

**WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING
PROCESSES IN MIZORAM**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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**WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN
MIZORAM**

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This is to certify that **Melody Kawlramchhani**, a research scholar bearing Ph.D. Registration No. MZU/Ph.D./1451 of 26.07.2019 in the Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, has completed her work on “*Women Representation in Decision-making Processes in Mizoram*” for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Political Science under my supervision. The work carried out by the scholar is original and no part of the thesis has been published in any form, either in a journal or a book.

She has fulfilled all the criteria as prescribed by the UGC Regulation 2018, including the mandatory publication requirement. Upon completion of all formalities at Mizoram University, I am pleased to forward the thesis for evaluation and further necessary action.

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DECLARATION
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I **MELODY KAWLRAMCHHANI**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABA	Area Baptist Council
AICS	Academy of Integrated Christian Studies
AIWC	All-India Women's Conference
AMC	Aizawl Municipal Corporations
ATC	Aizawl Theological College
BCM	Baptist Church of Mizoram
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BKHP	Baptist Kohhran Hmeichhe Pawl
CYLA	: Central Young Lai Association
CYMA	: Central Young Mizo Association
DCC	District Congress Committee
DSS	Desh Sevika Sangh
DVBs	District Volunteer Boards
ECM	Evangelical Church of Maraland
EITU	Eastern India Tribal Union
IKK	Isua Krista Kohhran
INC	Indian National Congress
KTP	Kristian Thalai Pawl
LAD	Ladies Auxiliaries Department
LADC	: Lai Autonomous District Council
LIKBK	Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran
LIKBK	Lairam Isua Krista Kohhran
LMC	Lunglei Municipal Council
LSA	Lai Student's Organization
LWA	Lai Women Association
MADC	: Mara Autonomous District Council
MCHP	Mara Chano Py
MCSU	Mizoram Chakma Students Union
MFP	Mara Freedom Party
MHIP	Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl

MHT	Mizo Hmeichhia Tangrual
MKHC	Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee
MNF	Mizo National Front
MPCC	Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee
MPF	Mizoram Peoples Forum
MPS	Mizoram Public Service
MPYCC	Mizoram Pradesh Youth Congress Committee
MRS	Mahila Rashtriya Sangha
MSA	Mizoram Journalist Associations
MSO	Mara Student's Organization
MTP	Mara Thyutlia Py
MU	Mizo Union
MUP	Mizoram Upa Pawl
MZP	Mizo Zirlai Pawl
NCW	National Commission for Women
NCWI	National Council Women in India
PAC	Public Affairs Committee
PCI	Presbyterian Church of India
PLRC	: Pawi-Lakher Regional Council
PLTU	Pawi Lakher Tribal union
PMSA	Pachayat Mahila Shakti Abhyan
PRI	: Panchayati Raj Institutions
PYD	Pentecostal Youth Department
RSS	Rashtriya Stree Sangh
SEC	Synod Executive Committee
TKP	Thalai Kristian Pawl
TU	Tribal Union
UCC	Uniform Civil Code
UMFO	United Mizo Freedom Organization
UPC NEI	United Pentecostal Church of North East India
UT	Union Territory
VC	Village Council

WIA	Women's Indian Association
YCA	: Young Chakma Association
YCA	Young Chakma Association
YLA	: Young Lai Association
YLA	Young lai Association
YMA	: Young Mizo Association
ZNP	Zoram Nationalist Party
ZPM	Zoram People's Movement

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The issue of women's representation is a complex and widely debated topic. To understand the problem of women's representation, it is important to comprehend the culture, history and institutional structure of a society. In every society, whether in western developed countries or underdeveloped countries elsewhere, women are under-represented in decision-making bodies. Among others, different factors like social-cultural, economic and historical forces could have contributed to the low representation of women in politics. Although women have made progress in different fields, there is no significant increase in their presence in decision-making bodies in many countries of the world. To raise the number of women and empower them, some countries have adopted measures that increased the number of women in the national legislature and local government. Yet, women remain under-represented on average globally.¹

Traditionally, there has been a distinction of gender roles in most societies. Men were primarily responsible for affairs in the public sphere like politics and the economy. The private sphere like the home and the family was considered the domain of women. Historically, the denial of women's right to vote and the argument against it came from fear of disturbing 'the balance between the public and private spheres'. While the strict division of the public-private spheres has been diminishing, it continues to manifest itself in different ways across cultures and societies.² Some argue that representation of women in positions of power not only 'symbolizes

¹According to Inter-Parliamentary Union, global average of women in Lower chamber and unicameral is 27.3 percent and 27.6 percent in Upper chamber as of 1st July, 2025. Retrieved July 3, 2025 from https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_month=7&date_year=2025

² Farida Jalalzai., & Mona Lena Krook. (2010). Beyond Hillary and Benazir: Women's Political Leadership Worldwide. *International Political Science Review*, 31 (1), 5-21. Retrieved March 9, 2022, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25652937>

greater legitimacy of public institutions' but also changes people's perception about the public sphere of politics as the domain of men.³

The problem of the representation of women points toward different things, and 'it raises economic, psychological, sociological, and biological questions.'⁴ The Government of India appointed the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) in 1971 to examine the condition and status of women in India and to evaluate 'the impact of the constitutional, legal and administrative provisions' in improving the lives of women in different areas. The CSWI report 'Towards Equality' (1974) criticized the political process and the low political status of women. It also found that government policies and programmes had no adequate positive outcome in changing the status of women in India.⁵ Even after 50 years, women's representation in the parliament and legislative assembly continues to be low with regional differences.

1.1 Representation: Meaning and Theory

Before adopting representation in the political context in modern usage, it was historically used in the contexts of theatrical and symbolic representation in Latin, French, and English. The Latin word 'repraesentare' in ancient Rome referred to something close 'to present'. The modern political usage of the term representation is more similar to the usage of the theatrical term 'persona'. A different meaning of representation was developed in the Middle Ages Christian thinking and practice in the spiritual and corporate realm as 'Christ representing God and the pope representing Christ to Christendom'. The modern understanding of consent underpinning the authority of political representatives emerged around the English Civil War. As the meaning of representation has evolved, the modern usage of representation 'moved toward more political senses of a king' or a parliament representing a constituency. 'The latter set of meanings moved from acting for a

³Kirsten Haack. (2014). Breaking Barriers? Women's Representation and Leadership at the United Nations. *Global Governance*, 20 (1), 37-54. Retrieved March 9, 2022, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24526180>

⁴Virginia Sapiro. (1988). When are Interest Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women. In Anne Phillips, (Ed.), *Feminism and Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press. p. 163.

⁵Zoya Hasan. (2023). *Democracy and the crisis of Inequality*. Delhi: Primus Books. pp. 232, 233.

collectivity without actual authorization, to acting for smaller groups and individuals with authorization.’⁶

Cambridge dictionary defines representation as ‘a person or organization that speaks, acts, or is present officially for someone else’.⁷ The Britannica dictionary defines representation as ‘a person or group that speaks or acts for or in support of another person or group’.⁸ Oxford learner dictionaries defines it as ‘the act of presenting somebody/something in a particular way; something that shows or describes something’.⁹ Pitkin defines representation as ‘the making present of something which is nevertheless not literally present’. She further argues that ‘political representation is primarily a public, institutionalized arrangement involving many people and groups, and operating in the complex ways of large-scale social arrangements’.¹⁰

Rehfeld argues that political representation is about performing a specific function by someone who stands for a group of people. And representation comes from the audience’s judgment using a set of ‘rules of recognition’.¹¹ So, according to him, political representation occurs if the audience approves or recognizes a person as representative, and the representative is someone who performs some specific function that they are assigned.

A different meaning of representation is provided by Saward who argues that political representation is not just about political life or status achieved from elections but goes beyond that. It is a ‘dynamic process of claim-making and the reception of claims.’¹² Representation, according to him, is ‘an ongoing, dynamic

⁶Micheal Saward. (2010). *The Representative Claim*. Oxford New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 4, 5.

⁷Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved October 11, 2023, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

⁸The Britannica Dictionary. Retrieved October 11, 2023, from <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary>

⁹Oxford Learners Dictionaries. Retrieved October 11, 2023, from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>

¹⁰Hanna Fenichel Pitkin. (1972). *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 144.

¹¹Andrew Rehfeld. (2006). Towards a General Theory of Political Representation. *The Journal of Politics*, 68 (1), 1-21. Retrieved November 22, 2019, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00365.x>

¹²Opcit, Micheal Saward. p. 8.

process in which a great variety of actors and organizations take part.’ ‘Representation is a process of claim-making rather than a fact established by institutional election or selection; or at least, it can only be the latter by virtue of being the former.’¹³

The concept of representation is understood as standing up for an individual or a group of people and acting on behalf of the interests of the group of people.¹⁴ Representation is a process that builds a medium of two-way communication, expressing aspirations and producing responses between the state and society. The term representation of women emphasizes the notion to mean ‘increasing the number of women in political office because of the assumption that women in power would be more responsive to women’s interests than men would be’.¹⁵

J.S. Mill, an advocate of representative government suggested a form of government where not only a few but diverse opinions in the society are included so that diverse interests are balanced with each other. He was one of the earliest political philosophers who gave attention to the functions and importance of representative government. Regarding the role of the representative assembly, he gave importance to the opinion and judgment of the people. He argues that the representative assembly should watch and control the government while its actions should stay transparent to the public. In terms of the composition and function of the legislative body, Mill suggested that diverse opinions should be heard and presented through their representatives and even if those ideas and opinions got rejected during deliberation, every member in the society would feel heard and seen.¹⁶

One of the most influential works in the study of representation was Hannah Pitkin’s concept of representation. She offers four views of representation, which are as follows:

¹³Ibid. p. 44.

¹⁴Andrew Heywood. (2014). *Politics*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 356.

¹⁵Opcit, Virginia Sapiro. p. 180.

¹⁶John Stuart Mill. (2016). *On Liberty & Utilitarianism*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited. p. 195.

Formalistic views of representation: In formalistic views of representation authorization and accountability are the basic features of representation. Authorization view of representation, as seen in Thomas Hobbes' view of representation 'defines representation in terms of the giving and having of authority.' It sees a representative as someone who is authorized to act while the responsibility for the consequences of that action is rested on the represented. Representing is not measured in terms of activity of the representative, 'anything done after the right kind of authorization and within its limits is by definition representing.'¹⁷

There are three versions of the authorization view of representation. The first one is developed by a succession of German theorists who focus on the concept of *Organschaft* which views representation as a group action instead of individual action. Based on this understanding, representatives 'need not be elected to office' but organs of the group.¹⁸

An authorisation view of representation is also seen in the works of some theorists of democratic representative government. For them, the election acts as a way of transferring authority from the voters to the elected representatives. In elections, voters elect their representatives and grant them authority to act. 'The definitive election is the one which puts a man into office, for it is that election which gives him authority and makes him a representative.' In this manner, a representative is seen as someone who is elected for some time and an election is seen as a way to grant authority to someone by the voters. A third version of the authorization view emphasizes 'the need for social action' and sees a representative as 'someone whose acts are imputed to a group so that they impose obligations on that group.'¹⁹

In the accountability view, representation is understood in terms of accountability instead of authority. A representative is someone who is to be held accountable for what he does. A representative is bound by responsibility and

¹⁷Opcit, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin. p. 39.

¹⁸Ibid, pp. 39-41.

¹⁹Ibid, pp. 42-47.

obligation for what he does and the represented should not be held accountable for the actions of the representative.²⁰

Descriptive representation: In descriptive representation, the composition of a representative body is emphasized to resemble the diverse population in a society. Representation means ‘a presenting again, a presenting of something not present.’ It focuses on making a resemblance of people or things to be seen and heard. Representation is seen as standing for the represented and representing ‘depends on the representative’s characteristics’ and it is ‘being something rather than doing something.’ Descriptive representation gives importance to the characteristics and appearances of the decision-making body to accurately reflect the community and the variety of interests in society.²¹

Symbolic representation: Understanding representation in terms of symbols is what Pitkin called symbolic representation. This kind of representation sees the representative as a symbol, just like a flag represents the nation. An example could be drawn from the existence of the king in a constitutional monarchy and the heads of state in various democratic nations. At the same time, symbolic representation ‘seems to rest on emotional, affective, irrational psychological responses rather than on rationally justifiable criteria.’ People must believe in the symbol for what it represents and stands for. To be a political symbolic representative, there must be a strong belief in the symbol so that people can accept the representative.²²

Substantive representation: In substantive representation, representation means acting or speaking for the interests of the group of people they represent. Representing involves activities as well as obligations that concern the welfare of the represented. Representatives are seen as someone who acts for or on behalf of the represented to pursue their interests. The representative needs to conduct careful activities as they are acting for others, and that actions have consequences. Substantive representation demands deliberative action on the part of the

²⁰Ibid, p. 55.

²¹Ibid, pp. 61, 71.

²²Ibid, p. 100.

representatives since they are responsible for that action. Representing is ‘to speak for, act for, look after the interests of their respective groups.’²³

Therefore, representing according to Pitkin is ‘acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them.’ Regarding the relationship between representatives and represented, she argues that ‘the representative must act independently, his action must involve discretion and judgment.’ At the same time, ‘the represented must also be conceived as capable of independent action and judgement.’²⁴

Pitkin argues that in descriptive representation, what the representative is supposed to do is express the views and opinions of the represented. As a result, the representative body could be seen more like a place where popular opinion is presented instead of governing and making policies. Representation is merely reflecting and resembling the diverse population and making an accurate description of the society. Furthermore, descriptive representation relies on accurate description as if the shared experience between the representative and represented will likely make present what is absent. She argues that descriptive representation missed the point of ‘accountability’ which is a crucial element of representation and the ‘activity of representing’ is neglected. As a result, descriptive representation ‘has no room for the creative activities of a representative legislature, the forging of consensus, the formulating of policy, and the activity of governing.’²⁵

Descriptive representation is rejected by most normative theorists and even advocates of group representation like Will Kymlicka and Iris Marion Young do not support descriptive representation.²⁶ Despite the criticism, feminist scholars have debated and argued for descriptive representation of women in positions of power. Feminist scholars have concerns about ‘the extent to which the interests of women are represented in legislative decisions’ and argued for ‘the presence of women in

²³Ibid, p. 116.

