cultivators grow different varieties during different *jhum* seasons. Villagers informed that diversification of crop is helpful in generating more income. They further informed such practice is not environment friendly, because it degraded soil fertility, especially in the uplands.

Villagers faced pricing obstacles in *jhumming* seasons. Households get proper benefit, only when, they harvest early or late during the season. Harvesting the seasonal crops during the peak season does not yield better income generation. Households harvesting at the peak season usually sell their harvest at lower prices. There are no storage facilities at Aibawk sub-division villages. Storage facilities could maintain demand and supply of farm products.

Market reforms through required legal changes would boost agricultural growth, proper prices, augmenting income of small farm holders and promoting market access (Banham & Fuller, 2002). Suitably integrate production and marketing of commodities through appropriate institutions and market facilities is a better option. In rural Mizoram, there are no proper pricing mechanisms. Outcome of diversification of crop is the fluid nature of market prices. Flexibility of farmers for diversification is constrained by the size of markets and price risks, soil suitability, cost of labor and land rights (Dorjee et.al, 2003). Villages harvest and sold their harvest to Aizawl markets. Most of the harvest goods are sold mainly on Saturday at different market facilities.

Fodder prices have increased many folds. The outcome is decline of animal husbandry as source of livelihood. There has been a decline in piggery, poultry and fisheries in the villages, due to price rise of fodders, plant nutrients and fertilizers. Labor wages and water shortages add more woes. Earlier there were dozens of orchard farms in Aibawk sub-division. Only four orchard farms, at present, are growing oranges in this sub-division. Owners of orchard farm informed that wages for the workers are higher, costly fertilizers and plant nutrients have affected maintenance of orchard farms. Maintenance cost and labor charges for running orchard farms are becoming a costly affair. Villagers opined livelihood hardships are creations of legitimations by governance and the environment obstacles.

2013 Mizoram Land Revenue Act (MLRA) and Private Quarries

Complicated, crisscrossing and existing forest laws and environmental laws are mostly naïve to villagers. 2013 Mizoram Land Revenue Act further complicates land issues. The act recognizes privatization of land and issues a periodic *patta* (Land settlement certificate) for a period of 25 years for Private/ Non-government/ Periodic *patta*. Land revenue fees and taxation for the periodic *patta* generates revenues for the state. Privatization of *jhum* land to a non-Mizo is not possible due to the Sixth Schedule constitutional provisions.

Private quarries profiting from village resource is the case in point. Private owners utilized privatized uplands in many ways granted under the provisions of 2013 MLRA. Periodic *patta* clearances for mining and quarry activities from government officials needed further enquiries. Families engaging in mining and quarry activities are politically affluent. Village council clarified that dozens of private mines and quarries have emerged during the last decade. Aibawk sub-division has a total of 16 quarry units. During case study, it was found that only three quarries are managed and run by the village council. Sixth Scheduled area in Northeast assures collective owner and resource sharing. Land belongs to community, not to private individuals and collective sharing is a prime feature in many native communities. 2013 MLRA altered the tradition and ushered complex social reality.

No Remarkable Achievements on Politics of Distribution in Mizoram

Fieldwork narratives and case studies narratives revealed that policy beneficiaries - NLUP to SEDP beneficiaries since 1990s did not get full installments as promised. They received only the first and second installments. No full payments, sometimes only 10%-20% of the promised sum. During case study, basic questions were asked – has your lives' been transformed by all these policies? Followings are the main reasons why development policies have not transformed livelihood.

First, shortages of sum assured. At present, SEDP under MNF government promised 3 lakh rupees during the 2018 run up to state election. SEDP policy assured three lakh rupees in three installments. After four years, SEDP beneficiaries received two installments. Thirty thousand rupees as the first installment and twenty thousand rupees as second installment, till date were disbursed to beneficiaries.

Second, unethical ventures by the policy beneficiaries. Beneficiaries ended up spending beneficiary money in to something else. Thirty thousand rupees is not even enough for tilling the soil and buying seedlings. Instead, the sum got ended up buying scooter, refrigerator, smart television and smart phone. The errors from the state official are that while disbursing the second installment, state's officials do not review the fund utilization process. There are no proper checks and balances. No proper verification after first installment was distributed. Whether it was NLUP during 2010 – 2017 under Mizoram Congress, and SEDP (2018 - present) under MNF, no checks and balances on the grounds. Such processes are one of the reasons why policies failed.

Third, development policies are formulated without even having the working Capital. Crores of rupees that are required for the policy implementation in Mizoram are mainly procured from central government funds, New Delhi. Without even having the total budget, government promises lakhs of rupees for beneficiaries. When fund flows from New Delhi got delayed, problem starts.

Fourth, Politics of Distribution are for the people and it should be population-development centric. Yet, development policies are becoming more political party centric. A tool used to win elections. That is the reason why development policies fail to deliver.

Summing Up

Mizoram experience on Politics of Distribution and development policies is a mix bag of party politics and winning elections. Rather than changing livelihood, policy dictums are used as tools for winning ballots. The outcomes are - uneven development, rampant poverty at rural areas and bundles of livelihood issues. Development policies should not have any political colors. Rather a development centric for transforming livelihood.

Mizoram needs new land reforms. 2013 MLRA needs a rethinking. State cannot remain close eyes. Even though there are plenty of forest and resources, existing land, forest and environmental laws drew sharp line between belonging and un-belonging. Environmental laws and its consequences create inequalities and class divide in Mizo society. Another alarming situation is scarcity of water. At the hills, water is precious. Monsoon is the main source of water. Many villages do not have supply water and running water pipe facilities. Water is life in the hills. Scarcity of water and inability to provide safe supply water ought to be solved by state authorities. Hills do not have running water. If monsoon fails, shifting cultivation fails. Hills have water points and water springs known as *Tuikhur*, at the outskirts and at the peripheries of villages. During winter, no rain, *Tuikhurs* were usually dry. During monsoon, water fills-up to the brim of *Tuikhurs*. During monsoon, villages harvest rainwater to meet water requirements for winter. Livelihood hurdles on everyday basis is a common sight in villages.

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