

Abstract

M.Phil Dissertation

on

**ROLE OF HIGH POWERED COMMITTEE FOR URBAN
DEVELOPMENT IN LUNGLEI**

Submitted by

Lalsangpuii

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Supervisor

Prof. Lalrintluanga

Professor of Public Administration

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

ROLE OF HIGH POWERED COMMITTEE FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN LUNGLEI

There is a world-wide consensus that urbanization and economic development are complementary to each other. Urbanization without proper planning may give rise to various problems like housing, sanitation, education, electricity, provision of safe drinking water, unemployment, transport system, population growth and social unrest.

In India, urbanization is taking place at a fast pace. Next to China, India has the second largest urban system in the world. Urban development administration aims to achieve decentralization, poverty alleviation, equitable and affordable access to infrastructure and services at different levels of governance. However, the passing of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, has opened a new door for involvement of urban people in decision making and decentralized planning in many areas of urban administration directly affecting their life.

Mizoram has the credit of being one of the most urbanized states of India with more than half of the population living in twenty-three urban centres. Lunglei district which lies in the south-central part of Mizoram state is the second oldest and second most populous district of Mizoram. Lunglei district covers an area of 4,536 Sq.Kms constituting 21.52 per cent of the state's total geographical area. As per the 2011 Census- the total population of this district is 1, 61,428. Literacy rate of Lunglei town is 98.27 higher than the state average of 91.33.¹

After Indian independence, Lunglei town became the Headquarters of Lunglei District. It continued to be a Sub-Division/Sub-District up to 1972 when it was again elevated to a full- fledged district and it continues to enjoy this status till today. Several important Government offices and Sub-headquarters of various organizations including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are located in this town. It is also the

¹ Government of India, *Census 2011: Mizoram population 2011*. Retrieved September 9, 2020 from <https://www.census2011.co.in>state>

business Centre and Training Centre for various disciplines for the southern part of Mizoram. Lunglei town is made up of 23 (twenty-three) urban local areas having 'Village Councils' for managing urban affairs at the town and grassroots levels.

Review of Literature

The present study is focused on the role of the High Powered Committee for urban development in Lunglei. Some of the few books and articles that are relevant to the study are reviewed as follows:

Girindra Kumar (1999)² in his book, (Ed.) '*Urbanization in Mizoram: Retrospect and Prospects*' attempts to analyse the different aspects of urban life, its prospects and problems with special reference to the state of Mizoram. The volume is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the concepts, problems and perspectives of urbanization in Mizoram. The second part of the book addresses the specific case of urbanization at Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. It highlights the need to have a proper planning at different levels of urban administration in the interest of its population.

Lianzela (2006),³ in his article, '*Status of Urban Administration in Mizoram*' stressed that recently, the Government of Mizoram has been aware of the urgent need to create and establish separate functional department for a more effective and efficient town administration. Due to the absence of functional department exclusively responsible for urban development in Mizoram, the urban development schemes projected by the Government of Mizoram had been unable to receive funds from the Ministry of Urban Development. Therefore, creation of a new department exclusively responsible for urban development and urban structures for the towns of Mizoram is needed.

Isher Judge Ahluwalia (2019),⁴ in her article, '*Urban Governance in India*' examines the institutional framework and mechanisms that has been used to deliver the

2 Kumar, Girindra. (1999). *Urbanization in Mizoram: Retrospect and Prospects*. Titagard, West Bengal: Linkman Publications.

3 Lianzela. (2006). "Status of Urban Administration in Mizoram." in R.N.Prasad (Ed.,) *Urban Local Self Government in India*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

4 Ahluwalia, Isher Judge. (2019). "Urban governance in India." *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol.41, Issue 1.

quality of life of the urban residents and stress the need to initiate investment climate for sustainable growth and development. She emphasizes the importance of bridging the urban infrastructure shortfall and asserts that institutional reforms are pivotal to collaborate with the private sector and sharing financial burden for improved service delivery.

Research Gap

Though the literatures under review are all commendable in their own respective, they do not specifically study HPC for Lunglei district till today. Through the extensive review of literatures, the researcher has witnessed the absence of relevant works, books or articles published in Mizoram and in other parts of India. So, the research gap has proved the feasibility of carrying out the research on the role of High Powered Committee for urban development in Lunglei town.