²⁴Ibid, p. 209.

²⁵Ibid, pp. 89, 90.

²⁶Jane Mansbridge. (1999). Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘Yes’. *The Journal of Politics*, 61 (3), 628-657. Retrieved October 4, 2019 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2647821>

decision-making bodies as a necessary condition for the representation of women's interests.' They focus on the possibility of descriptive representation delivering a measure of substantive representation.²⁷ Descriptive representation is justified to include the voice of disadvantaged groups in decision-making bodies.²⁸

There are different arguments for increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies. One of them is 'symbolic equity' which emphasizes the idea that elected office can only function democratically if all points of view are presented reflecting the diverse population in society. 'Substantive argument claims that more women in decision-making bodies would make a substantive difference.' Based on this perspective, increasing the number of women in positions of power is important because they represent 'women's distinctive values, attitudes and concerns; a woman's point of view which may have an impact on legislative behaviour and the content of public policy.'²⁹

Sapiro provides the argument for increasing the representation of women in government. She argues that increasing the number of women in government 'is not sufficient but it is necessary' for different reasons. Women in positions of power made 'some difference in government responsiveness toward women's interests.' Aside from women's interests, she argues 'the mere presence of women in positions of power readjusts what is now a thoroughly inequitable distribution of political values in society: power, participation and decision-making.' Increasing the descriptive representation of women 'will affect powerful symbolic changes in politics.'³⁰

²⁷Rosie Campbell et al. (2010). Do Women Need Women Representatives? *British Journal of Political Science*, 40 (1), 171-194. Retrieved August 16, 2019, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40649428>.

²⁸Tali Mendelberg et al. (2014). Does Descriptive Representation Facilitate Women's Distinctive Voice? How Gender Composition and Decision Rules Affect Deliberation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58 (2), 291-306. Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24363486>.

²⁹Pippa Norris., Joni Lovenduski. (1989). Women Candidates for Parliament: Transforming the Agenda? *British Journal of Political Science*, 19 (1), 106-115. Retrieved November 5, 2019 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/193790>

³⁰Opcit, Virginia Sapiro. p. 183.

Mansbridge provides four contexts where descriptive representation may work between the disadvantaged groups (the represented) and their descriptive representatives. She argues that the experience and better communication of descriptive representatives would improve the quality of deliberation which would enhance the substantive representation of groups 'in contexts of group mistrust and uncrystallised interests.' In contexts of 'historical political subordination and low de facto legitimacy' descriptive representation helps in creating a 'social meaning of ability to rule' and enhances 'the attachment to the polity of members of the group.'³¹

According to Phillips, there are four types of arguments for increasing the proportion of women in elected office. The first one is that increasing the proportion of women is necessary to set the role model example to raise women's confidence and encourage others and remove the 'deep-rooted assumptions on what is appropriate to women and men.' The second argument is the justice argument that justified gender parity to correct the obstacles that some groups of people in society have been experiencing resulting in the positions of political power being dominated by men. The third argument is the 'interests' argument that focuses on women's specific needs and interests from their experience which would otherwise be discounted in a politics dominated by men. Another argument 'points towards a revitalized democracy that bridges the gap between representation and participation.'³²

The issue of women's representation has gained much attention from feminist scholars and an attempt to link women's descriptive and substantive representation has been put forth that focuses on the concept of 'critical mass'. The concept of 'critical mass' emphasises the link between descriptive representation of women and policy change through the threshold number.³³ The argument for 'critical mass' focuses on the problem of impacting the legislative outcomes by the presence of a

³¹Opcit, Jane Mansbridge.

³²Anne Phillips. (1998). Democracy and Representation: Or, Why Should It Matter who our Representatives are? In Anne Phillips (Ed.), *Feminism and Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 228-239.

³³Karen Beckwith. (2007). Numbers and Newness: The Descriptive and Substantive Representation of Women. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 40 (1), 27-29. Retrieved October 4, 2019 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25166063>.

few women and suggests the growing presence of women ‘from a few token individuals into a considerable minority, or critical mass’ in positions of power.³⁴

There are different arguments from different strands of feminism, but most of them agree that increasing the number of women in positions of power is necessary. Marxist feminists argue for the change of the institutions, ‘poststructuralist feminists worry about co-option.’³⁵ To empower women and raise the number of women in decision-making bodies, a more recent development in the study of women's representation argues for quotas ‘as a fast track to equal representation for women.’³⁶

Decision making is related to power and it is made through a certain process. It is a necessary step for the process and implementation of public policy that affects the lives and living conditions of people. Decision-making is considered a key feature of policy-making through the process of initiation and implementation.³⁷ There are different theories of decision-making, some of which are:

Rational actor model: This model emphasize human pleasure based on utilitarian philosophy which upholds the view that human beings are rational creatures and their interests should be measured in terms of pleasure and pain. So the main focus is maximizing pleasure and achieving positive outcomes while making decisions by rational individuals. Decisions are made after careful assessment and calculation so that policies that benefit people and increase their interests are met.

Incremental model: This model of decision making focuses on small and gradual change to existing policies making it simpler for policy makers to face challenges. It focuses on solving immediate problems instead of bringing radical change and a comprehensive solution.

³⁴Sarah Childs., Mona Lena Krook. (2009). Analysing Women's Substantive Representation: From Critical Mass to Critical Actors. *Government and Opposition*, 44 (2), 125-145. Retrieved October 4, 2019 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44484170>

³⁵Shirin M. Rai., Carole Spary. (2019). *Performing Representation: Women Members in the Indian Parliament*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p. 17.

³⁶Drude Dahlerup., Lenita Freidenvall. (2005). *Quotas as a Fast Track to Equal Representation for Women: Why Scandinavia Is No Longer the Model*. DOI: 10. 1080/1461674042000324673. Retrieved October 11, 2020, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248994967>

³⁷Andrew Heywood. (2014). *Politics*. 4th ed. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 352.

Bureaucratic organization model: This model reflects the values of decision makers who are workers of organisations and bureaucrats. A decision is viewed as a reflection of the inspiration and culture of a group of people in government. It is based on a hierarchical structure of authority where decisions are made at the top level and implemented by the lower level.

Belief system model: In this model, ideology plays an important role when people make decisions. Social and political values often tend to influence how people decide and decisions are made based on values. Decision makers are viewed as making partial decisions as their choices are often shaped by their ideology and belief system.³⁸

1.2. Women's Movement for Suffrage

The Enlightenment movement in the eighteenth century which believed in rationalism and reason with its objectives of human progress and development has made tremendous changes in how people viewed authority, freedom and rights. Unfortunately, it had not changed the situation for women. There was a widespread belief that women are naturally weak, irrational and lack reason. The notion of women being creatures that lack reason but emotion and passion which made them best suited for the role of wives and mothers was expressed in the writings of philosophers like Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot and Montesquieu. However, from the late eighteenth century, there were challenges and attempts to show the applicability of liberal ideas of rights for women. Among them, the notable one was Mary Wollstonecraft's revolutionary work 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' (1792).

In her book, Mary Wollstonecraft argued that women are capable of reason as much as men and the opportunity to develop their rational power is denied which led to society's view towards women as irrational, emotional and creatures that lack reason. The French writer Condorcet also argued against the general opinion towards women and insisted that women are capable of reason and education and they should

³⁸Ibid. pp. 352-355.

enjoy the same political rights available to men. Another notable writer during this period who rejected society's labeled of women was the German writer Von Hippel who argued that women's subordinate position resulted from men and has nothing to do with women's biological nature.³⁹

A history of the concept of equality and a history of feminism are similar and related to each other. Starting from the revolutionary England during the seventeenth century, followed by the Enlightenment movement in the eighteenth century and the French Revolution, the concept of equality was held as the new society's ideology. Feminism as a conscious and protest movement emerged to achieve equality for all. As a result of the change brought by the new society that emerged from the transformation of feudalism to capitalism, the seventeenth-century feminists, who were largely middle-class women, fought for equality. They challenged the reason why they were being left out in applying principles of freedom and equality.⁴⁰

From the seventeenth century, the feminist movement began in England when women started to question their position in society. Before the emergence of industrial capitalism, which drew labour out from the private realm to the public workplace, both men and women had done productive work that generated income to earn their living till the eighteenth century. But, the uneven development of industrialization has eventually had its severe impact on the working-class white women as they now need to work in the public workplace to survive.⁴¹

The decline of the traditional mode of economy and its resulting division of labour between public and private engagement during the early years of capitalist development has changed the social and economic dynamics. As a result of the decline of the old system of family-based domestic industry, women were excluded from the public sphere of work and trades in which they had previously engaged. In such a condition, women were left miserable and economically dependent on men,

³⁹Valerie Bryson. (1992). *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction*. London: The MacMillan Press. p. 19.

⁴⁰Juliet Mitchell. (1987). Women and Equality. In Phillips, Anne (Ed.), *Feminism and Equality*. New York: New York University Press. p. 31

⁴¹Rosemary Tong., Tina Fernandes Botts. (2018). *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. (5th ed.). New York: Routledge. p. 13.

which led to a debate about the role of women. So, the distinction of the public/private dichotomy, which was alien to medieval society but central to modern feminism, has started to exist.⁴²

Equality is a long-held value in Western and American societies since the Enlightenment. The French Declaration of Man and Citizen (1789) and the American Declaration of Independence (1776), inspired by the ideas of philosophers like Locke and Rousseau, have contextualized the debates around the issue of freedom and human rationality. Even though these societies attained freedom and asserted equality for all, women as a group were left behind in enjoying equality like men. They refused to accept women as equals, which led to women being deprived of their human rights. Women have had to fight for their rights against the odds of patriarchal prejudices against them. So, feminist anger in western societies may be understood as women's cry against the hypocrisy of a culture that promised to bring equality and freedom for all but failed to include women in its practice.⁴³

Nineteenth-century feminist demands directed toward the movement for women's voting rights, along with educational, legal, and political reform. During this period, there was no full suffrage even for men as only a section of society enjoyed the right to vote. Among the suffragists, there was divided opinion about women's suffrage and adult suffrage. Besides this, some prominent women did not support the demand for women voting rights and dismissed it as relatively unimportant, insisting that not having the right to vote did not crippled them.⁴⁴ One of the most popular and influential liberal feminists during this period, Elizabeth Cady Stanton in America, John Stuart Mill and his wife Harriet Taylor in Britain, through their writings and campaigns, had made women's issues more visible, and their demand for women's suffrage was powerful and radical at the time. Mill and Taylor went beyond Wollstonecraft by claiming that allowing individuals to pursue their goals without harming others maximizes liberty. They also insisted that there

⁴² Opcit, Valerie Bryson. p.12.

⁴³ Suma Chitnis. (1998). *Feminism: Indian Ethos and Indian Convictions*. In Rehana Ghadially (Ed.), *Women in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd. p. 83.

⁴⁴ Margaret Walters. (2005). *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc. p. 70.

must be the same economic and educational opportunities as well as the same political rights for women so that sexual equality will be achieved.⁴⁵

There was an attempt to tie the issue of women's suffrage and abolitionist movement during the first wave of the women's rights movement in America. This attempt was opposed by the white male abolitionist who insisted that giving political rights to male African descent was more of an urgent matter than women's suffrage. Feeling neglected and abandoned for not being given any chance to speak about women's rights issues at the world anti-slavery convention held in London in 1840, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott decided to organize a women's rights convention on their return to the United States. Consequently, after eight years in 1848, the historic women's convention of Seneca Falls was held in New York with three hundred women and men participants. At this convention, the Declaration of Sentiments was made, which dealt with issues of marriage and divorce, property rights, and child-custody laws.⁴⁶

Granting the right to vote to African decent men after the end of the Civil War in America had pulled the plug for the feminists, as women were completely left out in voting rights. From this point, the women's rights movement focused more on the issue of suffrage. After going their separate ways for quite some time, the two leading women's rights groups, the Equal Rights Association, led by Stanton and Anthony, and the more moderate group, the American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Lucy Stone, decided to unite. So, the National American Woman Suffrage Association was formed in 1890 to fight for women's suffrage in America. After fifty-two years of endless struggle for women's right to vote, women in America were eventually enfranchised through the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.⁴⁷

In Britain, J.S. Mill with his wife Harriet Taylor denounced the denial of women's rights that hindered their growth and progress as rational individuals. The publications of *Enfranchisement of Women* and *the Subjection of Women* have made

⁴⁵Opcit, Rosemary Tong., Tina Fernandes Botts. p. 16.

⁴⁶Ibid. pp. 19, 20.

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 21.

a tremendous impact in inspiring and empowering women especially among the educated women.⁴⁸ A women group known as Langham Place under the leadership of Barbara Leigh Smith made a huge contribution in the struggle for women's voting rights, and they even organized a petition for suffrage with more than 3000 signatures after they formed a suffrage committee named the London Society for Women's Suffrage in 1866.⁴⁹

Not only did liberal feminists took the cause of women's suffrage, but socialism also inspired many feminists to campaign for women's suffrage based on socialist principles. Some feminist groups with socialist goals had tried to include working-class, immigrant, and black women in their suffrage campaign in America. Elsewhere in Europe and especially Germany, feminists viewed women's issues along with the problem of capitalist social structure. They tried to reconcile it with socialist and Marxist principles that aim to change the whole capitalist structure of division of society between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. From the socialist feminist view, the whole issue of women's suffrage is a social issue rather than a women's issue. So its focus was on social transformation to achieve equality and an egalitarian society.⁵⁰

Women in New Zealand attained the right to vote nationwide in 1893 becoming the first country in the world. Following the footsteps of New Zealand, women in countries like Australia in 1902, Finland in 1906, Denmark in 1915 and Norway in 1915 have secured their right to vote.⁵¹ For the first time, a female member of parliament was elected in 1907 in Finland to mark Finland the first country in the world to elect a female member of parliament. The Union of Soviet

⁴⁸Opcit, Valerie Bryson. p. 50.

⁴⁹Opcit, Margaret Walters. p.72.

⁵⁰Opcit, Valerie Bryson. pp. 90-92.

