



Electricity Management And Village Governance: A Study Of Nerhema Village

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ABSTRACT:

The access to electricity is one of the basic services and it is vital for the development of all other sectors. To achieve total rural electrification, the Government of India has introduced numerous schemes and projects over the last few decades. In Nagaland, through the communitization process, the responsibility of electricity management in villages is delegated to the user community. As such, it is the Village Electricity Management Board (VEMB) that manages, supervises and carry out responsibilities to ensure smooth delivery of power services in every villages. Within this backdrop, the paper attempts to identify the role of village governance in electricity management and aims to find out the activities and actions undertaken by the VEMB and other village governing bodies to facilitate efficient power supply in Nerhema. The data were collected from secondary sources like books, research articles, journals, etc, and interview method was employed to collect primary source of data.

KEY WORDS: Local Governance, Electricity, Power Supply, Communitization, Decentralization

I. INTRODUCTION

Power sector is an indispensable pillar of socio-economic development and contributes to raising the standard of living. In order to guarantee that every household in the State avail power services, the Government of Nagaland through “The Nagaland Communitisation of Public Services Act, 2002” empowers the Village Council to constitute the Village Electricity Management Board (VEMB) in every villages of Nagaland. Communitisation programme provides a platform for the local community to participate in the management and development of power sector in Nagaland in general and Nerhema village in particular. This governing approach empowers the local authorities to monitor and coordinate activities to prevent interruption of power supply (Pandey, 2010: p. 162). The VEMB thus acts as the local governing body and initiate activities to ensure smooth functioning of power services in the village.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Local governance can be generally understood as the system of governance by the local people to manage and administer the public affairs of a community or area. According to Srivastava (2025) local governance is “the extension of democracy to the grassroots”. It refers to the involvement of people in the management of public affairs (Srivastava, 2025: p. 1). According to Thapa (2020), local governance is a door step governing system for the local people and it is important as it promotes people’s participation in management (Thapa, 2020: p. 1). Shah and Shah (2006) defined local governance as the constitution and implementation of collective activities at the local level (Shah & Shah, 2006: p.1). Lutz & Litzer stated that the involvement of local population in decision making is necessary as it promotes transparency, accountability and responsiveness in governance. Inclusion of local actors in governance is vital as it promotes local development (Lutz & Linder, 2004, p. 2). Without the participation of traditional and local authorities, many national policies are difficult to be implemented. It needs the local and traditional authorities to educate the local populace about the benefits of certain policies (Lutz & Linder, 2004: 40).

Local governance is an integral aspect of every village in Nagaland. Each village were sovereign and has its own self-governing system. Naga villages enjoy autonomous power and exercise autonomous authority within the designated territorial area (Longkumer, 2024: p. 26). In the past, each village had a village head or chief or group of elders who acted as the governing body and governed and managed the different aspects of the village. Today, the Village Council (VC) and the Village Development Board (VDB) acts the local governing bodies in the village. Through the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1978, the Village Council functions as a legal statutory body and plays a vital role in the decentralization of power of modern governance system in Nagaland (Das et al, 2017: p. 23). Under the Act, the Village Council also constituted the VDB in every village in order to carry out developmental activities in the village.

In Nagaland, under the Nagaland Communitization of Public Institutions and Services Act, 2002 (Act No. 2 of 2002), the State Government delegate powers and functions to the local authorities for management of public services at the local level (Pandey, 2010: 115). The Communitization programme provides that each Village Council should create a committee called as the Village Electricity Management Board (VEMB) to monitor power supply and management in the village (Pandey, 2010:161-162). Similarly in Nerhema village, the VEMB performs specific functions and responsibilities in accordance to the Act to ensure better management and delivery of power services in the village.

III. BRIEF PROFILE OF NERHEMA VILLAGE:

Nerhema village is an average sized Naga village located in the Northern Angami region of Kohima district. It falls under Chiephobozou sub-division of Kohima district in Nagaland. The village is divided into three sub-villages namely; Nerhema, Nerhe-Phezha and Nerhe-Model. The village comprises of eight (8) khels- Solhi 1, Solhi 2, Solhi 3, Khrama, Cüzie, Rülho and Chadi Ziephrü. In Angami community, *khels* play a pivotal role in the functioning of society and acts as a social as well as a political unit¹. Similarly, in Nerhema

¹ https://dl.dbuniversity.ac.in/bitstream/123456789//22/6/06_chapter%202.pdf accessed on 15th September 2025.

village, khels performs social, cultural and political functions and village leaders are often elected on the basis of khels. The first VEMB was formed in the year 2003 which had eight (8) members, having one (1) member each from the 8 khels of the village. At present, in Nerhema, there are 9 VEMB members in total which includes the Chairman and eight (8) other members from each khel as khel representatives.