Statement of the Problem

The people of Lunglei District have for many years felt that the pace of development in their district had slowed down and were not satisfied with the limited funds allocated to their district by the State Government. So, by way of compensating the grievances of the people in Lunglei district, the Government of Mizoram had set up the HPC, Lunglei, which would serve the development needs of the people living in both rural and urban areas of Lunglei District. Accordingly, HPC has been given the task of drawing inclusive developmental projects and schemes considered necessary for development of the entire district for submission to the Central Government or any other funding agencies through the State Planning Board (SPB). Further, the Committee has been given the responsibility of pursuing those projects and schemes submitted to different funding agencies. In spite of all these positive development initiatives taken for the entire district, urban affairs in Lunglei town continue to be managed by the State Government through the HPC with the assistance of Rural Local Governments functioning at the grassroots level in Lunglei town. This indicates that no financial autonomy has been given to the HPC by the State Government so far.

In the absence of appropriate urban governance structure for Lunglei urban centre, the HPC, Lunglei, continues to initiate the preparation of district plan and programmes, implementation of plan schemes including evaluation, reviewing as well as monitoring of those developmental plans, programmes and schemes. So long as HPC continues to function as the replica of Municipal Council or Board, it is indeed necessary not only to increase its staff strength but also to equip it with skilled personnel and better infrastructural facilities.

Scope of the Study

The present study has focussed on the genesis, organization, role and functions of HPC for urban development in Lunglei town, Mizoram. It has also studied development policies and programmes implemented by HPC for providing urban amenities to the people living in Lunglei. The study has also identified the problems and challenges faced by HPC and give suggestions for successful implementation of those urban development programmes by the Committee for improvement of urban governance in Lunglei.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- (1) To study the origin of the High Powered Committee, Lunglei.
- (2) To study the organization and functions of the High Powered Committee, Lunglei.
- (3) To study urban development policies and programmes for Lunglei and their implementation by the High Powered Committee, Lunglei.
- (4) To identify the problems and challenges faced by the High Powered Committee, Lunglei and suggest remedial measures.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been formed for obtaining the purpose of the research:

- (1) What is the reason behind the creation of the High Powered Committee, Lunglei?
- (2) What are the organisational structure, role and functions of the High Powered Committee, Lunglei?
- (3) What are the urban development policies and programmes implemented in Lunglei town by the High Powered Committee, Lunglei?
- (4) What are the problems and challenges faced by the High Powered Committee, Lunglei, and the remedial measures thereof?

Methodology

The present study is exploratory and descriptive in nature which requires both primary and secondary data. The primary data have been collected from the field work through questionnaires, structured and unstructured interview. A stratified sampling method has been used for selecting respondents for the study. In addition, informal discussions on the research topic have also been held with knowledgeable persons having interest in this topic with the aim of knowing their reactions and suggestions related to the study.

The secondary data have been collected from published and unpublished works on the related subjects, books, journals, articles, government's data, etc. Web materials have also been used as a secondary source of information.

Chapterization

The whole work is divided into *five* chapters. The *first* chapter, titled “**Introduction,**” deals with a brief introduction to the topic, the concept of urban development, origin of Lunglei town and urbanization in Lunglei. It also includes reviews of different literatures on the related subject for identification of the research gap, statement of the problem, scope and objectives of the study, research questions, methodology applied and Chapterization of the present study.

The *second* chapter, titled “**High Powered Committee, Lunglei: Genesis, Organizations and Functions,**” traces the origin of High Powered Committee, Lunglei and how the Committee has evolved in spite of different hurdles and difficulties faced

by it. This chapter also deals with the detailed organizational set-up of the High Powered Committee including various functions performed by it.

The *third* chapter, titled “**Implementation of Urban Development Policies and Programmes in Lunglei town by High Powered Committee, Lunglei,**” briefly studies Urban Development Policies and Programmes implemented by High Powered Committee for the socio-economic development of the urban dwellers in Lunglei town. It also makes an in-depth study of various policies and programmes implemented by the Committee as well as its evaluation and monitoring of the progress of these urban development programmes, and makes an analytical study of the different programmes carried out by the Committee.