⁵¹Richard E. Matland. (2010). Structuring Representation: Women's Access to Political Power across the World. *Harvard International Review*, 32 (1), 46-50. Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42772668>

Socialist Republics (USSR) became the first country where the number of women in its national legislature reached 10 per cent in 1946.⁵²

1.3 Demand for Women's Suffrage in India: Demand for women's suffrage in India was mainly based on the philosophy of equal treatment without positive discrimination. They demanded the removal of sex disqualification in voting rights, and their campaign mainly focused on universal suffrage. Because of their priority of universal franchise over female franchise, their work was compatible with the nationalist agenda for national citizenship, and the 'sex war' which the western women activists had faced during their struggle for suffrage was avoided. One of the prominent features of the women's campaign was carefully avoiding to have negative impression on Indian men while they appealed to the British government. As a result of that, there was harmony between women's activism and nationalist politics, which was reflected in the decision of the Congress to adopt universal adult franchise in its charter of rights during the Karachi Convention in 1931.⁵³

On 15th December 1917, a women's delegation consisting of 14 members led by Sarojini Naidu met Edwin Montagu and Lord Chelmsford to put forth their demand for women political rights. Montagu remarks on the demand of women's deputation as just 'interesting' and there was no mention of it in the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. Gaining the support of the Indian National Congress was considered a necessary step and they sought help from political organizations, including the Indian National Congress. The Women's organizations had to be careful while demanding their voting rights to avoid misunderstanding and uncooperation with their male nationalists.⁵⁴

During her speech at the Congress special session held in Bombay in August 1918, Sarojini Naidu tried to convince the members to support women's suffrage. She passionately argued for women's voting rights and tried to convince others not to

⁵²Pamela Paxton. et al. (2006). The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation 1893- 2003. *American Sociological Review*, 71 (6), 898-920. Retrieved September 9, 2019 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25472436>

⁵³Anupama Roy. (2013). *Gendered Citizenship: Historical and Conceptual Explorations*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited. p. 130.

⁵⁴Ibid. p. 136.

object women's voting rights. Then a resolution was passed with a 75 per cent majority. Saraladevi Chaudhurani also presented a resolution supporting women's voting rights in the thirty-third session of the Indian National Congress in December of 1918.⁵⁵

Besides women's organizations in India and Britain, women's demand for franchise received support from political parties and petitions for women's franchise were submitted to the concerned committees that outlined the details of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. When the Southborough Committee, specifically assigned to deal with the franchise issue came to India, women's delegation led by Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu met the Committee to push for women's suffrage. However, the Southborough Committee in its final report released in April 1919 rejected their demand on the grounds that it did not represent the wishes of the general Indian women. It also pointed out women's social disabilities under Indian customs, the practice of purdah, and the female literacy rate as reasons for not supporting women's suffrage. Even the Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons, which considered the Government of India Bill, also rejected the female franchise. The British government approached the issue carefully to avoid hurting the sentiment of the conservative wealthy group in India.⁵⁶

Montagu advised the House to pass the India bill as it is and left the question of female voting rights in the hands of the provincial legislatures. Accordingly, in 1919, the British Parliamentary Committee made a recommendation to leave the decision of franchise for women in the hands of the provincial legislatures. So, the Government of India Act 1919, although technically not enfranchising women, allowed the Indians to decide that matter.⁵⁷ Indian provinces started to enfranchise women by using property and age as criteria. Bombay and Madras provinces enfranchised women in 1921 to be the first to do so, followed by United Provinces in

⁵⁵Geraldine Forbes. (2007). *Women in Modern India*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. pp. 93, 94.

⁵⁶Opcit, Anupama Roy. pp. 137- 139.

⁵⁷Ibid. p. 139.

1923, Punjab and Bengal in 1926, Assam, the Central Provinces, Bihar, and Orissa in 1930.⁵⁸

To become the first woman legislator, Muthulakshmi Reddy was appointed as a member of the Madras Legislative Council in 1927.⁵⁹ The enfranchised women could not only vote for the provincial election but also for the central legislative assembly. Yet, women did not have the right to contest in elections. Women's organizations like the Women's Indian Association (WIA) fought for the removal of sex disqualification in elections. The Reforms Enquiry Committee of the Muddiman Committee finally recommended the removal of women disqualification from election or nomination in the Indian legislature or provincial councils. Then the Governor-General-in-Council announced the approval of making such an electoral amendment through resolution.⁶⁰

Demand for women's suffrage was revived again when it was announced that the Simon Commission was appointed to study the constitutional matters in India. When the Simon Commission arrived in India in February 1929 to discuss the future of India, women's organizations like the Women's Indian Association (WIA) and All India Women's Conference (AIWC) had agreed to join the nationalist decision to boycott the Commission. At the same time, some educated women met with the Commission and suggested a women franchise for literate women or the reservation of seats for women.

When the British government decided to call for a Round Table Conference to discuss the political future of India, the WIA backed the decision of the Congress to boycott the Conference, although they initially planned to attend it to press the franchise issue. The Conference began its meetings in November 1930, and two women picked by the British, namely Begum Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz and Radhabai Subbarayan, attended the Conference. In contrast to the opinion of major women's organizations, they showed their willingness to accept the policy of reservation for women if universal adult franchise is not to be granted. As a result of that, the WIA,

⁵⁸Opcit, Geraldine Forbes. p. 101.

⁵⁹Ibid. p. 103.

⁶⁰Opcit, Anupama Roy. p. 141.

AIWC, and the National Council of Women in India (NCWI), together with Sarojini Naidu, through a joint memorandum, announced their disagreement with the reservation policy and made clear their support of universal adult franchise.⁶¹

During this period, there were opposing ideas among women's groups regarding the reservation policy and adult franchise. One group supported the idea of reservation of seats for women owing to the inferior status of women, especially in rural backward areas, whereas one group, mainly from the active members in the national movement, demanded adult franchise with the spirit of gender equality.⁶² Along with the Congress, women's organizations had participated in the Second Round Table Conference. At the end of the Conference, a recommendation to enlarge women's suffrage was brought up, and the White Paper, which dealt with it, was presented to the parliament. To work out the problem of the franchise issue, the Indian Franchise Committee under the leadership of the Marquess of Lothian was set up in December 1931. Two women, Radhabai Subbarayan and Mary Ada Pickford, were appointed as members of the Lothian Committee.⁶³

Again, the All India women's organizations submitted a memorandum to the Lothian Committee in 1932 criticizing the formulas under consideration, which were nomination, enfranchisement for educated women and urban women. However, the Lothian Committee did not approve the demand for universal adult franchise owing to the country's condition and instead recommended increasing the ratio of female to male voters from 1:20 to 1:5.⁶⁴

The Government of India Act 1935 increased the number of women voters to a female-to-male ratio of 1:5 against the previous ratio of 1:20 in an electorate of 35 million voters. It introduced the reservation of seats for women in the provincial legislatures. In terms of the criteria, the Act prescribed that women who attained 21 years of age provided they fulfilled one of these requirements: literate women,

⁶¹Opcit, Geraldine Forbes. p. 107.

⁶²Pushpa Bali. (2018). Women's Movement in India: Issues and Perspectives. In Mahendra Prasad Singh, Himanshu Roy (Ed.), *Indian Political System* (4th ed.). Noida: Pearson India Education Services Pvt. Ltd. p. 420.

⁶³Opcit, Anupama Roy. pp. 144, 145.

⁶⁴Opcit, Geraldine Forbes. pp. 108, 109.

property owners, or wives or widows of men having property.⁶⁵ Thus, six million Indian women were considered registered voters who could vote and stand either for election to general seats or reserved seats.⁶⁶

Universal adult franchise that was introduced since independence in 1947 allows both adult males and females to freely participate in politics. Adult males and females, irrespective of gender, caste, religion, or class, can vote and contest in national legislature, legislative assembly or local government. Despite having equal political rights for men and women in the constitution of India and some prominent women at the forefront of Indian politics, the political status of women continues to be low. 74 women were elected as MPs of Lok Sabha in 2024 lower than the previous 2019 election in which 78 women MPs were elected. Despite the increasing pattern of women representation in the lower house in India in recent years, India remains at a low ranking position at the global level.⁶⁷

Table 1.1: Representation of Women in Lok Sabha from 1952-2024

Year-Lok Sabha	Total Seats	Women MPs	Winning Percentage
First-1952	489	22	4.4
Second-1957	403	22	5.45
Third-1962	494	31	6.27
Fourth-1967	520	29	5.57
Fifth-1971	521	22	4.2
Sixth-1977	542	19	3.50
Sveneth-1980	542	28	5.16
Eight-1984	514	42	8.17
Ninth-1989	529	29	5.48
Tenth-1991	524	37	7.06
Eleventh-1996	543	40	7.36
Twelfth-1998	543	43	7.91
Thirteenth-1999	543	49	9.02

⁶⁵Opcit, Anupama Roy. p.150.

⁶⁶Opcit, Geraldine Forbes. p. 191.

⁶⁷‘India ranked at 151 in the Inter Parliamentary Union’s rankings as of 1st July 2025’. Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments. Retrieved July 3, 2025 from [https:// data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_month=7&date_year=2025](https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_month=7&date_year=2025)

Fourteenth-2004	543	45	8.28
Fifteenth-2009	543	59	10.86
Sixteenth-2014	543	62	11.41
Seventeenth-2019	543	78	14.36
Eighteenth-2024	543	74	13.6

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi. <https://eci.gov.in>

Among the northeastern states, Assam has the highest number of women Lok Sabha MPs. From the first to sixth Lok Sabha (1977-80), Assam has elected women MPs of the Lok Sabha in each term. Between the seventh and eleventh Lok Sabha, Assam has no women MP. After a gap of about 18 years, Assam has elected a woman MP again in 1998 and has continued to elect women since then in every Lok Sabha election except in 2004. In Nagaland, the first female MP of the Lok Sabha was elected in 1977. Sikkim elected its first woman Lok Sabha MP in 1985. One woman was elected in 1991 in Tripura and Manipur elected its first woman Lok Sabha MP in 1998. In 2004, Meghalaya elected its first female Lok Sabha MP.⁶⁸ In 2019, a total of three women from the states of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura were elected. Only two women from the states of Assam and Tripura won the Lok Sabha 2024 election among the northeastern states.⁶⁹ Among the northeastern states, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are the only states that have not elected women MP of the Lok Sabha. Manipur and Nagaland have not elected women MPs again after they elected the first time in 1998 and 1977 respectively.

No woman has been elected as an MP of the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha in Mizoram. Major political parties in the state have never fielded women candidates in the elections of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. After one woman had unsuccessfully contested in the 1977 Lok Sabha election, another woman had contested the Lok Sabha election in 2024. The only woman candidate in this election was from an unrecognized political party with no chance of winning based on the party's previous electoral performances in the legislative assembly elections. Since

⁶⁸Opcit, Shirin M. Rai., Carole Spary. pp. 133, 134.

⁶⁹Retrieved January 11, 2025, from <https://www.eci.gov.in/general-election-to-loksabha-2024-statistical-reports>

the attainment of statehood in 1987, only five women were elected in the state legislative assembly that too with the latest election in 2023, when three women were elected.

1.4. Statement of the problem: Despite the legal and political provisions for gender equality in the constitution of India, the political representation of women is considerably low in India and around the world except in a few countries. To ensure gender equality in decision-making processes, some countries introduced quotas or reservation for women which increases women's representation in national parliament. The problem this study addresses is the under-representation of women in decision-making processes. In Mizoram, few women have been elected as MLAs, and only a few women in the history of the elections of the legislative assembly have secured major party nominations. In the three Autonomous District Councils, a very small percentage of women have been elected and few women have occupied the nominated seats in the three District Councils over the years. In addition to this, women who have occupied the nominated seat rarely, if not never, contested the election from the general seat after their period as nominated member was over.

Besides women's organizations, most of the civil society organizations are headed by men. Women have achieved progress in the fields of education and economic activities, yet, they remain under-represented in decision-making bodies which deserve attention to understand the social and political realities of Mizoram. There is existing literature that deals with the study of women and their participation in politics. A study of women's representation not only in the political sphere, but also in other areas in the public sphere is important to understand the social and political status of women. This study focuses on the descriptive representation of women in decision-making processes.

1.5. Review of Literature:

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1972), *The Concept of Representation* analyses the concept of representation and explains the complexities of the understanding of representation by examining the historical as well as contemporary views of representation. She presents four types of representation, which are formalistic representation, descriptive representation, symbolic representation, and substantive representation.

An edited book by Rehana Ghadially (1988) entitled *Women in Indian Society* is a collection of articles that deal mainly with gender construction in Indian society. This volume attempts to understand how women's identity is largely shaped by the influence of culture and how social attitudes toward women perpetuate the subordinate position of women. It seeks to explain social practices in forming feminine identity and the implications of cultural values and norms on women's status in Indian society. It explains problems that are arising from social and cultural attitudes toward women that hold women back from their full participation in society.

A feminist critique of contemporary theories of justice is offered by Susan Moller Okin (1989) work *Justice, Gender and the Family*. She offers a comprehensive critical analysis of theories of justice and criticizes modern theories of justice for failing to include the institution of family in their analysis where inequality between males and female exists first. She contends that the understanding of justice that failed to address problems associated with the institution of family and suggests that the issue of unpaid labour of work and uneven distribution of work within the family system has to be addressed to fully understand justice.

Sangkima (1992), *Mizos: Society and Social Change (1890-1947)* offers an analytical study of the nature, growth, and development of the social and political system in Mizoram. This work has thoroughly explained the traditional Mizo society and the changing social structure as a result of the British administration. It examines

women status in the traditional Mizo society where women condition was shaped by customs, traditions, and culture.

C. Nunthara (1996), *Mizoram: Society and Polity* provides a detailed analysis of the people, culture, tradition, social and political change from the pre-British era to the attainment of statehood, with an assessment of political turmoil in the state fueled by identity politics. This work examines the social, economic, and political conditions during the period of chieftainship and traditional norms and values in the then Lushai Hills now Mizoram. It also analyzes the impact of British administration and the emergence of new political consciousness among the new educated class that fought for a democratic system of government to replace the traditional political institution.

Chris Weedon (2000) analyses the feminist view on patriarchy, class, racism, and heterosexism while explaining the limitations of western feminism due to its Eurocentric view in her work *Feminism, theory and the politics of difference*. This work explains the construction of gender and the notion of superiority of white males which degrade vulnerable and marginalized sections of society, including women. It offered an in-depth analysis of various strands of feminist theories and their challenges and limitations.

