

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MIZORAM

Thesis

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PREFACE

The accomplishment of economic and social development in a developing country like India depends upon the optimum utilisation of its resources. Serious challenges and threats in the path of socio-economic development exist in India such as poverty, unemployment, and population explosion. The best possible way to solve these problems would be the utmost use of human resources. Therefore, endless effort by all concerned- men, women and the Government- is necessary to bring about economic and social progress in our country.

‘Development’ by definition means, capacity building, expanding one’s ability and energy to bring about desired changes at individual, community, national or global level. It addresses equity or distribution issues so that increasing development and enhancing productive capacity mean broadening levels of well being for many people, not just a few. In the global context, socio-economic development means the improvement of peoples’ lifestyle through improved education, skill development and incomes. It is the process of economic and social transformation based on cultural and environmental factors also. This clearly shows that development will be more inclusive when the both sexes are completely involved in the process.

Due to the changing need of the economy and the necessity for increasing family income, Indian women have to play a vital role in the society and economy. This change is also noticed in the

thought of Mizo women towards family, society and economy. Before hand, the parents showed their confidence only in sons who are well- placed to take care of their ailing parents. Today, parents express their confidence on daughters too who would extend help to them. However, till today women working in different sectors have not received recognition for their contribution. Therefore, the study of women's participation in socio-economic field is needed so as to improve the position of women.

So far as the present study is concerned, the first chapter is a brief introduction to the study. It studies the statement of the problem, review of available literature, scope of study, objectives of the study, methodology applied for the research and significance of the study.

The second chapter makes a conceptual study of women in India. It examines the customs and tradition, the role women in family, education, social change and the Constitutional provisions for women in India.

The third chapter covers the study of the socio-economic profile of Mizoram; the status of early Mizo women and also the present scenario. It further studies the impact of women's education in Mizoram.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the study of different women groups and organisations in Mizoram.

The fifth chapter studies the Governmental institutions and interventions and different programmes and policies for women under the Central Government and the State Government.

The sixth chapter carries out the analysis of empirical data.

The seventh and the concluding chapter consists of the summary and findings of the research work. Suggestions for improvement in the position of women are also presented in this chapter.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Anno Domini
AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
AMC	Aizawl Municipal Council
AMWF	All Mizoram Women Federation
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BPR&D	Bureau of Police Research and Development
BSY	Balika Samridhi Yojana
CSWB	Central Social Welfare Board
DWCD	Department of Women and Child Development
ENF	Evangelical Nurses' Fellowship
FCC	Family Counseling Centre
FND	Food and Nutrition Board
FWPR	Female Work Participation Rate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immuno deficiency Virus
HRD	Human Resource Development

IAY	Indira Awaas Yojana
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMY	Indira Mahila Yojana
IPC	Indian Penal Court
IWEP	Integrated Women Empowerment Programme
JSSK	Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram
JSY	Janani Suraksha Yojana
KVI	Khadi and Village Industries
MHA	Mizoram Hmeithai Association
MHIP	Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl
MHT	Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NCC	National Commission for Children
NCF	National Crèche Fund
NCW	National Commission for Women
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NMBS	National Maternity Benefit Scheme

NNP	National Nutrition Policy
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission
p.c.	Percentage
RITC	Residential Institute and Training Center
RMK	Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
RWDEP	Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project
SC	Schedule Caste
SGSY	Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
SHG	Self Help Group
SLL	Special and Local Law
ST	Schedule Tribe
STEP	Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women
SWD	Social Welfare Department
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
YMA	Young Mizo Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

GLOSSARY

<i>Chapchar Kut</i>	Festival celebrating Mizo New Year
<i>Hmeichhia</i> or <i>Hmeichhe</i>	Women
<i>Hmeithai</i>	Widow
<i>Hnatlang</i>	Collective voluntary work
<i>Jhum</i>	Process of slash and burn agriculture
<i>Mimkut</i>	Mizo Festival honouring the death of the past year
<i>Mo man</i>	Bride's price
<i>Pawl Kut</i>	Mizo thanksgiving festival celebrating harvest
<i>Pawnpui</i>	Quilt
<i>Thifen</i>	One string of beads
<i>Thival</i>	Three strings of beads
<i>Thla</i>	Soul
<i>Thlaichhiah, thlahual, mitthi chawpek</i>	Ceremony for dead husband
<i>Thuam</i>	Dowry
<i>Tlawmngaihna</i>	Stoical, ever-ready for others' sake
<i>Zawlbuk</i>	Big house called bachelor's den

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CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

The success of economic and social development in a developing country depends upon the utmost utilisation of its resources. Especially in India where we find problems like poverty, unemployment, and population explosion that pose serious challenges and threat in the path of socio-economic development. The approach to solve these problems would be the best use of human resources. This involves maximum participation of women in the different socio-economic activities. The United Nations General Assembly on 24th October 1970 stated that economic and social progress is the common and shared responsibility of the entire international community. The General Assembly laid the goals and objectives for socio-economic development for developing countries in which importance was given to the goal – ‘the full integration of women in the total development effort should be encouraged’. The General Assembly also stated that continuous effort by all people- men and women and the Government is necessary to promote economic and social progress in developing countries.¹

The position of women in the Indian society has changed from time to time. In ancient India, women enjoyed equal position with men in all fields of life but during the medieval period, the position of women went down. The position of women in modern India has changed considerably. Today her

¹ Every Man's United Nations . *A summary of the activities of the United Nations for the period 1966-70*. A five year supplement, U.N. Publication.p.73.

position is equal to that of men, socially, economically, educationally, politically and legally. Indian women were one of the first in the world to have the right to vote. The Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women. In spite of the advances women have made in the society, women's concerns are still given second priority almost all over the place. They continue to face discrimination and marginalisation, subtle, and blatant, and do not share equally in the socio-economic development.

The major reason for women's subordinate status is the fact that they are not only economically exploited but also socio-culturally oppressed. This stands in the way of development of the country. The development of a country is not only measured in terms of GDP, per capita income, wage but also in terms of effective participation and utilisation of the capabilities of both men and women as an effective human resource potential.²

According to Barbara Thomas Slayter (1955) development means capacity building, expanding one's ability and energy to bring about desired changes at individual, community, national or global level. It addresses equity or distribution issues so that increasing development and increasing productive capacity mean broadening levels of well being for many people, not just a few.³ From this definition, we come to know that in a country like ours, the pace of development will increase with the involvement of both sexes.

²Mary E. John (1996). 'Gender and Development in India, 1970s-1990s :Some Reflections on the constitutive role of contents'. *Economics and Political Weekly*. 31(47), 3077-3147.

³ Barbara Thomas Slayter (1995). *A Manual for Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis: Responding to the Development Challenge*. Worcester: Clark ECOGEN Publication.

Women have entered public life on a massive scale, but are still on their own when it comes to running the household. A new balance must be struck if there is to be genuine democracy. At the dawn of the 21st century, states and the international community can no longer disprove the fact that humanity is made up of two sexes and not just one. This has brought women's existence into the limelight. One of the great democratic challenges for societies over the next century will be to mature so that both sexes are able to live their lives on an equal footing with equal rights and responsibilities irrespective of all their differences, contrasting history and culture, but also with equal rights and responsibilities. Women's rise to power and their participation are the vital signs of a healthy democracy. When women take part in the public arena, contributing to the ongoing, shared effort to shape better ways of living together, a qualitative leap occurs. Their participation fills a gap which has until now prevented the emergence of a truly democratic culture. The structure of society and the way men and women run their daily lives are other stumbling blocks.⁴

The need of organised information on women's economic participation has been much debated. The underlying reasons are well summarised in the platform for action adopted during the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), as follows: Women contribute to development not only through remunerated work but also through a great deal of unremunerated work. On the other hand, women participate in the production of goods and services for the market and household consumption, in

⁴ M.L. Narasaiah (2006). *Women and Development*. New Dehi: Discovery Publishing House.p.1

agriculture, food production, or family enterprises. Though included in the United Nations system of National Accounts and, therefore, in international standards for labor statistics, this unremunerated work — particularly that related to agriculture — is often undervalued and under-recorded. On the other hand, women still also perform the great majority of unremunerated domestic work and community work, such as caring for children and older persons, preparing food for the family, protecting the environment, and providing voluntary assistance to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups. This work is often not measured in quantitative terms and is not valued in national accounts.⁵ Women's contribution to development is seriously underestimated, and thus its social recognition is limited. The full visibility of the type, extent and distribution of this unremunerated work will also contribute to a better sharing of responsibilities.

It is a matter of great concern that India is ranked the 115th in the index of Human Development among the 162 countries studied by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in their Report published in 2001, while Sri Lanka and China rank as 81 and 87 respectively. The growing consensus among development thinkers is that people are and should be – the starting point, the centre and the goal of each development intervention.⁶ The real wealth of a nation is its people, both men and women, and the purpose of development is to create an

⁵ <http://www.un.org/esa/gopher-data/conf/fwcw/off/a--20.en> accessed on 19/2/2012

⁶Michael M. Cernea (1985). 'Preface' in Michael M. Cernea. *Putting People for Sociological Variables in Rural Development*. New York : Oxford University Press.

environment to enable them to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives.⁷

Statement of the Problem

Frequent changes of economic policies of the State Government cause socio-economic instability. In the process of societal changes 'the Have' and 'the Have not' have also come up due to the changes of economic growth which was never heard in the Mizo society. The gap between the poor and the rich becomes very wide though it is a natural process in economic development. In the process of studying socio-economic development of Mizoram, documents for implementation of economic policies has been found to be lacking.

Mizo women are available in all trades of state's economy. In the past and in modern time, it is found that they play a vital part in the socio-economic development of Mizoram. Yet, they have not received the admiration they deserve.

Review of Literature

Risman (1998) identified three distinct theoretical traditions that help understand sex and gender. The first difference focuses on gendered-selves, that is, whether sex differences are due to biology or socialization. This focus is on the individual level of analysis encompassing social identities in which case men mature to be competitive and work oriented

⁷ Anju Bhatia (2000). *Women's Development and NGO'S*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.p.42

while women mature to become nurturing, person oriented and child centered. In terms of gender, the socialization theory suggests that children are taught to behave a certain way according to their sex. Boys are taught to be masculine and girls to be feminine. For example, parents will often buy boys trucks or army toys and for girls, they will buy dolls and playhouse sort-of toys. According to Risman, the second tradition focuses on how social structure creates gendered behaviour. This approach argues that men and women behave differently because they fill different positions in institutional settings, work organisations and families, that is, they take on different gendered roles. A third theoretical underpinning is the interaction perspective, which emphasises contextual issues such as cultural expectations and taken-for-granted situational meanings. According to Risman, this concept implies that an individual is expected to create differences that are neither inevitable nor essential.

Sangkima (2004) a Mizo historian, wrote in his book *Essays on the History of Mizos* about Women and Politics in Mizoram, reviving a fresh study on women and politics in Mizo history starting from pre-colonial times to the recent era. The first part of his essay brought out a case study of female widow chiefs in the pre-colonial period. He implicitly credited 'tribal patriarchy' when noting that women "become rulers or Chieftainess not as a matter of right but as a matter of chance". He skipped the colonial period on the grounds that there were no women who actively participated in the politics in colonial Lushai Hills. He then finally gives credit to post-colonial women as "they joined active

politics only because of their desire to uplift the position of Mizo women in the society”.

Mikkola (2005) says that gender hierarchy shows in family, inheritance laws and customs, valuations of women’s work as opposed to men’s work, and the power to make decisions in society, family, church and social networks. It shows in the opportunities available for development, education, health and nutrition. It shows in violence and in general invisibility of the women’s work. The hierarchy is generally acceptable by both genders, and is not normally questioned. It is general enough to apply across nations, cultures and time periods with the underlying presumption that changes in the status of women will become apparent in development only over a longer time period.

Lalhriatpuii (2010) in *Economic Participation of Women in Mizoram* attempts to examine the women’s participation in labour market and the type of segregation that exists in India, with special reference to Mizoram. Reviewing the status of women in the state under the prevailing demographic, health, economic, educational, social and political situation, it makes an empirical analysis of Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR) and sex ratio, FWPR and literacy, FWPR in organized and unorganized sectors, decision making as a factor determining FWRP, and attitude of male towards women’s work. Identifying the factors determining female work participation rate, it makes a comparative study of women’s economic participation in India as a whole and in the state of Mizoram.

Lalneihzovi (2007) in the edited volume *Women’s Development In India* which comprises fourteen scholarly papers

deals with the concept of development and various issues/problems and constraints, viz., political and economic empowerment of women of women, and suggests to resolve the degrading socio-political-economic conditions affecting the poor/neglected women adversely who are the victims of chronic poverty, unemployment, exploitation and gender inequality because of unequal productive and property relations.

Education of Women and Socio-Economic Development, by Geeta Gandhi Kingdon (2002) is a valuable contribution to the emergent analysis of female education. Kingdon draws on her extensive research in the field to support her central thesis: that the promotion of female education should be a priority concern of governments and organizations worldwide. Following introductory remarks which draw attention to the prominence given to female education in teachings, the author sketches an overview of the appalling status of women in the developing world. The discussion then shifts to the substantial social and economic gains that female education can yield. Citing important studies undertaken in developing countries, highlights its profound implications for reduced fertility and mortality rates. The second section of her paper examines some of the obstacles which often mitigate against the advancement of women: a narrowly defined gender division of labour, which prescribes a domestic role for women, and fiscal incentives to parents of educating sons - the traditional source of social security in old age. What is needed, Kingdon rightly asserts, is public education about the benefits of female education, government subsidies for girls' schooling, and a more equitable treatment of women in the

labour market to improve economic returns to female education. Furthermore, underscores the importance of the content of education.

B. Lalrinchhani (2004) in 'A Gender study of the Socio-Economic History of the Early Mizo' in the book *A Modern History of Mizoram* edited by Sangkima mentions the role of women in traditional society stating that they performed hard work for the family and society and also in the economic process.

Mukhopadhyay (2002) in the book, *Tribal Women Development* observed that amongst the different tribes of India the status of tribal women is inferior to that of tribal men. The reason for deterioration of status of tribal women is due to the impact of social change which has affected the social structure of tribal society. The problems of tribal women are increasing as tribal life gets disturbed more and more by modern economic development. The author feels that the immense potential of the tribal women and their wide area of participation and contribution to tribal life and culture could be of great use and help in the induction, implementation and adoption of different kinds of innovations proposed in programmes of development.

Nussbaum (2000) in *Women and human development* proposes a new kind of feminism that is genuinely international. Martha Nussbaum argues for an ethical underpinning to all thought about development planning and public policy, and dramatically moves beyond the abstractions of economists and philosophers to embed thought about justice in the concrete reality of the struggles of poor women. In this book, Nussbaum argues that international political and economic thought must be

sensitive to gender difference as a problem of justice, and that feminist thought must begin to focus on the problems of women in the third world. Taking as her point of departure the predicament of poor women in India, she shows how philosophy should undergird basic constitutional principles that should be respected and implemented by all governments, and used as a comparative measure of quality of life across nations. Nussbaum concludes by calling for a new international focus to feminism, and shows through concrete detail how philosophical arguments about justice really do connect with the practical concerns of public policy.

Edited by Nalini Visvanathan, Lynn Duggan, Nan Wiegersma and Laurie Nisonoff - *The Women, Gender and Development Reader II* (2011) is the definitive volume of literature dedicated to women in the development process. The editors expertly present the impacts of social, political and economic change by reviewing such topical issues as migration, persistent structural discrimination, the global recession, and climate change. Approached from a multidisciplinary perspective, the theoretical debates are vividly illustrated by an array of global case studies. This classic book has been designed as a comprehensive reader, presenting the best of the now vast body of literature. The book is divided into five parts, incorporating readings from the leading experts and authorities in each field. The result is a unique and extensive discussion, a guide to the evolution of the field, and a vital point of reference for those studying or with a keen interest in women in the development process.

Puroshothaman (1998) in the book, *Empowerment of Women in India: Grassroots Women's Networks and the State*, states that for poor women to facilitate their participation in developmental processes, there is a need for decentralised, informal organisational forms, such as networks of women's collectives in mobilising resources.

Anup Taneja (2005) in *Gandhi, Women and the National Movement, 1920-47* critically analyses the success achieved by Gandhi in mobilising women and motivating them to participate in the National Movement. The very experience of working outside home and of participating shoulder to shoulder with men, for a noble cause, went a long way in infusing a spirit of self confidence and self respect among the women in India and enhanced their status in the society.

Das (1997) in the article, 'Child Development and Empowering Women in India', in *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, discusses the constitutional legal provisions, efforts made under plan provision and policies and their impact on women; various Central governments empowering strategies, schemes and services pursued over the years along with some new special initiatives. While discussing the future approaches on women empowerment, she identifies priority areas under the Central Schemes and Programmes.

Reddy, Kumar, Nalini (2005) in the edited volume *Women in Development: Challenges and Achievements* deal with the comprehensive and analytical account of the progress made with particular reference to the women in a developing society like India. It mainly focuses on five important issues: Empowerment

and Development; Participation and Development; Employment and Development; Health, Education and Development and Legal Rights and Development. With issue based thematic discussions all the paper writers have contributed socially significant works.

Pandya and Reddy (2010) in *Women and Development* wrote that India is definitely the hub of entrepreneurs worldwide. Women-owned businesses are highly increasing in the economies of almost all countries. The hidden power potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to the role and economic status in the society. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business ventures. Women Entrepreneur is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. A strong desire to do something positive is an inbuilt quality of entrepreneurial women, who is capable contributing values in both family and social life. The challenges and opportunities provided to the women of digital era are growing rapidly that the job seekers are turning into job creators. In India, although women constitute the majority of the total population, the entrepreneurial world is still a male dominated one. Women in advanced nations are recognized and are more prominent in the business world.

Usha Rao's (1983) *Women in a Developing Society* is a book which is a collection of research studies focused mainly on the women in Karnataka. The study involves literacy, work participation rates, etc. It is a modest attempt to fill such a gap in this area of women's studies.

Women's Development and NGOs by Anju Bhatia (2000) is a comprehensive study on the functioning of NGOs, in one of the most underdeveloped districts of India. The study brings out in detail various aspects of the functioning of NGOs, profiles and portrays the psyche of their personnel and also presents the views and opinions of their beneficiaries.

Meena Razvi and Gene Roth (2010) in 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Socio-Economic Development of Low-Income Women in India', *Human Resource Development International* focuses on the socio-economic development of women in low income category in India. The study describes how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in India attempt to fill the gaps in governmental support for marginalized women in the Indian workforce. Some scholars have recommended expanding the boundaries of human resource development (HRD) to include multiple topics in a variety of contexts to investigate the holistic development of individuals. Gaps exist in current HRD literature regarding the status of low-income women in India. This article argues that many Indian NGOs are capable of serving the needs of women in informal work sectors and in addition, they can provide a broad non-traditional context for investigating HRD processes and services at a national level.

V. Mohini Giri (1998) in *Emancipation and Empowerment of Women* mentions that women's role goes beyond the home and bringing up children as she is adopting a career and sharing equal responsibility for development of society in all respects.

Shanta Kohli Chandra (1997) in her article 'Women and Empowerment' *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, briefly defines the concept of women empowerment. She discusses the strategy of empowerment and curtailing gender discrimination through women's participation in decision-making, development process and governance and reinforcing it through establishing linkages between women in public life and women working elsewhere. She says that empowerment is not a process which is horizontal or vertical. It is a process which goes round in a circle. Here the beginning ends in a change and the change leads to another beginning.

Mira Seth (2001) in *Women and Development* mentions that Indian states which strive to ensure that women have equal rights have higher rates of economic growth, education, lower mortality rates, smaller and healthier families and better educated population.

Vanita Viswanath (1993) in *NGOs and Women's Development in rural south India - A Comparative Analysis* evaluates and compares the role of two NGOs in providing women's development among the poor agricultural communities of Karnataka. The author finds that the NGOs women's programme has a far reaching impact on development.

Yadhav (1999) in 'Judiciary and Gender Laws: A Perceptual Survey', *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, in her article examines in detail various aspects and issues having a bearing on the changing status of women vis-à-vis their male counterpart.

King and Hill (1998) in *Women's Education in Developing Countries* explain how deprivations of different levels of education of women have effects on women's fertility, mortality rates, life expectancy, and income. The book also describes the effects of women's education on family welfare. The authors look at family size and women's labour status and earnings. They examine child and maternal health, as well as investments in children's education. Their investigation demonstrates that women with a better education enjoy greater economic growth and provide a more nurturing family life. It suggests that when a country denies women an equal education, the nation's welfare suffers.

Karmakar and Ghosh (2005) in *Role of Women in the Self-Help Group* said that self-help groups enhance the quality of the status of women as participants, decision makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic and socio-cultural life. In all stages of economic and social activities, involvement of women becomes essential. They further said that self-help groups encourage women to take active part in the socio-economic progress in the nation. The groups empower women and claim them self-made and self-disciplined. It has inculcated a great confidence in the minds of rural women to succeed in their day to day life.

K.P.Singh (2001) in 'Women, Work and Inequality: A Case Study of Punjab' in the book *Modernity, Feminism and Women Empowerment* edited by Abha Avasthi and A.K.Srivastava analyses the situation in Punjab and Haryana

saying that the participation of women in economic development in both the states are very high . The two states have a female labour force participation rate of about 31 per cent and in both states 30 per cent of the female populations are engaged in expanded domestic activities. This shows that there are a number of economically active women in both the States.

Manohar (1983) in *Socio-Economic Status of Indian Women* says that the socio-economic condition, poor-implementation of existing laws and regulations and government policies have a direct bearing both on the women worker and the status of women. Her studies observe that social conditions continue to be women's rival. Women are separated from development by the economic situation which is categorised by class structure. The socio-economic situations have a negative impact on women's participation.

Neetha (2000) in *Adverse Sex Ratios and Labour Market Participation of Women: Trends, Patterns and Linkages* says that if women become more and more involved in economic activities outside the household, the status of women in the society will increase which in turn will lead to an increase in the social value of a girl child. In addition to this, she stated that the status of the girl child in the family will further rise through this economic independence.

In *Socio - Economic Development of Rural Women*, Choudhury (2011) made suggestions for improving the status of women in the society and for solving their various problems, specifically socio- economic condition of rural women.

Banerjee (1985) in *Modernisation and Marginalisation* highlights the importance and amount of the economic role played by women through their active participation in various agricultural actions. The author further says that women's role in agriculture is so important because without them nothing can be done. As a result of modernization of agriculture, labour force participation of women has increased. This has provided them with an opportunity to have access to new knowledge, and women are now taking independent decisions relating to agricultural production and development.

Papola and Sharma (1999) in *Gender and Employment in India* found that women have less entrée to higher position. The employer's outlook is a most important factor contributing to women's low share of employment, which tend to place women in a secondary position and under the suppression to men.

Kalpagam (2011) in her book interrogates current issues on gender and development in India. A number of issues relating to livelihood and social security that impinge on women's lives that have come to fore in context of globalization and liberalization of the Indian economy are discussed. At the same time, the discourse on women's empowerment has flourished both in the state and in the civil society, although with multiple meanings and approaches to it. The impact of information and communication technologies on women in the informal sector is also analysed. Climate change is foreseen to increase women's vulnerabilities on account of livelihood and food insecurities. An inclusive approach that involves women in participatory development and decentralized democratic governance will

strengthen women's empowerment as evident from their roles in the panchayats. Certain insights and strategies are also suggested for grassroots women's activism.

Scope of Study

Benefit of imparting proper education to women had shown the path of socio-economic development in Mizoram. Socio-economic development of Mizoram squarely rested upon the women for the reason of being more enterprising than men folks. In agriculture occupation and economy, women become the main workforce in family economy because they do agricultural work plus all kinds of household works. Not only in primary sector of economy but also in secondary and service sector women are working to earn for livelihood.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the contributions of Mizo Women in socio-economic development of Mizoram in the past and in modern time.
- To examine the role of Women Organizations and Groups in socio-economic development of Mizoram

Research questions

- Will greater participation of Mizo women in various socio-economic activities lead to a higher rate of development for Mizoram?
- Are women Non-Government Organisations effective for the promotion of the position of Mizo women?
- What effect do the various policies and programmes of the Government have on the women of Mizoram?
- Will formation of women-centric cooperative societies and Self-Help Groups result in improvement of the standard of living of women in Mizoram?

Methodology

The study was based on secondary data and the primary data collected through quantitative and qualitative methods.

Out of the eight districts in the State, three districts viz., Kolasib, Aizawl and Lunglei were selected using simple random sampling method. Again from these districts, respondents were selected through similar sampling method.

Quantitative data was collected by a sample survey of respondents using questionnaire and interview schedule. A structured and uniform questionnaire which canvassed the issues connected to the objectives of the study was distributed among the sampled respondents. This was supplemented by an interview of knowledgeable individuals, residing at different parts of the State, who are engaged in the field under study. The data

obtained from primary sources were then tabulated using percentage method.

In addition to primary data, available books, research articles, journals, and Government documents on the subject and related areas were also consulted to get relevant data and information.

Significance of the study

According to the wants and necessities of the house hold, a woman needs to move to and fro, and engages herself in varies task of work whether it is useful or sterile. However, because of old beliefs women are not allowed step out of their homes to get employed and even if they do so it is because of poverty and deprivation. The changing need of the economic and the want for increasing family income could be the major factors for women employment.

Involved in a number of activities, Indian women play a vital role in the Indian economy to provide for the survival of their families. Women constitute one-third of the total labour force and half of the agricultural labour force in India.⁸ They contribute to development through production of goods and services for the market or family enterprises. Majority of the working women are employed in the unorganised sector such as domestic works, community work petty commercial trade etc which are often not measured and valued in quantitative terms in national accounts.

⁸ S.N. Tripathy (2003). *Women in Informal Sector*. New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House.p.92

The ILO highlighted that due to the different economic, social and cultural conditions prevailing in each region, female work participation rate varies from one place to another. For that reason, the social condition, in general, has come in the way of women participation in the economic activities in India.⁹ Women's participation to development is underestimated and hardly gets any recognition. However, recently it has been realised by census numerators that in rural areas, housewives are major producers in their own right and that they are the backbone for the survival of the family. Women working in these sectors till today are not touched by state benefits nor are their services taken into account. Therefore, the study of women's participation in needed so as to improve the position of women.

Chapterisation

The entire study has been divided into seven chapters which are as follows:-

The first chapter introduces the basics of the research topic, the main concept and ideas, statement of the problem, review of available literature, scope of study, objectives of the study, methodology applied for the research and significance of the study.

The second chapter makes a conceptual study of women in India. It examines the customs and tradition, the role women in family, education, social change and the Constitutional provisions for women in India

⁹ ILO (1987): *World Labour Report*, Oxford University Press.

The third chapter makes an effort on an extensive study of the socio-economic profile of Mizoram; studying the position of early Mizo women, their life in the society, family, economy, politics and education and also the present scenario. This chapter also studies the impact of women's education in Mizoram.

The fourth chapter has carried out a study of different women groups and organisations in Mizoram.

The fifth chapter has dealt with the Mizo women and Governmental institutions and interventions, studying the different programmes and policies under the Central Government and State Government.

The sixth chapter consists of analysis of empirical data.

The seventh and concluding chapter consists of the summary and findings of the research work. Suggestions for improvement in the position of women are also presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER-II

WOMEN IN INDIA: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

The previous chapter which is an introductory chapter comprises of introduction to the study, the main concepts and ideas of the study, statement of the problems, review of literature; review from books, articles, reports etc, scope of study, objective of study, research questions, the methodology used and outline of the chapters. The current chapter makes a conceptual study of women in India.