The *fourth* chapter, “**Problems and Challenges faced by High Powered Committee, Lunglei,**” discusses the problems and challenges faced by the High Powered Committee, Lunglei. It gives an in-depth study of the various obstacles that hinder the working of HPC in achieving its objectives towards urban development of Lunglei town. The problems and challenges discussed in this chapter are based on observation, questionnaire, and interview schedule prepared for the study.

The *fifth* chapter is the concluding Chapter which is divided into two parts. The *first* part brings out the summary of the previous chapters. The second part provides the major findings of the study and it also contains possible solutions to research questions and suggestions for improvement regarding the role of the High Powered Committee, Lunglei based on the research findings.

Major Findings and Conclusions

The present study discloses that the HPC has undertaken various schemes and programmes for urban development of Lunglei town. The HPC in collaboration with the various line departments in the district, undertake different developmental schemes and projects.

On 6th September, 1990, the Governor of Mizoram constituted a High Power Committee (HPC) for Lunglei District to redress the grievances of the people and to ensure effective co-ordination in planning, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of plan schemes. The then Chief Minister of Mizoram, Mr. Lal Thanhawla inaugurated

the office of the High Power Committee, Lunglei on 7th December, 1990, and its first meeting was held during 8th – 10th December, 1990.

The State Government had re-constituted the HPC, Lunglei, on 12th May, 2009 by amalgamating it with District Planning Board, Lunglei with the Chief Minister as its Chairman, to address the problems of Lunglei District in general and Lunglei town in particular.

Within the outlay earmarked as discretionary funds, the High Powered Committee, Lunglei was empowered to formulate District Plans and Schemes, implement district level plan and also review and monitor all district level plan, programmes and projects. The office has taken up various developmental programmes, projects and schemes in different sectors initiated for the progress of Lunglei District.

Some of the problems and shortcomings encountered by HPC-L are discussed as under:

1. **Problems in Plan Formulation:** Some of the schemes undertaken by the HPC-L do not have any pre-project investigation and survey most probably due to limited time and inadequacy of technical and qualified personnel and hence do not suit the needs and requirements of the people of Lunglei town. In many cases, survey and feasibility studies were not done properly. The unsystematic approach to infrastructure development has resulted in the distortion of the development process to some extent and it has narrowed down the role played by the Committee.

2. **Administrative Problems:** It has been observed that the administrative setup of HPC-L is not clearly defined right from its birth. The Chief Minister of the State acts as the Chairman of the Committee while an M.L.A from Lunglei town is appointed as the Vice Chairman of the Committee by the Governor of the State. This has led to political influence on the working of HPC-L rather than serving the real desire of the people in Lunglei town. The existing administrative setup of HPC-L with its limited staff strength and without regular sanctioned posts creates problems in the administration of the Office. The Office of HPC-L lacks qualified personnel of requisite capacity and quality.

3. **Inadequate Project Efficiency due to Lack of skilled Personnel and Administrative Staff:** Lack of qualified personnel to deal with key issues of formulation, implementation, review and evaluation of schemes and projects has resulted in inadequate project efficiency. The absence of regular posts of technically qualified and trained staff in the Office to provide necessary support is a hindrance to the effective functioning of the Committee towards accomplishing its objectives.

4. **Lack of Participatory Institution:** Even though there is emphasis on community or mass participation in the development programmes, in reality, the people are rarely involved in the implementation of development schemes and programmes. The need for popular participation in Lunglei urban development planning has not been well recognised which has retarded the smooth and effective functioning of the HPC-L.

5. **Undue Interference of Party-politics:** A large number of people in Lunglei consider the Office of HPC-L as a political institution or organisation serving mainly the purpose of the ruling party. This negative connotation and perception of the people on HPC-Lunglei extensively deteriorates the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee. Politicisation of selection of work supervisor and beneficiaries is one of the main factors for stagnation of development in Lunglei town as political patronage has more weight than excellence and merit.

6. **Financial Constraints:** To achieve economic development in the district, it is indispensable to ensure increased flow of budgetary allocation for specific critical infrastructure projects and schemes in Lunglei District. Even though the budget allocation of a certain amount of fund has been sanctioned to the HPC-Lunglei by the State Government annually, it is still too meagre and insufficient to actually accomplish the desirable urban development goals for the whole district of Lunglei.