Ramesh Chandra Mishra (2000), *Role of Women in Legislatures in India: A study* offers a study on the role of women legislators and examines the socio-economic background of women legislators in the state of Orissa. It analyzes the process and agents of political socialization by focusing on how family background has impacted their interest in politics. This study also analyzes the role of various agents in candidate recruitment and the nature of the support structure of women in the elections of the state legislature.

Jane Mansbridge's (2003) article *Rethinking Representation* explains different forms of representation in representative democracy. She called the traditional form of representation characterized by accountability 'promissory' and differentiated modern forms of representation as 'anticipatory representation',

‘gyroscopic representation’, and ‘surrogate representation’. She argues that modern forms of representation have abandoned the democratic accountability character found in the traditional form of representation. Voters’ influence over the representative is less, and the power relationship between the voter and the representative is undefined.

Pitam Singh (2003), *Women Legislators in Indian Politics* is a study of women legislators in Uttar Pradesh covering the period between 1952 to 2002. It analyses the socio-economic background of women legislators and examines their role and participation in the assembly proceedings, as well as the hindrances women legislators faced while entering politics. It also examines the contributing factors and processes through which women legislators have achieved their position of leadership.

Lalrinawmi Ralte (2004), *Bible Women-te nghilhlohnna* examines church women contribution to the growth of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church through the activities of a group of women called ‘bible women’ set up in 1913. Besides gospel preaching, most of the roles the ‘bible women’ engaged with were related to social service, health, and public service. Despite their contribution to the church, ‘bible women’ were excluded from getting access to higher positions and service within the administration of the church. She raises concern over the motive of the church behind the discontinuation of the service of ‘bible women’ and criticizes the rejection of the ordination of women by the church.

Bonita Aleaz (2005), *Emergent Women: Mizo Women’s Perspectives*, employs a feminist approach to analyse Mizo society and culture, largely shaped by religion and church organization. She argues that to understand women’s level of engagement in the public sphere, looking beyond the political sphere is important to recognize a more powerful force, which is the religious sphere. She analyzes the influence of Christianity in Mizo society in shaping values and perspectives and examines the patriarchal structure of the church.

In her book *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*, Margaret Walters (2005) examines the women's movement and the historical development of feminism. She analyses various phases of the feminist movement, which differ from one another on different continents, including Asia. She argues that feminism as a concept and study appears to be an academic discourse making it hard to fully grasp the meaning in the practical world in a larger context.

Prem R. Bhardwaj (2005) edited volume *Gender Discrimination: Politics of Women Empowerment* contains different articles that address some issues pertaining to the subordination of women and their lack of power in public and private spheres. This volume examines social and political factors that caused women to be subordinate and disadvantaged position and suggests policies to empower women in India. It also assesses government policies and initiatives to empower women and their impact on women's political participation at both the central and state levels.

Vanlalhlani (2005), *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh* examines the changing status of women due to the introduction of Christianity in Mizoram and women's contribution to the Presbyterian Church from its inception. She critically analyses the traditional patriarchal values that dictate the organizational structure of the church in Mizoram which caused unequal representation between men and women in decision-making bodies within the church organization.

Andrew Rehfeld (2006), *Towards a General Theory of Political Representation* points out the limitation of the understanding of political representation by contemporary theorists like Pitkin in analyzing non-democratic political representation. He argues that representation in any form or type always carries some sort of function as it stands for something or someone. According to him, the recognition and acceptance of the audience are what matter most in representation.

Devaki Jain (2006), *Women, Development, and the UN: A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice*, examines the roles and contributions of the United Nations in advocating equality and human rights in the world. This work analyses the efforts

of women in raising problems and issues affecting women as well as the influence of the UN in tackling problems and challenges facing women. It also identifies areas where the UN needs to pay attention, such as the problem of women's involvement especially in less advanced societies, in the informal economy. This work points to re-conceptualize the concept of poverty, inequality, and development to better understand the condition of women.

Dharam Vir and Kamlesh Mahajan (2006) edited volume entitled *Women's Movements: Politics and Awareness* explores issues relating to women, such as women's political representation, seat reservation policy, women's rights, as well as government initiatives through policies to redress the social, economic and political conditions of women. It also contains the assessment of the women's movement in India and abroad in fighting against injustices and advocating rights of women.

Michelle Fram Cohen's (2006) article *The Condition of Women in Developing and Developed Countries* examines the influence of legal, religious, and cultural factors in shaping the condition of women in developing and developed countries. She identifies lack of legal protection for women and the exploitation of underage girls perpetuate their subjugation in developing countries. Religion, cultural practices and values have less negative influence on women in western developed countries. She observes that women have not taken full advantage of legal reforms due to the prevalence of traditional norms and practices in many societies.

Niroj Sinha (2006) edited the work *Women in Indian Politics* contains different articles that deal with the status of women in society and women's participation in politics in various states including the north-eastern state of Assam. Theoretical explanation of gender and patriarchy, women's participation in the national freedom struggle and their role in different phases of the national movement under the leadership of Gandhi are examined. Women's participation in parliament, state legislative assembly and rural local government through reservation in various states in India is analyzed in this work.

Suruchi Thapar Bjorkert (2006), *Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices 1930- 42* analyzes different social and religious practices that acted as an obstacle for women to participate in public life during the national freedom movement. This work explores the experience and journey of ordinary Indian women in the national freedom movement as well as the influence of British colonialism in changing the role and contribution of women in private and public spheres. It also highlights the process of the domestication of politics as well as the politicization of the private sphere during the national freedom movement.

Geraldine Forbes (2007), *Women in Modern India*, offers a comprehensive analysis of the status and condition of Indian women from the British period to post-Independence India. She thoroughly examines the context of socio-political conditions to understand the status of women in Indian society and the implications of British colonialism for Indian women. She analyses women's involvement and contribution in the national freedom movement and their fight for the enfranchisement of women in British India. She further assesses the influence of education in changing the lives of women and their social and political participation.

Mary E. John (2007) article *Women in Power? Gender, Caste and the Politics of Local Urban Governance* offers a critical analysis of the role of reservations based on caste and gender in the municipal corporations of Delhi and Bangalore. It addresses the problem of 'proxy' women and 'critical mass' and observes that the problem of proxy women is a complicated issue that needs more careful analysis to fully understand it. It also analyses the problem of 'critical mass' among women corporators and observes that the idea of women working as a group to make a positive influence is not working in local urban government.

Pamela Singla (2007), *Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj: Nature and Effectiveness* is a study about the nature and effectiveness of women's participation in panchayati raj in Haryana. The historical evolution of panchayati raj in India and Haryana and the introduction of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, which mandated reservation of seats for women are discussed in detail. To analyze the nature and effectiveness of women's participation in panchayati raj, she examines the

socio-economic and political profiles of the members and the determinants of women's participation in politics.

Kiran Saksena (2008) edited the work *Women and Politics* contains twelve articles that deal with women's participation in politics in India and abroad. Women's participation in panchayati raj institutions in various states is analyzed to understand the nature and effectiveness of women's leadership in rural local government. Women's status in other countries like Pakistan and Iran, as well as women's voting patterns in American elections, political socialization of South Asian women in British politics are also examined in this book.

Meena Dhanda (2008) edited volume *Reservations for Women* is a collection of essays that deals with the historical, theoretical and political perspectives of reservation policy in India. The historical background of the debate about seat reservation for women and the conflicting arguments about it among women leaders during the British government in India is explained. This volume contains a detail analysis of the theoretical background for affirmative action and representation of women in decision-making bodies. It contains debates about seat reservation for women and an analysis of different perspectives on the issue of reservation for women. It examines the historical development and implementation of the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts, which changed the low political status of women in rural local government by mandating the reservation of seats for women.

Monique Leyenaar's (2008) article *Challenges to Women's Political Representation in Europe* attempts to identify determinants and challenges to women's political representation in different countries in Europe. She argues that neo-liberal ideology, a weak women's movement, cultural values upheld by the new right political parties, re-emergence of patriarchal values and religious fundamentalism challenge political representation of women.

Sindhu Phadke (2008), *Women's Status in North-eastern India* offers an assessment of women's condition within the diverse cultural and social settings in different north-eastern states in India. This work examines cultural norms and

traditions in north northeastern states that largely determined the status of women and their roles and responsibilities. It analyzes their involvement and participation in economic activity as well as their participation in politics. It also presents an overview of women's educational status, their living conditions, and social-cultural values to understand the status of women in different states of north-east India.

Irene Colbert (2008), *Women and Politics in Mizoram* offers a critical analysis of the status of Mizo women in public and private spheres. She points out the condition of women in the family and criticized the customary law for leaving women at a disadvantage in matters of marriage and divorce. Women's involvement in the traditional Mizo economy without monetary source and their involvement in various economic activities in contemporary Mizo society characterized by insecurity and uncertainty are highlighted. She examines the position of women in the church and criticises the patriarchal structure in denying the ordination of women by various churches in Mizoram. She also examines the role and contribution of women's organizations for women's rights and empowerment.

Lalneihzovi (2009) edited volume *Changing Status of Women in North-Eastern States* offers an analysis of the socio-economic and political condition of women in north-east India. The Change brought by Christianity and education in the lives of women and the obstacles for women to actively involve in social and political institutions are examined to understand the influence of traditional and cultural forces.

Lalfakzuali (2010), *Changing Position of Mizo Women* assesses the changing status of Mizo women as a result of the introduction of education during the British administration. She analyses the progress made by women in educational field which helped them in improving their social and economic status in the society. She argues factors like Christianity, education, and modernization as responsible for the changing position of Mizo women. While this work mainly focuses on the role of education in changing the position of women it does not analyse the condition of women in others areas.

Lalhriatpuii (2010), *Economic Participation of Women in Mizoram* analyses the nature and extent of women involvement in economy and argues that women's economic participation is mainly concentrated in the informal and unorganized sector, resulting in women being economically unstable and insecure. She also argues lack of education and skill, engagement in household work, and patriarchal economic structure are responsible for the low participation of women in the economy.

Richard E. Matland (2010) article *Structuring Representation: Women's Access to Political Power Across the World* tries to identify factors responsible for women under-representation in politics by comparing countries based on their level of economic development and forms of government. This article argues that western democratic country has greater women's representation because of their economy and democratic form of government. It argues that development and culture are significant determinants to change the status quo and promote women's representation.

Praveen Rai (2011) article *Electoral Participation of Women in India: Key Determinants and Barriers* seeks to identify some of the prominent barriers for women's electoral success and the determinants of women's participation in politics in India. This article identifies various factors like socio-historic forces, reservation policy, role of political parties in selecting women candidates, political structure, and role of family as the determinants for women's representation.

H. Lalrinthanga (2013) *Church and State: Relationship in the Mizo Socio-Political Life 1952-20006* examines the socio-political relationship between church and state in Mizoram by analyzing various efforts of church toward the government and the people. The introduction and growth of Christianity and the role of church to bring peace and normalcy during insurgency period which provides an understanding of the relationship between the state and church is analyzed. This work also highlights the efforts of the Presbyterian church on socio-political matters like conducting free and fair election, total prohibition of liquor, social and educational reform, combating corruption and drug addiction and political education for the

church members. It offers an evaluation of the contribution of church to bring reform and change in the socio-political life of the people.

Harendra Sinha and B. Lalrinchhani (2013) edited volume *Women in Mizo Society* contains different articles addressing the socio-political and economic status of women and cultural factor that acts as a barrier for women empowerment in the society. The position of women under customary law that impeded the progress of women is analyzed to understand the cultural factor that influence the condition of women. The works and contribution of women's organizations in addressing different issues concerning women is highlighted. The political participation of women and economic condition of women by examining their engagement in traditional agricultural economy are also analysed in this volume.

Daniel Stockemer (2015) article *Women's descriptive representation in developed and developing countries* explains different variables on women's legislative representation in the developed and developing world. The article gives an insight into how different variables work differently to increase women's representation in various parts of the world. It argues that quota rules, types of electoral system, political culture, women's participation in the workforce, and types of government plays an important role in determining women's descriptive representation. It further argues that economic development is an important factor in changing the condition of women, which enables them to enter into public sphere.

Shirin M. Rai and Carole Spary (2019), *Performing Representation: Women Members in the Indian Parliament* offers a comprehensive analysis of women's representation in the parliament and the performance of women representatives. The role of political parties in selecting women candidates and the role of family for the sustenance of women's political participation as well as the dynamics of elections for women are analysed. This work observes different factors such as numbers in parliament, political party, caste, regional, linguistic, social, and class positions, as well as constituency, have affected the performance of women representatives in the parliament.

Zoya Hasan (2023), *Democracy and the Crisis of Inequality* offers a critical analysis of various issues in Indian politics and the changing nature of state and society. It addresses different issues in Indian politics like representation, minority issues, caste and reservation, religion and gender. She analyzes the changing position of government on the issue of the uniform civil code and argues for its enactment to bring equality and justice for women. She also analyzes the debate about reservation for women and points out the importance of reservation to raise the proportion of women in decision-making bodies to bring 'structural change'.

1.6. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of the study is Mizoram state including the three Autonomous District Councils, namely, the Chakma Autonomous District Council, the Lai Autonomous District Council and the Mara Autonomous District Council. The study analyse representation of women in the legislative assembly, district councils and the Aizawl Municipal Corporation. It also examines the level of women involvement in decision-making in civil society to understand not only their political status but also their social status.

There are some limitations to the present study. The study primarily focuses on the descriptive representation of women in decision-making processes, and the role and performance of women elected representatives are not included in the analysis, which may cause some limitations in the understanding of women's representation. In addition to this, interview with some former members of the three district councils could not be conducted mainly due to the problem of contacting them and a language barrier in the case of Chakma, which led to the sample size being less than originally intended. Due to lack or absence of recorded materials especially in the case of some student's associations, the exact number of women could not be provided in some cases.

1.7. Objectives of the study

1. To study the decision-making processes in Mizoram.
2. To examine the status of women's representation in decision-making processes.
3. To analyze the socio-economic and political profiles of women representatives in decision-making processes.
4. To discuss government initiatives towards women's representation.
5. To find out the problems and understand the issues about women's representation in decision-making processes.