The status of women is mostly determined by the structure of the society or family.¹ A country is deemed to be advanced if its women are advanced. A society cannot progress without the contribution of the womenfolk.

The term status refers to the position of an individual in a social system. Status also encompasses in itself the notions of rights and obligations of superiority and inferiority in terms of power, authority and grading.² Each status or position is examined in terms of a role which expresses the behavioral pattern of the human beings in a social system of social relationship.³ The Constitution of India makes no discrimination between men and women and the rights and privileges are equally enjoyed by them. However, the status of women, in many respects, is not equal to men.

¹ Kunja Medhi. (1999). *Women and social change*, Gauhati University: Women studies Research Centre.p.257

² Amit Kumar Gupta (1986). *Women and Society, The Development Perspective*. New Delhi: Criterion Publications.

³ *Ibid.*,

History tells us that women have played an important role for the country. They took gallant role in the freedom movement. Today also we find outstanding women with great potentialities in different fields. However, this advancement of just a handful of women does not bring about the higher status of women in the society.

Many attempts have been made to raise the status of women through legislation and by the Government of India. The social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ranade, Vivekananda were the pioneers for the uplift of the status of women among the Hindus, while Syed Ahmad Khan followed by many others including Zakir Hussain lead the movement of education among the Muslims. The abolition of the Sati system was the first social reform step taken up by Raja Ram Moham Roy, which was followed by various reforms in the institution of marriage and family.

Deprivation of women is not a nation-specific event but their condition is almost the same throughout the world. Women all around the world like in east, west, north and south have not only been marginalized but also had suffered ruthlessly.⁴ The subordination of women has been felt terribly all over the world. The Fourth World Women Conference held at Beijing in 1995 created a global awareness about women issues and on questions as to how a vast majority of women in different countries are being maltreated. Like other male dominated countries in the world, women of India are also assigned a secondary status i.e. a weaker section of the society, who is bounded in the four walls

⁴ Kiran Saxena (2000). *Women and Politics*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.p.13

of a home. On the other hand, the status of women in a Hindu society has changed from time to time.⁵

Customs and Tradition

In ancient India, the birth of a daughter was not celebrated but it did not pose a threat of burden to the parents.⁶ Girls had the freedom of receiving education and military training and there are instances of women administrators in ancient India. No limitation was imposed on them. They had the liberty to choose their spouse for marriages.

The status of Indian women took a turn in the medieval times. Some evil socio-religious practices, superstitions, customs and traditions cropped up in the social system. This greatly degraded the status of the women. Some of the social practices were – early marriage, forced widowhood, sati system, purdah system, dowry system, female infanticide and the evil practices of polygamy and polyandry. All these social customs and practices of the medieval time became a hindrance for women's progress and made them victims of social oppression and depression.

The custom of early marriage which started in the medieval India was performed at the tender age of three or four.⁷ The girl was married at an age where she should have been playing with dolls. There was however no maximum age limit

⁵ Kiran Devendra (1994). *Changing Status of Women in India*. New Delhi: Vikash Publication.p.174.

⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁷ Neera Desai and M. Krishnaraja (1990). *Women and Society in India*. New Delhi: Ajanta Publications p.271.

for her spouse. She was married even with a man of 50-70 years of age, which led to a large number of child wives death in some cases and that of early widowhood in other cases. Child marriage was thus responsible for the increasing number of widows and because of early marriage; the death rate of children was very high.

There is no evidence of when the evil custom of sati entered into the society. It was practised among the upper caste Hindus for at least 2000 years. Sati was a ritual in which a young wife or even an old one had to sacrifice herself on her husband's pyre. It is believed that the main dharma of a wife is to serve her husband and when the husband dies, she becomes irrelevant for the family and the society. As such, the newly-widowed wife had to sacrifice her life in the pyre. This social practice of sati or widow-burning thus became rampant in many parts of India.

The Muslim invasion of India brought purdah system which was absent in ancient India. Purdah means covering a woman's face with a veil to screen herself from the eye of strangers. They covered themselves with a burca from head to toe. While those of lower classes were completely free from this system, it was strictly practised by the women of higher classes and mostly belonging to northern India.

The dowry system, like the purdah system, started in the medieval period. Dowry has become a burden to the parents of the girls who were financially weak. It has become a social custom rather than a social evil. The Government of India has passed the Dowry Prohibition Act in 1961 to check the social

evil. But still till we find that young men and their parents who are interested in accepting dowry.

Another evil custom that prevailed among the orthodox Hindus was female infanticide. As female child was a burden for the family because of the dowry at her marriage, they were immediately killed after birth. This practice of female infanticide was mostly common among the tribes of Rajputana, Maharastra and some parts of north India.⁸ An infant female child was killed by drugging or by either mixing poison in the milk.

Women had no legal safeguard to the possession of economic position in the Hindu family. A woman had to maintain her livelihood at the mercy of the male members of the family. They could not inherit her father's property nor her deceased husband's property.

Polygamy the practice of having more than one wife was prevalent in Bengal, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. This lowered the status of women. Polygamy had a legal sanction among the Muslim whereas for the Hindus, it was a crime. Till today, the legislation has not taken any steps for eradicating this evil custom.

Polyandry the practice of having more than one husband was practiced in Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and among the Todar in the Nilgiris of Madras. It was followed on the grounds of the limited area of land, to control population and to bind the family together.

⁸<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=I0oY1mixjTMC&pg=PA45&lpg=PA45&dq> &source. accessed on 13/3/2011

The status of women as depicted by Manu in the Manusmriti places the women in a very low position. The Manusmriti also known as *Manav Dharam Shastra*, is the earliest metrical work on Brahminical Dharma in Hinduism. While defending Manusmriti as divine code of conduct for all including women, apologist often quote the verse: “*yatr naryasto pojyantay, ramantay tatr devta(3/56)* (where women are provided place of honour, gods are pleased and reside there in that household), but they deliberately forget all those verses that are full of prejudice, hatred and discrimination against women.

Here are some of the ‘celebrated’ derogatory comments about women in the Manusmriti :

- “Swabhav ev narinam” – 2/213. It is the nature of women to seduce men in this world; for that reason the wise are never unguarded in the company of females.
- “Avidvam samlam.....” – 2/214. Women, true to their class character, are capable of leading astray men in this world, not only a fool but even a learned and wise man. Both become slaves of desire.
- “Matra swastra” – 2/215. Wise people should avoid sitting alone with one’s mother, daughter or sister. Since carnal desire is always strong, it can lead to temptation.
- “Naudwahay.....” – 3/8. One should not marry women who has have reddish hair, redundant parts of the body (such as six fingers), one who is often sick, one without hair or having excessive hair and one who has red eyes.

- “Nraksh vraksh” – 3/9. One should not marry women whose names are similar to constellations, trees, rivers, those from a low caste, mountains, birds, snakes, slaves or those whose names inspires terror.
- “Yasto na bhavet ” – 3/10. Wise men should not marry women who do not have a brother and whose parents are not socially well known.
- “Uchayangh.....” – 3/11. Wise men should marry only women who are free from bodily defects, with beautiful names, grace/gait like an elephant, moderate hair on the head and body, soft limbs and small teeth.
- “Shudr-aiv bharya.....” – 3/12. Brahman men can marry Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaish and even Shudra women but Shudra men can marry only Shudra women.
- “Na Brahman kshatriya..” – 3/14. Although Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaish men have been allowed inter-caste marriages, even in distress they should not marry Shudra women.
- “Heenjati striyam.....” – 3/15. When twice born [Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaish] men in their folly marry low caste Shudra women, they are responsible for the degradation of their whole family. Accordingly, their children adopt all the demerits of the Shudra caste.
- “Shudram shaynam.....” – 3/17. A Brahman who marries a Shudra woman, degrades himself and his whole family ,becomes morally degenerated, loses Brahman status and his children too attain status of Shudra.

- “Daiv pitrya.....” – 3/18. The offerings made by such a person at the time of established rituals are neither accepted by God nor by the departed soul; guests also refuse to have meals with him and he is bound to go to hell after death.
- “Chandalash” – 3/240. Food offered and served to Brahman after Shradh ritual should not be seen by a pig, a cock, a dog, and menstruating women.
- “Na ashniyat.....” – 4/43. A Brahman, true defender of his class, should not have his meals in the company of his wife and even avoid looking at her. Furthermore, he should not look towards her when she is having her meals or when she sneezes/yawns.
- “Na ajyanti.....” – 4/44. A Brahman in order to preserve his energy and intellect must not look at women who apply collyrium to her eyes, one who is massaging her nude body or one who is delivering a child.
- “Mrshyanti.....” – 4/217. One should not accept meals from a woman who has extra marital relations; nor from a family exclusively dominated/managed by women or a family whose 10 days of impurity because of death have not passed.
- “Balya va.....” – 5/150. A female child, young woman or old woman is not supposed to work independently even at her place of residence.
- “Balye pitorvashay.....” – 5/151. Girls are supposed to be in the custody of their father when they are children, women must be under the custody of their husband when married and

under the custody of her son as widows. In no circumstances is she allowed to assert herself independently.

○ “Asheela kamvrto.....” – 5/157. Men may be lacking virtue, be sexual perverts, immoral and devoid of any good qualities, and yet women must constantly worship and serve their husbands.

○ “Na ast strinam.....” – 5/158. Women have no divine right to perform any religious ritual, nor make vows or observe a fast. Her only duty is to obey and please her husband and she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven.

○ “Kamam to.....” – 5/160. At her pleasure [after the death of her husband], let her emaciate her body by living only on pure flowers, roots of vegetables and fruits. She must not even mention the name of any other men after her husband has died.

○ “Vyabhacharay.....” – 5/167. Any woman violating duty and code of conduct towards her husband is disgraced and becomes a patient of leprosy. After death, she enters womb of jackal.

○ “Kanyam bhajanti.....” – 8/364. In case women enjoy sex with a man from a higher caste, the act is not punishable. But on the contrary, if women enjoy sex with lower caste men, she is to be punished and kept in isolation.

○ “Utman sevmansto.....” – 8/365. In case a man from a lower caste enjoys sex with a woman from a higher caste, the person in question is to be awarded the death sentence. And if a

person satisfies his carnal desire with women of his own caste, he should be asked to pay compensation to the women's faith.

○ "Ya to kanya....." – 8/369. In case a woman tears the membrane [hymen] of her vagina, she shall instantly have her head shaved or two fingers cut off and made to ride on donkey.

○ "Bhartaram....." – 8/370. In case a women, proud of the greatness of her excellence or her relatives, violates her duty towards her husband, the King shall arrange to have her thrown before dogs at a public place.

○ "Pita rakhshati....." – 9/3. Since women are not capable of living independently, she is to be kept under the custody of her father as child, under her husband as a woman and under her son as widow.

○ "Imam hi sarw....." – 9/6. It is the duty of all husbands to exert total control over their wives. Even physically weak husbands must strive to control their wives.

○ "Pati bharyam" – 9/8. The husband, after the conception of his wife, becomes the embryo and is born again of her. This explains why women are called Jaya.

○ "Panam durjan....." – 9/13. Consuming liquor, association with wicked persons, separation from her husband, rambling around, sleeping for unreasonable hours and dwelling - are six demerits of women.

○ "Naita rupam....." – 9/14. Such women are not loyal and have extra marital relations with men without consideration for their age.

- “Poonshchalya.....” – 9/15. Because of their passion for men, immutable temper and natural heartlessness, they are not loyal to their husbands.
- “Na asti strinam.....” – 9/18. While performing namkarm and jatkarm, Vedic mantras are not to be recited by women, because women are lacking in strength and knowledge of Vedic texts. Women are impure and represent falsehood.
- “Devra...sapinda.....” – 9/58. On failure to produce offspring with her husband, she may obtain offspring by cohabitation with her brother-in-law [devar] or with some other relative [sapinda] on her in-law’s side.
- “Vidwayam.....” – 9/60. He who is appointed to cohabit with a widow shall approach her at night, be anointed with clarified butter and silently beget one son, but by no means a second one.
- “Yatha vidy.....” – 9/70. In accordance with established law, the sister-in-law [bhabhi] must be clad in white garments; with pure intent her brother-in-law [devar] will cohabit with her until she conceives.
- “Ati kramay.....” – 9/77. Any women who disobey orders of her lethargic, alcoholic and diseased husband shall be deserted for three months and be deprived of her ornaments.
- “Vandyashtamay.....” – 9/80. A barren wife may be superseded in the 8th year; she whose children die may be superseded in the 10th year and she who bears only daughters

may be superseded in the 11th year; but she who is quarrelsome may be superseded without delay.

- “Trinsha.....” – 9/93. In case of any problem in performing religious rites, males between the age of 24 and 30 should marry a female between the age of 8 and 12.
- “Yambrahmansto.....” – 9/177. In case a Brahman man marries Shudra woman, their son will be called ‘Parshav’ or ‘Shudra’ because his social existence is like a dead body.⁹

According to Hindu mythology, the Manusmriti is the word of Brahma, it is classified as the most authoritative statement on Dharma. In traditional Hindu society, *dharma* has historically included within its sphere such phenomena as Vedic ritual, ethical conduct, behaviour and duties appropriate to one's caste, civil and criminal law. Its most common meaning, however, pertained to two principal ideas: that social life should be structured through well-defined and well-regulated classes, and that an individual's life within a class should be organized into defined stages. A Hindu's *dharma* is therefore affected by the person's age, caste, class, occupation, and gender.¹⁰ From the Manusmriti it is clearly known that the status of women was very low.

Women and Family

Family is the centre of security, resources, power, shelter, love, affection and insurance against the problems of the world.

⁹ <http://nirmukta.com/2011/08/27/the-status-of-women-as-depicted-by-manu-in-the-manusmriti/> accessed on 1/4/2012

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharma> accessed on 1/4/2012

It is a social unit where men, women and children live in mutual ties, obligations, understandings and responsibilities. It is an important area where the members of the family tie up their feelings of affection together. It is through the family that the members of the family can fulfill their aims and objectives of life. Family is the first institution which prepares them as social beings and it is through this family that tradition and culture, moral and spiritual values are being passed on from one generation to another.

Most of the families in India are of patriarchal structure. So, it is not a surprise that the women have a subordinate status which results in their deprivation of educational facilities, employment opportunities, etc. In spite of the fact that a woman performs innumerable responsibilities, women are still deprived in the society and family. Regardless of her hard work and dedication to the family, women still play a marginal role in decision making. In a patriarchal family, a male child is looked upon as the heir of the family. The birth of a son is much celebrated in a family but it is not the same case with the birth of a female child.

Women and Education

Education is the key to success in life for both men and women. Education plays a vital role to uplift women. A woman can identify herself, can establish herself in life and take share in the decision-making body only when she is educated. Education enables a woman to cross the barriers of race, age, class or status. It makes her conscious about her legal rights. It keeps her

fit and strengthens her mind to fight against all kinds of social ills and injustices. Education is the door that unlocks to welcome her into a world of good health and healthy children and an understanding husband just as much as it enables her to fight for her less fortunate sisters.¹¹ Education has the important value system to uplift the society. It is the light, which enlightens the darkness of the society. Education frees the society from all kinds of evils.

Education comes from the Latin word ‘educa’ which means bringing out the potentialities of the individual for self-development.¹² Education is a catalyst of change which tends to change the attitudes and aspirations of the general mass. It can be stated that it is the most powerful instrument to bring about a social change.

Women’s development and empowerment is possible only through education. Moreover, educating women will lead to favourable effects on the family, society and the country as a whole. Education facilitates women in changing her status in the family and society. Making women literate and educating them is essential not only for equality and empowerment but for the development of the nation.

The Constitution of India has made provisions for women’s education. There is no discrimination and every child has equal right to education. In pursuance of the Constitutional directives, the government has enacted a number of laws and programmes in the Five Year plan to raise the status of women

¹¹Promilla Kapur (2001). *Empowering Indian Women*. New Delhi: Haranand Publications.p.42.

¹² S.K Pandit (1998). *Women in Society*. New Delhi: Rajat Publicatio.p.169.

through education. However, women's literacy rate is much lower than that of men. Women's literacy rate in 2011 census was 65.46 percent while male literacy was 82.14 percent.¹³ To bring about an all-round development, women need to be educated. Parents should provide equal facilities and opportunities. The age-old tradition of deprivation of education to a female child should be disposed.

Education is the most powerful instrument to bring social change. Women's development is possible only through education. Education of women means the education of home, society and the country. The social reformers have emphasized on women's education. Mother is the primary teacher of the child. A child's basic education starts at home. Good citizens are an asset to a country and it is the mother who makes this asset of the Nation. Education is the way through which the progress and development of women are possible. Education facilitates women in changing her status in the family and society. Though education for both boys and girls are necessary, the boys are comparatively in good position in the society. Male children had a preferential place in the family where as girls are in most of the families neglected, less cared for and deprived of their basic rights. In most of the families girls don't get enough scope of educational facilities. Till now, people could not come out of their age old superstitions about girls and they think that expenditure on girls means misuse of money and manpower because after some years girls will be handed over to the husband's family through marriage. It is only through the light of

¹³ <http://censusindia.gov.in/> accessed on 23/6/2012

education people can come out of this kind of superstitions and prejudices. Making women literate and educate them are pre-requisites not only for their equality and empowerment but for the development of the Nation.¹⁴ It will inspire women to come forward and lead to active participation in social life and will ultimately lead to the participation in the administration of the State. Education is the only instrument which will make women aware of their due share in public life and responsibilities. More and more women will come out of the four walls of home and take part in the Nation-building process of the country. Education of women will place them on equal footing with men in decision- making positions in economic and political fields.¹⁵

All over the world, the movement for improving women's status has always emphasized education as the most significant instrument for social change.¹⁶ The presence of the Foreign Missionaries, introduction of English language as a medium of instruction brought some changes in the education system. The influence of the Foreign Missionaries as well as the struggles of the social reformers was a landmark in the history of women's education. The Constitution of India has made provision for women's education. There is no discrimination and both the boys and girls should get equal facilities of education. In pursuance of the Constitutional directives, the Government has enacted a number of laws and programmes in Five Year Plans to raise the status of women particularly through education. In spite of the Governmental steps women's education ratio has not increased

¹⁴ Sushama Sahay (1998). *Women and Empowerment: Approaches and Strategies*. New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House.p.125

¹⁵ Sushama Sahay, *op.cit.*, p.125

¹⁶ Arun Kumar (2002). *Empowering Women*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons.p.83.

much. In 1951, female literacy was 7.93 percent in the country and in 2011, the female literacy consist of 65.46 percent whereas male literacy consist of 82.14 percent. Therefore, women need to educate themselves because the country suffers from the lack of education specially women education. The parents should provide equal facilities for education of boys and girls. The age-old tradition of girls need no education should be thrown out.¹⁷ Until and unless women are educated a society cannot make progress. Through women's education only the family life and the social life will be enlightened.

In spite of the various efforts done by the reform movements, the social development was very slow in the country.¹⁸ However, women were not lagging too far behind. With the spread of education women became aware of their rights and duties. Women began to think for themselves, mobilize themselves and organize movements against the British Government, demanded voting right for them. They participated in the Constitution-making body and also shared in the Government till the first Government formed in 1952 after independence. Women of our country have entered in the Parliament, in the State administration, in the local administration, in every services, business and games and sports. But their numbers are very few. Education is a powerful tool in the emancipation and development of women. The importance of education was felt internationally. The different organs of the United Nations Organizations particularly UNICEF and experts

¹⁷Premlata Pujari, and Vijay Kumar Kaushik (1994). *Women power in India*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers. p74.

¹⁸ *Ibid*,

in women's liberation suggested for women's education as the basic step in establishing women's equality with men. Education is really the sword through which a woman gains knowledge about the outside world and can equip herself to every situation both inside the country and to the outside world.

Women and Social Change

Social change in general term refers to change in the nature, the social institution, the social behaviour, or the social relations of a society, community of the people or other social structures. Changes in the lives of the people take place due to the change in society and these changes are affected by the technological development, urbanisation, modernisation, etc. Thus, changes can be said to be affected by two factors - one is the materialistic factor like economic production and technology and the second is the idealistic factor like thoughts and beliefs.¹⁹ The material factor will bring change in the lives of women. Economic production and scientific technology is that factor, which will change in the living pattern of women. Today's women are also affected with the new inventions of technology. But the question raises whether majority of the women have the ability to adjust themselves with the new technologies and change their situations i.e. come out of the discriminated, male-dominated society to a free and equal one.

The second factor i.e. the ideas; beliefs and thoughts can change the society. The ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, Karl Marx

¹⁹ Walter Fernandes, and Sanjay Barbara (ed.) (2002). *Changing Women's Status: Focus on Northeast*. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre.p.37.

have great effects on the minds of women. Their ideas and thoughts have changed the society. Social changes also take place due to external aggression and internal unrest, natural calamities and women are the worst-affected by such calamities. Change is a common phenomenon in the lives of human beings. In the primal age when people had no residence, consumed fruits and raw meat, there was no question of tension and status. With the course of time, people developed and later on family came into existence because man cannot live alone. Spontaneous change and development of human mind, thoughts and ideas began to take place from pre- social stage to social stage and it would continue forever.²⁰

To bring about development, every country needs change. Change is a reality. Changes occur in the human mind. So change is the most pervasive aspect of life.²¹ It directly affects human life socially, economically, politically and all other aspects of life. Social change has effects on different sections of people. Here the change is related with the women and social change. The term social change may be defined as, ‘the structural transformation of political, social and economic systems and institution to create a more equitable and just society’. According to the Britannica, social change in sociology is the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure characterised by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organizations, or value systems. The social system includes various groups, organizations, institutions and

²⁰ Walter Fernandes, and Sanjay Barbara, *op. cit.*, p.37.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.37.

society. The nature of change occurs slowly in different styles and patterns and the people are to accommodate themselves with the changing needs of time.

Empowerment and development of women is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable them to realise and identify the powers in all spheres of life. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors – economic, social, political, education, health care and nutrition and legal.²² Women are oppressed in a society due to the social structure and it is determined by patriarchy that has made women a powerless creature in the hands of men. Therefore, women are to be empowered socially, economically and politically. The government has taken various steps and projects to empower women. But these laws and provisions will prove futile unless they break free from their oppression and male dominance. They must take initiatives to condemn all these social oppressions and organise movements to capture power. Only then will their status can be changed.

The concept of social change for women includes qualitative changes in health, nutrition, food and educational status. All around the world, the movement for improving women's status has always emphasised education as the most significant instrument for social change. The social reformers of the 19th century tried to remove all the evil customs and prejudices from the society through education. Health and nutrition is another factor which changes the status of women and subsequently leads to social change. Unfortunately, women

²² Arun Kumar, *op. cit.*, p.78.

with their multi-tasks to perform in the household are unaware of their health and nutrition. In the rural areas, women suffer from the problem of ill health and malnutrition. Their lack of education causes them to be ignorant about health and hygiene.

Women's contribution in the economic field cannot be neglected either. Even in the lower income group, women supplement family income despite her household responsibilities. This is the same case in the middle class families. Even though there are many scopes, there is still evidence of social discrimination against women in both government and private companies. It is necessary to set up effective machineries for the implementation and enforcement of laws by the government. Thus, it can be seen that although there are numerous changes in different fields of the society, it has failed to reach the female population.

Development and empowerment of women is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable them to realize and identify their powers in all spheres of life. There is continued inequality and vulnerability of women in all sectors—economic, social, political, education, health care and nutrition and legal.²³ Due to the social structure and the patriarchal society, women are oppressed and are made a powerless creature in the hand of men. Hence women are to be developed and empowered socially, economically, and politically. These cannot be imposed from outside and it has to be acquired by women through consciousness, demand and movement. The Government has taken various steps and projects for developing

²³ Arun Kumar, *op. cit.*,p.78.

women's empowerment. But these laws and provisions are meaningless unless women become aware of their oppression and male domination. They must take initiatives to condemn all these social oppression and organize movements to capture power. Only then their status can be changed.

The idea of social justice is unfamiliar to women unless they are economically and socially developed. Women need a change which is initiated to the benefit and development of women. The concept of social change for women includes qualitative changes in the health, nutrition, food and educational status. All over the world, the movement for developing women's status has always emphasized education as the most significant instrument for social change. Social reformers of the 19th century tried to eradicate all the evil customs and prejudices from the society through education. Later on education was used to create consciousness among women. The Foreign Missionaries in India took vigorous steps for the development of women education. The Government of India knowing that for the development of the nation the education of women is a crucial key to success has continued to take vital steps for their educational development.

Health and nutrition is another factor where the improvement of it indicates the development of the status of women and social change can take place. But unfortunately, in a patriarchal society woman has no time to look after her health as she has to look after her family and is indulged in household jobs. In the rural areas women are suffering from the problem of ill health and mal-nutrition. Women in a village cannot imagine

about the healthy and nutritious food for her and this is mainly due the ignorance, poverty and negligence.

Women perform restless work for the family but in spite of that she gets nothing except oppression from men. In the middle class families, women work to supplement their family's income. In the upper classes, women work mainly to develop their talents and raise their own status. However, there is a wide gap between the opportunities available to women as compare to men. Therefore, the Government has to take effective steps to remove this gap.

The gender based division of labour which is considered, to be the root cause of inequality needs to be changed. The change in the division of labour both at the home and in public sphere is instrumental in order to produce greater gender equality. Equality in every respect in the society- socially, economically and politically is needed for women to bring about all round development of the country. Various steps have been adopted to make women's development more effective. However, as long as women do not come out of their shells, the prospect of social change will not be effective.

Changing Trends in Mizoram

A slow change is noticed in the thought of women towards family and society. Before parents showed their confidence only in sons who are well- placed to take care of their ailing parents. Today, parents express their confidence on daughters too who would extend help to them. Now a days, girls in the Mizo

families do not confine themselves within the four walls of home and each and every one tries to earn in order to extend financial help to her parents and later on to her husbands. There is no area left vacant where women's entry is impossible. The age-old traditional ideas about women are changing rapidly both in the families and outside world too. Even in the rural areas of Mizoram, the attitude towards girl is changing.

The phrase "Women's Empowerment" has become an important topic of discussion amongst the academicians and policy makers in the state. The Government of Mizoram like the Central Government has undertaken many women related policies for the empowerment of women.

There are laws that stand with the women population but prejudices, hostile attitudes and resistance and social taboos still hold them back. It is therefore necessary to set up effective machinery for the implementation and enforcement of laws by the Government and then only the various progressive steps towards women's welfare will be fruitful. However, in spite of the many hurdles in their way to success, more and more women are taking part in the social activities, economic activities and political activities too.

Women and the Indian Constitution

To safeguard Constitutional rights of women and to prevent them from discriminations, a number of statutes have been created in India. The Constitution promised complete equality to women. It has fulfilled many of the promises of the

Constitution especially in regards to societal changes, but practically it is still too far from satisfaction. However, change has emerged in the present scenario of political system in India. Today, the Lok Sabha Speaker Shrimati Meira Kumar has proved her Constitutional rights in India. Of course, former Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi was an exceptional figure not only in India but also in the whole world. In the male dominated society of India, women have very limited scope to come up educationally and politically, but today people are aware of their Constitutional rights more and more. It is not only in India where male domination of society exists but in the whole world; it is because of the basic fact that God created men physically stronger than women. But a man is incomplete without a woman; no family could be built without a mother. Similarly, the nation can not prosper without the contributions of women in the society. Physical domination by strength no longer holds good in the present era. Male bias society is being changed from its original conception. A foreign observer of Indian culture from China said, "I visited Lucknow last December and I got the impression that there were only men and children in the streets almost no women". This publication in the newspaper of The Hindu on 2nd April, 1995 was the picture of Indian society. The Constitutional rights as provided to all men and women of the Nation by the Constitution require being upheld in its true sense.