IV. ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN ELECTRICITY MANAGEMENT:

In Nerhema, the Village Electricity Management Board is constituted under the Communitization Act and it performs ownership responsibility and monitor power related activities in the village under the authority of the Village Council. When Communitization of electricity was first introduced, the government introduced the 'Single-Point Metering' system to bill and collect revenue collectively (Solo & Tongpangkumla, 2013: p. 26). Similarly, under this system, the village power bill is collectively arranged in a single electrical bill for the village as a whole. The VEMB takes the responsibility to take meter reading and prepare power bill as per the reading. One of the respondents stated that, "the VEMB members go for meter reading in the first week of the month. Through the meter reading, the ledger would prepare individual light bill for each household"². In the village, in order to ensure equal representation of khels in governance, VEMB members were elected on khel basis. The khel basis membership proves beneficial as each khel representative members are assigned to go for meter reading and distribution of power bill in their respective khel locality. This ensures efficient and quicker coverage of works in a limited time.

The VEMB and Village leaders played a significant role in achieving total electrification in the village. Initially, when the government introduced communitization of electricity, the Village leaders and VEMB often visited different households across the village to encourage the people to avail power services. In Nerhema when the power sector was first communitised, the village leaders would visit the house of people especially the old people and sensitize them about the benefits of Communitization programme. One of the respondents revealed that during those days, there were households that do not have power connection but survived on burning *saki*³. Through this electrification drive, the villagers gradually started to apply for new power connection. In 2017, in Nerhema, the Government of India introduced 'Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana', which is also called as SAUBHAGYA scheme. The SAUBHAGYA scheme particularly aimed for universal household electrification in India, and similarly, the VEMB executed this programme in the village. Under this scheme, free meter box were provided to the villagers to promote electricity connection in the village. The VEMB convenor revealed that during this course, many villagers received free meter box, after which many new power connections were installed in the village.

In Nerhema village, during the year 2020-2022, there has been installation of ten (10) new power connections. With the introduction of Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) sector, two (2) additional connections have been set up to run the bore wells in the village. These instances pointed out that the contribution of the VEMB members has brought about effective management in achieving total electrification in the village.

² Interview with Satuo on 21st April 2022

³ A kerosene lamp that is used in olden days as a lighting device/lamp.

As power sector comes under the purview of the village local governance, the VEMB also plays pivotal role in checking power theft and actively ensure payment of bill. Solo and Tongpangkumla (2013) stated that in Nagaland for so many years, irregular payment of power bill is a major issue and it affects the state revenue as well (Solo & Tongpangkumla, 2013: 27). In the past the village had often witnessed non-payment or delay of bill payment, however through the management of the VEMB, there has been timely payment of bills. Under communitization, the government provides power services to the villages at a subsidized rate, and hence issues like power theft or disconnection of power due to non-payment of bills were removed through communitization programme.

The Village Electricity Management Board maintain revenue collection records, meter reading record, and power bills of the individual consumers and present audit account to the Village Council. In doing so, it promotes transparency and accountability in governance. The VEMB also provides assistance in clearing objects that hinders electrical supply, such as fallen trees or underlying wires. Maintenance and safe custody of electrical equipments is an important function of the VEMB under communitization programme. Therefore, the members occasionally assist the village lineman in repairing streetlights, check underlying wires and clear off branches when it construct the electrical wires especially after a bad weather. All these activities are carried out to ensure smooth delivery of power supply in the village.

In Nerhema, the Village Council also contributes towards development of power sector. In many events, the Village Council and leaders have donated cash and kind towards power management in the village. In an instance, in the year 2021 the power station had to be transferred to a new location as the former site was under private property. In such a situation, the Village Council and Village Development Board provided financial assistance as the VEMB had insufficient fund. The VC and VDB allotted money to execute the work without delay. In another case, the Village Council and other leaders appealed to the Government for installation of new electrical poles within the village and as result five (5) new electrical poles were set up subsequently.

V. CONCLUSION:

Communitization programme established a shared ownership system with the community and this enhanced active participation of people from the user community. In Nerhema, through communitization, there has been active involvement of people in management in public sectors. Under power sector, the VEMB actively manage and execute efficient functions for the development of the power related services. There was also active involvement of the Village Council and Village Development Board in the development of power sector. Through concerted efforts of the local governing bodies, the village as achieved total electrification, there has been more new connection through electrification drive like the door to door campaign. The proper management of bill and revenue records presents a transparent and accountable governance and led better management of services. Through local governance, better infrastructure was also developed with the assistance from Village Council, Village Development Board and the Village Electricity Management Board. Thus, it can be said that through proper management of services by the local governing bodies, better power supply and services have been achieved in Nerhema village.

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