1.8. Research Questions

1. How is the status of women's representation in decision-making processes in Mizoram?
2. What are the socio-economic and political profiles of women representatives in decision-making processes?
3. What are the initiatives of the government to increase the representation of women?
4. What are the problems and issues in women's representation?

1.9. Methodology: The present research work is based on a descriptive design. A mixed-method approach (both qualitative and quantitative) was adopted for the present study. Primary data was collected using semi structured interview schedule to conduct personal interviews with the respondents. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were used to collect the primary data. The purposive non-probability sampling method was used to select the sample. The 72 samples were selected from core and non-core respondents in this study. Selected core respondents were elected and unelected female MLA candidates, female corporators of Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC), elected and nominated women members of the three Autonomous District Councils, women leaders of political parties, and civil society organizations. The sample size of the selected core respondents is 44. The non-core respondents were male politicians like former MLAs, members of the District

Council, male corporators of the AMC, leaders of political parties and civil society organizations. The sample size of the non-core respondents is 28. Therefore, the total sample size is 72.

Participant observation method was also employed during the interview process to understand the confidence and empowering ability of elected women representatives in this study. Secondary data were collected from published works and documents, i.e., books, documents of political parties and civil society organizations, journals, websites, government documents, newspapers, and other relevant materials.

1.10. Chapterization

I: Introduction: The first chapter is an introductory chapter that mainly deals with the theoretical part of the study. Meaning and theory of representation, feminists arguments for descriptive representative of women, women's suffrage movement in India and abroad, is highlighted in this chapter. The chapter also contains the statement of the problem of the study, limitations of the study, research objectives, research questions, methodology, and chapterization.

II: The Status of Women Representation in Decision-making Processes: The second chapter provides an overview of women's representation in politics from the traditional political institution to the present-day state legislative assembly, Autonomous District Councils, and the urban local government. It examines the social and political status of women during chieftainship period to understand the historical context and culture. This chapter also describe the birth of women's organization and issues they tackle to change the social status of women.

III: Profile of Women Representation in Decision-making Processes: The third chapter examines the level of women involvement in decision-making in political parties and civil society organizations. The chapter also examines the number of women at the decision-making level in various state government departments/offices.

IV: Government Initiatives Towards Women's Representation: This chapter analyses the central and state government initiatives towards women's political representation. It explains the historical development of local self-government in India and the landmark enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. Amendment of village council acts by the state government and the three autonomous district councils and the introduction of the Mizoram Municipalities Amendment Act of 2009 which provided seat reservation for women are explained. Some laws relating to women that the state government has enacted over the years is also highlighted in this chapter.

V: Problems and Issues in Women's Representation: In this chapter, the socio-economic and political profiles of women MLA's (including women unelected candidates by major political parties), women corporators of the AMC, women former and current members (elected and nominated) of the three autonomous district councils and women leaders of political parties is analyzed to understand their background, journey, participation in political parties and exposure in society. Their opinions on reservation, low representation of women, obstacles they have faced and the problem of securing party nomination are examined. The problems of representation of women and the issue of proxy representation are also analyzed in this chapter.

VI: Conclusion: The last chapter summarizes the whole study and provides the findings of the study.

CHAPTER-II

STATUS OF WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

This chapter is an overview of women's representation in decision-making processes from a historical perspective. It traces from the traditional political institution of chieftainship and the nature of inheritance and succession. It highlights the composition of village officials under the rule of the chief to understand the political and social system. This chapter highlights the beginning of the British government in the then Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) and the introduction of formal education through the works of the Christian missionaries as well as the contribution of women Christian missionaries to advance girls' education.

It attempts to provide the position of women and the social and political structure in traditional Mizo society and describes the changes in the spheres of politics, education and society in general after the British administration in the then Lushai Hills. The rising political consciousness and the issue of people's representation within a democratic framework in the midst of the deteriorating hold of chieftainship under the British administration are highlighted to understand the whole process of political change at the time. Highlighting this process also provides the context in which the voice of women through the setting up of their own organization has been put out to raise issues affecting their lives such as customary law and women's representation.

The chapter discusses the evolutionary process of democratic electoral politics and women's participation in electoral politics since 1948. Women's representation in the district council and the legislative assembly from the first election in the union territory is discussed, along with the number of candidates different political parties have fielded in the elections. Women's representation in the three autonomous district councils through nomination and the number of elected women in the three autonomous district councils are also discussed.

2.1 Traditional political institution: Before the arrival of the British, the political system was maintained based on the existence of a chief called *Lal* in Mizo in a village who ruled their territory with the help of a few close associates. Liangkhaia wrote that the original ancestor of the Lusei chiefs was Sihsinga, who had a son called Ralnnaa, who had a son named Chhuahlawma. Chhuahlawma was captured as a slave by the Lusei. Chhuahlawma's son Zahmuaka, who was settled at Seipui village, married Lawileri, and they had six sons, including Thangura, but the seventh child died. On the invitation of the Hnamte clan settling at Khawrua and Tlangkhua, who lived without a chief at the time, Zahmuaka's family became chiefs over the Hnamte clan. Zahmuaka and his six sons were able to survive against the physical threats surrounding them, which was the nature of their living at the time. So, Zahmuaka's sons had their villages as chiefs while settling beyond the *Tiau* River (Burma).⁷⁰

Among the six sons of Zahmuaka, Thangura became the strongest. Thangura had two sons named Chawnglula and Thangmanga. Thangmanga had a son called Sailova whose descendants are called as Sailo who later established their superiority over other clans' chiefs and became the dominant clan.⁷¹ Starting from the time of Sailo chief Zahmuaka up to the period of British consolidation in the Lushai Hills was a little more than 300 years from 1580 -1890 A.D. Then, chieftainship continued to exist for 60 more years from 1890- 1954 under the administration of the British.⁷²

Among different chiefs, a large majority of them belonged to the Sailo lineage of the Thangura clan of the Lusei tribe. A few other chiefs belonged to other tribes like *Fanai*, *Pawi*, *Paihte*, and *Hualngo*, who were considered inferior to the Sailo clan of the Lusei tribe.⁷³ There were many Pawi (now Lai) and Lakher (now

⁷⁰Liangkhaia. (2011). *Mizo Chanchin*. Aizawl: LTL Publications. pp. 64, 65.

⁷¹Ibid. p. 71.

⁷²B. Lalthangliana. (2014). *India, Burma leh Bangladesh a Mizo Chanchin*. Aizawl: Remkungi. p. 348.

⁷³Sangkima. (1992). *Mizos: Society and Social Change 1890-1947*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p.34.

Mara) chiefs in the southern part of the Lushai Hills who created their independence and had never fallen under the influence of the Sailo's.⁷⁴

Major clans had their separate chiefs, and there were frequent raids and feuds against each other as they were in constant search of fertile land for their survival, which was part of the main reason why they had to migrate from one place to another from time to time. Eventually, they settled in the present Mizoram, with the weaker groups of the earlier inhabitants were made to leave their settlements by the stronger ones. Because of the constant war and conflict against each other, the Lusei soon realized that having an efficient and strong leader was a necessity, which became a starting point for having chieftainship. After the Sailo chiefs subdued the weaker and smaller sub-groups, they were able to establish their reign throughout the whole territory except the Pawi-Lakher region in the south of Mizoram. The Sailo's ability to rule the territory was marked by stability as the pattern of Mizo settlement became stable from this period.⁷⁵

Among various clans, the Sailo clan started to establish their names among others and extended their territory as they were able to establish their rule, mainly because of their prowess in war and their skills and ability in administration. So, by the time the British began to administer the Lushai Hills, Sailo chiefs had ruled almost the whole Lushai Hills of Lusei-dominated areas. The number of chiefs increased greatly after the British resized the territorial boundaries of villages and appointed new chiefs from other clans. The British administration introduced a new practice of appointing government employees as chiefs in place of deposed chiefs, generally in recognition of their excellent service to the government. Such chiefs were known as '*hnamchawm lal*', meaning 'chief belonging to commoners'.⁷⁶

When the British government began its administration in the Lushai Hills, there were about sixty chiefs and in 1949 there were more than four hundred chiefs.⁷⁷

⁷⁴N. Chatterji. (2008). *The Earlier Mizo Society*. Kolkata: Firma KLM Private Limited. p. 35.

⁷⁵C. Nunthara. (1996). *Mizoram: Society and Polity*. New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company. p. 41.

⁷⁶Opcit, Sangkima. p. 34.

⁷⁷A.G. McCall. (1977). *Lushai Chrysalis*. Calcutta: Firma KLM private ltd. p. 245.

When the system of chieftainship was abolished, among the Lusei-dominated areas there were 259 chiefs while there were 50 chiefs in the Pawi- Lakher region.⁷⁸

2.1.1. Power and administration of the chief: The chief, called *Lal* in Mizo, was the head of the village with full authority over legislative, executive, and judicial organs. War and peace with other chiefs, village jhum land, religious affairs, and cultural ceremonies were executed under the authority of the chief. Not only in administration but also even the judicial power was exercised by the chief to the extent that the chief enjoyed the power to decide life and death over his subjects.⁷⁹ The chief was a ruler and the supreme administrative head, and laws were made by him as the chief's word was law within the limits of his territory. However, the concentration of power solely on the chief does not make him a despotic ruler. The villagers had one option to take action against the tyrannical rule of the chief, which was migration to another village to follow another chief. The 'indirect but very potent control' of the chief by the people was what prompted the chief not to be tyrannical.⁸⁰ The chief's absolute power was checked by the people since the greatness of the chief was measured by the number of his followers.⁸¹

At the same time, leaving for a different village to escape the tyranny of their chief does not guarantee safety, as they might lose their lives at the hands of the chief from whom they sought refuge.⁸² The chief's council, headed by the chief administered both civil and criminal matters and it dealt with the daily life of people. While civil and criminal cases were deliberate in private, cases that concerned love affairs were held publicly, where any person was allowed to attend.

2.1.2. Succession and inheritance: In ancient days, men who were endowed with wisdom and courage held power and led their people until they were subdued by stronger ones. In the course of time, chieftainship became hereditary as power was passed down from generation to generation of the ruling clan, subject to good

⁷⁸Opcit, Nunthara. p. 68.

⁷⁹Opcit, B. Lalthangliana. p. 349.

⁸⁰Opcit, N. Chatterji. p. 35.

⁸¹Opcit, Sangkima. p.36.

⁸²Opcit, A.G. McCall. p. 96.

behaviour, mental and physical fitness.⁸³ Many Mizo customary laws that have been in practice even today are considered as those laws made during the period around 1740- 1750 A.D when the seven Sailo chiefs were integrated and built the village called *Selesih Sangsarih*.⁸⁴

Before the British administration in the Lushai Hills, the chief would set up a new village for the oldest married son to be the chief. The son who became chief in a separate village was not bound to pay any tribute to his father's chief. The youngest son, who was supposed to look after his parents and live with them, would succeed the father chief and inherit his property. However, the rule of succession was changed after the British, which put the eldest son instead of the youngest son to continue to be the chief after the father chief died. If the eldest son was considered unfit to rule, then the next son would be the chief, and all the other sons would become commoners.⁸⁵

In such circumstances where the eldest son couldn't succeed his father on the grounds of such cases, then the younger brother next to him was the one who would succeed and even if that was not possible, then the next sons were in line to succeed. In case of the absence of legitimate sons, the sons of concubines could succeed. In case of unavailability of concubines, then succession could also go to the illegitimate sons. If there were no sons, succession might pass down to the brother of the deceased chief.⁸⁶

Inheritance law, just like succession, was based on patriarchal norms and values. Only males could inherit the family's property and own family property. By custom, the youngest son was the heir to a father's property and caretaker of his parents, who would live with them. Generally, not only the youngest son but also other sons have shared their father's property, with the majority share going to the youngest son. Besides the legitimate sons, sons of a concubine (*Hmei fa*) and an illegitimate son (*Sawn*) could also inherit their father's property. If there were no

⁸³Ibid. 244.

⁸⁴Opcit, B. Lalthangliana. p. 348.

⁸⁵Opcit, N. Chatterji. pp. 33, 34.

⁸⁶Opcit, Sangkima. p. 32.

sons to inherit a father's property, then the deceased father or brother was the heir. As a rule, women could not inherit property unless there were no other heirs. If there were no male connection to the deceased father, the daughter could inherit property. If there were no daughters, then his widow could inherit her husband's property.⁸⁷ Women had no ownership of property in the family by custom, except in rare situations. Her labour was owned by her husband in the sense that 'the product of her labour in her husband's house accrues to her husband alone'.⁸⁸

2.1.3. Chieftainess: By custom, Mizo women did not have the right to inheritance and succession. However, there was a limited opportunity for women (mothers) in succession by acting as regents on behalf of a minor son when the ruling chief died. If a ruling chief died without any mature sons to succeed, then his wife could act as regent on behalf of their minor son until the underage son attained mature age. Women could only occupy the position of chieftainship as regents.

Among chieftainesses, Ropuiliani was famous for her resistance to the British government and her refusal to back down before the British government. Daughter of one of the great Sailo chiefs, Lalsavunga, and wife of the chief Vandula, Ropuiliani acted as a regent after her husband died. She could not be persuaded by the British to surrender, and she was among the few chiefs who refused to accept the British government and its domination over the Lushai Hills.

After Lushai Hills was annexed and the administration of the British was introduced, on 12th January, 1890, D.R. Lyall, I.C.S., made a five-point proposal for the administration of Mizoram. To execute the five-point proposal, the British government appointed Murray as superintendent of South Lushai Hills, who consulted all the Sailo chiefs in the South Lushai Hills for the implementation of the proposal. During this time, Ropuiliani's husband Chief Vandula had already died and she took charge of the administration as a regent for her minor son. Murray was replaced by Capt. J. Shakespear, who could influence all the Sailo chiefs to accept the five points proposal except Ropuiliani. She could not accept two points of the

⁸⁷Opcit, A.G. McCall. pp. 114, 115.