When the Constitution of India was framed, there was hardly any debate on women issues. The debate and discussion was set on other matters. Gender issues did not fit in the list of the agenda. Their main discussion was on policy approach and

social justice in general. However, there was the difference of opinion concerning the matter on policy approach i.e. some of them were in favour of non discrimination as a rule and those who advocated protective discrimination with equal or greater emphasis. The Constitution of India made a drastic change by granting to women equal social and political status. The traditional view towards women as members of family, as daughters, as wives and as mothers was changed. The Constitution gave status to each and every woman to act as a citizen of the country and a part and parcel in the nation building process. The Chapters of the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India stand truthfully for the function of the principles of non discrimination, women are entitled the same rights as men as citizen of India.

Constitutional Provisions

When India got its independence, the powers were shifted from the hands of the foreigners to the native people. The people of India were positive about the social, political and economical changes that would take place through Constitutional and legislative measures. With the demands for social change, it was decided that the Constitutional provisions and legislative actions are the only instrument that could change the social status of women. So, an attempt has been made to make a Constitutional framework and also to provide the various provisions through the Constitution relating to women so that they do not suffer any

discrimination. There are various provisions that protect women. In the Preamble, the Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy and election laws – the principles is directly laid down. Besides these provisions there are various laws, policies, schemes and projects which have been adopted relating to women. The Constitution guarantees the basic rights of human beings. It adopted the democratic system of administration in which the voice of the people is respected. The Constitution guarantees the best kind of liberty, equality and justice and it adopted the Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties. The Constitution makers realized that the law had to work as an instrument of social change. Keeping these in mind, the Constitution has guaranteed to every citizen certain basic rights and ordered the State to follow the social policies to maintain justice to every section of the society which are expressed in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policies.

The equality of the sexes is essential for the National development. The involvement of the entire population is important to bring about development in the Nation. The Constitution makers were aware of the sociological problems faced by women. It is necessary to provide opportunities to exercise human rights to promote the economic and educational interest of women and to make them free from the male domination. The society needs to get rid of sexual inequality and protect women from any kind of social injustice and exploitation. With the aim of protecting women, the Constitution has done three things. Firstly any discrimination on the ground of sex is

prohibited. Secondly the State is given power to make special provisions on women with their physiological, biological and social position. Thirdly, the Directive Principles of State Policies gives directions to the State to work for the betterment of the women. Besides these the Preamble of the Constitution makes available certain principles for its citizens, which are also benefited by women.

Fundamental Rights

There are six Fundamental Rights which are guaranteed to the citizen of India by the Constitution. They are – Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, Right Against Exploitation, Right to Religion, Cultural and Educational Right and Right to Constitutional Remedies. The 44th Amendment Act eliminated the Right to Property. The Constitution established the equality of sex law. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law to both men and women. Article 15 states that a citizen shall not be discriminated on ground of sex; be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition. The special provisions, which are in favour of women, need not be restricted to measure which are beneficial in the strict sense. Restrictions upon the right of alienation of women have similarly been upheld. Similarly reservation of seats for women in local bodies or educational institutions has been held to be valid in view of the provisions of the Art. 15(3). We further find in Article 16(1) that "there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or

appointment to any office under the State". Article 16(2) says that no citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, residence or any of them be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of any employment or appointment under the State. This guaranteed an important position to women of India. J.Das explained the relative scope of the Article 14, 15, and 16 as Article 14 guarantees the general right of equality. Article 15 and 16 are instances of the same right in favour of citizens in some special circumstances. Article 15 is more general. Article 16, the latter being confined to matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

Article 23 of the Indian Constitution mentions the Right against Exploitation which says that prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour is an offence punishable in accordance with law. This means that human beings should not be treated as goods or chattels through sale or hire. This includes that traffic in women and children used for immoral purposes is totally prohibited. Trafficking of women in India is not a new issue and this evil practices were prevalent since long. This has brought the status of Indian women to a very low status.

Condition of women in India has not been historically very good. It is clear from *Manusmriti* that women did not have much right as compared to men. Further, the women are physically weaker than men and due to this fact also, they have been exploited. Understanding these facts, makers of Indian Constitution has provided these Fundamental Rights for elevating the status of women and giving them a level playing

field. However, in a modern welfare society it is hard to completely accomplish the concept of liberty and equality and unfortunately, women in this country are mostly unaware of their rights because of illiteracy and the oppressive tradition.

Directive Principles of State Policy

As proposed by the Preamble, the Directive Principles of State Policy enlisted in Part IV of the Constitution of India aim to make India a Welfare State by introducing measures of socialism in economic sphere, to provide social security and better standards of sanitation and care for all, to emphasize duty towards women and children and the obligations towards the backward and tribal classes. They are a unique blend of socialistic, liberal, democratic and Gandhian Principles. The Constitution of India has provided enough scope and opportunities for the development of women in India. There are few directions which are specific to women, they are: Article-39(a), 39(d), 39(e), 42 and 44.

Article 39 (a) of the Constitution we find that it directs the state to provide equal right to adequate means of livelihood to men and women.

Article 39(d) directs the state to give equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

Article 39(e) of the Constitution says that the State should ensure that men, women, and children are not forced into work that is unsuitable to their age or strength due to economic necessity.

Article 42 says that the state shall make provisions for securing just and humane working conditions and maternity relief.

Article 44 says that the State shall make an effort to secure for the citizen of India; men and women a uniform civil code. Due to absence of a uniform civil code, women are routinely exploited in the name of personal laws promulgated by religions. This fact was known to the makers of constitution and they urged the states to implement uniform civil code.

The Directive Principles of State Policies are the aims and objectives of the country to be carried out by the State. The makers of the Constitution had a dream of making a welfare State if the State implemented these principles with a sense of moral duty. These principles are expression of the socio-economic objectives of the Constitution. Due to the bad socio-economic condition of the country in the post independence period, the makers of the Constitution gave these directions to the State Government for the all round development of the nation. These principles comprise of the political, social and economic programmes of a democratic State.

The Constitution of India has provided enough scope for the development and protection of women through Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. The State is expected to frame policies, which are completely based on equality of sexes. And to deal with the various desires of the women, much legislation has been made. However, sex discrimination is still a widespread problem in our society.

Fundamental Duties

Article 51 A (e) imposes that duty of every citizen in India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. The Fundamental Duties were added by the 42nd Amendment Act of the Constitution in 1976. We can say that the 42nd Amendment act took place to get rid of the difficulties which have risen in achieving the objective of socio-economic revolution, which would end poverty and ignorance and inequality of opportunity. Article 51A seeks to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. This article tries to find ways to do away with the evil practices of sati, dowry, child marriage etc. It is the duty of every citizen to follow this provision and the duty of the State and legislation to take necessary steps for its implementation. The citizens of India should respect the Fundamental Duties and promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and respect the dignity of women.

The Constitution has provided the opportunity of equal treatment to all citizens where no discrimination of citizens can be made between men and women on the basis of sex. Article 325 of the Constitution further gives women the right to contest in the election. The Constitution has offered sufficient scope of facilities through Constitutional provisions and Articles for the equality and justice of women. However these provisions and articles are not enough as these steps are meaningless, unless and until the women of India are aware of their facilities provided to them by the Constitution. Women need to be educated about their rights. Not only this, despite of the various provisions made, the

situation of women has not improved to the desired extent because of the traditional thoughts and beliefs. The mindset of the Indian society needs to be changed to a liberal attitude towards women. As soon as these changes are made, then only development and justice of women will be possible.

To summarise, the chapter has made a conceptual study of women in India in which we find that because of the customs and traditions and religious beliefs of the different religions, the status of Indian women has suffered a lot in the past and these beliefs till today stand in the way of the development of the status of women in India. The majority of the families in India are of patriarchal structure, in which the women play a nominal role in the family. This makes the Indian women bow their heads down in the family.

On the other hand, with the advent of education and the Constitutional Provisions, Fundamental Duties, Directive Principles of State Policy given to all the citizens of India and the social change in the society brought in by modernisation, urbanisation, development of technology etc., there has been changes in the economic production, wealth and resources etc. and these changes may change the living pattern of women in India. We find a slow but changing trend in Mizoram in which women both in rural and urban areas are venturing out to earn their livelihood. Such activities play an important role in the socio-economic status of the family in particular and the state as whole. Despite of the countless obstacles women face today, we find that women are joining the social activities, economic activities and political activities to greater extent.

CHAPTER-III

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF MIZORAM

The preceding chapter makes a conceptual study of women in India. It examines the customs and tradition and religious belief of India and how these factors stand in the way of the development of women in the Indian society. Nevertheless, as the gate-way of education is introduced to women, the society has begun to see ongoing changes and to enrich this new change in the society the statutes in the Constitutional of India safeguards the rights of women and prevents them from discriminations. The present chapter studies the Socio-Economic profile of Mizoram.

Location, Area, Population and Topography

Mizoram lies between Myanmar in the East, Bangladesh in the West, and on the North Cachar district of Assam and the state of Manipur and on the North West lies Tripura. It is geographically located between 92.15 to 93.20 (E) longitudes and 21.58 to 24.35 (N) latitude. It has 404 km international boundary with Myanmar and 318 km with Bangladesh. The total area of Mizoram is 21,087 sq. km. Thus, constituting about 0.64 percent of the total area of India.¹ The mountain ranges of Mizoram run north to south with an average height of 900metres and with the highest 2157metres above sea level. The hills are rugged and steep. The ranges are separated by rivers flowing; creating deep

¹ Statistical Handbook of Mizoram, 2006, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of Mizoram.

gorges between the hill ranges.² It is located on a tropical region and enjoys a moderate climate. Mizoram enjoys a lovely climate. The summer temperature from 20°C to 30°C and 11°C to 20°C in winter. The average rainfall of Mizoram is 250 cm per year.³ It rains during May to October and winter from December to end of February.

The People

It is believed that the Mizo people migrated to their present inhabitant from somewhere in China around the year 1700 A.D. However, there are no authentic records of their migration into this area. Therefore, it is not possible to ascertain their origin and the year that they settled in the area now called Mizoram. The Mizo historians such as Mr. Liangkhaia and Mr. K. Zawla who wrote the “History of Mizo” have stated that the Mizo people resided in the Chin Hills of Myanmar from 1800 A.D to 1700 A.D and gradually immigrated to their present area.⁴

According to 2011 Census of India, Mizoram’s population has reached approximately 10.91 Lakh. In 2001, Mizoram’s population was 888,573 approximately 8.89 Lakh; an increase of 18.48 percent from the past decade. Mizoram feeds approximately 0.09% of India’s total population. As per census report of Mizoram, of total population figures 1,091,014 male

² C.Lalkima (1997). *Social Welfare Administration in a Tribal State: A Case Study of Mizoram*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications.p.1.

³ Statistical Handbook of Mizoram, 2006, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of Mizoram.

⁴ R.N. Prasad (1987). *Government and Politics in Mizoram*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.p.3.

and female were 552,339 and 538,675 respectively. The majority of Mizo people are Christians.⁵

The Mizo people have rich and colourful heritage which are preserved till today. They celebrate three kinds of Festivals, commonly known as KUT for the Mizo people, viz. *Mim Kut*, *Pawl Kut* and *Chapchar Kut*.

The socio-political system of the early Mizo was ruled by the Chief of the village with his village elders who were appointed by him. The chief was the supreme commander of the village. Every village had a *Zawlbuk* (bachelor's den). The purpose of *Zawlbuk* was to accommodate village bachelors at night to provide security and safeguard the village from raids or any other threats.⁶

The Mizo people live in a close-knit homogeneous society with no class distinction. There is no discrimination on the ground of caste. It is a society where the poor and rich live together and share their joys sorrows whole-heartedly. However, the socio-economic development growing in Mizoram has created an emerging socio-economic gulf between the rich and the poor which was not heard of in the past.

⁵ <http://censusindia.gov.in/> accessed on 23/6/2012

⁶ C.Lalkima, *op.cit.*,p.5

Status of the Early Mizo Women

- **Society and Family**

Historical study of Mizo society, though not very old, reveals that cultural and traditional practices hold back their socio-economic progress. The Mizo family and the society is a strictly patriarchal. Hereditary and family roots pass through the males only. According to the customary law of the Mizo society, Mizo bride can be bought / sold at a price of just ₹400 only. And if a man has a child with a girl outside marriage, he can just pay a meager amount of ₹40.

In the Mizo traditional society, women were placed at a very low status, though they were the backbone of life in all the families. It was found that women did double the work of men from cleaning the jungle, sowing seeds, clearing the weeds, harvesting and transporting the harvest from *jhum* (process of slash and burn agriculture) land to home. When the harvested rice was brought home it was again the responsibility of the women to clean and pound it.

Besides, women made all the cloth that the family wore and every woman was expected to know how to weave. It was the hands of the women that made quilt called '*Pawnpui*' to keep the family warm at night. They also had to carry out domestic works such as fetching water from distant springs which was generally some way down the hill. They also husk rice, cook meals and gather firewood in which men of the family did not involve themselves. We can say that man did not take any part in

the domestic work. In spite of the numerous contributions of women, yet, there are popular sayings like:

“The wisdom of a woman does not cross a brook.”

“Woman’s word is not a word just as crab’s meat is not meat.”

“Wife and broken fences can always be changed.”

“Women and crabs have no religion.”

“Women and drums need to be beaten.”

They believed that women and wild plants should be suppressed because if freedom is granted to them they take full advantage of it. Women could not inherit any property. They engage in domestic work and did not have any say in the day to day affairs of the village. Their most important duty was to please their men; this practice was taught to them right from the day she stepped into teenage life. In the family, men hardly spoke to their wives. They also face abuse if the husband was a drunkard.⁷ It can be assumed that the marriage life for a woman was not that satisfying.

From the fact that women could not inherit any property, we come to know how low the position of women was. To authenticate the above line Chapman wrote:

‘A woman has no right at all. Body, mind spirit she belonged from her birth to her death, to her father and her husband. Her men folk could treat her as they liked and a man

⁷ Challiana (1986). *Pi Pu Nun*. Lalrinliana & Sons, Aizawl.p.7

who did not beat his wife was scorned by his friends as a coward'.⁸

Married or unmarried she had to get up early in the morning and perform the domestic work till the evening. Tired or not the life and duty of an unmarried girl continued till night where she had to entertain the men by rolling cigarettes for them, conversing and putting on a welcoming face to the young men who turned up to court her. In certain cases, when a man was not happy with her, he would go back to *Zawlbuk* (bachelor's den) to gather his friends and then venture out to destroy the girl's verandah. Even the village chief had no say in this matter. To calm down such rage, the girl's father had to give them a pot of beer.⁹ On the other hand, a man is able to show fondness to any girl. He can have sexual intercourse with any girl and that was not a shameful act for him, for it was regarded to be a manly act. Moreover, the early Mizo believed that when human beings died they had to go to the place of death where a man called *Pawla* will shoot them with his pellet. He however did not shoot anyone who had sexual relationship with a virgin.¹⁰ But for a woman, if she had a sexual intercourse with a man she was spoken badly of and was rejected by other men, she would often be despised by the same man with whom she had the sexual relationship.¹¹ Hence, the woman's situation in the society would be a very

⁸ Chapman and Clark (1986). *Mizo Miracle*. Madras: Ed. Marjories Sykes. p.13

⁹ C. Lalduhawma (1989) 'Women in Tribal Society'. In *Towards a Tribal Theology*, ed. K. Thanzauva . Jorhat : The Mizo Theological Conference.p.3.

¹⁰ K.Zawla (1976). *Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin*. Aizawl: Maranatha Printing Press.p.137

¹¹ Tribal Research Institute (1992). *Tunhma Mizo Nunphung*. Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute.p.71

difficult one since the men would try to take advantage of the girls while the girls tried their best to stay pure.

Women also participated in the various festivals like *Mimkut* (honouring the death of the past year), *Chapchar kut* (celebrating New Year), *Pawl kut* (harvest thanksgiving). The women were given no restrictions on these occasions. Furthermore, they also participated in all the special occasions and they were given specific tasks when someone dies in the village. They were compelled to take part in all these occasions whether they were interested or not. Their reason for not attending was not entertained in the society. If they did not turn up, they were given a very bad name in the society.

Therefore, women were expected to do all the domestic jobs and also take part in the society. But it also clear that the society did not give much attention to them. Moreover, in the area of health and nutrition of the women, they were not given attention. It was somewhat shameful for a girl to be unhealthy or sick. Though it was shameful for the men to be sick, yet, healthfulness was more emphasized for women.¹² Women would keep their illness a secret and try their best to cover it up. Women with ill health were rejected by men for marriage and people would not share their domestic instruments because of the fear of getting their illness.¹³ Health wise, life for the married women was not easy either. They lived a humble and meek life at her husband's place, a cautious life pleasing their in-laws. In times of pregnancy, they did not have the nerve to ask for what

¹² B. Lalrinchhiani (2004). 'A Gender study of the Socio-Economic History of the Early Mizo'. In *A Modern History of Mizoram*, ed. Sangkima . Guwahati: Spectrum Publications.p.38.

¹³ Challiana. *op.cit.*, p.15

they wanted nor did they say anything when they did not feel well. Not only this, even when she was close to expecting the child, she had to fetch water, gather firewood and did the domestic jobs. Right after delivering her child, for scare of maternal death she continues with her domestic jobs. Their husbands did not help out in any way. Even if they wanted to help their wives they did not lend a helping hand as they were afraid of being dubbed as henpecked by the village.¹⁴ Women were supposed to be healthy and be fit to fulfill all the gigantic domestic jobs.

In the past, women were not allowed to face the alter/pulpit (highest and sacred raised area inside a Church, place where the preacher preaches) in the churches. As such, women were to face the side walls during the church service. They believed that the looks of the women were deceptive and devilish and that it distracted the preacher. Therefore, we come to know that the status of the early Mizo women was very low in the society and family and were discriminated too.

Two customary practices which inevitably accompanied her marriage were bride's-price (*mo man*) and dowry (*thuam*) which tended to treat woman as a sort of commodity. In the past, the dowry consisted of any one or more of the following : at least three strings of *thival* beads; at least one string of *thifen* beads; and at least one string of old amber beads, etc., plus household belongings commonly used by woman. Another biasness of Mizo customary law was when a woman commits adultery either while her husband was alive or even after the death of her husband. If

¹⁴ T Vanlaltlani (2005). *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh*. Aizawl: Synod Press. p.26

she committed adultery while her husband was alive, the whole of the bride-price paid must be returned to her husband who was also entitled to retain his wife's dowry. If she committed adultery after her husband's death while living in her husband's house, she had to perform compulsorily three ceremonies such as *thlaichhiah*, *thlahual*, *mitthi chaw pek*. *Thlaichhiah* is a sacrificial ceremony for a dead husband. Because it was once believed that the spirit of the slain animal on the occasion might accompany the departed soul to the other world. Another inseparable ceremony is the *thlahual* which was performed in general for those who grieved too much over their beloved ones in order to prevent their *thla* (soul) from following the spirit of the deceased. But in this particular context, the woman's unfaithful behavior was believed to have disturbed her husband's spirit and the ceremony was usually performed in order to calm her husband's spirit. It was a kind of expression of deep anguish over her immoral act. When this ceremony was performed, the woman had to remain at her father's house at least three months. During this period, she was to perform another sacrifice on a daily basis, called *mithi chaw pek* - a ceremony of putting aside a portion of the food the woman was to eat at each meal for her dead husband. But the question here is: what happened to the man with whom she committed the act of adultery? The Mizo custom was completely silent on this. Divorce was also very easy. One can simply say to his wife "I divorce you" to terminate their marriage. Of course there were several ways of divorce in traditional Mizo society (by simply returning the bride-price, by

mutual agreement, etc). When divorced, a woman could not claim custody of her children.¹⁵

- **Economy**

The entire early Mizo people were agriculturist and all of them worked for their livelihood. Both men and women were involved in the *jhum* (process of slash and burn agriculture) cultivation. Men were involved in clearing the jungle, harvesting, and transferring the harvests. Women on the other hand had to start from clearing the jungle, sowing seeds, clearing the weeds, harvesting and transporting the harvest from *jhum* land to home.¹⁶ Even though rice was the staple food, it was the responsibility of the women to grow vegetables. It was the duty of the women not only to carry the *jhum* work equipments, but also carried the firewood and food for the animals while the men went and returned empty handed.¹⁷ When we look into the livelihood of the early Mizo society, we find that from dawn to dusk the women were indulged effectively in their enormous domestic work.

As the medium of exchange for business was transacted through the barter system, the early Mizo society reared pigs, chicken and goats. These animals served as a medium of exchange. They were also used for sacrificial gifts. The rearing of these animals was the responsibility of the women. However, whenever exchange was made or animals were slain, the decision

¹⁵ <http://www.zozamonline.com/ARCHIVEJ15/articles/atangpi/246-status-of-mizo-women-lal-dena.html> accessed on 1/12/2012

¹⁶R.L. Hnuni (1989). 'Women in the Context of the Bible and Mizoram'. In *Towards a Tribal Theology*, ed. K Thanzauva. Jorhat: The Mizo Theological Conference.p.82

¹⁷ Sangkima(1992). *Mizos: Society and Social Change*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications.p.30

was made by the men. As such, the women were just a mere rearer having no say over the animals she reared.

- **Politics**

In the past, the entire political system was dominated by the male population. Men were the village chiefs and women did not have right to rule as rightful heirs. However, a lady had an opportunity to become chief if her husband the village chief had died. This was practised till the abolition of chieftainship in Mizoram. Amazingly, the women chiefs had proved to be very efficient and effective in carrying out the village administration.

Military officer J. Shakespear noted the condition of South Lushai Hills in 1892: “It will be noticed that all these villages except Mualthuam and Aithur are now ruled by Widows”. The remaining Mizo Chiefs, including widow chiefs, were forced to negotiate with and to make certain adjustments towards the colonial government. It was under this critical situation that many women Chiefs; including Ropuiliani, emerge in the colonial archive. In the post-colonial and contemporary rethinking of the history of resistance against colonialism in Lushai Hills, Ropuiliani become an ethnic idol of patriotism. There were also other women like Buki, Lalhlupuii, Rothangpuii, Vanhnuaitangi, Laltheri, Darbilhi, Neihpuithangi, Pawibawia Nu, Dari, Thangpuii, Pakuma Rani, Zawlchuaii and many others, who fought bravely against colonialism.¹⁸

¹⁸ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/75220151/Ropuiliani-in-Mizo-Historiography-A-Postmortem> accessed on 12/1/2013

- **Education**

Before the coming of the missionaries into the land of Mizoram, the Mizo did not have written scripts. All were in oral form. J.H. Lorraine and F.W. Savidge, the missionaries who came to Mizoram took it upon themselves to develop the Mizo language into writing by introducing the Roman script. The missionaries adopted education as the most important means of spreading Christianity and within a short period of 50 years, a significant percentage of the population of Mizoram became educated. Only in 1903, formal Primary Schools were opened for the first time in a few villages. The first High School was established in 1944 and the first undergraduate college got opened in 1958. Only in 1948 could Mizoram produce High School Leaving Certificate candidates. In that year, there were 23 Mizo candidates, out of which 11 were females. This is an amazing fact considering women had to struggle hard for continuing their education.

When the Pioneer Missionaries started Christian schools, girls were deprived of basic education by parents with the fear that they would write love letters to boyfriends and on the plea that girls after they became adults were to go to their husband's home. Knowing the importance of educating girl child in Mizoram, the first Christian Missionaries that came to Mizoram established the first school for girls in the year 1904. In the year 1918 the first batch of 6 girls passed their Middle English School. They were: Darawti, Kaithuami, Chawngthuami, Thangveli, Rosiami and Vailuti. Vailuti passing her Middle English School became the first mizo woman teacher to teach in the girl's

school.¹⁹ The Christian missionaries paved the way for the educational development of the Mizo women. The advent of Christianity and its development brought a great change in the Mizo society particularly in the life of Mizo women. Therefore, Christian Missionaries are fondly called, '*The saviours of Mizo Women*'.

Impact of Women's Education in Mizoram

- **Education**

With the increase of educated women in Mizo society, the status of women began to rise. By the time Union Territory came into being in 1972, a number of women clerical staff were employed by the U.T. Government of Mizoram. Mizo women also took up various social work activities. They had formed a number of state level Non-Governmental Organisations such as- Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl (which started in 1946), Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (which started in 1974), Mizoram Hmeithai Association (which started in 1987) and Young Women Christian Association (which started in 1985). The aim of these Non-Governmental Organisations is to help and support the people and specially their fellow women. Beside these NGOs, Women Associations in different Churches in Mizoram have been rendering useful service to man-kind. With the hard effort of the different women groups in Mizoram, Mizo women have now stepped into a new era.

¹⁹ Lalhmuaka and T.Chawma (2000). *Zoram sikul zirna chanchin*. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press. p.77.

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, literacy rate in Mizoram has seen upward trend and is 91.58 percent as per 2011 population census. Of that, male literacy stands at 93.72 percent while female literacy is at 89.40 percent.²⁰ Mizoram has done quite well in the field of literacy, particularly in the field of women education. This has an important outcome on the position and status of women in the society. Education is the catalyst factor which leads to development. It is widely known however worth mentioning that education is of value in itself and is valued for what it can do. It is a great instrument in the process of economic growth and development. Education empowers and this empowerment brings social development.

- **Politics**

The British rule brought change in the political system with the introduction of Autonomous District Council in 1952. This brought political consciousness among the Mizo people. The first political party 'Mizo Union' was formed and at the same time, a Mizo women non-governmental organisation Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual was formed. Hence, the women leaders of this organisation were motivated to take part in politics to promote the status of women in the society. The need to have woman representatives in the District Council was strongly articulated by them. As a result, Lalziki Sailo was the first woman to be nominated as member in the first Mizo District

²⁰ <http://censusindia.gov.in/> accessed on 23/6/2012

Council. Maria Hmingliani, the President of the Tangrual organisation, was the second woman to be nominated as member Mizo District Council. She played a momentous role in changing the customary law of the Mizo through the legislation. The Tangrual organisation also played a momentous role in this regard. Due to their pressure made to the District Council, Mizo women have the right to inherit family property through will.²¹

In April, 1972 when the first General Election to the Legislative Assembly of the newly setup Union Territory of Mizoram was held, no political party made any women representative. However, the then majority party Mizo Union nominated Saptawni as member of the Legislative Assembly. In the Second General Election which was held on May 1978, one woman candidate Thanmawii was elected. She was the first woman to be elected as member of the Legislative Assembly. However, Mizoram was put under the President's rule and with that the third General Election was held on April, 1979. The third Legislative Assembly had two women members, namely, Thanmawii and K. Thansiami. K. Thansiami was the one who filled the nominated seat in that Ministry. The Fourth General Election held on April, 1984 nominated Rokungi as a member. However, she did not complete her term as the peace accord was signed by the Mizo National Front and the Government of India on 30th June, 1986. As Mizoram was declared the 23rd State of the Indian Union on 20th February, 1987, the Fifth General Election to the first Mizoram State Legislative Assembly was held in February, 1987. Lalhlimpuii was elected and was

²¹ Lalneihzovi(2009). 'Political Participation of Women in mizoram', in *Changing status of Women in North Eastern States*,ed. Lalneihzovi. New Dehi: Mittal Publications.p. 63.

inducted as Minister. She became the first woman Minister and the only one in the Mizoram State Government till today. In each and every General Election till today, we have seen women candidates; but sadly none of them has emerged victorious.

