

The cover features abstract graphic elements: a thick black line at the top left, a grey line below it, and a large, flowing red line that loops across the middle and bottom right. In the bottom right corner, there are several sharp, black, angular shapes that resemble stylized mountain peaks or a jagged line.

Bureaucracy and
Rural Development
in **Mizoram**

Harendra Sinha

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Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Mizoram

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Dedicated
to
my beloved wife
Late Nandita Sinha
(1976-2003)

Preface

Rural development has been one of the abiding concerns among policy-makers and planning experts as an apposite answer to the problems of poverty all-over the world. It is advocated as an essential strategy for social justice and economic development especially in developing countries. In a developing country like India where majority of population live in rural areas, rural development assumes immense significance. Hence, soon after Independence, the focal point of the planners both at the Centre and State levels was to eradicate poverty and to improve the standard of living of rural masses. The launching of Community Development Programme in early fifties and the introduction of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) later were the significant measures undertaken by the Government of India towards rural reconstruction.

The implementation of the Community Development (nomenclature changed) later as Rural Development Programme was characterised by division of the entire country into small manageable 'blocks' and a new bureaucratic model created in the form of 'block level functionaries' consisting of a generalist kingpin of the block—the Block Development Officer with a team of Extension Officers and Village Level Workers. With the exception of some good results at the preliminary periods, this model failed in discharging multiple rural reconstruction activities and to induce people's participation in the programme as was expected. Thus, a Committee on Plan Projects popularly known as Balwantrai Mehta Committee, after the name of its Chairman, was set up to enquire the working of the community development. The committee

recommended the introduction of three-tier system of PRIs to involve people in the development processes. Various committees, later on, headed by Ashok Mehta, V.P. Naik, P.B. Patil, G.V.R. Rao, L.N. Singhvi refurbish these institutions which gave necessary momentum to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 which revolutionise the Panchayats. The 73rd Amendment granted the Panchayats constitutional status and entrusted considerable number of functions and responsibilities in ensuring genuine participatory development process at the village level.

With the introduction of PRIs in almost all the States of India, rural development programme is undertaken and implemented by PRIs as well as with the coordination of the block level functionaries. In case of Mizoram, rural development programmes are being implemented by the block functionaries only as Mizoram has not introduced PRIs as local self-government. The State of Mizoram has been exempted from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment due to the existence of traditional local self-government bodies—the Village Councils. As the Village Councils are not as intense as PRIs, block level functionaries are vital for planning, implementation and to stimulate people's participation in the rural development programme.

There has several works on rural development and PRIs been done in various parts of the country. However, the remote and hilly State of Mizoram has been neglected in this manner by researchers on this very aspect. This study is the first of its kind in the disciplines of public administration and rural development which is focused on the block level functionaries and their role in rural development in the absence of PRIs, their role in planning and implementation, performance in motivating and encouraging people's participation in rural development programmes, their problems and the perceptions of the people towards these functionaries.

This book is organized in eight chapters. The first chapter deals with brief introduction, objectives and methodology and introduction of the study area. The second chapter deals conceptual framework of bureaucracy and rural development. The third chapter includes the democratic decentralisation in Mizoram, the District Councils and Village Councils. Chapter four is devoted to bureaucracy and rural development in Mizoram. In chapter five the author explained the problems and prospects of rural

development in Mizoram. The sixth chapter deals with the role and functions of the block functionaries and relationship between the generalist head of the block and his team of extension officers. The seventh chapter covers the role performance of the block functionaries and the perceptions of the people towards the rural functionaries. The last chapter presents the summary of major findings, suggestions and conclusions.

The present book "Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Mizoram" is mainly based on my Ph.D. thesis. This research would be of enormous help to the common people, policy-makers, government officials, future researchers and the non-governmental organisations who are engaging themselves in the upliftment of the rural poor in Mizoram.