⁸⁸Ibid. p. 106.

proposal which deal with the payment of annual tax of Rs 2/ to the British government and rendering free labour to the government if and when the Superintendent calls for it. After she refused to accept the proposal and boldly declared her sovereignty, she was charged with revolting against the state and arrested. She and her son Lalthuama were sent for confinement to Chittagong jail and admitted as state prisoners on 18th April, 1894. She died in jail on 3rd January, 1895.⁸⁹

2.1.4. Village officials: To administer a village or cluster of villages, the chief was assisted by a group of advisers called *Lal Upa*, which means ‘chief elder’. The chief elders appointed by the chief were experts in traditional customs and rules who could advise the chief and were a socially and economically elite group in a village. The chief usually appointed the chief elder from one of the Lusei clans, while the other chief elders were selected by the chief in consultation with the chief elder, from among each of the major clans in a village. A council of advisers was selected by the chief, if possible, from among those representing different tribes or clans. Yet, the chief was entitled to appoint any person whom he liked for members of his council while enjoying the power to dismiss any one of his council members at any time without an explanation.⁹⁰ Lalthangliana gives a different argument about the selection of the ‘chief elder’ (*Lal upa*). According to him, the chief elders (*Lal upate*)⁹¹ Were usually the chief’s close relatives, and there was no fixed number of members of the chief elders, as it depended on the decision of the chief, which was unquestionable and remained unchallenged.⁹²

‘*Ramhual*’ was another village official selected by the chief who was bound to pay paddy tax called *fathang* to the chief in a larger quantity than others. The main point of having ‘*Ramhual*’ was to increase the amount of paddy paid to the chief through the paddy tax. Since paddy tax (*fathang*) was the source of living for the chief without needing to have jhum cultivation, families who could cultivate more to

⁸⁹H. Lallungmuana and J.V. Hluna. (2005). Ropuiliani: The Freedom Fighter. In Lalneihzovi (Ed.), *Role of Ropuiliani in the Freedom Struggle*. Aizawl: Andrew Lalsangzuala. pp. 29-31.

⁹⁰Opcit, Sangkima. p. 37.

⁹¹*Te* in the *Lal upate* is a plural form of *Lal upa*.

⁹²Opcit, B. Lalthangliana. p. 349.

pay more paddy tax than others did to the chief were necessary. Families who were selected as '*Ramhual*' would select a plot of land before the commoners, and usually they paid paddy tax double or more than the common people.

Below *Ramhual*, there was '*Zalen*', who was able to choose a plot of land after the *Ramhual* but before the common people. Families of '*Zalen*' also had to pay paddy tax more than ordinary families, just like the *Ramhual*. Families of *Ramhual* and *Zalen*, for were recipients of the chief's favour, were the ones who would mainly follow the chief when needed.⁹³

Another village official was called *Thirdeng* (blacksmith), appointed by the chief, who was gifted with skills relating to agricultural devices and other necessary materials. Usually, there was one *thirdeng* in a village; however, in a big village, there were more than one *thirdeng*. There was a close relationship between the chief and the *thirdeng* to the extent that the latter was allowed to attend the assembly of the chiefs and the chief's elders meeting.⁹⁴ *Thirdeng* usually was loaded with his job and had no time to engage in cultivation and hunting. To repay him, anyone who shot animals would share some parts of the animal. *Thirdeng* also received paddy, which was almost like a tax from the people. He could also exempt those he favoured from paying paddy.

Tlangau (village crier) was another village official who was assigned the job of informing important messages from the chief to the people. *Tlangau* was repaid with paddy of around 15 kg per house for his service. Just like *Thirdeng*, *Tlangau* could also exempt those families he favoured from paying paddy.⁹⁵

Sadawt was a priest who performed rituals in religious practices. Different clans in a village had their own *Sadawt* (priest), and the chief's *Sadawt* was the most important one, for whom he (*Sadawt*) was mainly used in village-level religious functions. Another official was '*Bawlpu*', who was in charge of medical and health

⁹³James Dokhuma. (2015). *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung*. Aizawl: Gilzom Offset. pp. 150, 151.

⁹⁴Opcit, B. Lalthangliana. p. 350.

⁹⁵Opcit, James Dokhuma. pp. 152-154.

issues.⁹⁶ After the British government, one village official called *Khawchhiar* or village writer, was added by the government to be responsible for dealing with government papers for the chief, maintaining revenue books, statistics and other related matters.⁹⁷

2.1.5. Social structure: *Zawlbuk*

A former senior research officer at Tribal Research Institute, N. Chatterji wrote that '*Zawlbuk* was the key institution' in a village 'to sustain social solidarity and maintain social mores' and operated under the 'overall authority of the chief of the village'. Situated usually near the chief's house at the central place in a village, it was a 'very large dwelling place' where all the adult unmarried males were slept at night. By living under the discipline of *Zawlbuk*, the lives of the *Zawlbuk* dwellers were 'almost completely' determined by the 'practices and conventions' of it.⁹⁸

Lalbiakthanga argues that *Zawlbuk* might come into being after the Mizo migrated from Burma, since the exact time of the existence of *Zawlbuk* cannot be traced back. Regarding the purpose of *Zawlbuk*, the initial purpose of *Zawlbuk* was born out of necessity due to a security issue. The constant war against each other among the different clans of Mizo necessitated a village vigilance group composed of young men who could readily serve when needed. So, a place to sleep together at night for young men was necessary in order to counter any attack in case of emergency.⁹⁹ Kipgen also argues that 'the reason the *Zawlbuk* system was introduced in the first place was almost certainly the requirement of defence'.¹⁰⁰

Dokhuma also writes about the function and importance of *Zawlbawk* in the earlier society of the Mizo village. He mentions that due to the possibility of attack from the enemy as a consequence of their war-like nature, they need to make themselves ready to attack at any time. He compares *Zawlbuk* to a modern

⁹⁶Opcit, B. Lalthangliana. p. 350.

⁹⁷Opcit, A.G. McCall. p. 96.

⁹⁸Opcit, N. Chatterji. pp. 33, 68, 72.

⁹⁹Lalbiakthanga. (1978). *The Mizos*. Guwahati: United Publishers. p. 12.

¹⁰⁰Mangkhosat Kipgen. (1996). *Christianity and Mizo Culture: The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference. p.62.

government military quarter (*bahrik*), 'to be available and ever ready to attack, *Zawlbuk* functioned as a military quarter (*bahrik*) of unmarried men'. He further elaborates that to avoid facing emergencies unprepared and to be able to face unforeseen enemy attack collectively, attack of wild animals, fire eruption and any sort of emergency, *Zawlbuk* played an important role in the earlier Mizo society.¹⁰¹

Lalthangliana discusses the relationship between the chiefs and *Zawlbuk* while describing the roles and responsibilities of the chiefs to their people. According to him, there were three necessary roles and responsibilities of the chiefs which included providing security and defence, ensuring self-reliance and lastly maintaining justice for all. In regard to security and defence, the threat came from two sources which were the enemy (of other villages)¹⁰² And wild animals that disrupted the peaceful existence of the people. To collectively face any emergency in security matters, all the unmarried men (*tlangval*) slept at the *Zawlbuk* with all the weapons they could possess at the time like spear, bow and gun. Among them, the efficient and brave ones were the leaders and those leaders were respected and held in high esteem by the people.¹⁰³

From the above accounts, it appears that in the olden Mizo community life, the possibility of the outbreak of conflict and war between different clans coupled with the vulnerability of the living conditions of the people against wild animals necessitated the existence of *Zawlbuk* which could provide a powerful force against those threats for the safety of the people. The chief needed the cooperation, contribution and dedication of adult male villagers to protect the village, to provide safety and to take the responsibility for security issues. For this reason, *Zawlbuk* came into existence and it provided not only a defence service to the people but also efficiently served as what Kipgen calls the 'educational, cultural and communal centre of the village'.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Opcit, Dokhuma. p. 226.

¹⁰²Before the British administration, there was no definite boundary of villages which acted as a source of dispute between different villages. Liangkhaia. (2011). p. 153.

¹⁰³Opcit, B. Lalthangliana. p. 355.

¹⁰⁴Opcit, Mangkhosat Kipgen. p. 61.

Zawlbuk, situated near the chiefs' residence at the centre of the village, was a large dormitory designed to accommodate all young men and boys in the village. At the command of the chief, *Zawlbuk* was constructed by all the adult male members in a village, offering their free labour. It was forbidden for the Mizo women to enter *Zawlbuk* irrespective of their age, female members could not visit *Zawlbuk*.¹⁰⁵ A woman who had entered *Zawlbuk* was considered a promiscuous woman.¹⁰⁶

Sangkima wrote that the disallowance of women to visit *Zawlbuk* was justifiable on the ground that by its nature and existence it was 'reserved solely for men, not for the two sexes'.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, considering the role and function of *Zawlbuk* as a social and educational institution, it can be argued that the disallowance of women from entering *Zawlbuk* has confirmed women's lack of opportunity to get access to a social institution, leaving home as their only space.

Chatterji, in her study about the status of Mizo women to family and marriage in early Mizo society remarks that 'the status of women in the society was in no way inferior to that of men and she suffered none of those derogatory and discriminatory treatment as may be found in some of the more advanced societies'. However, her view about the status of Mizo women seems to appear different in her study on *Zawlbuk* as she wrote 'female folks were being considered more as a chattel who belong to male folks rather than seeing them as complementary units'.¹⁰⁸

The main function of the *Zawlbuk* was 'to inculcate the cherished traditional customs and values in the youth'. With no formal education and institution and family as the only institution for a child to learn, *Zawlbuk* provided a cementing force where young men were trained to become effective members in the society. By acting as the agent to transfer tradition from one generation to another, *Zawlbuk* served as an educational institution for which the possibility of widening the 'generation gap' has been prevented.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵Opcit, N. Chatterji. p. 82.

¹⁰⁶Opcit, James Dokhuma. p. 228.

¹⁰⁷Sangkima. (2004). *A Modern History of Mizoram*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p. 95.

¹⁰⁸Opcit, N. Chatterji. pp. 2, 82.

¹⁰⁹Ibid, 61, 63.

Every village had one or more *Zawlbuk* depending on the size of the population. Change in administration after the British and the deteriorating position of chiefs, the introduction to Christianity and formal education as well as people's exposure to the outside world, all these factors contributed to the downfall of the importance of *Zawlbuk* in Mizo society. When the new superintendent N.E. Parry assumed office in 1926, *Zawlbuk* was almost extinct in every village. He then tried to revive the *Zawlbuk* and gave orders to the chiefs to rebuild it but without success. On 1 January, 1938 in a public meeting at *Thakthing* locality *Aizawl*, A. G. McCall who succeeded N.E Parry decided to revoke N.E. Parry's order about the *Zawlbuk* within ten days. Therefore, *Zawlbuk* which used to occupy an integral part in the Mizo community life was officially abandoned and fell into complete disuse.¹¹⁰

Under the traditional political institution women were excluded from taking part in any decision making. By custom, they could not inherit property unless special and rare cases arise. They did not have the right to succession either except acting as regents on their minor sons. The chief council of advisers and other village officials were all males.

2.2. British Administration: The isolated life of the Mizo and the simple village administration under the chief was disrupted and drastically changed after the British administration was consolidated in the Lushai Hills. To prevent raiding of the Mizo toward the British subject, the expedition of 1888- 1889 and a bigger scale of expedition called The Chin-Lushai expedition of 1889- 1890 was conducted by the British government, which finally led to the British consolidation in the Lushai Hills. As a result, the Lushai Hills was divided into two districts, namely, the North Lushai Hills with headquarters at Aijal (*Aizawl*) under the chief commissioner of Assam and the South Lushai Hills with headquarters at Lungleh (*Lunglei*) under Bengal.¹¹¹

One prominent change brought by the British administration was the introduction of Christianity to the Mizo through the work of Christian missionaries from 1894. The two British missionaries named J. Herbert Lorrain and F. W. Savidge

¹¹⁰Sangkima. (2004). *Essays on the History of the Mizos*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. pp. 129-135.

¹¹¹Robert Reid. (2018). *The Lushai Hills*. Calcutta: Firma KLM Private ltd. pp. 8-19.

reached the *Sairang* village of then Lushai Hills on 11th January 1894.¹¹² Christianity or the missions work at first was rejected by some prejudice and natural conservatism but after not long enough it received appreciation to the common people.¹¹³

The work of Western Christian missionaries was successful as the whole community of Mizo accepted Christianity within fifty years. The subsequent impact of conversion to Christianity was seen in the change in the value system as people began to embrace a new system of values under the influence of Christianity by abandoning old practices. The changing value system and practices also came with changes in economic activities as the traditional system of agriculture slowly lost its significance due to the introduction of commercialization of agriculture and the practice of a cash economy in the region. The downfall of the traditional value system resulted in people's rejection of chieftainship in Mizoram, which upholds traditional values and practices as opposed to modernity and progress under the influence of Christianity.¹¹⁴

2.2.1. Education: Before the British began to administer the Lushai Hills there was no formal educational institution. *Zawlbuk*, a social institution for males in a village is considered as an educational centre where social values and morals were shared and taught.¹¹⁵ For the introduction of education, the British Christian missionaries had greatly contributed by first making the Mizo alphabet and then opening schools. However, the main purpose of Christian missionaries was not about education and opening schools, but 'to convert the Lushais from their animist beliefs to those of the Christian religion'.¹¹⁶ At the time when the missionaries entered the area, there was no alphabet, no formal education. Being able to read the Bible would be one of the first tasks for a Christian. In that context, the English Missionaries who came to the Lushai Hills to convert the people into Christianity had to first tackle the problem of illiteracy.

¹¹²J. Merion Lloyd (1991). *History of the Church in Mizoram: Harvest in the Hills*. Aizawl: Synod Publication Board. p. 26.

¹¹³Opcit, A.G. McCall. p. 200.

¹¹⁴Opcit, C. Nunthara. pp. 62, 63.

¹¹⁵Opcit, Mangkhosat Kipgen. p. 63.

¹¹⁶Opcit, A.G. McCall. p. 197.