As per the 74th Amendment of the Constitution, the first Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) election was held in November 2010. It is worthy of noting that out of the 19 Wards in the AMC, six have been reserved for women as per the 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution. This can be seen as a positive step towards empowering women in the state of Mizoram. The elected women in the first AMC are Hmingthanzami, Lalmalsawmi, Zamanthangi, Lalchhuanmawii, Laldinsangi and F. Lalhuthangi.

According to the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953, the Village Council in every village is a democratically elected body. This Village Council gives opportunity to women to contest election to the Village Council although it does not reserve seats for women. In spite of this, there are some instances where women candidates win the elections. We have also seen a number of women as Village Council Presidents.

After completion of the revision of voters' lists, Mizoram has an electorate of 6,53,208, according to the electoral roll 2012 published by the state election department, which is ninety-six per cent of the total state population and there were more female voters at 3,31,664 while the male voters numbered 3,21,544. The increase from the 2011 electoral rolls was 12,454 voters. Tuichawng assembly seat in south Mizoram's Lawngtlai district

has the largest number of voters at 25,198 while the Thorang constituency in Lunglei district has the least electorate at 12,039. The sex ratio in the electoral roll was 1031 female in every 1,000 male while according to Census 2011 the sex ratio was 975.²²

Therefore, it is evident that the role of women and their participation in the political field has been very low. During the District Council and Union Territory period, through the nominated seats women had the chance to participate in the decision-making and politics. Regrettably, nominated seats have not been made in the Mizoram State Legislature. Just having few women participate does not mean that the interests of women in the society are represented. The Government, NGOs, women's groups and activists of Mizoram have been actively involved in providing necessary in-puts to women for their participation. This has brought significant change in the male dominated political society. Moreover, this participative movement needs to go on so that women's needs and interests are being taken into account. Thus, participation of women in politics is believed to be necessity step in order to empower women to sustain development policies which strengthen women's aptitudes and remove the barriers that stand in the way their political participation.

- **Society**

Today, it is found that there are more female workers in offices and in market areas than the male population in Aizawl-

²² <http://ceomizoram.nic.in/> accessed on 19/2/2012

the state capital. This shows that in the building up of socio-economic development, the effort and contribution of women is no less in comparison to that of men in Mizoram.

Keeping this in mind, Mizoram Synod Social Front in the year 1991 published a booklet named ‘Where are the Mizo Men’. Mizoram Synod Social Front in 1991 elaborated that in Aizawl, out of the sampling size of 889 office workers, 35.9% were men and 64.1% were women, and out of the sampling size of 1233 students 39.25% were boys and 60.75% were girls.

After two decades, the Mizoram Synod Social Front surveyed the capital of Mizoram again and published a booklet ‘Work Participation of Men and Women’ in 2012. Their survey as shown on Table 3.1 clearly shows that Mizo women in today’s world do not lag behind Mizo men.

Table 3.1
Work participation of men and women

Sl No.	Respondents/ Place of Survey	No. of People Inter- viewed	No. Of Male	No. Of Fe- male	Percen- tage of Male	Percen- tage of Female
1	Offices (9 Offices)	1277	582	695	46 %	54 %
2	Millennium Centre (Shop Owners)	185	68	117	37 %	64 %

continued

3	Millennium Centre (Shop-Keepers)	314	89	225	28 %	72 %
4	Bazaar New Market	101	31	70	30.7 %	69.3 %
5	Quarry Workers	69	26	43	38 %	62 %
6	Students at School	3340	1621	1719	48.5 %	51.5 %
7	Teachers at School	155	83	72	54 %	46 %
8	Mizoram University Students	1278	678	600	53 %	47 %

Source: Mizoram Synod Social Front, 2012.

They surveyed 9 offices in Aizawl namely, Directorate of Art & Culture, Directorate of Social Welfare, Food, Civil Supply & Consumer Affairs, Rural Development, Mizoram Board of School Education, District Project Office Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Civil Secretariat, Environment & Forest Department and Directorate of School Education. Out of the sampling of 1277, number of male was 582 (46%) and number of female was 695(54%).

Surveying the Bazaar New Market in Aizawl, it was published that both men and women perform the task of meat

vendor and vegetable vendor. Out of the sampling of 101, there are 31(30.7%) men and 70 (69.3%) women.

The biggest shopping centre in Aizawl, the Millennium Centre, was also surveyed and out of the sampling of 185 shop owners, 68 (37%) are men, 117(64%) are women. Further surveying of the shop-keepers in Millennium Centre, out of the sampling of 314, 89(28%) are men and 225(72%) are women.

The stone quarry workers were studied and out of the sampling of 69, men consisted 38% (26) and women 62% (43). It was found out that the strenuous jobs at the stone quarry were performed by men while the women were engaged in the task of crushing the stone into smaller pieces by hammer.

Surveying schools in Aizawl namely, Government Higher Secondary School, Chaltlang, Mount Carmel School, Government Mizo High School, Exodus English School, KD Elementary and Greenland Higher Secondary School. Out of the sampling of 3340, boys were 1621 (48.5%) and girls were 1719 (51.5%). At middle school level 49% were girls; at the high school level 51.6% were girls and the higher secondary level 52% were girls.

The Central University Mizoram University was surveyed by the Mizoram Synod Social Front as well. Out of the total sampling of 1278 students, 678 (53%) were boys and 600 (47%) were girls.²³

²³ Mizoram Synod Social Front (2012). SF Booklet No.35, Aizawl: Mizoram Synod Social Front Publication.

From the survey carried out by the Mizoram Synod Social Front in both the years 1991 and 2012, we can say that Mizo women with the spread of education have definitely reached a higher ground in the society and in the educational field.

- **Role of Women in Church**

Women in Mizoram play an important part in the Church. To outsiders and occasional visitors, it looks as if women in the Church have no hindrance in their participation. But the reality and practical experience of women in their respective Church is somewhat different. There are areas in which Mizo women can actively participate and some areas in which they are severely restricted to do the same. This can be enumerated and shown below:

- The Mizo Women are very active to attend the services and perform whatever they are assigned to do. In all Church services held during morning/noon/night, many women regularly attend these services except for certain services intended for men only. The attendance of women in the Church services compared to that of men has never been fewer but often better. This shows their sincerity and commitment. In addition, fellowships, social works and other programs organised by the church have never been accomplished without women's participation. Women wing in all the Churches of Mizoram are active in their own respective ways of servicing God.

- In all the above mentioned services, women rarely take the responsibility of a Chairperson due to the fact that the

Churches allow only Pastors and Ordained Church Elders to take this valued responsibility. This has been caused by the ignorance and negligence of several Churches to maintain gender justice affecting the denial of committed women's right to become Pastors and Ordained Church Elders in the Church. However, throughout Mizoram only a few denominations such as Baptist Church of Mizoram and Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church acknowledge a woman's commitment for the Lord and accept women to be eligible for Pastors and Ordained Church Elders, subjective of gender biasness.

- When it comes to preaching the message of God from the Pulpit (which is considered to be the most highest and sacred raised area inside a Church place where the preacher preaches), many Local Churches leave out women from the opportunity to preach. On the other hand, this subject differs from one local church to another; some Churches give the privilege of preaching from the Pulpit to women on Saturday Night and Sunday afternoon Church Services. However, even if women are given the opportunity to preach on specific services, they are hardly given the chance to preach on Special Christian days like Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas and New Year Celebrations etc. Nevertheless, this subject would be entirely different in the Baptist Church of Mizoram and Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church as these denominations ordain women as Life-time Church Elders.

- In Mizoram, most of the Churches administer Sunday School for teaching the Gospel and Christian life. Churches of various denominations run Sunday Schools in two

ways namely- Children's Sunday Schools and Adult Sunday Schools. Children's Sunday School members are divided into different department on the basis of their age groups. Many women are teaching in the Children Sunday School and Adult Sunday School. When given the responsibility of teaching ministry to women, they carry out their duty flawlessly and play a crucial role in revitalizing the Gospel of God till date.²⁴

In short, this chapter has discussed the location, area, population and topography of Mizoram, the origin of the Mizo people, the status of the early Mizo women, furthermore studying the lives of the early Mizo women in the society and family, economy, politics and education. Living in a patriarchal society, the early Mizo women were engaged in domestic work and did not have any say. Rain or shine, she had to be healthy as it was disgraceful for a girl to be sick. Above all this, a girl child was held back from education. But thanks to the Pioneer Christian Missionaries, the path of education was paved for women. Nonetheless, with the advent of education change has come in the Mizo society. Today, we see more women in the offices, schools, markets places than men. Still, the participation of Mizo women politically is very low. In a state where we find more female voters than men, there are no seats reserved for women nor do the women have any one representing them in the State Legislative Assembly. Because of the 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution, Aizawl women today have six reserved seats

²⁴ T. Vanlaltlani, 'Participation of Women in the church- With reference to north east India' in *Changing status of Women in North Eastern States*, ed. Lalneihzovi. New Dehi: Mittal Publications pp.137-140

in the AMC. Mizo women also play an important part in the church. But in spite of this, most of the churches of Mizoram show hindrance to their participation. However, with the setting up of women NGOs and women groups in Mizoram, they seem to be moving on in a positive manner for the development of the state by participating in various walks of the socio-economic life.

CHAPTER – IV

WOMEN GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS IN MIZORAM

The previous chapter goes through the status of early Mizo women; their participation in the society and family, politics and economics and also studies the status of Mizo women in politics, education, society and in church after the introduction of education. The present chapter examines the various women groups and organisations in Mizoram such as voluntary organisations, groups in the church and Self-Help Groups.

The term Voluntary Organization has been defined in various ways. Sills, a sociologist, identified it as a group of persons, organized on the basis of voluntary membership without state control, for the furtherance of some common interest of its members. He excluded business firms, trade associations, marketing and consumer cooperatives, professional association, labour union, religious organization and political parties.¹ Chowdhry defined a voluntary organization as an organization in which the workers, whether they are paid or unpaid, they are established and governed by their own members and are free from external control.² Prof. M. R. Inamdar observes, “A voluntary organization in development to be a durable use to the community has to nurse a strong desire and impulse for community development among its members, to be

¹ David L. Sills (1968). *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*. New York: The Macmillan Company and The Free Press. Vol.16.pp.362-363

² Paul D.Chowdhry (1971). *Voluntary Social Welfare in India*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers. p.36

economically viable to possess dedicated and hard working leadership and command resource of expertise in the functions undertaken.³

The roots of voluntarism in India can be traced to the nature, social milieu and ethos of Indian people who believe in acts of charity rendering help to the people in distress caused by natural calamities or disadvantaged by birth, exploitation and denial of social justice. All the religions in India enjoin upon their followers to earmark a portion of their incomes for charity, for the welfare of the needy and downtrodden.⁴ Such voluntary actions have made a deep impact in our society making it a core course of action of our social life. The voluntary actions in India have an interesting history which can be separated into two periods as follows:

Pre-Independence Period

In the Indian traditional concept of social welfare and administration, voluntary actions were an integral part of the ruler's outlook. This made the individual and community lead support towards voluntary actions to the needy. Philanthropy was widespread. Nevertheless, the large scale of voluntarism during ancient and medieval India could not diminish the rigid caste system. The role of voluntarism persisted during the Muslim and Mughal periods.⁵ During the British period we found that they were

³ N.R.Imandar (1987). 'Role of Voluntarism in Development', *The Indian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol.XXXIII, No.3, July-Sept, New Delhi.pp. 420-432

⁴ D.R. Sachdeva (1993). *Social Welfare Administration in India*. Allahabad: Kitab Mahal.p.214

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215

hostile to the growth of voluntary organizations such as the Scout Movement, the Red Cross, the Rotary Club, and the Lion's Club etc.

The famous examples of the social reformers in India during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the eastern part and Dadabhai Naoroji in the western part of India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy established Atmiya Society, the Unitarian Committee, and Brahmo Samaj and Dadabhai Naoroji played a vital role in the furtherance of education of girls, religious reforms and women's education. In this period, voluntarism played a significant part in education, health, medical and social welfare development in India. The Christian missionaries played an important role in the pioneering of voluntarism work in all fields of welfare. The examples set by the Christian missionaries were followed by both the Hindus and the Muslims.⁶

During 1880-1900, a new school of thought started the campaign of social reform on secular liberal basis. Gopal Krushan Gokhale found the Servants of India Society in 1905. It was the first secular organization for social service in India. In due course of time, the women's organization came up such as the Women's India Association in 1926, the All India Women's Conference in 1927 and the National Council of Indian Women in 1927.

⁶ D.R. Sachdeva, *op.cit.*,p.216

With the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the national scene, voluntarism became the core of his thinking on the reconstruction of India's economic and political organization. He set up a number of agencies like Harijan Sewak Sangh, Adivasi Sewa Mandal and the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust with programmes for protecting justice for the down trodden sections of society.⁷

Post-Independence Period

With the spread of education, inadequacy of welfare services for the needy, rehabilitation, the rising expectations and aspirations of the disadvantaged sections of the society especially of weaker sections, schedule castes, schedule tribes, women and children was felt. The patronage was extended by the government in their promotion through a system of grant-in-aid. There has been a phenomenal rise in the number of voluntary organizations in the post-Independence period. The Central Social Welfare Board was constituted in 1953 to promote voluntary organizations and give them grant-in-aid for the achievement of their programmes. With this, the number of voluntary organizations seems to be rising each day. However, we also find that there are voluntary organizations that work and raise their own funds. They neither seek nor receive grant-in-aid.

⁷ D.R. Sachdeva, *op.cit.*, p.217

The features and courses of voluntary organization have gone through changes with the change in time and circumstances. As it is difficult to spell out the number of voluntary organizations, so is the case in grouping them on the basis of their objectives and programmes. The new problems emerging in the society; the results of scientific and technology advancement have contributed to the establishment of more voluntary organizations to solve their problems.⁸ In today's world, we find voluntary organizations active in the welfare of drug addicts, welfare of prostitutes, removal of illiteracy, victims of terrorism and militant activities, harmonizing environmental and development issues etc.

The voluntary organizations in India have played an important role in the past and continue to do so as providers of welfare services which are highly appreciated by the public as well as the government. Many of them give attention on providing livelihood, employment and income generation activities. There are many voluntary organizations that have had great achievements, especially in removal of illiteracy and in protecting the environment. Due to the effective efforts of the organizations, we have seen them protesting certain project that stood in the way of environmental development and have successfully stopped them. Voluntarism in India has shown that with bravery, determination, and dedication of the people; regardless of each and every obstacle, a lot can be accomplished.

⁸ D.R. Sachdeva, *op.cit.*, p.218

The Situation in Mizoram

Looking into the traditions and customs of the people of Mizoram, it is found that there was in-built traditional voluntary action in the society. The customary practices of every village include construction and repairing of the village school, blacksmith's shop, teacher's house, clearing and fencing of the village water point, clearing of inter-village tracks, and construction of bridges over rivers. All these works in the village areas were carried out through collective voluntary works called *Hnatlang*.⁹ Every grown up man was required to participate in *Hnatlang* or at least one member either male or female from each house must participate in *Hnatlang*. If a person could not attend the *Hnatlang* due to any reason he had to inform the village authority before the *Hnatlang* commenced. If there was any natural calamity in a village like cyclone or landslide, *Hnatlang* was called for immediately to give all possible help to the affected persons or families. This was a good custom in the Mizo village to meet and encounter any emergency that took place in the village.¹⁰

Voluntary action in the traditional Mizo society would not be complete without mentioning the contribution and significance of the *Zawlbuk*. *Zawlbuk* is a Mizo word meaning big house called Bachelor's den, occupying a central position in a village and near the house of the village chief. It would accommodate all the bachelors of the village at night and it served as a meeting place for

⁹ C.Lalkima (1997). *Social Welfare Administration in a Tribal State: A Case Study of Mizoram*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications.p.9

¹⁰ *The Lushai Hills District* (1980). Tribal Research Institute. Government of Mizoram.p.28

the aged men during the daytime when the young men were out at work. Female were not allowed to visit the *Zawlbuk*. Every village had one *Zawlbuk*. It was the first step of social control over the young lads and through it was taught the importance of social and community obligation and inculcated in them the spirit of voluntarism.¹¹ It was in the *Zawlbuk* that the most important Mizo philosophy *Tlawmngaihna* was taught. The former Superintendent Lushai Hills, N.E. Parry, in 1927, made an observation on the statement saying, ‘It is really a very good moral code enforced to the society by public opinion’.¹² Maj. A.G.Mc.Call, the former Superintendent of Lushai Hills wrote in his book, ‘Lushai Chrysalis’ in 1949 that, “A system of community obligation existed under the term *Tlawmngaihna*, implying public service. Crops of the sick would be tended by the strong; the chief’s land would be given to rebuild houses accidentally burned down, warriors would volunteer when called for, hunters would strive to be energetic in the chase, and, in general, the good citizen was he who was foremost in meeting calls that were really necessary for the good of the whole village. In return for this, the braves were always rewarded by the public acclaim and they would often be invited to share select toasts held by the chief in his own house”.¹³ The Mizo children were taught *Tlawmngaihna* from adolescence. Through the *Zawlbuk* continuity of teaching *Tlawmngaihna* went on from generation to generation. *Tlawmngaihna* has been surviving in the Mizo society as the guiding principle of social life and an important

¹¹ C Lalkima., *op. cit.*, p.15

¹² *Ibid.*, p.16

¹³ Maj. A.G.Mc.Call (1977). *Lushai Chrysalis*. Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute. (Reprint)p.97

instrument in raising the spirit of voluntarism among the Mizo. In fact *Tlawmngaihna* is a part and parcel of the Mizo society.¹⁴ The spirit of sacrifice for the others permeates the whole society. Thus, the seed of *Tlawmngaihna* was unconsciously sown in the Mizo Society.¹⁵

The spread of Christianity and education by the Christian missionaries brought change in the society. The importance of *Zawlbuk* system gradually reduced and was finally extinct from the society. With the hard effort of the Welsh Christian missionaries Rev. L. Evans and Miss K. Hughes, the Mizo voluntarism changed into a more organized manner. With them on 15th of June, 1935 Mizoram had its first voluntary organization called Young Lushai Association. However the name was changed to Young Mizo Association (Y.M.A.) in October 1947.¹⁶ Y.M.A. does not discriminate the women from being member of the organization. Women are allowed to participate freely as a member of the Y.M.A. Today Y.M.A. is the biggest organization in Mizoram, having 2,18,74 male members and 1,40,620 female members.¹⁷ However, till today there has been only one female executive committee member in the Central Y.M.A. This shows that Mizo society is male dominated society, yet the society is incomplete without its female members. Among the founder members of the Young Lushai Association in 1935 was its first Treasurer, Ms. K. Hughes. Mizo

¹⁴ C Lalkima., *op. cit.*, p.17

¹⁵P.L. Lianzuala(1989). 'Theology of Mizo Tlawmngaihna'. In Rev.K.Thanzauva (Ed.)*Towards a Tribal Theology*. Jorhat: The Mizo Theological Conference.

¹⁶ C. Lalropuia (1985). 'History of Young Mizo Association'. *Golden Jubilee Souvenir (1935-1985)* Aizawl: Central Young Men Association. pp.1-2, 23.

¹⁷ Statistical Handbook, Mizoram 2010, p. 135

female members of the Y.M.A. could take more leading part in the society for progress.

The aims of the Y.M.A. are: to make best use of leisure time, to strive for all round development of Mizoram; and, to promote good Christian life.¹⁸ The Y.M.A. lends helping hand to the community in case of emergency caused by natural disaster. They organize themselves and are used as agency for educating public in hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness. The Government agencies and Christian Missionaries had made good use of this organization to improve the standard of living of the Mizo. In case of death in the community, Y.M.A. members sit awake throughout the night consoling the bereaved family by singing songs of lamentations. It is the duty of the boys to act as messengers to inform the sad news to the near and dear ones of the deceased person in the village and in other villages nearby. However, this duty has been simplified by using today's modern technology such as cellphones, internet etc. It is also the duty of the young Y.M.A. boys under the leadership of their elders to dig graves for the burial of the dead and carry the dead body to the grave. Not only this, young boys come to sleep in the house of the bereaved family for a week or so, to help and console the bereaved family. With the increase in the population in the urban areas, especially in the Aizawl city, graveyard problem has aggravated for want of burial space in the vicinity of locality. Some of the Local Councils are acquiring land for graveyard at the outskirts of town/Aizawl city. Digging of graveyard has become

¹⁸ *Constitution of Young Mizo Association* (1984) (Revised) Central Young Mizo Association, Aizawl., p. 1

acute problem particularly for the young members of Y.M.A. who are school and college going students; as digging of grave has to be carried out before noon. This can be a problem for students and office workers routine works. The voluntary work of Y.M.A. also extends to marriage ceremonies in the community. In times of marriage, the Y.M.A. provides the bride and groom with utensils for the preparation of tea and food, also arrange benches for sitting.¹⁹ Thus it can be said that, with the help of Christian missionaries, Mizoram saw a new face of organization, a more organized and well planned one. Due to the lesser restrictions upon women in the social sphere, they could participate freely in the society.

Women Voluntary Organisations

With the rise of voluntary organizations in Mizoram, Mizo women felt the need to establish women organizations to help, support and to promote women's welfare and interest. The women organizations in Mizoram have put their best efforts in raising the position of the Mizo women. In the process of promoting the status of women, these women organizations have helped the needy and downtrodden women and paved way for their survival. Among various women voluntary organizations in Mizoram the most prominent are:

¹⁹ C Lalkima., *op. cit.*, p. 41

Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual (M.H.T.)

Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual (M.H.T.) which loosely translates as Mizo Women Organization was formed by the Mizo Women of Aizawl town on 16th July, 1946 at Mission Veng, Aizawl with the permission and full support of Mr. Macdonald, the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills.²⁰ The organization was established with the specific aim to develop and to improve the status of Mizo women in society and also to promote health, cleanliness and basic education among them. This organization was the first of its kind for the improvement of the status of women and concern of their well being. Because of the pressure made to the District Council by the M.H.T., Mizo women have the right to inherit family property through will.

Aims and objectives of the organization include the following:

- to play the rightful role at home and in the society
- to promote education and develop all spheres of life
- to create better and healthy relation and better understanding between husband and wife
- to play suitable roles in the development activities of the Lushai Hills
- to help needy motherless babies and
- to run a Working Women's Hostel.²¹

²⁰ Biaksiami (1982). *Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual*. Aizawl: Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual.p.1

²¹ C Lalkima., *op. cit.*, p.44

From the beginning of this inception, the main aim of the organization has been the development of the status of Mizo women. The organization tried to be self sufficient without the help of the Government in uplifting the status of women in teaching the duties of a woman in the household and the society and about cleanliness and good health. Fortunately the work of the M.H.T. received the support of the Government. The Government in 1950, when Mr. S.N. Barkataki was the Superintendent, gave the organization a plot of land in the heart of the Aizawl for the effective and efficient working of the organization. Among the various functions of the organization the most important are:

- Promotion of weaving: M.H.T. believed that promoting weaving was an important trade for women for their survival and to uplift their status. To encourage the women the organization distributed yarns to weave and organized competition on weaving.
- Teaching cleanliness: M.H.T. encouraged and taught about cleanliness. The organization knowing the importance of cleanliness for the uplifting the society taught the Mizo women how to maintain cleanliness at home and in the society.
- Training on midwifery: The organization felt that women should be given training on midwifery. So the M.H.T. appealed to the Assam Government to open training centre on midwifery for women. Their plea was heard and at Aizawl Civil Hospital few seats were open for this training. The women who passed out this training were employed by the Government as midwifery. This became one important way through which women started having salaried jobs.

- Maternity Centre / M.H.T. Hospital: With the donations given by the members of the M.H.T., the donations given by the few zealous people and with the help of the Government, Maternity Centre was constructed in 1954. The organization started the centre in 1956 and centre was called the M.H.T. hospital. It was a place where pregnant women and sick children were brought. The centre was advantageous to the women. But development in health brought up hospitals and health sub-centres and eventually, the Maternity Centre came to an end in July 1975.²²

- Loin Loom Centre: M.H.T. established Loin Loom Centre in 1962 in one of the rooms of the organization's building. Weaving and stitching was taught in the centre. After the completion of the course, which was usually six months, the trainees received certificates. The Loin Loom Centre had five branches in the village of Kelsih, Hualngohmun, South Hlimen, Durtlang and Lungdai. It was making a lot of progress but, due to the political disturbance in 1966, the Centre faced a number of problems which stood in the way of its smooth functioning and so the Loin Loom centre was discontinued.

- Motherless Babies Home: The political disturbance in Mizoram in 1966 troubled the peaceful life of the society. Poverty and hardship of life faced by the Mizo was much more than that could be imagined. Innocent people suffered immensely in the political war to the extent of starvation. This brought a very high

²² T Vanlaltlani (2005). *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh*. Aizawl: Synod Press. p.217

rate of maternity deaths which increased the number of motherless babies and also increased the infant mortality rate.²³ The cause for high rate of infant mortality was due to lack of maternal care and malnutrition. So the M.H.T. decided to run a home for motherless babies.²⁴ The home nurtures the babies for eight years and on attaining the age of eight; they allowed to live with her/his father or guardian. This home run by the M.H.T. since 1969 has mothered 164 babies. As on 28th March 2012 there were 18 babies.²⁵ The Motherless Babies Home has been and continues to be an adobe for several motherless babies.

- Establishment of Working Women's Hostel: The Central Government prepared scheme in 1972 to assist various voluntary organizations engaged in the promotion of Women's Welfare for the construction of Hostel buildings for the working women. The M.H.T. was advised by Mr. Bonthanga Poonte, the former District Social Welfare Officer to establish a Working Women's Hostel at Aizawl. As the organization had suffered a great set back due to the political turmoil, the organization found it very hard to accept the challenge of establishing the working women's hostel. On the other hand, the changing trend of Mizo society where the number of women employees increased in the Government services, encouraged the M.H.T. to finally accept the establishing of the Working Women Hostel's at Aizawl. The M.H.T. requested Mr. J. Lianchungnunga, a Class I Contractor to take up the construction

²³ C Lalkima., *op. cit.*, p. 49

²⁴ Biaksiami., *op. cit.*, p. 25

²⁵ *Enrolment Register* of Motherless Babies Home on 28/3/2012

work. The building was inaugurated on 1st March 1980 with a capacity for 34 hostellers.²⁶

The M.H.T. has no branch outside Aizawl but any women can be a member of the organization. Motherless Babies Home and Working Women's Hostel are two institutions which are managed well by the organization till today.

Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (M.H.I.P)

The Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (Mizo Women Federation) was established on the 6th of July 1974 and was registered under Registration No. 5 of 1977, Society Act 1860 (Act XXI of 1960). Its headquarter is located at Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. It is the second largest voluntary organization in Mizoram having 2,33,976 members.²⁷ The area of work covers the entire corner of the State. The organization is sub divided into seven (7) sub-Headquarters. These sub-headquarter are further divided into 16 blocks and 700 branches. These sub-headquarter are named after every District headquarters of Mizoram which are -

- Lunglei Sub-Headquarter
- Saiha Sub-Headquarter
- Lawngtlai Sub-Headquarter
- Serchhip Sub-Headquarter
- Champhai Sub-Headquarter

²⁶ Biaksiami., *op. cit.*, p.28-31

²⁷ Statistical Handbook, Mizoram 2010, p. 135

- Kolasib Sub-Headquarter
- Mamit Sub-Headquarter

Membership is accepted from any women who have attained the age of 14 years. A person can become a member of the MHIP on payment of ₹ 2/- to its branch in their village. It is therefore a strong social force devoted solely for the welfare and uplift of the weaker section of the society, particularly women and children.