Harendra Sinha

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Rural development has specifically been given prime importance in the development plans as 75 per cent of the worlds poor live in rural areas.¹ Any attempt at bringing overall development should lay greater importance on rural development especially in developing countries, which are characterised by high incidence of rural poverty. The increasing height of rural poverty in these countries is a matter of grave concern. Therefore, the primary goal of planning and development strategies in these countries has been directed towards tackling under-development and rural poverty. Bureaucracy occupies an important role in the formulation and implementation of these development plans and programmes even in the new economic order in which a reduced governmental intervention in the economic sector, thus implying a reduced role for the bureaucracy in the process of development is expected. However, at any rate, bureaucracy is a considerable segment of it, an inescapable obligation to inculcate a disposition towards work in the field—more especially in the rural areas and amongst the vulnerable sections of the population.² The vital requirement for bureaucracy now is to get away from the sluggishness to give a thorough response to the challenges posed by the new economic order.

The role of state intervention in the overall development of the population in developing countries are indispensable where the challenges of mass poverty, lack of infrastructure, unemployment, ill-health, illiteracy and inequality needs to be

dealt with. For this, good governance through e-governance, transparency, democratic decentralisation, accountability, efficiency and productivity and people's participation has now been acknowledged to be the basic requirements of administration in improving the quality of life of the people—especially the rural poor. In India, rural development has been one of the important objectives of planning since independence. The launching of Community Development Programme (CDP) in early fifties and the introduction of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) later were the significant measures undertaken by the Government of India towards rural reconstruction.

The implementation of the CDP was characterised by division of the entire country into small manageable 'blocks' and a new bureaucratic model created in the form of 'block level functionaries' consisting of a generalist kingpin of the block—the block development officer with a team of extension officers and village level workers. With the exception of some good results at the preliminary periods, this model failed to discharge multiple rural reconstruction activities and to induce people's participation in the programme as expected. Thus, a Committee on Plan Projects popularly known as Balwantrai Mehta Committee was set up to enquire the working of the community development. The committee recommended the introduction of three-tier system of PRIs to involve people in the development process. Various committees, later on, headed by Ashok Mehta, V.P. Naik, P.B. Patil, G.V.R. Rao, L.N. Singhvi refurbish these institutions which gave necessary momentum to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 which revolutionise the Panchayats. The 73rd Amendment granted the Panchayats constitutional status and entrusted considerable number of functions and responsibilities in ensuring genuine participatory development process at the village level.

With the introduction of PRIs in almost all the states of India, rural development programme is undertaken and implemented by PRIs as well as with the coordination of the block level functionaries. In case of Mizoram, the programme has been implemented by the block functionaries only as Mizoram has not introduced PRIs as local self-government. The State of Mizoram has been exempted from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment due to the existence of traditional local self-government bodies—the Village Councils. As the Village Councils are not as intense as PRIs,

there is heavy reliance on grassroots bureaucracy in the overall upliftment of the rural poor and it is, in fact, vital for planning, implementation and to stimulate people's participation in the rural development programme.

In this context, it is important to focus attention on the role of grassroots bureaucracy in rural development in this remote underdeveloped state.

Importance of the Study

In India where about 72 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, the development and progress of the country lies in the development of its villages. Any progress of growth and development that does not fulfil the needs of rural area and its people, especially the poor cannot be claimed as development. Mizoram is an under-developed state. It is highly mountainous with rugged topography, is a primary producing state. Shifting cultivation (*jhum*) has been widely practiced in the state causing soil erosion, damage soil fertility, creates environmental and socio-cultural problem, denudation of forest cover, etc. Agriculture (*jhum*) is the sole occupation but the local agricultural products could substantiate only about 25 per cent³ of the states requirements despite about as much as 70 per cent of the workers engagement in agricultural activities. 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.⁴ The situation in respect of allied sector is in no way better. The potential in animal husbandry, a common subsidiary activity, is grossly under utilised and meat, eggs, fish come from outside the state.⁵

In Mizoram, facilities like transport, communication, irrigation, industry, etc. are not adequate. The state depends largely on other states for essential commodities. In spite of the massive efforts of the government to develop the rural area, the success has been minimal. According to the 1990 Survey Report of the Rural Development Department, 52 per cent of people 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 1972.⁶ With the existing structure of Mizoram

economy, precarious state of agriculture (no fertile, intensive type of crop-land easily amenable), 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.⁷

Inequality in economic status in Mizo society has been very much evident with the emergence of elite rich class. One of the main reasons is unequal distribution of the fruits of development in the state. While launching New Land Use Policy (NLUP) by dissolving the Mizoram Intodelhna Project (MIP), the Chief Minister 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.⁸