Two English missionaries, J. Herbert Lorrain and F. W. Savidge, under the Arthington Mission (Indian Aborigines Mission), who came to Lushai Hills on 11th January, 1894, had greatly contributed to making the Mizo alphabet and paving the way for the introduction of education. Before them, Lieut. Col. T. H. Lewin had published a book called ‘Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai dialect’ in 1874. Another work on the Lushai language was done by Brojo Nath Shaha, Assistant Surgeon in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, with his publication of ‘Grammar of the Lushai Language’ in 1884. But, it was under the hands of J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge that the Mizo alphabet had been suitably furnished. J.H. Lorrain prepared a Lushai-English dictionary and a grammar of the language, presumably by F. W. Savidge.¹¹⁷

On 15th February, 1898, a missionary named D.E. Jones opened a school on the verandah of his house that was attended by around thirty boys and girls, but with irregular attendance. Girls attended school, but there were far fewer than the boys. Attending school from outside Aizawl was challenging one, as it was believed that before 1908, there were around thirty villages close to Aizawl for children to come to school regularly. Two girls from the south, who were nearly a hundred miles away from school, had attended the school during the initial period of its existence.¹¹⁸

The first Lower Primary exam was held on 25 June, 1903 with nineteen students achieving success and eight students failing the exam. Among the nineteen students who cleared the exam were two female students named Nui and Saii. In 1909, the Middle English exam was held at Aizawl and six male students passed the exam to become the first Mizo students to pass the middle school exam.¹¹⁹ An increase in interest on education among the people could be seen from the level of student’s enrollment in schools.

Between the years 1935- 1936, the number of schools and student enrollment had greatly increased, though with a lot of gender disparity in terms of student enrollment. In Aijal (Aizawl), there was one middle English school for boys and one

¹¹⁷Opcit, J. Merion Lloyd. pp. 29, 30.

¹¹⁸Ibid, pp. 42, 64.

¹¹⁹Opcit, Liangkhaia. pp. 156, 157.

middle English school for girls, and 181 primary schools with a total of 5967 boys and 1880 girls' students. 34 boys and 10 girls passed the Middle English examination, and 243 boys and 23 girls passed the primary examination. In Lungleh (now Lunglei), there was one middle English school for boys, two middle English schools for girls, one middle vernacular school for girls, and 40 primary schools with a total of 1346 boys and 413 girls students.¹²⁰

In 1909, female education was started in southern Mizoram, but without significant development. In northern Mizoram, the Welsh missionary named Mrs Jones took the effort of female education, which was a success as the government later allowed the entry of female missionaries to inculcate the importance of education among girls at Aizawl. Initially, female education had received opposition from men as the society believed that girls were to help their mothers at home, doing household chores. As a result of that, some girls who attended school sometimes had to carry their younger siblings with them. Mrs Sandy, who had taken over the girls' school from Mrs. Jones in 1916, had trained many primary school teachers and gave much emphasis on girls' education with considerable efforts to convince parents to send their daughters to school. Development was slowly achieved as people became more open about girls' education. By the late 1920's Miss Davies had taken over the Girls' Middle School from Miss Hughes, who had taken it over from Kitty Lewis. By this time, there was acceptance of girls' school and education by the people, but the acceptance was layered with unwillingness, as there was still prejudice against girls' education even among Christians.¹²¹

Since household chores was considered a women's responsibility, the society questioned the validity of educating girls on the reason that they were to look after household affairs while their mothers were absent doing jhum work during the day. Because of strong opposition, two lady missionaries of Chapman and Clark, who tried to open a girls' school in southern Mizoram in 1919, were told to go back to England within six months, but they eventually succeeded in opening girls'

¹²⁰Lalrimawia. (2004). British Policy and the Education of the Lushais upto 1947. In Sangkima (Ed.), *A Modern History of Mizoram*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p. 97.

¹²¹Opcit, J. Merion Lloyd. pp. 167-268.

education at Lunglei in southern Mizoram. Initially, there was some degree of opposition from the older generation to boys' education too as they did not understand the importance of education.¹²²

Education for girls was one of the issues that the first Mizo women's organization, called *Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual* (MHT) had taken up when they met the Sub-Committee of Advisory Council on the 19th April, 1947. They mentioned that girls could not go to school as much as boys because of their responsibility to manage household chores to help their mother. They pointed out that while 1/3rd of men can read or write, only around 1/15th of women are literate. They expressed their concern about female education, especially higher education, as girls students faced financial problems to study further and asked for financial support in the form of a scholarship for women to improve women's education in Lushai Hills.¹²³

2.2.2. Legislation: The Lushai Hills were declared as a Scheduled District under the Scheduled District Act, 1874, because the people were of primitive tribes with a small population and revenue. With the introduction of the Government of India Act of 1919, the Lushai Hills District (Mizoram), along with other hill districts, was declared as 'backward tracts'. The declaration as 'backward tracts' signified that the laws made by the Assam Legislature had to be applied in the Lushai Hills District only if approved by the Governor General. The Lushai Hills District was further excluded from mainstream national politics and left without representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly by the Government of India Act 1935. By this Act, the derogatory term 'backward areas' was replaced by 'excluded areas' as per the recommendation of the Simon Commission. The Governor of Assam acted as the administrative and legislative authority and indirectly administers those excluded areas through the superintendent.¹²⁴

¹²²Opcit, Sangkima. p. 170.

¹²³Constituent Assembly of India North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee. Retrieved July 2, 2023, from <https://indianculture.gov.in/reports-proceedings/constituent-assembly>

¹²⁴V. Venkata Rao. (1987). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India Volume III Mizoram*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company. pp. 7-22.

Excluded Areas were those backward areas where modern government functionality could not be adopted because of the backwardness of the people. As a result, laws made by the Central and Provincial legislature did not apply to the areas unless the Governor gave direction to apply those laws to the areas. This provision was made to protect the interests of the backward areas against the application of unsuitable legislation passed by the Assembly.¹²⁵ However, the practice of singular bureaucratic administration run by the superintendent led to the isolation and resentment among the Mizos, which stemmed from the absence of people's representation that was resulting in the lack of development.¹²⁶

The growing political consciousness among the commoners and the issue of people's representation, which had already taken place way back in 1926, started to emerge again in the 1940s with the growing political tension between the chiefs and the 'commoners'. The existence of the chief's durbar, which only consisted of chiefs who were not elected by common people, does not meet the aspirations of the people, as they were completely excluded from the decision-making process. Under those circumstances, A.R. McDonald, the then Superintendent, decided to reorganize the durbar to include the 'commoners' through their representatives.¹²⁷

The Superintendent felt the need to have a 'people's representative who will approach the government on their behalf'. By the end of 1945, the Superintendent released an order of election to elect one representative of chiefs and commoners, each from one circle. In the election, Mizoram was divided into 20 circles. There were 26 chiefs and commoners combined candidates from Aizawl as well as 14 chiefs and commoners combined candidates from Lunglei. On 16 January 1946, the election of Aizawl circle was held at Assam Rifles Ground, Aizawl. In this election, 26 people were elected both from the chief and the commoners group with the same proportion. From Lunglei circle, a total of 14 members were elected both from the

¹²⁵Ibid. p. 30.

¹²⁶Chitta Ranjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization: Pre-Colonial & Colonial Institutions*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. p. 71.

¹²⁷Opcit, Sangkima. p. 123.

chief and the commoners group with the same proportion. The superintendent called this body ‘Conference’, which represents the general Mizo population.¹²⁸

The process of election was based on household franchise (for commoners’ election), where a group of ten neighboring houses selected one man to vote for their representative. In 1941, there were 25102 occupied houses or 2510 groups of houses. To elect 20 members from the commoners seat in the district conference, one man from every group of ten houses became an elector to elect their representative from each circle. In the case of the chief election, every chief was an elector and entitled to cast their vote to elect 20 chiefs as their representatives. In the first district conference, there was a separate electorate both for the chiefs and commoners. The elected representatives of chiefs were elected by the chiefs only, whereas representatives of commoners were elected by the commoners.¹²⁹

The second election of the District Conference was held on 14 April 1947 for the Aizawl circle. Since the Mizo Union boycotted the election, only the United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) from the commoners’ side participated in the election.¹³⁰ As far as the election of the District Conference was concerned, there were no women candidates and elected members from both the chiefs’ and commoners’ groups in the first and second elections.

2.2.3. Women’s Organization: About three months after the first political party called the Mizo Union was formed, the first Mizo women’s organization called the *Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual* (MHT) was formed on 16. 7. 1946 at Mizo High School, Mission Veng, Aizawl by three close friends, namely Mrs Lalthanzami w/o Khawtinkhuma (Ex-Minister), Mrs MC Hmingliani w/o R. Thanhkira (Ex- MP of Assam), and Kapthluaii, sister of Lalbuaia (Ex- MP of Assam). Influenced by the existence of women’s organizations in other places in India, the three intimate friends decided to set up a women’s organization to address the low status of Mizo

¹²⁸Chaltuahkhuma. (2001). *Political History of Mizoram*. Aizawl: David Memorial Press. pp. 48, 49.

¹²⁹Constituent Assembly of India North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee. Retrieved July 23, 2023 from <https://indianculture.gov.in/reports-proceedings/constituent-assembly>

¹³⁰Opcit, Chaltuahkhuma. p. 77.

women and to uplift them. The organization was set up after they obtained the approval from the then-superintendent L. L. Peters.¹³¹

The MHT meeting held on 14th September, 1946 resolved the following proposals for the revision of the Mizo customary law to be submitted to the superintendent.

(a) A 'will' made by a husband or anyone before they died should be accepted.

(b) A widow without children should inherit at least half of her husband's property.

(c) Daughters with no male siblings should inherit the father's property.

(d) A surviving wife who had a sexual encounter with someone else should not be considered as committing 'adultery'.

(e) In case of divorce on 'mak',¹³² Children should be free to choose between their parents.¹³³

The first conference of the MHT held between 26-28 January 1948 discussed matters like bride price, divorce, children, will, inheritance, adultery and illegitimate child and decided to approach the authority.¹³⁴ The organization discussed the issue of acceptance of will and personal laws within the Mizo customary law many times as per the record of their meeting book. Besides those matters, the organization also fought for women representation in the District Council and village councils. The Divisional Working Committee of the MHT on 10.8.1948 resolved that three seats

¹³¹Liansangluri. (2016). General Secretary Report. In *Mizo Hmeichhe Tangruah Souvenir*. pp. 15, 16.

¹³²*Mak* in Mizo is a type of divorce where a husband divorces his wife. If a wife divorces her husband it is called *sumchhuah*.

¹³³MHT Minute Bu. Dated 14. 9. 1946. (Minute Bu means the minute book in which the resolution or report of any meetings of the organization is recorded).

¹³⁴MHT Minute Bu. Dated 21. 9. 1948.

should be reserved for women in the District Council and seats for women should be implemented in the village council as well.¹³⁵

When the Bordoloi Committee visited the Lushai Hills, the three leaders of the organization met them on 19th April, 1947 and demanded universal adult franchise for 18 years and above irrespective of gender and women seat reservation in the District Council. They demanded at least two or three seats for women out of 40 seats in the District Council to the Bordoloi Committee. Among other things, they also talked about women right to inheritance to the Committee.¹³⁶

Under the Mizo customary law, ‘no Lushai (Mizo) can make a will’ except on the occasion that a man has no relations at all which was very rare.¹³⁷ As per the record of the meetings of the MHT, the issue of will has been brought up several times. Besides the superintendent, the organization was also prepared to approach the District Council which was to be set up in the Lushai Hills for the acceptance of will and revision of customary law. The MHT Central and Divisional Working Committee resolved to submit a letter for the approval of ‘will’ to the Advisory Committee, a Committee of the Advisory Council.¹³⁸ This move has seemed to shed some light as the meeting (session) of the Advisory Council held between 27 April to 2 May, 1951 passed to accept ‘will’ for inheritance of property.¹³⁹ However, the decision of the Advisory Council was subject to the approval of the superintendent.¹⁴⁰

The MHT’s demand for the acceptance of ‘will’ in inheritance has become successful when the Mizo District Council passed the Mizo District (Inheritance of Property) Act, 1956 which came into force from 1st July, 1956. Under this act, property which includes moveable and immovable properties can be disposed of by

¹³⁵MHT Minute Bu. Dated 10. 8. 1948.

¹³⁶Constituent Assembly of India North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee. Retrieved July 22, 2023 from <https://indianculture.gov.in/reports-proceedings/constituent-assembly>

¹³⁷N.E. Parry. (1976). *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*. Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited. pp. 82, 86.

¹³⁸The exact date could not be seen because of the missing piece of paper of the MHT Minute Bu. But the year is still visible which was written as 1951.

¹³⁹Opcit, Chaltuahkhuma. p. 139.

¹⁴⁰Vanlawma. (2022). *Ka Ram leh Kei*. Aizawl: MCL Publications. p. 219.

will by 'every person of sound mind not below the age of 18'.¹⁴¹ The MHT formed in the midst of political change right before India's independence, greatly contributed to the upliftment of Mizo women as it made customary law its first target to change women's lives.

The acceptance of 'will' removed the disqualification of females by custom to inherit the family's property. The long and discriminatory practice of the Mizo customary law, that exclusively served the interest of males in inheritance, which, presumably would be stems from the denial of female contribution in the family, has been readjusted by the acceptance of 'will'. It allows female members in the society to inherit and possess material property even if it is only under the dictate of the parents or the father specifically. The disadvantageous position of women under the Mizo customary law regarding inheritance seems to be one main factor that motivated some women to set up a women's organization. Besides the MHT, another women's organization called 'Hmeichhe Hmasawn Pawl' was formed on 12.5.1948. The organization mainly focused on skill development and cleanliness.¹⁴²

2.2.4. Advisory Council: The Constituent Assembly appointed the Advisory Committee to study the rights of minorities and tribes of the excluded area on 24th January, 1947. The Advisory Committee set up a new committee called the Sub-Committee known as the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Area Committee with Gopinath Bordoloi as Chairman to consider the administrative setup of the tribal and excluded areas.¹⁴³ The Sub-Committee also known as the Bordoloi Committee started to tour the Lushai Hills and met representatives of the Mizo Union, District Conference, Ex-servicemen's association, Chiefs, government servants, Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church, Salvation Army, Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual (MHT), and non-Lushai Residents of the Lushai Hills. As per the recommendation of the Bordoloi Sub-Committee Report, the Constituent Assembly suggested the status of 'District Council' for the Mizo Hills (now Mizoram). The

¹⁴¹Act No. 1 of 1956, The Mizo District (Inheritance of Property) Act, 1956.

¹⁴²Opcit, Chaltuakhuma. p. 118.