The basic principles of the MHIP are based on philanthropic social work with no expectation of any return benefit. It aims at creating a state of welfare in which every individual is cared for irrespective of Caste or Creed. Since its establishment the main focus has been on uplifting of women and children. Some of these activities may be highlighted below:-

Fighting against atrocity of women: The MHIP is a mother to all the women, the destitute and down trodden women, fighting for their rights in all aspects of life. Mizoram has seen several rape and murder cases involving minor girls and adult women. Protesting against such inhuman behavior, the MHIP General Headquarters has organized gigantic processions several times in the major towns in Aizawl, Lunglei, Kolasib, Champhai and Saiha. As a result of these strong protests, the State Government took up the appropriate strong action against the accused who were then convicted.

Supporter of the destitute: The Mizo Society is by custom a patriarchal Society. Women and children in this society are generally considered inferior to men. However, with modernization

such consideration has become controversial. A Mizo man may divorce his wife and drive her out empty handed without any means of supporting herself. Women are often left socially and economically neglected; such destitute women are compelled to earn their living by any means, helpless to care for neither ethic nor morality with obvious consequences. Under such circumstances, the MHIP take up the issue strongly as discriminatory and unjust for the destitute women in general. The MHIP would support the issue to any high authority in the state.

MHIP as a family counselor: The MHIP involved themselves wherever there is a social injustice in the day to day family life of the Community within their respective branches/jurisdiction. The MHIP seek justice for women who are beaten by their drunken husband, a child who is neglected in nutrition or in the family and social life. An unmarried mother would be given the proper guidance and counseling, sometimes even provided monetary or material support to the destitute women and children. In some extraordinary cases where some families need medical treatment outside Mizoram, but are too poor to proceed, the MHIP lends a helping hand.

Declaration of women's year – Review of Mizo customary law: The MHIP General Headquarters declared "Women's Year" in Mizoram during 1997-2001. During this period, the Central theme of all activities focused on creation of awareness in, "The Low Status of Women in the Society". Most of their activities are concerned in

programs to elevate the low status of women. In this regard, the MHIP had been touring the length and breadth of the state covering even the most remote and interior villages and conducts workshops, seminars and groups discussion in such places. The major issue was “To Review the Mizo Customary Law”, which provide very little right and protection to the Mizo Women. These movements have enlightened many of the younger generation of today, and day by day it is gaining popularity and momentum. The MHIP is now earnestly pursuing the matter with the state Government to take action in the matter and is now a serious consideration.

Leadership training and social interaction: With a view to achieve a welfare state, block level leadership training is held periodically. The theme of such training is “Women in Mizo Society”. In these trainings, the declaration of Women’s Year and its consequences has made the general population aware of the importance of uplifting the status of the Mizo Women. The feedbacks of these programmes are very encouraging, and it is till today an ongoing activity.

Programmes with Mizoram State Welfare Advisory Board: The MHIP is the biggest organisation which has taken up the major portion of the programmes to the Mizoram State Social Welfare Advisory Board, which are as follows:

- Crèche Centres
- Condensed Course of Education
- Balwadi Centres

- Awareness Generation Projects
- Anganwadi Centres
- Family Counseling Centres
- Piggery Units
- Working Women Hostels
- Vocational Training Courses

Mandatory activities:

The MHIP Mizoram, in spite of its uncertain financial sources never loses heart in attempting to help the poor and the destitute. Every year, at Christmas it is mandatory to visit the following institution with appropriate gifts for all the inmates.

- Civil Hospital, Aizawl.
- T.B. Hospital, Zemabawk
- Synod Hospital, Durtlang.
- Hermon Children Home, Durtlang.
- Central Jail, Tanhril.
- TNT Drugs Addict Camp, Zuangtui.
- De-addiction Centre, Arm Veng.
- SOG De-addiction Camp, Selesih.
- Blessing Home, Sakawrtuichhun.
- Muanna In - Destitute Home, Zuangtui.
- Social Guidance Agency, Tuikual.
- Motherless Baby Home, Durtlang

The MHIP organization, since its inception in 1974, aims at primary work for the uplift of women in the Society. Today, however, due to the various needs of the community it has broadened its activities to several other social problems. Nevertheless, the emphasis is always on problems related to women. The MHIP General Headquarters Mizoram is therefore a very strong foundation of justice and social welfare in the state of Mizoram.²⁸

Mizoram Hmeithai Association (MHA)

MHA is a Non-Government, and Non-Profit Organization dedicated to serve the people in difficult circumstances particularly the widows and children, the victims of long time insurgency and counter insurgency in Mizoram and its adjoining north east states in India. In 1995 Ms. Veronica K. Zatluangi, a widow herself and a victim of circumstances, along with other widow associates; decided to extend a helping hand to the needy. Ms. Veronica K. Zatluangi and her associates formed the Mizoram Hmeithai (Widows) Association which is registered under Societies Registration (Extension to Mizoram) Act. The organization is steered towards the field of social work. Its head quarter is at Aizawl, Mizoram.

With the help of various philanthropists, donors, well wishers and compassionates, MHA excelled in the field of social service. Thousands of widows, street children and abandoned children have been benefited. Under the stewardship of the President Ms.

²⁸ <http://mizoram.nic.in/more/mhip.htm> accessed on 31/5/2012

Veronica K. Zatluangi, it was awarded with National Award for Child Welfare 2002, by Government of India, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Department of Women and Child Development, in public recognition of the valuable services to the community rendered in the field of child welfare.

MHA'S Mission

MHA works to fight against poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, social injustice, social evils, cruelty and domestic violence. Their target groups are widows, orphans, street children, illegitimate children and other vulnerable people.

MHA's Vision

- Women and Child Development.
- Alleviation of illiteracy
- Alleviation of poverty
- Promoting Health Care
- Promoting Awareness
- Promoting Social justice.
- Promoting welfare of domestic and protection of wild animals.

MHA'S on-going projects:

- MHA picks up the orphans, street children and children of helpless widows and embraces them to provide free education along with free boarding and lodging. There are about 300 boys and girls being looked after by MHA.

- MHA has established baby care centre to take care of illegitimate and un-wanted children abandoned by their parents. MHA holds and nourish them properly and lovingly and provide good medical care. They are looked after by qualified doctors and dedicated social workers.

- MHA is committed in the promotion of Indian as well as international adoption. The adoption programmes helps with the adoption of children irrespective of caste, creed, community and religion of parents residing in India or abroad.

- MHA extends temporary shelter (short stay home) to those women and girls who have no social support and become victims of domestic violence, mental strains, social ostracism, exploitation and other causes. The services extended in this home are medical aid, legal aid, counseling and case work services. MHA stands by them to face the social crises they are in.

- MHA is running a mobile clinic to extend medical care to sick people living in far-flung area in poverty and who are unable to reach the nearest hospital. Hundred of patients are examined every day and are provided with free medicines. Dedicated team of doctors and nurses are always on their toes to reach the patients.

- The MHA unit comprising of dedicated social workers from different streams are always alert and ready to respond to any distress call and reach the social victim for immediate help.

- MHA extends counseling, if possible rehabilitative services to victims of atrocities in family and society and also others affected family and social problems.
- MHA runs vocational education as well. The Vocational Education Centre imparts education to women, particularly to the widows; enabling them to become entrepreneurs and making them financially independent on their own.
- In order to solve the immediate economic problems of the people MHA has developed a number of SHGs in Mizoram and the adjoining North East states. It links them to financial institutions/banks, which make micro loans available to them for generating regular income of their members.²⁹

The Evangelical Nurses' Fellowship (E.N.F.)

The Evangelical Nurses' Fellowship (ENF) was set up on 12th April, 1975 under the leadership of Thanpari Pautu. It held its first meeting in the Aizawl Civil Hospital Lecture Hall. Currently, there are around 2800 members, 110 units, 1568 life members and patron members. It has its headquarters at Aizawl.³⁰

As its name suggests, the Evangelical Nurses' Fellowship works for the emotional and spiritual needs of the nurses in the state. Initially, they met only for prayers but now the ENF is a full-fledged organization which looks after the needs and requirements

²⁹ <http://www.helpwidows.in>. accessed on 1 /6/ 2012

³⁰ Record Book at the Office of The Evangelical Nurses' Fellowship, 2012.

of the nurses of Mizoram. Its first meeting not only gave birth to the Fellowship but also resolute its workings. They passed resolutions on continuing the ongoing prayer fellowships which is to be held two times a month on Saturdays. They appointed a secretary for smooth functioning of the Fellowship and are also in an agreement that there would be an offering every time they meet, which will be used for the Evangelical work. They also passed among its resolutions that the nurses which are not familiar with Jesus Christ would be acknowledged about Christ through the fellowship.

There are three types of membership in the Fellowship. The first is the Annual Member in which registered nurse mid-wife, registered annual nurse member, registered health worker and nurses and health workers students can be a member by paying an annual fee of ₹10/-. In addition, there is the Life Member in which the members can pay ₹ 100/- as the Life Membership Fee. Thirdly, a member can be a Patron Member by paying ₹300/- and fourthly a member can be a Chief Patron by paying ₹ 1000/-.

As its name suggests, the ENF strives for making the nurses possess and reproduce the life of Jesus Christ and lead them in the path of righteousness. Their beliefs are based on the Holy Bible which they profess to be the sole authority in their deeds and faith. The ENF holds conferences/gospel camping almost every year. Moreover, the different units also hold retreats at their convenient time every year in which they study the words and works of God and revive themselves in God.

The ENF do not have a solid source of income. Most of their funds are met from the pledges that the nurses themselves make on a monthly basis. That coupled with the membership fee is their only source of income. Even though the money that flows in may not be much, they are used in significant matters. For example, it is used for the wages of the workers, aid to the ENF staff workers, for camping and conferences, for running the Nurse Eng magazine, financial help to the new units.

Since the ENF members are nurses, it is of general knowledge that their occupation is of saving lives. Moreover, their method of expenditure tells us that their works reflects the missions of God. They make it their purpose to support those who work full time for the task of God. The prominent concern and fear is that there will be someone among the practicing nurses who has not had Jesus Christ in their lives. Therefore, they host campaigns etc. almost every year. In addition to these, they undertake the following:

- Nurse Eng: - The ENF started its magazine *Nurse Eng* (in Mizo) on March 1979 with 500 copies. Since it was very much valued, the magazine was out every alternative month from June, 1979. But it became a monthly magazine on February, 1983. The 'Nurse Eng' magazine usually contains the ENF workings and administrations, Nurses' missionary works, gospel writings, tips on health, agendas for prayers and all of their official programmes.

- Delegates in seminars:- The nurses of the ENF of Mizoram not only hold and attend their annual conference/camping but also attends various programmes set up by the ENF Evangelical Nurses

Fellowship of India. Moreover, they also appointed amongst themselves delegates to attend the Christian Fellowship International programmes hosted around the world. This helps in knowing about the workings of the nurses in other parts of the world to the benefit of the domestic nurses.

- Ever present help in trouble:- On the establishment of the full-fledged organization, the nurses of Mizoram are being advised that their occupation is but God's mission. As a result, they have become more hospitable in and around the hospital, clinic and other places. They became a great value to their family and to the locality in which they reside in because they could easily be called in emergencies even in the wee hours of the night. Simply because of the fact that the smooth functioning of the capabilities of the doctors depend on the nurses, they are an important element in the 'health' mission.

The establishment of the ENF and the fact that they let the nurses recognize that their occupation is a combination of the works on the health of body and soul makes them more approachable and an ease to talk to. Some bystanders even profess that the establishment of the ENF has made the nurses of Mizoram more respectable and cordial. Therefore, there is no denying that the ENF has not only helped its member but also the sick and diseased.³¹

³¹ T. Vanlalhlani, *op.cit.* pp. 256-258

Young Women's Christian Association - Aizawl (YWCA)

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) is a global network of women leading social and economic change in 125 countries worldwide. It advocates for peace, justice, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment, and has been at the forefront of raising the status of women since it was found in 1894. The World YWCA develops women's leadership to find local solutions to the global inequalities women face. Each year, it reaches more than 25 million women and girls through their work in 22,000 communities. This grassroot development experience shapes the organization's global advocacy agenda. YWCA work is inspired by Christian principles and a commitment to women's full and equal participation in society. It is a volunteer membership movement, inclusive of women from many faiths, backgrounds and cultures. The vision of YWCA is a fully inclusive world where justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment are promoted and sustained through women's leadership. The purpose of the World YWCA is to develop the leadership and collective power of women and girls around the world to achieve justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom and a sustainable environment for all people. The World YWCA is found on and inspired by the Christian faith.

The YWCA in India continues to be challenged in empowering women and girls to face gender inequities, social and economic disparities, caste based discrimination and all forms of violence against women. Today in a world ridden with

environmental degradation and violation of human rights, the YWCA, as one of the largest women's movements, is in a strong position to be an agent for social transformation and change. In a changing world with changing needs, the YWCA of India needs to respond effectively with timely intervention in programmes and projects that specifically address the needs of marginalized communities. It calls us to move into new areas of work such as sexual reproductive health rights of young women and girls, HIV/AIDS, and our work to be inclusive of all communities regardless of age, class, caste, creed, and religion and to be committed to protecting human dignity and environment.

The Mizoram YWCA came into being on the 30th Dec 1985. The motto of the organization is 'By love serve to one another'. The organization is based in the faith of God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ His only son, our Lord and saviour, and in the Holy Spirit. The aim main of the YWCA of Mizoram rooted in the Christian faith, and subscribing to the basis as stated above, endeavours to promote the full development of women irrespective of race, culture and creed. It seeks to develop a membership that is responsive, through service to the changing needs of the whole community in the changing world. Membership to the YMCA is open to any woman who wishes to join the worldwide fellowship of the YWCA and is in sympathy with its aim and shares in its activities. Membership in the YWCA of Mizoram carries with it

membership of the YWCA of India, which is a participating member of the world YWCA.³²

From its inception, the YMCA Mizoram strives to help women in the state. The organization has worked in different walks of life in helping the women. It has established hostel for college and high school going girls. The organizations main function is to protect the rights of the women and act as guardians for women suffering from discrimination. Not only has this organization taken care of the poor and downtrodden women but also has extended help to children as well.

Knowing the sufferings of women in the family causes problems in the family life, the organization setup a Family Counseling Centre (FCC) for women. The YWCA established FCC in 1996 which is sponsored by the Central Social Welfare Board functioning under the Mizoram State Social Welfare Advisory Board. The counselors of the FCC are usually experts from psychology and social work; they are always ready to help those in need. The FCC does not help them by handing out money; but try their level best in solving their problems through counseling. If the case is beyond their hands they refer them to doctors, lawyers etc. The counselors also visit clients at home and also give counseling through phone for clients who are reluctant to show their faces. The

³² YWCA: Application form for membership in the YWCA of Mizoram

FCC has gained importance and recognition, and has advanced a lot in the past years.³³

All Mizoram Women Federation

The All Mizoram Women Federation (AMWF) was established on 9th Nov. 2011. Lalneihzovi heads the federation as its President; Jane R.Ralte is the Vice President while Angela Ch. Ralte acts as the General Secretary. The All Mizoram Women Federation (AMWF) is now registered under the Registration of Firms and Societies. The newly formed federation tries to focus on the sexual abuse and other women related issues.³⁴

All Mizoram Women Federation is a conglomeration of organisations working with and for women development, empowerment and liberation in Mizoram. AMWF is an endeavour to bring together various women's organisation under one umbrella so as to strengthen women's movement in Mizoram.

The aims and objectives for which the society is established are as under:

- to lobby advocate for women empowerment and participation in decision making bodies
- to build the capacity of women's organization in promoting and protecting the rights and privileges of women

³³ T. Vanlaltlani, *op.cit.* pp.270-273

³⁴ <http://zolengthe.net/2011/11/10/mizo-women-form-umbrella-organization/#more-10826>
accessed on 3 /12/2012

- to take up activities and address relevant and contemporary issue and challenges of women
- to undertake and implement any policies and programmes of Centre and State Governments, concerning women, from time to time
- to work with women organizations both within and outside the State
- to ensure the representation of the interest of women from Mizoram in both national and international forum
- to realize the aims and object of the Federation, fund may be raised from both Government and Non-Governmental Organisation and
- to take up other necessary works and activities related to women as required from time to time.³⁵

Women Groups in the Church of Mizoram

The main religion in Mizoram is Christianity. The religion of Christianity plays a significant role in shaping the socio-cultural life of the people of the state. The people of this state are strong followers of Christianity. One of the significant aspects associated with the Christian religious group of Mizoram is the Mizoram churches. The Christians often make huge donations to these churches. The popularity of the Christian religion at Mizoram can be understood from the statistical fact that about 86.97 % of the total

³⁵ <http://amwfindia.org/> accessed on 3 /12/2012

population of the state is Christian by faith.³⁶ The major Christian denominations are Presbyterian (largest), Baptist, The Salvation Army, Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church, Seventh-day Adventist, Evangelical Church of Maraland in the southern district of Saiha, Roman Catholic and Pentecostal. Almost all the churches have women wings and all these women wings work actively for the church. This chapter studies the Presbyterian Women's Fellowship under the largest church which is the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram.

Presbyterian Women's Fellowship: The motto of the Presbyterian Women's Fellowship is "Called to witness" (Acts 1:8).

Their main objectives are:

- to work for the fulfillment of the ministry
- to endeavor to build a holistic Christian Home
- to help the needy in the name of Christ and
- to proclaim the gospel

The Formation of Mizo Presbyterian Women's Fellowship:

The origin of the Mizo Presbyterian women's fellowship dates back to the time when the Welsh missionary Rev D E Jones got married to Miss Catherine Ellen Williams (who was a missionary working in Syhlet, presently in Bangladesh) in 1903.

³⁶ Statistical Handbook of Mizoram, 2010

After marriage Mrs. Catherine Jones moved to Aizawl, Mizoram to join her husband in January 1904 and got involved in mission work particularly being engaged with women's concerns. She taught them different kinds of practical arts like sewing, knitting, stitching, cooking, hygiene, singing, and learning the alphabets etc. A Khasi lady Mrs. Siniboni, from Khasi Hills (now Meghalaya) was a great help to the missionaries in this regard.

The first women's fellowship meetings began around the year 1904 and were held on Friday afternoons in the Mission Veng Church at Aizawl. They spent their time of fellowship listening to Bible stories, the story of Jesus and His ministry, listening to sermons and the testimonies of the Mizo Christian women and the sharing of their Christian experiences. Through this evangelism many Mizo ladies converted to Christianity. The male missionaries supported the programme and even at times participated in it. In 2004, the Women Fellowship celebrated its Centenary. According to the report given by the General Secretary Mrs. H.Lalpianthangi, the Presbyterian Women's Fellowship has 158246 members.³⁷

The Spreading of Women's Fellowship all over Mizoram:

As the need of evangelism and developmental work was high, Mrs. Catherine Jones suggested that some of the women be trained for working on a full time basis in the Church for evangelism and to

³⁷ Report January – December 2012, Presbyterian Women's Fellowship, Presbyterian Church of Mizoram.

the uplift of the people. The mission/Church took up the project and some abled women were thus given training in Bible knowledge, general knowledge, midwifery, hygiene etc. On the completion of their training they were appointed as "Bible Women" and sent out to different districts to serve alongside the pastors. These bible women were very helpful in forming women's fellowship wherever they went. With the help of Bible women, pastors and Church elders, women's fellowships were organised in all the villages.

Structure:

In 1946, the local Church women's fellowship units belonging to two districts organised a District level women's fellowship conference in their respective districts and soon the holding of the district level conference became an annual feature all over Mizoram. In 1960 a general conference encompassing all the units of the Women's fellowship was called for the first time at Mission Veng Church. All the 23-district women's fellowship participated in this conference. From this time onwards a general conference has been conducted every year.

In order to facilitate the activities of the women's fellowship, committees were set up at all levels: local, district and central. As far as the local and district level committees are concerned, women in their respective levels elect the office bearers. Pastors and probationary Pastors are ex-officio members of their respective

district Women's Committees and of the local Church women's committees within their districts. In the case of the Central committee the chairperson and the General Secretary are appointed by the Synod Executive Committee from among the Church women; the General Secretary is appointed from among the Co-ordinator and or the Asst. Co-ordinators. The Synod Moderator, the Synod Secretary, and the Synod Executive Secretary in charge of women's ministry are the ex-officio members of the Central Committee. The General Conference elects other members of the Central Committee.

Nurturing Christian Homes:

Efforts are made to build up good Christian homes through seminars, workshops, and other special programmes. From 1970 an annual statistical survey of Presbyterian Homes is conducted. The best district is awarded a trophy and a certificate of appreciation at the Women's General Conference.

Handful of rice offering:

In 1914 the practice of handful of rice offering was started all over Mizoram. The principle behind this offering is based on the thought that Jesus Christ is the Guest at every meal and rice being a staple diet of the Mizo the person cooking the meal puts a handful

of rice in a container which is collected every week end and sold at the prevailing market rate. The money received from the sales proceeds of the handful of rice offering amounted to ₹ 868, 37,566/- in the year 2011-2012. Though the handful of rice collection was not so popular in the beginning it has now become one of the main source of the income for the Synod.

Agape news magazine:

The Churchwomen's Magazine called "Agape" has been published since 1986 and was published as a bi-monthly till June 1996. From July 1996 it has become a monthly publication. Mention may be made here that the Magazine is being able to meet its own production costs.

Hmangaihna In (Home of Love):

In 1986 the Mizo Synod established an orphanage called "Home of Love." The Synod entrusted the Central Church Women's Committee since 1992 to look after this home. The home can accommodate 30 babies and the finances for running the home are made available by the Synod.

Every year the Districts and the General conference take up certain projects to supplement the ministerial activities of the Church. The women fellowship contribute to various causes like the

Synod mission Board, the extension programmes of the Aizawl Theological College, the Presbyterian Hospital, the Synod Rescue Home, Women Centre etc. Besides these, the local Church Women's fellowship unit engages in different works in their respective localities like helping the poor, orphans, the sick and the bereaved families, visiting the jails and the hospitals and the rescue and rehabilitation homes. They also participated and contributed for the need of their local Church building and programmes.

Fellowship meeting and conferences in almost all the local Churches Women's fellowship meet every Tuesday evenings and the District level conference meet once a year and the General conference is held every year. The gospel has brought a significant change in the Mizo society as a whole and to the Mizo women in particular. The women play a dynamic role and they are instrumental from the beginning of the existence of the Church in Mizoram to spread the Gospel and to build up the Church.³⁸

Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Mizoram

Self-Help Group (SHG) is a group formed by the community women, which has specific number of members like 15 to 20. In such a group, the poor women would come together for emergency, disaster, social reasons, economic support to each other have ease of

³⁸ <http://www.mizoramsynod.org/> accessed on 6/6/2012

conversation, social interaction and economic interactions. A SHG also acts as a savings and credit organization. The SHGs pool financial resources to make small interest bearing loans to their members. This process creates an ethic that focuses on savings first.³⁹ This practice originated in 1992 when the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) began a pilot project linking 500 SHGs to the banks. The project maintained these linkages between SHGs and banks to provide credit and keep group savings. SHG members are encouraged to regularly save what they could and the banks provide for the financial needs that are beyond their savings. Eventually, these SHG-bank linkages have become a part of mainstream activity in India's rural finance system.⁴⁰

There are three types of situations in which the members of Self-Help Groups may take up economic activities:

- Individual activities like farming, animal husbandry, artisans work, petty trade and wage labour
- Common investments like common agro-services etc. and
- Joint activities like social forestry with a joint responsibility and involvement to generate employment to earn livelihood.

In Mizoram, SHGs are being promoted by the Mizoram Rural Bank, Non-Governmental Organisations and also by a state

³⁹ http://www.rmbgf.com/self_help.php accessed on 1/3/12

⁴⁰ <http://www.theinternational.org/articles/168-indias-self-help-movement> accessed on 1/3/12

government project under Social Welfare Department called Swayamsidha. This Swayamsidha is the only project that encourages the Mizo women to form women-centric SHGs, where the members are solely women.

As already mentioned, the Swayamsidha (Integrated Women Empowerment Programme) was implemented in Mizoram since 2000 by the Department of Social Welfare as the Nodal Department. Its main aim is to empower women. The scheme is funded by Department of Women & Child Development (DWCD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, New Delhi. Swayamsidha is an integrated project incorporating not only the core issues of SHG formation and mobilisation under the IWEP, but also encompasses other activities within the department itself. It also proposes to join related schemes with other departments. Training and capacity building, skill improvement, networking, baseline survey, documentation and end line survey are the important ingredients of the project.⁴¹

The main objectives are:

- Long term: All round empowerment of women especially socially and economically by ensuring their direct access to, and control over resources through a sustained process of mobilisation and convergence of all the on-going sectoral programmes.

⁴¹ Department of Social Welfare, Government of Mizoram, *Women Welfare Programme IWEP*. Unpublished Source.

- Immediate: Creation of confidence and awareness among members of SHGs regarding women's status, health, nutrition, education, sanitation and hygiene, legal rights, economic uplift and other social, economic and political issues.
 - Strengthening and institutionalising the saving habit in rural women and their control over economic resources.
 - Improving access of women to micro credit.
 - Involving women in local level planning.

Under this scheme, women groups are formed and the Groups are provided with a certain amount of revolving fund. The revolving fund thus provided was taken on loan by the members. Such utilisation of fund helped the members for self and family development. SHG members are expected to take up sustainable income generating activities. The project is expected to create self reliant and sustainable institutions prioritising women's needs and interests and bring about social and economic empowerment of women.⁴²

Again in Mizoram, the scheme was introduced in 3 (three) Blocks i.e. Tlangnuam Block, Aizawl District with 100 Self- Help Groups, Thingdawl Block, Kolasib District with 100 Self Help Groups and Lunglei Block, Lunglei District with 100 Self Help

⁴² Department of Social Welfare, Government of Mizoram, *Women Welfare Programme IWEP*. Unpublished Source.

Groups. The total number of Self- Help Groups today is 300 covering 94 villages having 5081 members.⁴³

The number of members in each group under Swayamsidha normally ranges from 10 to 15, and are of the age-group 25-60 years. These SHGs receive regular trainings on concepts and skill development as well as awareness campaigns on health and social issues from the promoting agency. They also held meetings to interact with one another and discuss their problems.

The groups also avail bank loans from the Khadi and Village Industries (KVI) Commission and other agencies. In addition to using the loans for economic purposes, they are sometimes disbursed among the members, which in turn earn their group some interest money. Thus, these loans also serve as a capital to start their own businesses.

Moreover, most of the members of the women SHGs do not have any other source of income other than that earned from the economic activities undergone by them through their group. They undertake different activities like that of poultry farming, piggery, pickle-making, chalk manufacturing, tailoring, sericulture plantation, ginger cultivation, door to door sales, juice manufacturing and different types of handicrafts such as basket-weaving, making straw hats, doormats, dyeing of clothes, handloom and candle-making. As a result, they turn out to be self-employed workers through these activities. Also, employment opportunity is

⁴³<http://socialwelfare.mizoram.gov.in> accessed on 2/4/2012.

generated for non-SHG members especially in chalk manufacturing, sericulture plantation and handloom.

Out of their total income, a certain sum of it are set aside every month and deposited in their personal savings accounts. However, the income acquired is generally used for business expansion while the bulk of it is used for meeting their household needs, medical expenses, and education and luxury items.

Through the SHGs a habit of saving is inculcated among the members. SHG-bank linkage programme is responsible for developing these banking habits among the uneducated and unemployed.⁴⁴

Therefore, it can be stated that the SHG programme is instrumental in initiating micro entrepreneurial activities among the wage-less and unemployed. Through the micro-credit facilities obtained from banks and other agencies, setting up of numerous micro-entrepreneurial opportunities becomes possible not only for the group members but also for non-members.