Under these circumstances, the state is facing with the uphill task of elimination of shifting cultivation (*jhum*) and in achieving self-sufficiency in foodgrain production. Therefore, development strategies of the Government of Mizoram has been mainly towards agricultural development and to protect the land from degradation, to 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. The Government of Mizoram launched various programmes for rural development other than the Centrally Sponsored Schemes like NLUP in 1990-91, revived in 2009-2010 and MIP during 2002-2003, BAFFACOS during 2005-2006, etc. to wean away the *jhumia* families from shifting cultivation by providing them alternative means of livelihood. Bureaucracy is the focal point of administration, planning, and actual ground implementation of these rural development programmes. The present position of the Village Councils in Mizoram may be compared with the Panchayats of Indian States before the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act 1992. Socio-economic development is beyond the scope of the Councils due to lack of financial and political power. Although the Councils are being

involved in the process of rural development, their role is limited by the fact that the bureaucracy assumes more power and influence. It is bureaucracy that made the actual ground implementation of all the schemes of rural development in the absence of PRIs.

The study of bureaucracy especially at the block level and its role in rural development in Mizoram assumes significance in the above context.

Review of Literature

The present study is concerned with the role of bureaucracy at the grassroots level in the rural development in Mizoram where the Panchayati Raj Institutions not introduced. There is enormous trust vested on bureaucracy in the implementation of rural development programmes as the existing local governing institutions are not intense and bureaucracy easily overrides the local democratic bodies in Mizoram. Researches on bureaucracy and rural development in a state where the Panchayati Raj Institutions not introduced are few although there have been numerous studies carried out on the various facets of bureaucracy and rural Development.

R.K. Saprú⁹ (2003) in his book '*Development Administration*' suggested that a developing country like India can realise its developmental goals only through its instrument of action, namely, the civil service and there is need of bringing about reforms in the civil service system through better recruitment procedures, sustained training, more rational organisation and improved administration capacities. The state should have a clear developmental programmes for the future not only in terms of goals and objectives in various spheres of socio-economic development and nation-building and policies required to achieve these goals, but also in terms of a civil service system with such organisation, personal and procedures as would help it implement those programmes and policies and enable the state to achieve its developmental goals.

N.R. Inamdar¹⁰ (1992) in his book '*Development Administration in India*' pointed out the need of modifications in the Indian model of development administration and politics in practice. Both political and bureaucratic components have to be

more active taking more energetic efforts to reach the development outputs to the marginal and poorer peasants, artisan and labourers.

Debidas M. Muley¹¹ (1987), in his book '*Rural Development Administration*' suggested realistic plan formulation and the effective implementation of plans depends on sound and viable local government structure, which at the same time needs smaller and larger units to reconcile democratic aspirations a strong executive to carry out development programmes and policies.

In their book '*Village Development in India: A Sociological Approach*' G.R. Madan and Tara Madan¹² (1988), given emphasis on the problem of village development from a sociological point of view in all the major aspects of the problem—economic, technological, social, religious, cultural, political and administrative so as to understand the problem in proper perspective.

S.R. Maheshwari¹³ (1985) in his book '*Rural Development in India*', opines that a large amounts of public funds are presently disbursed under the various programme of rural development, leakages and seepages have become noticeable and corruption in rural development administration has become a serious problem today. The media and the opinion leaders in India are, as a rule, notoriously urban oriented both by training and temperament, and happenings in the rural sector are not reported at any great length or discussed.

B.S. Khanna¹⁴ (1991), in his book '*Rural Development in South Asia, India*', opines that block development administration began to be weakened from about the middle of the decade of sixties onwards with the decline of community development programme and rise of separate sectoral programmes of rural development.

A.K. Agarwal¹⁵ (1991), in his article '*Dynamics of Rural Development in Mizoram*', stated that administrative infrastructure for programme planning and implementation is weak in the state as it is found in the North East as a whole. Lack of training facilities within the region is to a great extent responsible for poor motivation of grassroots staff.

S.G. Deogaonkar¹⁶ (1980), in his book '*Administration for Rural Development in India*' opines that success and failure of the rural development depended on village level workers at the grass root level and hence selecting the right man and equipping him suitably and sufficiently to do his work was the crux of the problem.