7. **Problems on Information and Communication Technology:** Even though the HPC- Lunglei has an access to internet yet it does not have a website for sharing and updating necessary information about its organisation and working. Shortcoming in the utilization of ICT by the Office of HPC-L contributes to problems such as lack of people's participation in urban development schemes, inequality, poor monitoring and also leaves people's feeling helpless to influence the Committee.

8. **Unavailability of Government free Land:** In the present scenario, most of the town area in Lunglei are already owned and occupied by public and private sectors. It is highly required by the government to have free land for undertaking urban development schemes and projects. Limitation of public free land which could be made use of by the HPC for development purposes hinders its effective functioning.

9. **Problems on Management Capacities:** Due to lack of technical and human resources in almost every department in Lunglei, the performances of various implementing agencies do not fulfil the expectation of the people in regard to development schemes and projects. Improvement and strengthening of the capabilities of administrators to effectively carry out the programmes and projects is indispensable to stay attuned to the urban development goals of Lunglei.

10. **Concentration of Powers in Vice Chairman, HPC-L:** The Vice Chairman of HPC enjoys a unique position and plays a significant role in the formulation of plans and programmes for the development of Lunglei District. He has an extensive authority over selection of plan proposals that have been submitted to the Committee by various governmental departments, individuals and Village Councils, etc. Though there are a number of Non-Official members who are persons of good repute and prominent citizens drawn from different localities of Lunglei, yet, in reality, they have limited involvement in the working of HPC. Concentration of too much power and authority in a single person or position can have an adverse effect on the process of implementation of development goals.

11. **Multiplicity of Development Implementing Agencies:** The budgetary allocation of HPC for Lunglei District is re-allocated to different departments at the district level and a meagre percentage of the fund is allocated for urban development of Lunglei town. The authority should select the development schemes and projects on priority needs of the people rather than allocating funds to minor works under different departments. Multiplicity of development implementing agencies inevitably causes overlapping of developmental works, which diminishes the direction, coordination, and relationship between the various departments within the district.

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following Suggestions have been made for enabling HPC-L to play a significant role in the implementation of urban development programmes in Lunglei town:

1. Creation of more Technical Posts and attachment of Clerical staff to the HPC-L are suggested for filling up the gap of the technical or staff inadequacy.

2. A strong Monitoring Committee should be established under the HPC-L to deal with the day-to-day coordination and monitoring of various developmental plans/programmes within the jurisdiction of HPC-L.

3. It is suggested that HPC-L should take initiative towards formulation of major plans or long-term urban development programmes rather than preparing short-term or minor works for urban development schemes and projects in future.

4. It is suggested that there should be slight change or modification in the administrative composition of HPC so as to enable the permanent executives to hold important positions in the Office of the HPC-L which will thus help in reducing party politics in its working and also promote mutual trusts between the people and the working of HPC-L.

5. There is also the need for building complete transparency and openness in public transaction and in the formulation and implementation of urban development plans and programmes. It is an imperative need for incorporation of the provisions in the Act for encouraging mass participation in decision-making and implementation processes concerning urban development.

6. The role of HPC-L needs to be broadened, widened and strengthened in terms of manpower so that there will be faster and sustainable urban growth in Lunglei town.

Lunglei District has been equipped with the High Powered Committee which is not been made available for the other districts in Mizoram. With the funds allocated to the HPC-L, many works have been taken up and more works are proposed to be taken up in the near future. Despite a few shortfalls on the role played by HPC-L for urban

development in Lunglei, it has been observed that the developmental works which have been carried out by HPC-L with a limited fund are commendable and remarkable.

The funds have been utilized judiciously to fill the development gap that has ever existed in the district. Its working and the effectiveness largely depends upon the availability of the technical and expert members, the amount of funds allocated and timely release of fund without delay, active participation of the local people in development works, the process of policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of plans at different levels of urban development. The HPC-L still has to adopt different strategies for the development of infrastructures that are associated with the growth of Lunglei town.

The present study has a few limitations such as limited time span for completion of the study, that too in the midst of the Covid19 pandemic which makes it difficult for the researcher to collect data and information relevant for the study. However, these limitations can be overcome for future studies with more space and time, covering broad area like the role of HPC-L for the entire district of Lunglei. Thus, having wider consultation with the beneficiaries, collection of study material and information for conducting a more and meaningful study will lead to arriving at general conclusion with reliable and broad based suggestions regarding the High Powered Committee, Lunglei in Mizoram.

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