To sum up, this chapter analyses the roots of voluntarism in India, studying the working of the voluntary organisations in the Pre-Independence Period and the Post-Independence Period and the situation in Mizoram. The traditional custom of hnatlang (voluntary works) in the society, shows that Mizo have voluntary zeal in them.

⁴⁴ Helen Lalromawii, *Analysis of Economic Performance of Self-Help Groups in Mizoram: A case study of Aizawl District*, A Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Economics to the Mizoram University, 2010.

This chapter studied the biggest voluntary organization in Mizoram i.e. the Young Mizo Association. It analyses the working of the first women voluntary organization the Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual(MHT). The chapter examines the various women NGOs such as Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), Mizoram Hmeithai (Widows) Association (MHA), the Evangelical Nurses' Fellowship (ENF), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), All Mizoram Women Federation (AMWF) and the among the various women groups in the churches of Mizoram, this chapter studies the Presbyterian Women's Fellowship under the largest church which is the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram. It also studies the working of women SHGs promoted by state government project under Social Welfare Department called Swayamsidha. The women organization and groups in Mizoram have helped the needy and the downtrodden women and have paved way for their survival. By uplifting the women and helping the needy in Mizoram, these organizations and groups have contributed to the socio-economic development of the state.

CHAPTER-V

MIZO WOMEN AND GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

The previous chapter studies the working of the various women groups and organisations in Mizoram. The study shows that improving the lives of the women and helping the underprivileged in Mizoram these organizations and groups have added up to the socio-economic development of the state. The current chapter studies the Mizo women and the Governmental Institutions and Interventions.

As far as the development of women in concerned, there have been various shifts in the policies of the government for the last fifty years-from the concept of 'welfare' to 'development' and then to 'empowerment'. A number of Non-Governmental Organizations have worked and continue to work to improve the lot of women in the country. Employment, credit facilities, training, awareness generation, income-generation activities etc. have been the major interventions for improving the position of women. Governments at the Centre as well at the State design a number of schemes and programmes to support women.¹

Government of India – Institutions, Programmes and Policies on Women

Improving the status of women is the need of the hour and to convert this hope into reality, the Government of India has taken up various programmes and policies directed towards the

¹<http://www.mynetresearch.com/Wiki/Krishnan%20Embran-2004>. accessed on 1/4/2012

advancement of women. Governments at the Centre as well at the State have designed a number of schemes and programmes for the development of women.

Some of the supportive measures taken by the Government of India:

- Hostels for Working Women

With the change in the economic structure, more and more women are moving from their homes in search of employment. One of the main difficulties faced by such women is lack of safe and conveniently located accommodation. The Government of India being concerned about the difficulties faced by such working women, introduced a scheme in 1972-73 of grant-in-aid for construction of new and expansion of existing buildings to provide hostel facilities to working women in cities, smaller towns and also in rural areas where employment opportunities exist for women.

- Women's Training Centres and Institutes for the Rehabilitation of Women in Distress

Adversities of life arising out of economic, social, psychological and environmental situations affect women the most. Young and old widows, unmarried mothers and victims of kidnapping are some of the vulnerable groups affected. With the objective to rehabilitate such women and their dependent children, a scheme was launched in 1977 to provide vocational training-cum-employment and residential care so that these women could become economically independent.

- Short-stay Homes for Women and Girls

The government gives grants-in-aid to voluntary organization to establish and run Short-stay Homes, to protect and rehabilitate women who are facing social and moral danger because of family problems, mental strain, social ostracism, exploitation etc.

- Family Life Institute

The Association for Social Health in India runs the Family Life Institute in Delhi. The major functions of this institute are counseling services and family life education for the maladjusted spouses, parents, unmarried youth etc.

- Education Work for prevention of Atrocities against Women

Assistance under this Scheme is given to organization working with women for their social uplift and betterment and for carrying out education work for the prevention of atrocities against women through propaganda, publicity and research work.

- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

This collective scheme renders support to women's employment, for women working in various sectors such as agriculture, dairy farm, animal husbandry, fisheries, Khadi and Village Industries, handlooms, handicrafts and sericulture. The scheme was formulated at the beginning of the Seventh Plan.

- Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987

The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 was passed by Parliament in December, 1987. An Act to provide for the more

effective prevention of the commission of sati and its glorification and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

- Other Acts and Amendments of the Government for the Uplift and Empowerment of Women (both pre- and post-Independence period)
 - Sati Pratha Abolition Act, 1850
 - Caste Disability Removal Act, 1850
 - Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act, 1856
 - Female Infanticide Prevention Act, 1870
 - Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
 - Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937
 - Equal Remuneration Act 1976 (which provides for the payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers; and prevention of discrimination on the ground of sex against women in the matter of employment)
 - Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
 - The Special Marriage Act, 1955
 - The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
 - The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1976 (provides for establishment of a Crèche, where 30 women are employed as against one for every 50 hitherto)
 - The Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 (as amended in April 1976 to cover women who do not fall within

the purview of the Employee's State Insurance Act, 1948)

- Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act, 1956
- Women's and Children's Institution (Licensing) Act, 1956
- Orphanages and other Charitable Homes (Supervision and Control) Act, 1960
- Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- Family Courts Act, 1984
- Indecent Presentation of Women's Act, 1986
- National Commission on Women, 1992
- National Commission on Human Rights, 1992
- 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992
- Women Empowerment Policy, 2001
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- National Expert Committee on Women Prisoners, 1986 (an expert committee was set up at the National level in May 1986 to enquire into treatment of women offenders at various stages of the criminal proceedings, facilities available for women in custody or prison and their eventual rehabilitation)
- National Commission on Self Employed Women, 1987 (this was set up under the Department of Women and Child Development on January 5, 1987 for an all around development of the present status and welfare of women)

- Women's Development Corporations, 1986-87 (a scheme to set up women's development corporations in all the States and Union Territories was formulated during 1986-87, with the objective of providing better employment avenues for women so that they can become economically independent and self-reliant)
- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 (President of India give his assent to the anti-rape bill on 2nd April 2013, providing enhanced punishment for rape, making stalking and voyeurism criminal offences and fixing the age of consent for sex at 18. It provides for rigorous imprisonment for a minimum of 20 years, extendable to life imprisonment, to those convicted for the offence of gang-rape, and also defines and prescribes punishment for stalking, voyeurism and sexual harassment.)

- Policies of the Government

The major policy initiatives undertaken by the government for welfare of women include internal restructuring of Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY), Balika Samridhi Yojana (BSY), Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project (RWDEP), setting up of the National Commission for Women (NCW), National Commission for Children (NCC), National Crèche Fund (NCF),

adoption of National Nutrition Policy (NNP) and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK).

- Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY): It aims at empowering women and was launched during 1995-96 in 200 blocks based on the findings of the Joint Study Team of the Planning Commission. The recast IMY with the awareness generation and training component has recently been approved to overcome the existing weaknesses, as a mid-term correction. The Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) has been merged with IMY.
- Balika Samridhi Yojana (BSY): It was launched in 1997 with the specific aim to change the community's attitude towards the girl child. It has been further re-casted in June, 1999. Earlier the mother of a girl child born on after 15 August, 1997 in a family below poverty line in rural and urban areas was given a grant of ₹ 300. In the recast scheme, the post-delivery grant of ₹ 500 per child is deposited in an interest bearing account in the name of the new born child.
- Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project (RWDEP): It was sanctioned in October 1988 as a centrally sponsored project and aims to create an environment for empowerment of woman in six states viz., Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh at an estimated cost of ₹ 186.21crore. In addition an amount of ₹ 5 Crore will be provided over the project period but outside the project outlay for facilitating

in setting up of Revolving Fund to giving interest bearing loans to beneficiary groups primarily during formative stage.

- National Commission for Women: The demand for a National Commission for women had been made in 1976, when the first apprehensive report on the status of women in India was released. National Front Government introduced the National Commission on Women Bill on the last day of the budget-session of Parliament in 1990. It was set up in 1992 and gained credentials of many success stones in the areas of offering pre-litigated counseling to aggrieved women, attending to and investigating into the individual complaints received from all over the country, looking into the special problems of services, women and child, sex workers, women in custody and jail, women in mental asylums Women with disabilities, deserted women etc.
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh: It is an innovative venture to facilitate credit, support/ micro-financing to poor and asset less women struggling in the informal sector, works through the medium of NGOs as its channelizing agencies for identification of borrowers, delivery of credit support and also recovery. RMK was set up in 1993 and since then it has failed the initiative of having a national level mechanism to meet the credit requirements of poor and asset less women in informal sector.

- Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS): It aims to provide integrated package of health, nutrition and educational services to children up to 6 years of age, pregnant women and nursing mother.
- Department of Women and Child Development: This being the National Machinery for Empowering Women in the country is made responsible for mainstreaming women into national development by raising their overall status on par with that of men. It is charged with the nodal responsibility to implement and co-ordinate programmes of women's welfare and development.
- Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB): It was set up in 1953 with the objective of promoting social welfare activities and implementing welfare programmes for women, children and the handicapped through voluntary organizations. Presently more than 18,000 NGOs are receiving financial assistance and guidance from the Board.
- Food and Nutrition Board (FNB): It was transferred to Department of Women and Child Development on April 1, 1993 in pursuance with National Nutritional Policy. The regular programmes of FNB include organization of nutrition demonstration programmes, integrated nutrition education camps, orientation training courses, two week training courses in home scale preservation of fruits and vegetables, mass awareness campaigns, development of educational / training material, monitoring the

supplementary feeding at Aanganwadis, quality control of food etc.²

History of Mizo Women Institutions under Assam, Union Territory and Statehood

Mizo Hills District Council was one of the Districts of the Assam State prior to the North Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act 1972. It later became a Union Territory including three Autonomous District Councils in the South of Mizoram. The Union Territory administration was under the control and supervision of the Government of India. During the primitive system of the district administration, there was not much record of the work on women institutions for the progress and development of women in Mizoram. The Union Territory of Mizoram after 1972 under the direct administration of the Central Government evolved welfare concept in the general administration in which important role of women in the society came to be addressed.

After eight years of the Union Territory administration in Mizoram, Zirtiri Women's College was found by Mrs. Lalziki Sailo. She provided initially free accommodation at her residence at the Republic Road, Aizawl. Edith Mary Chapman of East End London, the English Missionary arrived India on 7th March 1919 (Bombay) and worked as a missionary till 1956 at Lunglei. She specialized herself in women education. The first women college was named after Edit Mary Chapman, Mizo called her 'Zirtiri'.

² <http://www.preservearticles.com> accessed on 2/4/2012

The college was named Zirtiri Women's College.³ The college was purely private and for women as the name suggested; with the specialization of B.Sc (Home Science). In order to financially support the institution, the Union Territory Government of Mizoram put the college under deficit system of college along with other colleges in 1986. The college was also shifted from Republic Road to its permanent location at Ramthar Veng Aizawl on 26th February 1987. With the change of the Union Territory status of Mizoram to Statehood, the Government proposed to establish Government Science Residential College to meet the requirement of science subjects in general. This has brought conversion of Zirtiri Women's College to a Science College with amalgamation of existing Home Science and the Science Department of Government Aizawl College with provincialised system. Thus, the college became a co-education institute under the Notification of the Mizoram State Government on 21st June 2000.

One of the most well-known and the only all girls school in Mizoram established by the Welsh Missionaries, also known as 'Girls' School' or 'Pi Teii's School' or P.C.Girls' School was established in 1903. The school introduces Classes A to VIII. The school on February 2012 has 32 staff members and 510 students.⁴ The School's Motto: 'To Serve the Lord'. The school was taken up by Government of Mizoram and was given Deficit status in 1986. Apart from formal education the school introduces several co-curricular activities to develop the student's

³ Lalziki Sailo (1990). 'The life and work of Miss Edit Mary Chapman', *Souvenir of Zitiri Women's College 1980-1990*.

⁴ Interview with Mrs. Chalngaii, Teacher, P.C. Girl's School on 27/2/ 2012.

ability to be better individuals for the society and for the country. Some of these activities are as follows:

- Work Experience (Craft): The children are taught different kinds of art and craft - knitting, sewing, painting, traditional sifting of rice (cleaning husks), weaving, etc. Many of the alumni develop skills enough to provide them a profession and are now self-employed; so these craft classes prove to be very useful.
- Music etc.: Tonic Solfa is taught, and they are given guidance to enable them to perform choirs, group singing, drama, recitation, etc.
- Guide and Bulbul: Guide and Bulbul classes have been continued since 1941. Apart from their regular studies, these are among the school functions; they prove to be very useful since these classes teach them a variety of things and the programmes include social services.

The school has been running smoothly till today. This school aims at preparing the students to be useful and productive for the country and the nation, to be good citizens, to have sound education, and to lead them to Jesus Christ.⁵

Established in 1972, Mamawii Girl's High School was named after Mrs. Hmingthanmawii (L) w/o Mr. K. Thangzuala. Till today the high school section of the school is all girls' high school. However, the higher secondary part of the school which was introduced in the year 2000 is co-education school. The high

⁵ <http://mizoram-synod.org/index.php?phkek=bawm&bid=4> accessed on 2/4/2012

school section teach the girl students how to stitch, knit, arranging of flowers, making of artificial flowers, embroidery, crochet etc.⁶ At Lunglei, the largest town in Mizoram, on 1st February 1981 Girl's High School was established; which was provincialised by the State Government on 1st October 1984. Nevertheless, on 23rd June 2000 the school was upgraded to higher secondary school, with this the school was changed to a coeducational school and the name of the school was also changed to Government Leitlangpui Higher Secondary School.⁷

With the approval of All India Council for Technical Education, Women's Polytechnic, Aizawl was established in the year 1998 with two departments i.e. Electronic and Telecommunication and Modern Office Practice. The institution is under the Directorate of Higher and Technical Education, Government of Mizoram. Mizoram is one of the State coming under World Bank assisted Technical Education III Project. With the fund from the World Bank, a new campus has been constructed at Durtlang. Two departments i.e. Garment Technology and Beauty Culture and Cosmetology have also been introduced. The institution also provides hostel for students who are admitted to their institution.⁸

⁶ Interview with Mrs. Liantluangpuii, High School Teacher, Mamawii Higher Secondary School on 26/3/2012

⁷ Interview with Mr.Lalrinchhana Ralte, Lecturer, Govt. Leitlangpui Higher Secondary School on 27/3/2012

⁸ Brochure Women's Polytechnic Aizawl:Mizoram

Present State Government - Institutions, Structures, Policies and Plans for Women

Government of Mizoram in the recent years has taken up a number of policies and plans for women. However, most of these policies and plans are centrally sponsored. The Department of Rural Development, Social Welfare Department and Health and Family Welfare Department are the main departments who are taking up steps for women.

Activities under Department of Rural Development

- Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) : The target groups for houses under the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) are below poverty line households living in the rural areas belonging to Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes, freed bonded laborers and non-SC/ST BPL rural households, widows and next of-kin to defense personnel/paramilitary forces killed in action residing in rural areas (irrespective of their income criteria), ex-servicemen and retired member of paramilitary forces fulfilling the other conditions, by providing them a lump sum financial assistance. IAY is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme funded on cost-sharing basis between the Government of India and the State Government in the ratio of 75:25.

- Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY): The main objective of Swarnajayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) is to provide sustained income to the rural poor which would enable them to cross the poverty line. To achieve this objective, the scheme has its focus on community mobilisation by forming self

help groups (SHG), capacity building, infrastructural facilities, subsidised credit linkage and market support. This scheme is funded by the Centre and State in the ratio of 75:25 respectively.⁹

Activities under Social Welfare Department

- Protection of Women against Domestic Violence:
 - For the purpose of this Act, any conduct of the respondent shall constitute domestic violence if he, — (a) habitually assaults or makes the life of the aggrieved person miserable by cruelty of conduct even if such conduct does not amount to physical ill-treatment; or (b) forces the aggrieved person to lead an immoral life; or (c) otherwise injures or harms the aggrieved person.
 - Nothing contained in clause (c) of sub-section (1) shall amount to domestic violence if the pursuit of course of conduct by the respondent was reasonable for individual's protection or for the protection of his or another's property.

- Reception Centre:

The Government of Mizoram established Reception Centre/Protective Home in 1988 as a branch of distress home for girls. It became a separate centre in October 1990 located at Maumual, the western outskirts of Aizawl. The only centre of its kind in the state which is established under sec 21 of Prevention

⁹ <http://rd.mizoram.gov.in> accessed on 2/4/2012

of Immoral Traffic Act 1956 with the purpose of rehabilitation for commercial sex workers. Though the official capacity of the centre is 25 residents, this number has been exceeded most of the time. Each resident is detained for a period of one year. They are assigned to one of the vocational courses offered which are tailoring, carpet weaving, embroidery work, cross stitching and candle making.

The centre is manned by Superintendent with Social Work Teacher, Warden, Staff Nurse, Instructress, and other Clerical Staff and sufficient IV - Grades as Security Guards. All administration of the centre rest with the Superintendent Protective Home; however subordinate staffs assist the Superintendent. All necessary decision at various level under the Superintendent are being made with due approval of the Director, Social Welfare Department.

- Residential Institute And Training Centre:

Residential Institute and Training Centre (RITC) also known as Home for Women in Distress was established in the year 1989 under the Department of Social Welfare, Govt. of Mizoram. The Primary objective of RITC is to rehabilitate women who are in need of care, protection and give training for their security and self-employment. The intention for establishing RITC is to rehabilitate women who are victims of circumstances who get involved in situations where they are socially and economically deprived, discarded and handicapped by giving them shelter, food, lodging, treatment and training to enable them

to take care of themselves. After finishing the course they are provided with sewing machines, basic tools for tailoring and a certificate for economic rehabilitation.

All Administration of the institution rests with the Superintendent RITC however subordinate staffs assist the Superintendent. All necessary decision at various level under the Superintendent are being made with due approval of the Director, Social Welfare Department.

▪ Swayamsidha (I.W.E.P.):

For Women's empowerment, Swayamsidha (IWEP) was implemented in Mizoram since 2000 by Department of Social Welfare as Nodal Department. The scheme is funded by Department of Women & Child Department, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, New Delhi.

The main objectives of the scheme are:

- All round empowerment of women especially socially and economically by ensuring their direct access to, and control over resources through a sustained process of mobilization and convergence of all the on-going sectoral programmes.
- Creation of confidence and awareness among members of SHGs regarding women's status, health, nutrition, education, sanitation and hygiene, legal rights, economic uplift and other social, economic and political issues.
- Scrutinizing and institutionalizing the saving habit in rural women and their control over economic resources.
- Improving access of women to micro credit.

- Involving women in local level planning.
- Convergence of services of DWCD (SWD) and other Departments:

Under this scheme, women groups are formed and the groups are provided with a certain amount of revolving fund. The revolving fund thus provided was taken on loan by the members. Such utilization of fund helped the members for self and family development.

The Scheme was introduced in 3 (three) Blocks i.e. Tlangnuam Block, Thingawl Block and Lunglei Block.¹⁰

Activities under Health and Family Welfare Department

- Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY):

Janani Suraksha Yojana is launched to reduce overall maternal mortality ratio and infant mortality rate, by increasing institutional deliveries. JSY is being proposed by way of modifying the existing National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and is fully funded by Govt. of India. The type of population that comes under the scheme are all pregnant women SC/ST, belonging to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) households and of the age of 19 years or above for up to two live births. Benefits would be extended to a woman belonging to a Below Poverty Line family even after a third live birth if the mother of her own accord chooses to undergo sterilization immediately after the delivery.

¹⁰ <http://socialwelfare.mizoram.gov.in> accessed on 2/4/2012

The amount to be paid is ₹700 as assistance to the expectant mothers/pregnant mothers and ₹ 600 for accredited social health activist (ASHA) / other equivalent worker after institutional delivery in rural area; while it is ₹ 600 as assistance to the expectant mothers and ₹200 for ASHA in urban area. Mothers can get this assistance from any Government Hospital or Accredited Private Hospital or Sub-Centres which have facility to deliver babies. The mother to receive this assistance has to be registered in a Sub-Centre, has to have been checked up at least 3 times and has to get tetanus injection during her pregnancy.

- National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS):

Under the NMBS there is a provision for the payment of ₹500 per pregnancy to women belonging to BPL households for pre-natal and post-natal maternity care for their first and second child, which can be disbursed during sixth or seventh month of pregnancy. The benefit is provided to eligible women of 19 years and above. They should be registered in any Govt. Hospital/ Primary Health Centre. However, one cannot enjoy the benefits of both JSY and NMBS at the same time; one has to opt for either one of them.¹¹

- Pattern of Central assistance for payment of compensation for sterilisation (tubectomy/vasectomy) Revision 2008:

Under this scheme, the Govt. of India releases compensation for sterilization acceptors to both women and men. Women who have undergone sterilisation operation (Tubectomy)

¹¹ Brochure by Directorate of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of Mizoram.

in the Government Hospital can get ₹600 and men who have undergone sterilization operation (vasectomy) can get ₹1100. Further, Women who have undergone failure sterilization (pregnant after sterilization) can also get ₹30, 000. With a view to do away with the complicated process of payment of ex-gratia to the acceptors of sterilization for treatment of post operative complications, incapacitation or death attributable to the procedure of sterilization. The Family Planning Insurance Scheme was revised and improved w.e.f. 01.01.2008 to take care of the cases of failure of sterilization, medical complications or death resulting from sterilization, and also provide indemnity cover to the doctor / health facility performing sterilization procedure, as shown on Table 5.1:

Table 5.1
Family Planning Insurance Scheme

Sl. No.	Coverage	Limits
1	Death following sterilisation in hospital or within 7 days from the date of discharge from the hospital.	₹ 2.00 lacs
2	Death following sterilisation within 8-30 days from the date of discharge from the hospital	₹ 50,000/-
3	Failure of sterilisation	₹ 30,000/-
4	Cost of treatment up to 60 days arising out of complication from the date of discharge	Actual not exceeding ₹ 25,000/-
5	Indemnity Insurance per doctor/facility but not more than 4 cases in a year	Up to ₹ 2.00 lacs per cliam

Source: Health and Family Welfare Department, 2012.

- Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK):

This programme is for all mothers who deliver in public institutions and extends for a period of 6 weeks after childbirth and for newborns up to 30 days after birth, and includes:

- Free transport from home to public health facility, referral from facility to facility and drop back home
- Free provision of drugs, consumables and diagnostics
- Free provision of blood
- Free provision of diet during hospital stays (3 days for normal delivery and 7 days for caesarean section)
- Exemption from all kinds of user charges
- Grievance redressal system so that the general population have a say in the function of JSSK.

Mizoram State Commission for Women

The State Government by notification in the Official Gazette, constituted a body to be known as the Mizoram State Commission for Women, to exercise the powers conferred on, and to perform the functions assigned to it under this Act and the rules framed were:

- The Commission consists of-
 - A Chairperson committed to the cause of women, nominated by the State Government;
 - Seven women members appointed \ nominated by the State Government from amongst persons of ability, integrity and standing, who have served the cause of women or have had

experience in law of legislation, trade unionism, management of own industry or organization committed to increasing the employment potential amongst women, women's voluntary organization, administration, economic development, health, education or social welfare.

- One Member-Secretary, nominated by the State Government, who is-
 - an expert in the field of management of non-government organization, or social movement or
 - an officer of the State Government, with adequate experience.

- Terms of office and conditions of service of chairperson and members-
 - The Chairperson and every member other than the Member-Secretary holds office for such period, not exceeding three years, as specified by the State Government in this behalf.
 - The Chairperson or a Member of the Commission other than the Member-Secretary can, by writing and addressed to the State Government, resign his/her office.
 - The State Government can remove a person from the office of Chairperson or Member other than the Member-Secretary, if that person –
 - becomes an undercharged insolvent, or

- is convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for an offence which, in the opinion of the State Government, involves moral turpitude, or
- becomes of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court, or
- refuses to act or becomes incapable of acting,
- is, without obtaining leave of absence from the commission, absent from three consecutive meetings of the Commission, or
- in the opinion of the State Government, has so abused the position of Chairperson or of member to render that person's continuance in the office detrimental to the public interest, provided that no person is removed under this sub-section until that person has been given a reasonable opportunity of being heard in the matter.
- A vacancy caused under sub-section (2) or otherwise is filled by a fresh nomination or appointment.
- The salaries, allowances and other terms and conditions of service of the Chairperson and Members other than the Member-Secretary, are provided salaries and allowances in a fixed manner and in the nature of honorarium.
- Officers and employees of commission-
 - The State Government provides the Commission with officers and employees as necessary for the efficient performance of the functions of the Commission.
 - The salaries and allowances paid to the Chairperson and Members and the administrative expenses, including

salaries and allowance and pensions paid to the officers and other employees referred to in section 5 are paid out of the grants made by the State Government.

- Committees or Commission-
 - The Commission appoints Committee or Committees as it considers necessary in due discharge of its functions under this Act.
 - The Commission has the power to co-opt as members of any committee appointed under sub-section (1) as such member of persons who are not members of the Commission, as it may think fit and the persons so co-opted has the right to attend the meeting of the committee to which they have been co-opted and take part in its proceedings, but does not have the right to vote in any meetings of such Committee or Committees.
 - The persons so co-opted are entitled to receive sitting allowances for attending the meeting of the committee, as prescribed.

- Procedure to be regulated by commission-
 - The Commission or committees meet as and when necessary and meets at such time and place as the Chairperson thinks fit.
 - The Commission regulates its own procedure and the procedure of the committees.

- All orders and decisions of the Commission are authenticated by the Member-Secretary or in his absence, by any other officer of the Commission authorized in writing by the Chairperson in this behalf.

- Functions of the Commission-
 - Subject to the provisions of the Act, the Commission performs all or any of the following functions, namely -
 - investigate and examine all matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the Constitution and other laws and recommend steps to be taken by the State Government for effective implementation of such safeguards;
 - review, from time to time, the existing provisions of the Constitution and other laws affecting women and recommend amendments thereto so as to suggest remedial legislative measures to meet any lacunae, inadequacies or shortcomings in such legislation;
 - take up the cases of violation of the provisions of the Constitution and of other laws relating to women with the appropriate authorities;
 - look into complaints and take notice of matters relating to –
 - deprivation or women's rights;
 - non-implementation of laws enacted to provide protection to women and also to achieve the objective of equality and development;

- non-compliance of policy decisions, guidelines or instructions aimed at mitigating hardships and ensuring welfare and providing relief to women; and take up the issues arising out of such matters with appropriate authorities;
- call for special studies or investigations into specific problems or situations arising out of discrimination and atrocities against women and identify the constraints so as to recommend strategies for their removal;
- undertake promotional and educational research so as to suggest ways of ensuring due representation of women in all spheres of life and identify factors responsible for impeding their advancement, such as, lack of access to housing and basic services, inadequate support services and technologies for reducing drudgery and occupational health hazards and for increasing their productivity;
- participate and advise on the planning process of socio-economic development of women ;
- evaluate the progress of the development of women under the State;
- visit jails, remand home, women's institution or other place of custody where women are kept as prisoners or otherwise, and take up with the concerned authorities for remedial actions, if found necessary;
- fund litigation involving issues affecting large group or groups of women;

- make periodical report to the Government on any matter pertaining to women and in particular various difficulties under which women toil;
 - any other matter which is referred to it by the Central Government or the National Commission for Women.
- The Commission have all the powers of a civil court trying a suit under the existing laws and in particular in respect of the following matters, namely :-
 - summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person from any part of India and examining him on oath;
 - requiring the discovery and production of any document;
 - receiving evidence on affidavits;
 - any other matter which is prescribed.
- On any investigation, the Commission can take up the matter with the State Government or the appropriate authority and can recommend to the state government or the appropriate authority, as the case may be, to institute legal proceeding or prosecuting in the matter and can also recommend to the state government or to the appropriate authority to appoint a special prosecutor for the conduct of such legal proceedings or prosecution.
- The state government or the appropriate authority communicates in writings to the Commission from time to time the progress of any such legal proceeding or

prosecution filed on the recommendation of the Commission.