In their book '*Problems in Rural Development*' (1985),

Ramashray Roy, T.M. Vinod Kumar and V.B. Singh¹⁷ gave importance on developing planning process at the block level.

E.D. Setty¹⁸, in his book '*New Approaches to Rural Development*', (2002), evolved some guidelines for the block staff in assisting the Panchayat Samiti and the Village Panchayats in diagnosing village problems and in developing plans and programmes for village improvement.

Shiv Raj Singh¹⁹ (1989), in his book '*Bureaucracy and Rural Development*' evaluated and made an assessment of the performance of all the bureaucrats at block level including bureaucrats of development departments, peoples participation in Panchayat, IRD Programme at the Pachhad Block and Chopal Block of the districts of Shimla and Sirmour of Himachal Pradesh and opined that block bureaucracy should be committed to rural development. This can be possible in case the block bureaucracy has its social roots in the rural soil.

In his book '*Development Administration in An Indian State Guide Book Evolved for Block Development Officer in Orrisa*' (2002), Dr. Taradatt²⁰, suggested number of guidelines and duties of the block development officer in relation to Panchayat, relation to block level functionaries.

Kalpna Das²¹, in her book, '*Rural Development in Mizoram*' (2004), focusing on the various ramifications of the IRDP administration and suggested to build motivation of the personnel at the cutting edge through a system of continuous appraisal, performance based rewards, and special postings in remote areas and need to build professionalism.

The above studies on bureaucracy and rural development are different from the present study. Because of the absence of Panchayati Raj Institutions and its geographical location where the villages are scattered with different socio-economic structure, the policy recommendations that are applicable to other parts of the country may not necessarily be suitable for the state. It is in this background that an assessment towards block level bureaucracy and their role on rural development has been carried out.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to focus mainly on bureaucracy at the block level which is involved in the implementation of rural development

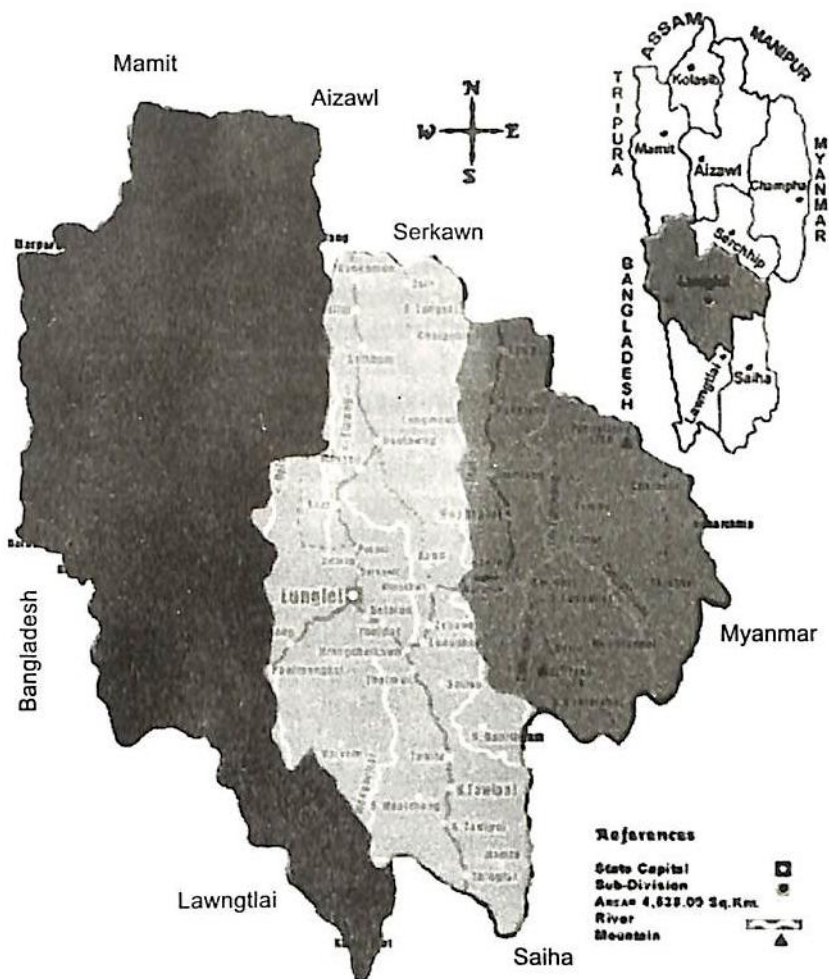
programmes in Mizoram. In the absence of Panchayati Raj Institutions, where the existing local self-government system is irrelevant today, grassroots bureaucracy is the key in overall development of rural Mizoram. Accordingly, the specific objectives of the study have been set:

1. To make an assessment on the performance of the grassroots bureaucracy and their role in the execution of rural development programmes.
2. To highlight the implementation of various rural development programmes towards upliftment of the rural poor in Mizoram, its impact and the role of bureaucracy in it.
3. To obtain the perceptions of the people—the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of rural development programmes towards the rural bureaucratic functionaries as well as the perceptions of the rural bureaucrats, their difficulties and challenges.
4. To explore the problems and prospects of rural development in the study area and to suggest suitable measures.

Hypothesis

To meet the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses are formulated for empirical verification in the study.

1. The existing rural bureaucracy at the block level has failed to execute the task of rural development to the extent needed.
2. There is lack of motivation of rural bureaucracy to the extent required and belongingness in their department, hence, failed in the task of motivating the village people.
3. The existing local self-government is irrelevant and its role in rural development is insignificant in the absence of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
4. There is very modest impact of rural development programmes initiated in the blocks.



Map 1.1: Mizoram with the Study Area—Lunglei district blocks.

Source: Economics and Statistics Department, Lunglei, 2010.

Red = Lungen block, Yellow = Lunglei block
 Blue = Hnahthial block, Green = Bunghmun block

Study Area

For an in depth study of this nature requires limiting the geographical parameter of the study. This was done taking up four

per the 2001 census, the total population of this district is 1,37,223. The male population is 71,403 and female 65,821. The rural population of the district is 79,2672 and urban 57,956. The density of population per square kilometer is 30 and the literacy is 84.20 per cent. The present Lunglei district has three sub-divisions Lunglei, Hnahthial, and Tlabung and four rural development blocks—Lunglei, Lungsen, Hnahthial and Bunghmun. Lunglei is 235 km (via Hnahthial) and about 165 km. (via Thenzawl) far from Aizwal. Agriculture is the predominant activity in the district. The general condition of rural population is poor.

Profile of Blocks and Villages²⁷

- (a) Lunglei is one of the biggest rural development blocks in Lunglei district which covers inside and neighbouring villages of Lunglei town. The number of rural population is 20904 with 4227 households. The number of cultivator (*jhum*) is 3282 and 161 wet rice cultivators. The block office is located at Chanmari, in Lunglei town. Dawn (85 households, population of 367) which is 25 kms away from Lunglei town, Thualthu (227 households, population of 588)—31 kms, Tawipui (143 households, population of 620)—40 kms, Mualthuam N (271 households, population of 1253)—70 km and Mamte (100 households, population of 524)—80 km and Thingfal (254 households, population of 1374)—68 kms away, were selected from this block for the present study.
- (b) Lungsen is one of the backward blocks in Lunglei District with a rural population of 38814 with 8104 households. The number of cultivator (*jhum*) is 6236 and 912 wet rice cultivators. The block office is located at Lungsen which is 58 km away from Lunglei town. Hmunthar (36 households and population of 177) which is 118 kms away from Lunglei town, Belthei (102 households and population of 429)—42 kms, Lungsen (475 households and population of 2218)—58, Tuichawng (1521 households and population of 2750)—95 km and Rangte (125 households and population of 746)—59 kms, Tipperaghat (155 households and population of 911) 100 kms away, were selected from this block for the present study.

- (c) Hnahthial block is situated 60 kms away from Lunglei town. Under this block total number of rural households is 4268 and total population is 23351. The number of cultivator (*jhum*) is 3210 and 210 wet rice cultivators. The block office is located at Hnahthial. Thingsai (452 households with population of 2801) which is 227 kms away from Lunglei town, Leite (177 households and population of 885)—47 kms, Darzo (243 households and population of 1417)—79 kms, Rotlang E (127 households and population of 696)—53 kms away, were selected from this block for the present study.
- (d) Bunghmun block is one of the most backward blocks in Mizoram. Under this block total number of rural households is 3657 and total population is 18768. The number of cultivator (*jhum*) is 3297 and 129 wet rice cultivators. The block office is located at Bunghmun which is 140 kms away from Lunglei town. Serte (85 households with population of 450) which is 40 kms away from Lunglei town, Bunghmun (242 households and population of 2019)—140 kms, Belkhai (153 households and population of 773)—167 kms, Dengsur (71 households and population of 402)—56 kms away, were selected from this block for the present study.

The four blocks of the Lunglei district and the sample villages almost shares the same characteristics. Out of the four blocks, Lunglei block, being nearest to the district headquarter is relatively in a better position due to the facilities available. The economic status and the standard of living of the villages which are located nearby block headquarters are also relatively better than those remote villages because of the market accessibility and other facilities like health, education etc. which are available near to them in the towns. Otherwise, the overall economic condition—dependence on agriculture (mostly *jhum*), communication constraints, market accessibility, scarcity of essential commodities and lack of facilities like irrigation, power supply, etc. are almost the same.

Methodology

The present study requires both primary and secondary data. The

primary data has been collected from the fieldwork through questionnaire and interview schedule. Total of 20 villages—10 nearby and 10 remote villages (six villages each from Lunglei and Lungsens block, four villages each from Hnahthial and Bunglemun block) from the block headquarters were selected. A previously prepared schedule was used to acquire information from the respondents of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of rural development schemes. A stratified sampling method was used in selecting individuals. Total of 240 individual (including SHG) members was obtained. Detail interview with block functionaries was done with a previously prepared schedule with total of 19 functionaries selected. A simple tabulation method in terms of percentage was made to analyse the data collected for the study.

The secondary data is mainly collected from published and unpublished works on the related topics, books, articles, journals, souvenir, Potential Linked credit Plan of NABARD, Mizoram, publications of the Government of India and Government of Mizoram, records available in the Directorate of Rural Development Department and concerned block offices, Mizoram and Reports, Acts, Rules and Regulations. In addition, web sources were also an important source of secondary information. In addition, personal interviews and informal discussions were also done with government officials to know their reactions and suggestions related this study.

Chapterisation

The introductory chapter deals with a brief introduction on the topics, importance of the study, objectives of the study, hypothesis, brief introduction of the study area and methodology applied. It also reviewed a number of literatures on the subject, limitations of the study and the organisation of materials.

Chapter 2 deals with conceptual framework of bureaucracy and rural development, approaches and strategies of rural development in India.

Chapter 3 deals with democratic decentralization—the PRIs, District Councils and Village Councils in Mizoram.

Chapter 4 deals with the bureaucracy and rural development in Mizoram.

Chapter 5 deals with the problems and prospects of rural

development in Mizoram.

Chapter 6 deals with the block level bureaucracy and their role, duties and responsibilities in rural development.

Chapter 7 presents an assessment of the block level bureaucracy in Mizoram.

Chapter 8 presents the findings and suggestions.

Limitations of the Study

Researchers generally come across many constraints and barriers in the course of their studies. The present study on the role of bureaucracy and rural development in Mizoram is not a straightforward task where the villages are scattered over a wide geographical area. The following are the main limitations of the study:

1. Almost all the four rural development blocks in the Lunglei district do not maintain proper and uniform record. Moreover, there is shortage of officials in all the blocks. Gathering of adequate information is difficult although the researcher managed to draw together as much information as possible for the purpose of data analysis. Here, the researchers very good command in Mizo language (the researcher a non-Mizo) as well as the supportive and sociable nature of the Mizo people helped.
2. The conclusions drawn from the present study may not be applicable to other states where Panchayati Raj Institutions are introduced as local self-governing institutions which are involved in the implementation of rural development programmes in coordination with the rural bureaucracy.
3. As the study was carried out mainly in the sample villages of Lunglei district blocks, some of the generalisations may be at variance with other parts of the state. Moreover, all the aspects relating to bureaucracy and rural development in the state cannot be covered in the present study leaving scope for further research in the field. However, genuine efforts have been made to make the study meaningful— which may serve as a highlight for further studies in the field.

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