- The state government or the appropriate authority can not apply for withdrawal of any case or proceeding without prior consultation in writing with the Commission.
 - It is the duty of the Commission to furnish comments and recommendations on any report of the National Commission for Women on any matters with which the state government is concerned as that government calls for.
-
- Government to consult commission- The state government consults the Commission on all major policy matters affecting women at large.

 - Power of commission to utilise the service of certain officers and investigating agencies for conducting investigation-
 - The Commission for the purpose of conducting investigations under this Act utilise the services of-
 - any officer or investigating agency of the state government with the concurrence of that government, or
 - any other persons.

- For the purpose of conducting an investigation, any officer or agency referred to in clause (a) of sub-section (1) can, subject to the direction and control of the Commission –
 - summon and enforce the attendance of any person and examine him;
 - require the discovery and production of any documents; and
 - requisition any public record or copy thereof from any office.
- Such officer or agency or the person can investigate into the matter as directed by the Commission and submit a report to the Commission within such period or extended period as specified or extended by the Commission on this behalf.
- The Commission can satisfy itself about the correctness of the facts stated and the conclusions, if any, arrived at in the investigation report submitted to it and for this purpose the Commission can make such inquiry (including the examination of the person or persons who conducted or assisted in the investigation) as it thinks fit.
- Statements made by the persons to commission-
 - No statement made by a person in the course of giving evidence before the Commission or an officer or agency, is subject to him or be used against him in any civil or criminal proceeding except in a prosecution for giving

false evidence by such statement, provided that the statement-

- is made in reply to a question which required by the Commission or such officer or agency or such person to answer, or
- is relevant to the subject matter under investigation.

▪ Registration of voluntary organisations and seeking the commissions assistance -

- Any voluntary organization for women within the State can seek registration with the Commission for the purpose of the Act. The Commission is able to after satisfying itself in the manner deemed fit by the Commission in the value and role of such organisation in the society, include the name of such organisation in its register;
- The Commission maintains a register of voluntary organizations within the State and more particular women's organizations whose assistance it seeks for the discharge of its functions.
- In discharge of its functions, the Commission seeks the assistance of any voluntary organizations within the State, more particularly, the women's organizations.
- A list of such organizations registered with the Commission can be made available to any court or authority or, on request, to the members of general public.

- If, for any reasons to be recorded in writing, the Commission deems it fit to cancel the name of any organization from its register, it can do so, after giving such organization a reasonable opportunity to be heard.
 - The decision of the Commission about such cancellation is final.
- Protection of act done in good faith-

No suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings lies against any member of the Commission or any officer or other employee of the Commission or any person acting under the direction either of the state government or of the Commission, in respect of anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done in pursuance of the Act or any rules or orders made there under.
- Finance accounts and audit-
 - Grants are given by state government
 - The state government, after due appropriation made by the State Legislature by law in this behalf, pay to the Commission by way of grants from Consolidated Fund of the State, such sums of money as the state government thinks fit for being utilised for the purposes of the Act;
 - The Commission can spend such sums as it thinks fit for performing the function under the Act, and such sums of

money is treated as expenditure payable out of the grants referred to in sub-section(1)

- Accounts and Audit
 - The Commission maintains proper accounts and other relevant records and prepares an annual statement of accounts in such form as prescribed by the state government in consultation with the Accountant General of the State of Mizoram.
 - The annual accounts of the commission is audited by the Accountant General of the State at such intervals as specified by him and any expenditure incurred in connection with such audit are payable by the Commission to the Accountant General.
 - The Accountant General and any person appointed by him in connection with the audit of the accounts of the Commission under the Act, has the same right and privileges and the authority in connection with such audit as the Accountant General generally has in connection with the audit of Government accounts and, in particular, has the right to demand the production of books, accounts, connected vouchers and other documents and papers and to inspect any of the offices of the Commission.
 - The accounts of the Commission, as certified by the Accountant General or any other person duly appointed or authorized by him in this behalf, together with the audit

report thereon, are forwarded annually to state government by the Commission.

- Annual Report

The Commission prepares, in such form and at such time for each financial year as prescribed, its annual report giving a full account of its activities during the previous financial year and forwards a copy thereof to the state government. Annual and other report and audit report are laid before the state legislature.

- Chairperson, members etc. to be public servants-

The Chairperson, the Members, officers and other employees of the Commission are deemed to be public servants within the meaning of section 21 of the Indian Penal code (55 of 1860).

- Power to make rules-

The state government can, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the provisions of the Act. Every rule made under the Act, is laid before the Mizoram Legislative Assembly while it is in session for a total period of seven days which is compromised in one session or in two sessions and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or successive session as aforesaid, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly agrees in making any modification in the rule or that the rule should not be made, the

rule thereafter has affect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be so.

- Removal of difficulty-

If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of the Act, the state government can, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provision not inconsistent with the provision of the Act as appears to it to be necessary or expedient for removal of the difficulty.

The Commission has initiated various steps to improve the status of women. There are today only two voluntary organisations namely Women Welfare Front and Acceptance Improvement Kindness Organised (AIKO), who have registered with the Commission for the purpose of the Act. The Commission has and continues to take up the various cases that have come up to them.¹² The following table shows the number of cases under the Mizoram State Commission for Women in the year 2011 and 2012.

¹² Interview with Mrs Thuami, LDC, Mizoram State Commission For Women on 18/3/2013

Table 5.2
Number of cases under the Mizoram State Commission
for Women

Sl. No	Subject of Cases	2011	2012	Total
1	Sexual Harassment	5	7	12
2	Sexual Abuse	17	8	25
3	Maintenance	14	12	26
4	Inheritance	16	7	23
5	Domestic Violence	12	6	18
6	Defamation	3	3	6
Total				110

Source: Mizoram State Commission for Women, 31st Dec 2012.

Crime Against Women Cell in Mizoram

The capital Aizawl has one Crime against women cell in the main police station, the Aizawl Police Station which is located in the heart of the city. This cell is the only cell that is operating in reality in the state of Mizoram. Though instructions have been passed, there is no Crime against Women Cell that is operative in other districts of Mizoram as stated by the Additional Superintendent of Police Crime Branch, Aizawl.¹³

Crime against women in Mizoram during the last five years was generally dominated by a high figure of rape (Sec 376 Indian Penal Code) and molestation, outraging modesty. Crime against women and children like murder, cruelty meted out by husband, immoral traffic and assault contribute small figures of not more than 6% each to the total number of crime against

¹³ Interview with Addl. SP (C) in his office on 30/4/2012.

women and children in Mizoram. A total of 183 incidents of crime against women both under Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special and Local Laws (SLL) were reported in the state during 2007 and 172 cases during 2008 and 161 cases in 2009. In 2010 the number of incidents has increased by 24% recording a total case of 200 during the year as compared to 161 during the previous year.¹⁴ The cases recorded for crime against women is eventually very high every year.

Looking into the National Crime Records Bureau statistics on crime in India for the year 2010, which has a separate chapter devoted to crime against women, we find that there is an urgent need for establishing Women Police Station all over India. A total of 2,13,585 incidents of crime against women (both under IPC and SLL) were reported in India during 2010 as compared to 2,03,804 during 2009 recording an increase of 4.8% during 2010. These crimes have continuously increased during 2006 - 2010 with 1,64,765 cases in 2006, 1,85,312 cases in 2007, 1,95,856 cases in 2008, 2,03,804 cases in 2009 and 2,13,585 cases in 2010. Andhra Pradesh, accounting for nearly 7.1% of the country's population, has accounted for 12.8% of total crimes against women in the country by reporting 27,244 cases. West Bengal with 7.6% share of country's population has accounted for nearly 12.2% of total crime against women by reporting 26,125 cases in 2010.

The rate of crime has increased marginally from 17.4 during the year 2009 to 18.0 during 2010. Tripura reported the highest rate of crime against women at 46.5 during 2010. Crime

¹⁴ <http://tntmagazine.in/news/crime-against-women-in-mizoram/> accessed on 1/4/12

against women has increased by 4.8% over 2009 and by 29.6% over 2006. The IPC component of crimes against women has accounted for 96.0% of total crimes and the rest 4.0% were SLL crimes against women. The proportion of IPC crimes committed against women towards total IPC crimes has increased continually during last 5 years from 8.2% in 2006 to 9.6% during 2010. An increasing trend in cases of rape has been observed during 2006 - 2008.

A mixed trend in the incidence of rape has been observed during 2008 - 2010. These cases reported an increase of 7.2% in 2007 over 2006, an increase of 3.5% in 2008 over 2007, a decline of 0.3% in 2009 over 2008 and an increase of 3.6% in 2010 over 2009. Incest rape cases have decreased by 10.3% from 321 cases in 2009 to 288 cases in 2010 as compared to 3.6% increase in overall rape cases. Maharashtra (44) has accounted for the highest (15.3%) of the total such cases reported in the country. There were 22,193 victims of rape out of 22,172 reported rape cases in the country. 8.9% (1,975) of the total victims of rape were girls under 14 years of age, while 16.1% (3,570) were teenage girls (14-18 years). 57.4% (12,749) were women in the age-group 18-30 year 3,763 victims (17.0%) were in the age-group of 30-50 years while 0.6% (136) was over 50 years of age. Offenders were known to the victims in as many as 21,566 (97.3%) cases. Parents / close family members were involved in 1.3% (288 out of 21,566) of these cases, neighbors were involved in 36.2% cases (7,816 out of 21,566) and relatives were involved in 6.2% (1,344 out of 21,566) cases.

Kidnapping and Abduction cases reported in 2010 had an increase of 15.7% as compared to previous year (25,741). Dowry Death cases in the year 2010 increased by 0.1% over the previous year (8,383). 26.4% of the total such cases reported in the country were reported from Uttar Pradesh (2,217) alone followed by Bihar (1,257). Torture cases in the country increased by 5.0% in the year 2010 over the previous year (89,546). Incidents of Molestation in the year 2010 increased by 4.9% over the previous year (38,711). The number of sexual harassment cases decreased in the year 2010 by 9.5% over the previous year (11,009). A decrease of 25.0% was observed under the Importation of Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act as 36 cases were reported during the year 2010 as compared to 48 cases in the previous year (2009). Cases under this Act were registered an increase of 1.0% during the year as compared to the previous year (2,474). No case was registered under Commission of Sati Prevention Act in 2010. An increase of 5.9% was noticed in the year 2010 under Indecent Representation of Women (Prevention) Act as compared to previous year (845). In the year 2010, cases under Dowry Prohibition Act decreased by 8.3% as compared to the previous year (5,650).¹⁵

The Hindu, New Delhi on 24th December 2012 using the headline States not keen on women police stations stated that Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) data, there were just 442 women police stations across India as on January 1, 2011. Tamil Nadu had the maximum number of

¹⁵ http://www.wikigender.org/index.php/Crime_against_Women_in_India,_2010 accessed on 1/8/2012

stations (196) followed by Uttar Pradesh (71), Andhra Pradesh (32), Gujarat (31), Rajasthan (24), Jharkhand (22), Madhya Pradesh (9), Punjab (5), Chhattisgarh (4) and Haryana (2). There are 13 States and Union Territories that are still to open women police stations. The Centre has been repeatedly telling these States to open women police stations to ensure better safety and security of women but to no avail.¹⁶

The State of Mizoram with its high number of crime against women cases is among one of the states which are not keen to open Women Police Station. A state where there is only one operating Crime Against Women Cell, the establishment of Women Police Station is but yet a dream. However, to ensure better safety and security of women the State of Mizoram is bound to take up action on this matter vigorously.

To sum up, this chapter highlights the various Government of India institutions, programmes and policies on women. The Government of India has made and passed a number of Acts and Amendments for the uplift and empowerment of women. Governments at the Centre as well at the State have designed a number of schemes and programmes for the support of women. This chapter studies history of Mizo women institutions under Assam, Union Territory and Statehood, various policies and plans for women under the State Government Departments of Rural Development, Social Welfare and Health and Family Welfare. It also studies the working and functions of the

¹⁶ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/states-not-keen-on-women-police-stations/article4232696.ece> accessed on 31/1/2013

Mizoram State Commission for Women. At the end of the chapter, it studies the Crime against Women Cell in Mizoram setup by the Home Department, Government of Mizoram for the protection of women.

CHAPTER-VI

ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL DATA

The previous chapter studies a variety of Government of India institutions, programmes and policies on women and also studies the institutions, structures, policies and plans for women made by the Government of Mizoram. Governments at the Centre as well at the state designed a number of schemes and programmes, passed a number of Acts and Amendments for the development of women.

As already stated in the first chapter, questionnaires were distributed in Aizawl District, Lunglei District and Kolasib District. These questionnaires were particularly answered by females. The questionnaire asked various questions touching generally on the society and economy. Moreover, the study also enquired about their knowledge of the various programmes and projects undertaken by the Central and State Governments. Questions were asked about the efficiency and effectiveness of such policies and programmes and whether they think that the Government both at the Centre and state work for the uplift of women. Suggestions were elicited on various problems faced by women today as individuals and as a group. In addition to these, questions were asked to the respondents about the Self-Help Groups and Cooperative Societies.

The respondents were also asked about their respective profiles. The responses are shown in the following table (Table 6.1)

Table 6.1
Profile of the Respondents

Sl. No	Factors		No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Area of Origin			
	a)	Urban	58	52
	b)	Semi-Urban	38	34
	c)	Rural	16	14
	Total		112	100
2	Age of Respondents			
	a)	20-30 years	48	43
	b)	31-40 years	38	34
	c)	41-50 years	16	14
	d)	51 or more	10	9
	Total		112	100
3	Education			
	a)	Illiterate	0	0
	b)	Functionally literate	0	0

	c)	Primary School	10	9
	d)	Middle School	2	1
	e)	High School	8	7
	f)	Higher Secondary	14	13
	g)	Graduate	24	22
	h)	Post Graduate	48	43
	i)	Professional	6	5
	j)	Any other	0	0
		Total	112	100
4	Marital Status			
	a)	Unmarried	62	55
	b)	Married	40	36
	c)	Widow	6	5
	d)	Separated	4	4
		Total	112	100
5	Occupation			
	a)	Government Service	58	52
	b)	Private Service	26	23
	c)	Self-Employed	22	20

continued

	d)	Business	6	5
	e)	Others	0	0
	Total		112	100
6	Monthly Family Income			
	a)	Below ₹ 5,000/-	10	9
	b)	₹ 5,000/ – ₹ 10,000/-	20	18
	c)	₹ 10,000/ – ₹ 20,000/-	8	7
	d)	Above ₹ 20,000/-	74	66
	Total		112	100
7	Membership in NGO			
	a)	Yes	112	100
	b)	No	0	0
	Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

Table 6.1 shows that out of the total 112 respondents, 58 live in the urban area of the state and 38 are from semi-urban places. The remaining 16 respondents are from the rural part of Mizoram. It can also be seen that 43p.c. of respondents are 20-30 years old while 34p.c. are aged between 31-40 years. Moreover, 14p.c. of the women are of 41-50 years while 10p.c. of them are aged 51 and above.

The table also portrays that more of the respondents i.e. 43p.c. selected randomly have finished their post graduate degree, 22p.c. are graduates, and 13p.c. finished their higher secondary level while 7p.c. are matriculates. In addition, 9p.c. of the respondents finished up to primary school and 1p.c. their middle school. Still another 5p.c. are professional. This shows that the questionnaire is answered by different respondents of different educational levels.

More than half of the respondents, i.e. 62 are unmarried while 40 of them are married. There are 6 widows and 4 are either divorced or had separated from their spouses.

Fifty two p.c. of the respondents work under the Central and State Government while 23p.c. are in the private sector. Twenty p.c. are self-employed while 5p.c. of the respondents are in the business sector.

It is also seen that most of the respondents i.e. 66p.c. earn a monthly family income above ₹ 20,000/- followed by those earning ₹ 5,000-1,000 are of 18p.c. Nine p.c. of the respondents and their family earn a monthly income below ₹ 5,000/- while another 7p.c. earn between ₹ 10,000-₹ 20,000/-

Furthermore, all of the respondents are engaged in some NGO or the other. In Mizoram, the civil society groups are very active in the social field and the respondents in general are associated with many of these groups as a matter of continuous engagement.

As already stated, the respondents were asked about their knowledge and opinion about various matters that touch the

society, economy, working of the Central and State Governments etc. The analysis of the empirical data is given in the following (Figure 6.1 to Figure 6.3 & Table 6.2 to Table 6.27):-

Table 6.2

Opinion of respondents regarding progress of Mizo women

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Mizo women are developed than what they were in the past			
a	Yes	112	100
b	No	0	0
c	I don't know	0	0
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked about their opinion about the position of Mizo women, whether they are more developed than they were in the past. Out of the 112 respondents, all of them answered in the positive. Hundred p.c. of the respondents are of the opinion that Mizo women show definite signs of development.

Table 6.3
Opinion regarding women's role in society

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Play a role in bringing change in society			
a	Yes	102	92
b	No	6	5
c	I don't know	4	3
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked if they think that women play a role in bringing about change in the Mizo society. Hundred and two i.e. 92p.c. of them agreed that Mizo women do play a significant role in bringing favourable changes in the society while 6 i.e. 5p.c. of them did not agree. The remaining 4 respondents i.e. 3p.c. answered neither in positive nor negative.

Table 6.4
Opinion regarding marriage law

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Satisfied with traditional customary law of marriage			
a	Yes	54	48
b	No	50	45
c	I don't know	8	7
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

Regarding the traditional customary law of marriage, 54 respondents i.e. 48p.c. are satisfied with the law. While 50 respondents i.e. 45p.c. are not satisfied and are in favour of a higher *hmeichhe man* which is the nominal price of the bride; the remaining 8 respondents i.e. 7p.c. did not air their view.

Table 6.5

Participation of women in decision making bodies

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Women should play a part in decision making bodies of the community			
a	Yes	54	48
b	No	38	34
c	I don't know	20	18
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

Out of the total respondents, 54 of them i.e. 48p.c. are of the opinion that women should play a part in decision making bodies of the community. Another 38 i.e. 34p.c. are not in favour of women's participation and 20 i.e. 18p.c. of the respondents are indecisive about it.

Table 6.6
Participation in household decision making

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Participate in decision making at household level			
a	Yes	110	98
b	No	2	2
c	I don't know	0	0
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked whether they participate in decision making at their respective households. A total of 110 i.e. 98p.c. respondents do make decisions at the household level while the remaining 2 i.e. 2p.c. do not participate in the decision making process in the household.

Table 6.7
Participation in community decision making

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Participate in decision making at community level			
a	Yes	32	29
b	No	80	71
c	I don't know	0	0
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked whether they participate in decision making at the community level. Thirty two i.e. 29p.c. of the respondents participate in making decisions at the community level, while 80 i.e. 71p.c. of the respondents do not participate in any decision making at the community level.

Table 6.8
Freedom of participation in society

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Able to participate in activities of the society without restriction			
a	Yes	92	82
b	No	20	18
c	I don't know	0	0
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The women were asked whether they freely participate in various activities of the society. Out of the total respondents, 92 i.e. 82p.c. answered that they participate freely in the society's activities. On the other hand, 20 i.e. 18p.c. of the respondents answered that they cannot participate freely in the activities of the society.

Table 6.9

Participation of women in political decision making

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Participation of women in political decision making bodies at the state administration, municipality etc.			
a	Yes	14	12
b	No	94	85
c	I don't know	4	3
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked if whether Mizo women participate adequately in the political decision making bodies at the state administration, municipality etc. Ninety four i.e. 85p.c. of the respondents think that Mizo women do not partake adequately while 14 i.e. 12p.c. of the respondents think that Mizo women do participate adequately. The remaining 4 i.e. 3p.c did not air their views.

Table 6.10

Support for educational institutions for women only

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Support the idea of establishing educational institutions for women only			

continued

a	Yes	76	68
b	No	16	14
c	I don't know	20	18
	Total	112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked if they are in favour of establishing educational institutions for women only. Seventy six i.e. 68p.c. of the respondents are in favour of it; while 16 i.e. 14p.c. are not. Moreover, the remaining 20 i.e. 18p.c. do not have any opinion in this matter.

Table 6.11
Discrimination of women

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Ever been discriminated for being a woman			
a	Yes	18	16
b	No	94	84
	Total	112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked if they had ever been discriminated just for being a woman. Eighteen women i.e. 16p.c. stated that they had encountered discrimination while the remaining 94 i.e. 84p.c. of the respondents answered that they had never been discriminated for being a woman.

Table 6.12

Sexual harassment of women

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Ever been sexually harassed			
a	Yes	22	20
b	No	90	80
Total		112	100
If Yes, did you report it?			
a	Yes	0	0
b	No	22	100
Total		22	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked whether they had ever been harassed sexually in one way or the other. Twenty two i.e. 20p.c. of the respondents replied that they had been sexually harassed. They were further asked whether they reported such incident of harassment which all of them answered in the negative. Moreover, out of the total respondents, 90 i.e. 80p.c. of the women replied that they had never been sexually harassed.

Table 6.13

Opinion on establishment of Women Police Stations

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
In favour of establishing Women Police Stations			
a	Yes	88	79
b	No	16	14
c	I don't know	8	7
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

Regarding the establishment of Women Police Stations in Mizoram, 88 i.e. 79p.c. of the respondents are in favour of the establishment of such stations and state that women will benefit immensely from it. On the other hand, 16 i.e. 14p.c. of the respondents are not in favour of it, while the remaining 8 i.e. 7p.c. did not air their view on it.

Table 6.14

Women Police Stations and crime against women

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Establishment of Women Police Stations will decrease crime against women			
a	Yes	70	62

continued

b	No	10	9
c	I don't know	32	29
	Total	112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked if they think that establishment of Women Police Stations will decrease crime against women. Seventy i.e. 62p.c. of the respondents think that establishment of such police stations would decrease the prevailing crimes against women. On the other hand, 10 i.e 9p.c. of them do not think that it would help and 32 i.e. 29p.c. do not have any opinion on the matter.

Table 6.15

Current occupation of women and benefits for the family

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Family benefits from current employment or occupation of women			
a	Yes	96	86
b	No	10	9
c	I don't know	6	5
	Total	112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked whether their current occupation helps their family needs and if the family benefits

from it. Ninety six i.e 86p.c. of the total respondents answered that their family benefits from their employment. On the other hand, 10 respondents i.e. 9p.c. answered that their current occupation is more or less insufficient while the remaining 6 respondents i.e. 5p.c. answered neither in negative nor positive.

Table 6.16
Contribution of women to economy of the state

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Women contribute to Mizoram economy			
a	Yes	108	96
b	No	2	2
c	I don't know	2	2
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

A question was asked if the respondents think that women contribute to the economy of Mizoram. Out of the total respondents, 108 i.e. 96p.c. are of the view that women contribute to the growth and development of the economy; while 2 i.e. 2p.c. of the respondents do not think so. Moreover, another 2 i.e. 2p.c. of them have no opinion on the matter.

Table 6.17

Efficiency of women in the market

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Women are more efficient than men in the market			
a	Yes	68	61
b	No	12	11
c	I don't know	32	28
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

On asking the respondents about their point of view that women are more efficient than men in the market of Mizoram, from the total respondents 68 i.e. 61p.c. are of the opinion that women are more efficient than men in the market while 12 i.e. 11p.c. of the respondents do not believe so; whereas 32 i.e. 28p.c. of them have no idea on the subject matter.

Table 6.18

Higher participation of women and rate of development

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Higher participation of women will enhance development rate			
a	Yes	80	71

continued

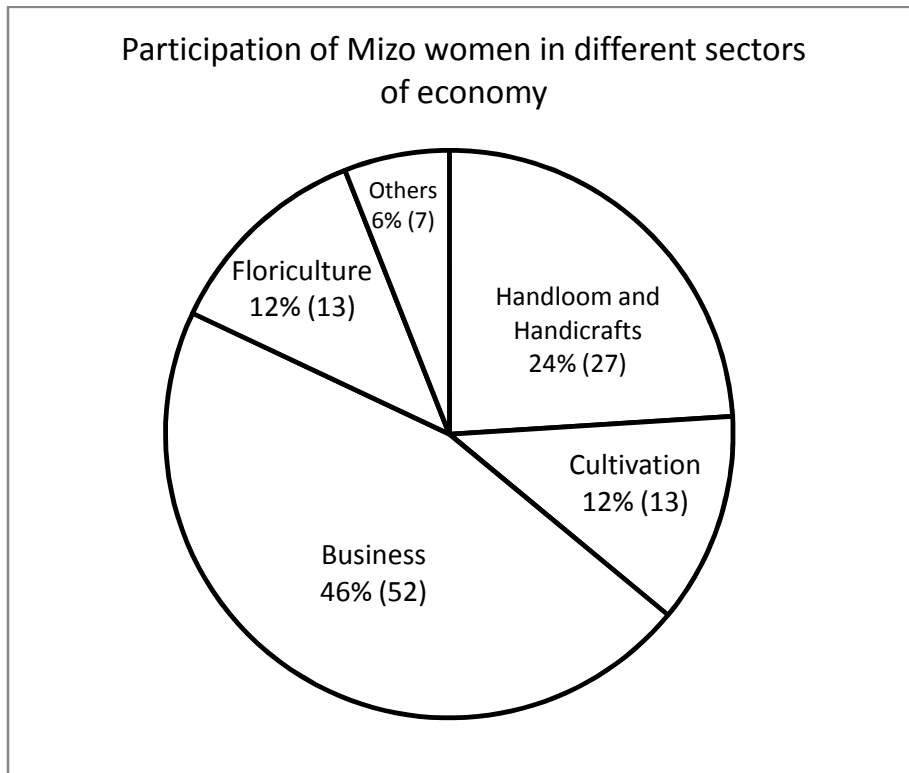
b	No	10	9
c	I don't know	22	20
	Total	112	100

Source: Field Survey

When the respondents were asked whether higher participation of women will enhance development rate, 80 respondents i.e. 71p.c. of them are of the view that higher participation of women will enhance development rate. While 10 respondents i.e. 9p.c. of them did not think so; 22 respondents i.e. 20p.c. of them answered neither in negative nor positive.

Figure 6.1

Participation of Mizo women in different sectors of economy



Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked about the participation of Mizo women in different sectors of economy. Twenty seven i.e. 24p.c. of the total respondents view that Mizo women contribute through handloom and handicrafts to economy, while 13 i.e. 12p.c. of the total respondents view that Mizo women participate through cultivation, as 52 i.e. 46p.c. of the total respondents are of the opinion that they participate through business to the economy, at the same time as another 13 i.e. 12p.c. of the total respondents view that through floriculture women participate to the economy, whereas 7 i.e. 6p.c. of the total respondents opine that women contribute to the economy through other sectors.

Table 6.19

Measures by State Government and gender equality

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
State Government undertakes measures to promote gender equality			
a	Yes	36	32
b	No	54	48
c	I don't know	22	20
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked if the State Government undertakes measures to promote gender equality. Out of the total respondents, 36 i.e. 32p.c. agreed that the State Government

undertakes measures to promote gender equality. Whereas 54 i.e. 48p.c. of the total respondents opined that the State Government does not undertake measures to promote gender equality; only 22 i.e. 20p.c. of the total respondents did not have any view on this matter.

Table 6.20

Access to employment and social benefits by the women

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Provisions of access to Government employment and social protection benefits for women			
a	Yes	52	46
b	No	30	27
c	I don't know	30	27
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked whether the State Government provides access to employment and social protection benefits for women. Out of the total respondents, 52 i.e. 46p.c. believe that the State Government enacts laws guaranteeing equal access to employment and social protection benefits, although 30 i.e. 27p.c. of the total respondents did not believe that the State Government enacts laws guaranteeing equal access to employment and social protection benefits, at the same

time as 30 i.e. 27p.c. of the total respondents had no clue to this subject matter.

Table 6.21

Governmental financial assistance to women for trade

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Role of Government in financial assistance to women for trade			
a	Yes	38	34
b	No	40	36
c	I don't know	34	30
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

A question was asked if the State Government provides financial assistance to women for trade. Out of the total respondents, 38 i.e. 34p.c. are of the view that State Government has taken specific measures ensuring to provide financial assistance to women for trading activities. On the other hand, 40 i.e. 36p.c. of the total respondents view that the State Government does not provide required financial assistance to women for trade opportunities. However, 34 i.e. 30p.c. of the total respondents did not have any point of view regarding this issue.

Table 6.22

State Government and awareness generation of women

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Role of State Government in awareness generation of women			
a	Yes	34	30
b	No	50	45
c	I don't know	28	25
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

When the respondents were asked to give the opinion regarding the role of State Government in awareness generation of women on various issues related to women development, 34 of them i.e. 30p.c. opined that the State Government plays a role in this aspect. While 50 of them i.e. 45p.c. answered in the negative; 28 of them, i.e. 25p.c. did not have any specific response.

Table 6.23

State Government and Women Development programmes

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Working of State Government in women development programmes			
a	Yes	32	28

continued 184

b	No	58	52
c	I don't know	22	20
	Total	112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked if the State Government is successful in developing and implementing programmes for women development. Out of the total respondents, 32 of them i.e. 28p.c. view that the State Government is successful in developing and implementing programmes for women development. While 58 of them i.e. 52p.c. are of the opinion that the State Government is not successful in developing and implementing programmes for women development; 22 of them i.e. 20p.c. do not have any specific view on the issue.

Table 6.24

Mizo women and Centrally sponsored programmes

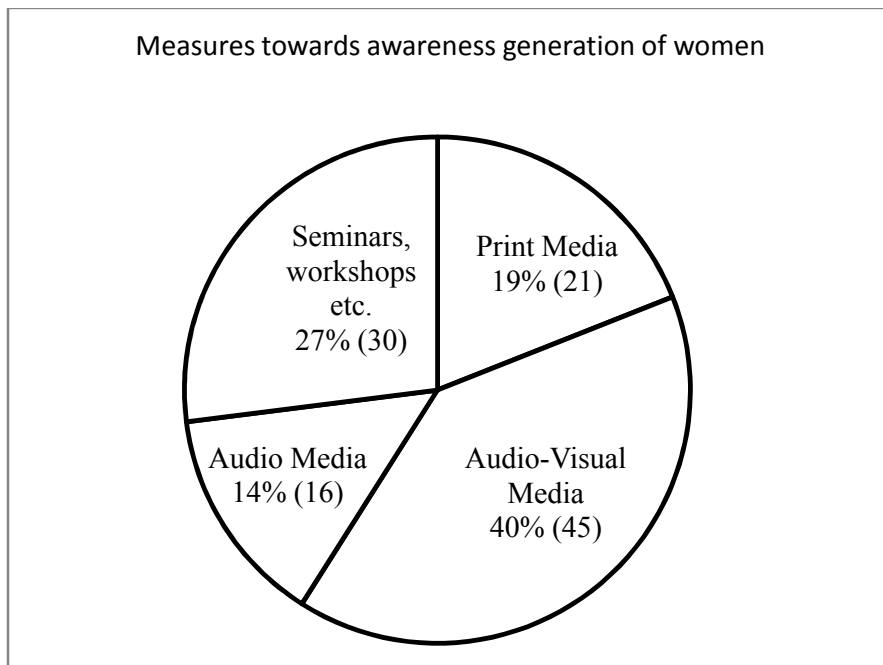
Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Awareness of Mizo women about Centrally sponsored programmes			
a	Yes	10	9
b	No	84	75
c	I don't know	18	16
	Total	112	100

Source: Field Survey

When the respondents were asked if the Mizo women are aware of the Centrally sponsored schemes aimed at women development, 10 respondents i.e. 9p.c. responded that they are aware of the Centrally sponsored programmes. While 84 respondents i.e. 75p.c. opined that they are not aware of such programmes; 18 respondents i.e 16p.c. did not give any specific response.

Figure 6.2

Measures towards awareness generation of women



Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked what are the measures the state government should take in making women aware of the government programmes. Out of the total respondents, 45 of them i.e. 40p.c. choose audio-visual media. While 30 of them i.e. 27p.c. select seminars, workshops etc.; 21 of them i.e. 19p.c. go

for print media and 16 of them i.e. 14p.c. opt for audio media, that is regular and occasional announcements through microphones.

Table 6.25
Women NGOs and Women Development

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Role of Women NGOs in promoting women development			
a	Yes	82	73
b	No	12	11
c	I don't know	18	16
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The respondents were asked if the women NGOs work to promote women development. Out of the total respondents, 82 of them i.e. 72p.c. view that women NGOs work efficiently to promote women development. While 12 of them i.e. 11p.c. opined that women NGOs do not work to promote women development. Eighteen of them i.e. 16p.c. do not have any specific opinion on the subject matter.

Table 6.26

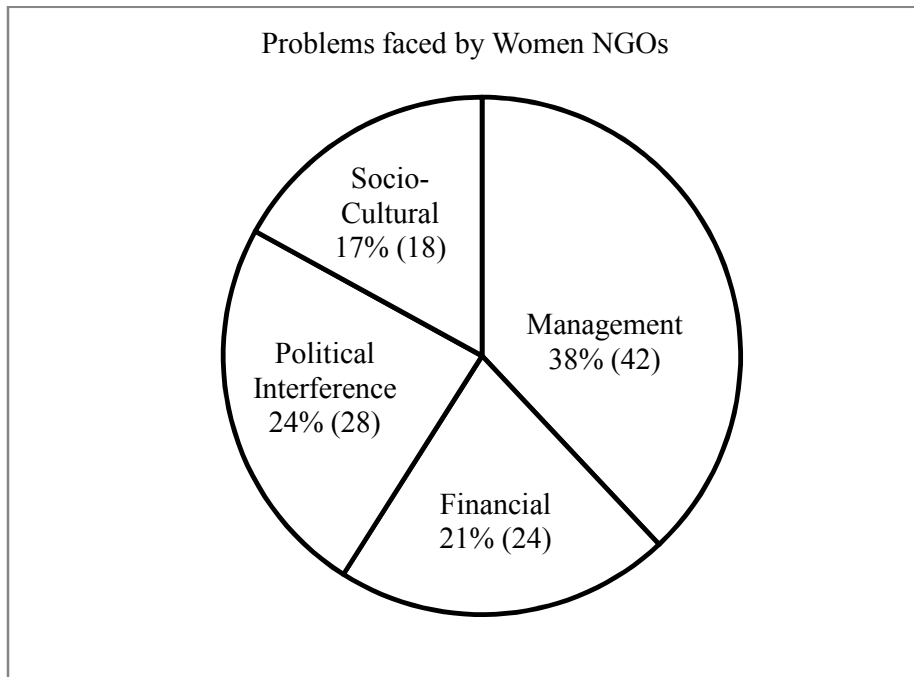
Role of other NGOs in Women Development

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Working of other NGOs (not necessarily women NGOs) in women development			
a	Yes	18	16
b	No	68	61
c	I don't know	26	23
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

A question was asked if other NGOs, not necessarily women NGOs only, contribute to women development. Out of the total respondents, only 18 of them i.e. 16p.c. are of the view that other NGOs contribute to women development. While a vast majority of the respondents i.e. 68 or 61p.c. are of the view that other NGOs do not contribute to women development; 26 respondents i.e. 23p.c. do not have any specific response.

Figure 6.3
Problems faced by Women NGOs



Source: Field Survey

A question was asked to the respondents regarding the problems faced by the women NGOs. Out of the total respondents, 42 of them i.e. 38p.c. view that the women NGOs face the problem of management. While 28 i.e. 24p.c. of them opined that political interference is a problem faced by the women NGOs; 24 i.e. 21p.c. of the respondents view that the women NGOs face financial problem and 18 i.e. 17p.c. of the respondents are of the view that the women NGOs face socio-cultural problems in their day to day working.

Table 6.27

Self Help Groups and Women Development

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in women development			
a	Yes	64	57
b	No	14	13
c	I don't know	34	30
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

Self Help Groups today have become an integral part of activities and initiatives concerning women development in India. These groups organise women for sustainable socio-economic activities, life income generation, self-employment, particularly in decision making process improving the standard of living of women and uplifting women in general. When a question was asked to the respondents regarding the role of SHGs in women development, 64 of them i.e. 57p.c. opined that these groups contribute to women development. While 14 of them i.e. 13p.c. were of the view that SHGs could not contribute much to women development; a significant member of the respondents i.e. 34 or 30p.c. did not have any specific opinion on the issue.

Table 6.28

Cooperative societies and Women Development

Inquiry		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Contribution of Cooperative Society for the development of women			
a	Yes	62	55
b	No	8	7
c	I don't know	42	38
Total		112	100

Source: Field Survey

The Mizo society throughout the ages has been a close-knit society. The Mizo people have maintained a tradition and culture of social cohesiveness. In such a social backdrop, the cooperative movement could have been very effective and efficient in Mizoram. However, while pursuing the study, it has been found that very few women members are there in different types of cooperative societies. Still, there are few women cooperative industrial units in the state like weavers cooperative societies. However, when the respondents were asked regarding the role of cooperative societies for women development, 62 of them i.e. 55p.c. opined that the cooperative societies can contribute to women development. While only 8 of them i.e. 7p.c. were of the view that cooperative societies cannot contribute to women development; a significant number of the respondents i.e. 42 or 38p.c. did not have any specific opinion on the issue.

To sum up, in this chapter data analysis has been done regarding the role of Mizo women in socio-economic development which relates to different spheres of social and economic activities along with plans and programmes as designed and implemented by the government as well as the Self Help Groups and Cooperative societies in Mizoram.

CHAPTER – VII

CONCLUSION

The present aims at analysing the role of women in the socio-economic development of Mizoram. Women in Mizoram constitute almost fifty percent of the entire population. They are involved in a number of socio-economic activities. Mizo women play a vital role in the development of Mizoram by participating in all spheres of life. The study focused on the role played by Mizo women in the socio-economic development of Mizoram in the past and in modern time. Under the present research work, governmental initiatives and programmes for women and other relevant aspects were also studied.

The first chapter or the introductory chapter consists of introduction to the study, stating that maximum participation of women in the different socio-economic activities is necessary to bring about success in economic and social fields in a developing country like ours. It further deals with the main concepts and ideas of the study, statement of the problems, review of literature including reviewing from books, articles, reports etc, scope of study, objective of study, research questions, the methodology, significance of the study and a brief sketch of all the chapters.

The second chapter makes a conceptual study of women in India. Mentioning that, the status of women in ancient India was

considerably good which took a downward turn in the medieval times because of some evil socio-religious practices, superstitions and customs that cropped up in the social system. Because of these customs, practices and religious beliefs of different religions, the status of Indian women has suffered a lot and these beliefs till today stand in the way of development of the status of women in India. The majority of the families in India are of patriarchal structure, in which the women play a nominal role in the family. This makes the Indian women bow their heads down and lead a meek life even in their own family. Customs and superstitions play a dominant role in determining the status of women. Though the evil customs of child marriage, sati system, female infanticide etc. have been abolished through legislative Acts, the society still is not devoid of these customs. Women of the present day are victims of torture, rape and molestation.

Furthermore, the chapter studies the advent of education that enables women to challenge all the superstitions and restrictions that are imposed on women. It also makes them aware of their duties and responsibilities towards the country. The Constitutional rights that safeguard women and prevent them from discrimination are also discussed in this chapter. Factors like modernisation, urbanisation, development of technology etc. have brought change in the society which have further brought in changes in production, wealth and resources. These changes possibly will improve the living pattern of women in India. There is a slow but changing movement in both rural and urban areas of Mizoram in which

women's thoughts are changing towards family and society. They are coming out of the four walls of family to earn their livelihood. They are trying to establish themselves in the family and the society. Women are joining different social, economic and political activities to a significant extent in spite of the numerous barriers faced by them.

The third chapter studies the location, area, population and topography of Mizoram including the origin of the Mizo people, the status of the early Mizo women while studying their lives in the family, society, education, economy and politics. Living in a patriarchal society, the early Mizo women were placed at a very low status. Like in any other society, they were the backbone of life in all the families. It was found that women did double the work of men from cleaning the jungle, sowing seeds, clearing the weeds, harvesting and transporting the harvest from *jhum* land to home. They also had to carry out domestic works such as fetching water from a distant spring which was generally way down a hill, husking of rice, cooking meals and gathering firewood in which men of the family did not involve. On top of this, a girl child was not permitted to receive education. However, later on, the Pioneer Christian Missionaries paved the way for women education.

The change in the Mizo society is brought in through education. In the present day, change is seen in the society where more women are found in the offices, schools, markets places than men. Despite of the change, the participation of Mizo women is very low in the field of politics and it is not satisfactory at all.

Mizoram has more female voters than male but political parties do not select women to represent. Today, women have no representation in the State Legislative Assembly. However, due to the 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution, Aizawl women today have six reserved seats in the Aizawl Municipal Council out of a total of nineteen. Moreover, it was also found that regardless of the huge contributions of women in the Church, most of the Churches of Mizoram show hindrance to women by not allowing them to preach the message of God from the sacred place inside the Church on special Christian occasions and thereby denying committed women the right to become Pastors and Ordained Church Elders in the Church.

The fourth chapter examines the roots of voluntarism in India, studying the working of the voluntary organisations in the pre-Independence period and the post-Independence period. Studying the situation in Mizoram, all the activities in the village areas were carried out through ‘hnatlang’ voluntary works. The traditional custom of ‘hnatlang’ in the society shows that the Mizo have voluntary zeal in them. Through the ‘Zawlbuk’ (bachelor’s den) ‘Tlawmngaihna’ was taught from generation to generation. ‘Tlawmngaihna’ has been surviving in the Mizo society as the guiding principle of social life and as an important instrument in raising the spirit of voluntarism among the Mizo. The chapter studies the biggest voluntary organization in Mizoram i.e. the Young Mizo Association. It analyses the working of the first women voluntary organization i.e. the Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual(MHT).

The chapter examines various women NGOs such as Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), Mizoram Hmeithai (Widows) Association (MHA), the Evangelical Nurses' Fellowship (ENF), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and All Mizoram Women Federation (AMWF). Among the various women groups in the Churches of Mizoram, it studies the Presbyterian Women's Fellowship functioning under the largest Church which is the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram. The chapter also studies the working of SHGs promoted by state government project under the Social Welfare Department called Swayamsidha; the only project that encourages Mizo women to form women-centric SHGs. The project aims at all round development and empowerment of women, especially social and economic, by ensuring their direct access to and control over resources through a sustained process of mobilisation and convergence of all the on-going sectoral programmes. This process has contributed to confidence building and awareness generation among members of SHGs regarding women's status, health, nutrition, education, sanitation and hygiene, legal rights, economic uplift and other social, economic and political issues. These organizations and groups play a vital role in the socio-economic development of the state. By uplifting women and helping them, including the deprived, these organizations and groups not only empower their members but also wield a powerful role as interest groups as well.

The fifth chapter focuses attention on the various Government of India institutions, policies and programmes on women. The

numerous Acts and Amendments made and passed by the Government of India for the uplift and empowerment of women are presented in the chapter. Governments at the Centre as well at the State have designed a number of schemes and programmes for the development of women. It also studies the history of Mizo women institutions under Assam, Union Territory and Statehood. Various policies and plans for women under the State Departments of Rural Development, Social Welfare and Health and Family Welfare have also been discussed. It also studies the working and functions including the Act and Rules of the Mizoram State Commission for Women. As the recorded criminal cases against women both under Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special and Local Laws (SLL) are eventually very high every year, the chapter studies the Crime Against Women Cell in Mizoram that has been setup for the protection of women by the Home Department, Government of Mizoram.

The sixth chapter contains the analysis of empirical data. Questionnaires were distributed in Aizawl District, Lunglei District and Kolasib District. Women were requested to answer the questions. The questionnaire asked various questions touching generally on the role of Mizo women in the society, culture, economy and politics. Besides these, the questionnaire tried to elicit responses about their knowledge regarding various programmes and projects taken up by the Central and State Governments and asked their opinion about the efficiency and effectiveness of such policies and whether they think that the Government both at the Centre and

State work for the uplift of women. The respondents were also invited to make suggestions on various problems women face today as individuals and as a group. In addition to these, the respondents were asked about the working of Self-Help Groups and Cooperative Societies in Mizoram in the context of socio-economic development of women.

The participation of Mizo women in every sphere of life is noteworthy and omnipresent as Mizoram strives for development. This is possible only with the active participation of women who are the catalysts for the growth of future generation as well. Women are stepping out of the four walls and are participating in all spheres of life such as society, education, economy and politics to name a few. The presence of women in various decision making bodies helps in developing confidence among other women and opens up possibilities for future. Greater the participation of Mizo women in various socio-economic activities; the higher will be the growth rate of development in Mizoram.

Before going into the role and positive contribution of women to the socio-economic development in Mizoram there is a need to mention some of the factors that inhibit effective participation of Mizo women in different walks of life. The study reveals that even today the Mizo women carry too much of household burden even if they are very active outside the family. Some of the cultural and religious belief systems along with custom and superstitions also contribute to lack of effective participation of Mizo women in

different fields. In many cases, there is lack of support from the family to Mizo women in carrying out different activities and responsibilities. A vast majority of Mizo women have very little knowledge, information and awareness regarding women development policies and programmes as sanctioned by the Centre and State Government.

Women do contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of the state. All the respondents are of the opinion that over the years, Mizo women have developed immensely. Moreover, ninety two percent of them think that women play a vital role in bringing change in the society. About ninety six percent of them think that Mizo women contribute greatly to the growth and development of the economy. Most of them believe that women should participate in the decision making bodies so as to attain a high rate of development.

Women NGOs have played a pivotal role in promoting the position of women which have resulted in socio-economic development and income generation activities. The women organizations in Mizoram have put their efforts in raising the position of the Mizo women. In the process of working for the cause of women, the women organisations have helped the deprived and oppressed women and have paved the way for their survival. In the beginning, the Mizo women NGOs worked to promote health, cleanliness and basic education among the Mizo women. These women NGOs today, by way of organising workshops and seminars

in the villages of the state, have enlightened many of the younger generation in promoting the status of women.

In recent years, the result of the programmes launched by the Government in different fields such as social, educational, economic, and political have given some good results. The condition of women has improved in all spheres of life but much more is needed to improve and establish their due position. The reality is that, in spite of acceptance of science and technology, industrial growth and modernization, policies by the Government including the norms, values and ethics are changing at a very slow rate, leaving women development in the back seat. This is quite clear from the answers of the respondents. Forty eight percent of them opined that the State Government does not undertake measures to promote gender equality; while twenty percent did not have any clue as to what the Government is doing. Very similar to this, fifty two percent of the respondents answered that the State Government is not successful in developing and implementing programmes for women development; while, twenty percent of the respondents are unfamiliar with the subject matter.

Cooperative societies and Self-Help Groups have played an important role in providing empowerment initiatives which result in income generation and socio-economic development. The SHGs have made an enduring impact on the lives of women. Their quality of life has improved. There are increases in their income, savings and consumption expenditure. This shows an improvement in their standard of living. Many women have gained self-confidence. They

avail an opportunity to improve their hidden talents after joining the SHGs. They can speak freely in front of large groups of people and have gained recognition in the family and society.

Patriarchy is the root cause of many social evils, of which the women are the worst victims. The male dominated society does not want to provide adequate space to women in society, economy and polity. Legally, there is no difference between men and women. Customs and tradition play a dominant role in determining the status of women. Due to the prevalence of these customs and tradition in the society, women are homebound and cannot participate effectively in the decision making process of the country.

Feminist movements have started all around the world to change the mindset of the society. But in spite of many such movements throughout the world, the condition of women has not improved up to the mark. From the present study, it came out that seventy one percent of the respondents do not participate in the decision making process at the community level and the respondents are of the view that women cannot participate in the activities of the society because they face restrictions. Regarding the customs and tradition of marriage in the Mizo society where a bride can be bought or sold at a price of just ₹400 only; forty eight percent of the respondents are still satisfied with it, saying it is just a practice. About forty five percent of the respondents feel that the nominal price of a Mizo bride is too low and that it degrades the status of women in the society.

Women's progress has been possible mainly through education. Education of women means education of the family. This has made women bold enough to face challenges against all the superstitions and restrictions imposed on them from the traditional customs and beliefs. Importance of literacy can never be ignored. Its contribution to the life and well-being of the people deserves our attention. However, in the state of Mizoram, we find that most of the girls' schools and colleges are transformed into co-educational institutions. About sixty eight percent of the respondents support the idea of establishing educational institutions for women only to bring about desirable benefits to the society and economy.

Being the weaker sex, violence against women both inside and outside of their home has been a critical issue in the Mizo society. This stands in the way of development of women. Women in Mizoram constitute about half of its population and most of them continue to reel under the socio-cultural structures. In the era of globalisation and modernisation, the present trend of crimes against women is on the increase. In spite of this fact, we find that Government of Mizoram could not establish Women Police Stations for the security of women. There is only one women cell, attached to the Aizawl Police Station located in the state capital. Being aware of the fact that women need security for their development, seventy nine percent of the respondents are in favour of establishing Women Police Stations and sixty two percent of the respondents believe that establishment of women police stations will decrease crime against women.

The Constitution of India has provided enough scope of facilities for women through Articles and legal provisions besides various Schemes and Projects started by the Governments. But these Laws, Schemes and Projects are not sufficient enough to ensure equality and justice for women. The mindset of the society should be reformed. The age-old thoughts and beliefs about women are to be changed. The society should have a liberal attitude towards women and their issues and problems.

Most of the programmes and schemes concerning women development that are launched by the Government have not yielded desired results because of lackadaisical commitment on the part of the implementing officials and towards attainment of success of the programme. Again most of the women are ignorant of the policies and programmes. It is found that seventy five percent of the respondents are not aware of the Central Government's developmental programmes for women. This further means that the women are not aware of the different benefits and facilities provided by the Central Government. In addition to it, corruption in administration causes serious problems and difficulties for women in availing these facilities.

During the survey of literature, it is found that the State Women Commissions in other states hold legal literacy workshops for women through NGOs as well as directly. They are vigilant about specific issues such as implementation of Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation & Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 and gender insensitivity on the portrayal of women in the

media. They conduct various research studies on issues pertaining to women. They organise workshops highlighting women's issues and collaborate with NGOs on these issues. They publish newsletters in local language and English to enable greater rapport between the Commission and women organisations. Many of the respondents are of the view that the Mizoram State Women Commission may take up such activities and programmes.

The study also discusses the problems encountered by the women NGOs in their day to day functioning. It is found that the NGOs face various internal and external problems such as financial problems, political interference and management problems as their main obstacles. Some of the problems faced by them include too much dependence on Government funds, insufficient allocation of funds, misuse of government funds, non-availability of trained and qualified workers, insufficient technical help and guidance and ignorance of the members.

From the study, it is found out that the SHGs can act both as facilitators and promoters of women development programmes. The SHGs not only empower their members but also wield a powerful role as interest groups as well. Through the SHGs, the practice of saving is established in the mind of the members. The SHG-Bank linkage programme contributes to developing the banking habits. Lack of support from male member of the family as well as banks is one of the main problems faced by the members of the SHGs. However, there is a need to create awareness among women regarding the effective role of the SHGs. This is revealed from the

answers given by the respondents as about thirty percent of them have no idea regarding the role of SHGs in women development.

Religion is an inspiration for human behavior. It contains civilised rules for behavior. It teaches the tenets of the faith. It is said that the socio-cultural life of the people of a state rests upon religion. As some of the Churches of Mizoram do not show interest towards participation of women in religious activities, the society as a whole still does not appreciate the role of women in the different walks of life.

The women of Mizoram today have come a long way from the past in comparison to where they were fifty years ago. It is found that despite various problems they face, women directly or indirectly contribute to the financial well-being of their families. Moreover, they have found their niche in every sector of the economy like agriculture, industry, banking, marketing etc. Various networks of women groups have also played a crucial role in providing empowerment initiatives, and particularly income-generation activities. However, gender bias as it exists in the society tends to ignore the significant contribution of Mizo women in the field of socio-economic development.

The Mizo women who were confined to the four walls of home are today deemed to be the frontrunners in many fields. Some of the respondents are of the view that women surpass men in more ways than one and that the male population should try and keep pace with their female counterparts. But women still have to travel a long way. Therefore, this study of women's participation has been

undertaken to improve the position of women which will result in further participation of the Mizo women in the society and economy. This will eventually lead to higher rate of socio-economic development of the state.

Some of the suggestions which emerge out of the present study are as follows:

- Women to live freely and to have equal rights in our society can only be accomplished if women stand up for themselves and their beliefs and never give in to a society that undermines their efforts or initiatives. The situation can improve only if women are united. Then their voices can be heard.
- The people of this state are strong followers of Christianity. As the religion of Christianity plays an important part in shaping the socio-cultural life of the people, religion has to be understood in its true form, devoid of any patriarchal or anti-women ideology.
- The involvement of NGOs, Civil Society Groups and Women Organisations along with institutions dealing with education, training and research have to be involved in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policies and programmes with appropriate support related to resources and capacity building in the process of uplifting women. Efforts

should be made to reduce constraints and to facilitate the participation of women in social and economic activities.

- The Government should organise a series of activities including seminars and workshops to make the citizens aware of women development programmes. Moreover, the government should try to make best possible use of the media for awareness generation.
- Education is the most important instrument of social change. So, sincere consideration should be given to the promotion of women's education. More educational institutions should be established for women, with special incentives like scholarships, hostel facilities and educational loan facilities for girl students belonging to poor families.
- For security, protection and development of women, Women Police Stations need to be established in all the district headquarters of the state.
- States and Union Territories of India have already established different Departments of Social Welfare and Women and Child Development for functional efficiency of their respective responsibilities. Similar administrative mechanism needs to be established in Mizoram.

- From the study it is found out that there is an urgent need to strengthen the institutional mechanism under the Government of Mizoram to facilitate women development and the participation of Mizo women in the process of development.
- The State Women Commission in Mizoram needs to be more pro-active in promoting the cause of women. The Commission should organise workshops, consultations and constitute expert committees on economic empowerment of women. It should work towards gender awareness campaign and take up the cases involving violence against women.
- The NGOs in Mizoram need more dedication towards generating awareness among women. They may organise programmes to upgrade vocational skill of women. The women NGOs have special responsibilities in this respect.
- Emphasis should be given on more income generating activities among the women SHGs. This will improve the livelihood opportunities of women so that they can receive better and stable income.
- The mass media including newspapers, radio and television can play a significant role by creating awareness among the people about the role and importance of women in socio-economic development.

- As suggested by a vast majority of the respondents, women should participate more in the political decision making bodies at the state administration, municipality etc. The political parties should have more women office-bearers, members and women candidates during different elections. This will not only increase the number of women representatives but will also contribute to women empowerment in the context of socio-economic development of the state.

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