¹⁴³Jangkhongam Doungel. (2008). Autonomous District Councils: A Study of the Implications of the Sixth Schedule in Mizoram. In Jagadish K. Patnaik (Ed.), *Mizoram: Dimensions and Perspectives* (206-225). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. p. 207.

government of Assam formed the Advisory Council, which was supposed to function during an interim period, i.e., before the official functioning of the District Council.

On 10th November, 1947, a committee was held between delegates of Lushai Hills and officials of the government of Assam at Shillong. Delegates of Lushai Hills comprised political party leaders of the Mizo Union and United Mizo Freedom Organisation (U.M.F.O), and Superintendent of Lushai Hills, L.L. Peters, with three representatives of chiefs. From the Assam government, Premier Bordoloi, Minister Nichols Roy, and Adviser M.V.C.D. Walker attended the meeting to discuss the setting up of the Advisory Council. The meeting resolved to set the arrangement of seats in the election of the Advisory Council as under:

Commoners – 20 seats

Chiefs – 10 seats

Town – 3 seats (2 for Aizawl, 1 for Lunglei)

Women – 2 seats (1 for Aizawl, 1 for Lunglei)¹⁴⁴

The Advisory Council was set to comprise representatives from commoners, chiefs, towns, and women, with a total number of 35 members. Elections were held on 23 March and 15 April 1948, for the chiefs and the commoners respectively, in which the former elected 10 members while the latter elected 25 members. Among the elected representatives of commoners were two women named Lalsangpuii from Aizawl and Remthangi from Lunglei. Lalsangpuii¹⁴⁵ fought the election as an Independent candidate against Zami, who was the President of the MHT, whereas Remthangi from the MHT defeated her opponent Lalziki, who contested from the UMFO (*Zalen*) party. The Advisory Council became ‘the first popular government

¹⁴⁴Opcit, Chaltuahkhuma. p. 108.

¹⁴⁵The meeting of the MHT held on 3rd March, 1948 discussed the action of the president, Lalsangpuii. In this meeting, the committee decided to take action against the president who attempt to contest the election of the Advisory Council in violation of the decision of the organization that already set up the candidate. The meeting then resolved to let the president, Lalsangpuii, make a choice either to contest the upcoming election against the decision of the organization or leave the president post of the MHT. MHT Minute Bu. Dated 3.3. 1948.

elected by the people'.¹⁴⁶ In this election, Lalsangpuii had a better chance of winning the election mainly because of the electoral fight between the leading two parties, the Mizo Union¹⁴⁷ and the U.M.F.O with the latter having the support of the rich and intellectual groups in Aizawl. Outside Aizawl town, the UMFO was badly defeated.¹⁴⁸ The Advisory Council was short-lived and finally dissolved on 12 November 1951 by the government of Assam to hold the election of the District Council in January 1952.¹⁴⁹ The setting up of the 'Advisory Council' with the policy of seat reservation for women opened the door for women's political representation as they were included in the decision-making process for the first time.

2.2.5. District Council: Chieftainship was abolished in 1954 and the District Council under the Sixth Schedule provision of the Constitution of India functioned from 1952 until the attainment of the Union Territory status in 1972.¹⁵⁰ On 11th February 1950, a meeting of the Advisory Council under the leadership of the superintendent was held to discuss the composition and power structure of the District Council. In this meeting, it was resolved that the District Council shall consist of 24 members including four nominated seats. Two seats for women and two seats for other minority groups such as the Chakma and Reangs.¹⁵¹

The District Council, created in 1952, consisted of 24 members elected based on universal adult franchise with a five-year term. The first election of the District Council was held on 4 January 1952. Among 37 candidates, there were eighteen elected candidates. Six nominated seats were divided into different categories such as: Mizo Union, government official, chief's council and one seat for a minority group (Chakma).¹⁵² One woman named Lalziki was among the six nominated

¹⁴⁶Opcit, Chaltuahkhuma. pp. 109-113.

¹⁴⁷The MHT was viewed by some people as a part of the Mizo Union. Some of its leaders were partners of leaders of the Mizo Union party. For instance, the first president Lalthanzami was the wife of Khawtinkhuma, president of the Mizo Union. Opcit, Vanlawma. p. 155.

¹⁴⁸Sangkima. (2004). *Essays on the History of the Mizo*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p. 166.

¹⁴⁹Opcit, Chaltuahkhuma. p. 140.

¹⁵⁰Opcit, C. Nunthara. p.75.

¹⁵¹Opcit, Chaltuahkhuma. p. 135.

¹⁵²H. C. Thanhranga. (2007). *District Councils in the Mizo Hills (Updated)*. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press. pp. 102, 103.

members, and there were no female candidates in the first election of the Mizo District Council.

About the reason why Lalziki was nominated in the first Mizo District Council, she said she was nominated by Lalmawia of the UMFO leader. However, the ex-president of the MHT, Hmingliani believed that she was nominated by the Governor of Assam. This could be the reason as the party having the majority of members has the right to nominate members as a matter of rule. In this election, it was the Mizo Union not the UMFO that won the election. Lalziki, a popular figure among the Mizo community, who was brought up by the missionaries and has British as her mother tongue, said that she could not effectively participate in the debate and work to champion the cause of women due to her language problem.¹⁵³

The second District Council election was held on 25th January, 1957, and one nominated seat was given to Hmingliani, a leader of the MHT. In the second election, general seats were increased from 18 to 22 while nominated seats were reduced to 2 from 6 in the first election. There was no female candidate in the election, and it was fought mainly between the Mizo Union and UMFO parties, with the Tribal Union party from- Lakher region. Among the 22 elected members, 13 were Mizo Union, 6 were UMFO, 2 were Tribal Union, and Congress won one seat.¹⁵⁴

To occupy the nominated seat in the District Council, the MHT held the election within its organization. The Central Working Committee meeting of the MHT held on 2nd February, 1957 elected Hmingliani for the nominated seat of the District Council.¹⁵⁵ During her tenure as a nominated member, she played a significant role in voicing the need for women's right to property. As a result of the efforts by the MHT, a significant change was made by the District Council which approved acceptance of 'will'. Towards the end of the term of the second District Council, Hmingliani was nominated again for the third District Council but she

¹⁵³Opcit, Sangkima. 168.

¹⁵⁴Opcit, H. C. Thanhanga. p. 103-104.

¹⁵⁵MHT Minute Bu. Dated 2. 2. 1957.

surrendered the seat to one of her colleagues. From this point on, they gradually distanced themselves from politics in addition to the outbreak of insurgency in 1966. The MHT was badly hurt by the political upheaval of 1966 as it started to lose its position of representing women as an organization.¹⁵⁶

The third election of the District Council (1962) was again dominated by the Mizo Union party, as it had captured 16 seats out of 22. The six remaining seats were shared by Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU), Independent candidates, and the Pawi-Lakher region, with two seats each. There were no female candidates in this election, and two nominated seats were given to males. The fourth election of the District Council held in 1970 was mainly fought between the Mizo Union and the Congress, with the latter forming the government. There were no female candidates in this election, and two nominated seats were also given to males.¹⁵⁷

During the District Council period (1952- 1972), four elections (1952, 1957, 1962, 1970) were held. No women contested in the four elections and two women were nominated as members during the first and second terms. Of all the four elections combined, the total number of nominated seats was twelve, out of which two seats were given to women.

Table 2.1: Women in the District Council 1952- 1970.

Year	Name	Status	Nominated seats
1952	Lalziki	Nominated	Six
1957	Hmingliani	Nominated	Two
1962	Nil		Two
1970	Nil		Two

Source: District Councils in the Mizo Hills (updated) by H.C. Thanhanga

¹⁵⁶Opcit, Sangkima. p. 169.

¹⁵⁷Opcit, Thanhanga. pp. 102-105.

2.3. Women's representation in the Legislative Assembly (UT period):

The legislative assembly during the union territory period has 33 members. Out of the 33 seats, three were nominated seats. In the first election in 1972, a woman named Saptawni¹⁵⁸ was a nominated member. The election was fought by parties such as the Mizo Union, the Mizo Labour Party, the Indian National Congress (INC), the Socialist Party, and independent candidates. The Congress Party and the Socialist Party are the national parties, whereas the Mizo Union and the Mizo Labour Party are the regional parties. Out of the two national parties, the less popular one, the Socialist Party, fielded one female candidate. The other three females who fought in the election were contested as independent candidates. So, out of more than 156 candidates, only four were female candidates.

Around the time when a new party 'People's Conference'(PC) was formed in 1975, a new party called the Mizo Democratic Front (MDF) was formed, headed by a woman named Sanglianchhungi as the party president. She was the first woman in Mizoram to take a leadership role in a political party. During the emergency period in 1975, opposition party leaders were put in jail. PC leader Brig. T. Sailo and his party men were arrested and imprisoned in Tezpur jail in Assam. Sanglianchhungi and her colleagues were arrested and sent to the District jail in Aizawl as well. The imprisonment did not stop her from participating in the election as a candidate in the Lok Sabha election of 1977 from behind bars. She contests the election from her internment on the MDF (independent) ticket, but unfortunately loses the election.¹⁵⁹

In the second election in 1978, Thanmawii was elected from the PC Party and became the first female elected member of the legislative assembly. In 1979, a fresh election was held and she was elected again. In the 1979 election, there were three female candidates, but only Thanmawii was contested as a party candidate while the other two were contested as independent candidates. Aside from Thanmawii, one woman named K. Thansiami was given a nominated seat.

¹⁵⁸Opcit, Sangkima. p. 170. Saptawni was the headmistress of Presbyterian Church Girls School, Aizawl.

¹⁵⁹Ibid. p. 170.

In the last election held during the union territory period in 1984, the only female candidate in the election, K. Thansiami, a nominated member in the previous term, won the election from the PC Party. The Congress formed the government and appointed a woman named Rokungi as a nominated member in this term.

Overall, the total number of women candidates in the MLA election of the union territory of Mizoram within fifteen years (1972-1987) is nine. Among the nine women candidates, only three secured a major party nomination (all from the PC) and the rest of the six women MLA candidates were mostly independent candidates. Aside from this, a total of three women were nominated as members during the union territory period.

Table 2.2: MLA Elections during the UT period 1972-1987

Individual Performance of Women Candidates					
Year	Total Candidates	Women Candidates	Party Affiliation	No of Winner	No. of FD
1972	155	4	Ind-3, SOP-1	0	4
1978	154	1	PPC-1	1	0
1979	150	3	Ind-2, PPC-1	1	2
1984	134	1	PC-1	1	0

Sources: Election Commission of India, New Delhi, <https://eci.gov.in>

2.4. Women's representation in the State Legislative Assembly: In the first Mizoram state legislative assembly election held in 1987, the MNF party won 24 seats out of 40 seats and one woman named Lalhlimpuii was elected. After statehood, the nominated seat was abolished, and the assembly seat was enlarged from 33 to 40 seats. In this election, out of the four female candidates, one was from the national party, Congress, two were from regional parties of MNF and PC, while the other one was an independent candidate who forfeited her deposit.

In the second Mizoram state legislative assembly election held in 1989, there were four female candidates, one from the MNF party and three from the PC Party. All of them lost the election, with one candidate forfeiting the deposit. The MNF party was defeated in this election as it won only 14 seats. In the 1993 election, there

were only three female candidates. One of them was from the MNF party, and one of them was from the BJP, while the other one was an independent candidate. Only one MNF candidate did not forfeit her deposit in this election. The MNF party again won 14 seats in this election.

In the election of 1998, there were ten female candidates who all lost and forfeited their deposits in the election. The leading two parties at the time, the Congress and the MNF, had no female candidates, and out of the ten candidates, two were contested as independent candidates. There were seven female candidates in the 2003 election, but only one candidate from the Congress did not forfeit her deposit. In the 2008 election, there were nine female candidates, with one candidate each from the MNF, the Congress, and the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP). Except for the three women from these three political parties, all six candidates forfeited their deposits.

In the 2013 election, the leading two parties, MNF and the Congress, both fielded one female candidate, and the BJP fielded three. The other candidate contested as an independent. Among the total six women candidates, except the MNF and the INC candidates, all the other four female candidates forfeited their election deposits. There are 18 female candidates in the 2018 legislative assembly election. Congress fielded one female candidate, the BJP fielded six, the National Congress Party (NCP) fielded one, and 10 women contested as independents. Among the ten independent candidates, two were from the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), which was not yet recognized as a political party at the time. Among the eight independent candidates, three of them were contested in two constituencies separately. Out of the total eighteen female candidates in this election, only the Congress candidate and one independent candidate from ZPM did not lose their deposits.

In the 2023 election, there were eighteen women candidates and half of them were independent candidates. Two of them contested in two constituencies resulting in the actual number of women to sixteen. For the first time, the two oldest parties in Mizoram, the INC and the MNF, both have fielded more than one woman candidate

as both of them have fielded two. The ZPM has fielded two and the rest of the other three who secured party nominations were from the BJP. Except for the INC, the MNF and the ZPM candidates, all the other candidates have forfeited their election deposits. For the first time in the history of the Legislative Assembly election, three women were elected. So, from the 1972 election, there are seven women elected members of the Legislative Assembly in Mizoram and one of them was elected twice in the 1978 and 1979 elections.

Table 2.3: MLA election after statehood between 1987-2023

Individual Performance of Women Candidates					
Year	Total Candidates	Women Candidates	Party Affiliation	No of Winner	No of FD
1987	145	4	PPC-1, INC-1, Ind-2	1	1
1989	162	4	PPC-3, MNF-1	0	1
1993	121	3	BJP-1, MNF-1, Ind-1	0	2
1998	221	10	Ind-2, BJP-2, JD-2, RJD-1, LS-1, SAP-1, MNF(N)-1	0	10
2003	192	7	ZNP-2, JD(U)-3, INC-1, EU-1	0	6
2008	206	9	BJP-2, LJP-2, INC-1, MNF-1, Ind-1, LB-1, ZNP-1	0	6
2013	142	6	BJP-3, INC-1, MNF-1, Ind-1	0	4
2018	191	18	Ind-10, BJP-6, INC-1, NCP-1	0	16
2023	174	18	BJP-3, INC-2, Ind-9, MNF-2, ZPM-2	3	12

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi, <https://eci.gov.in>

2.5. Women's representation in the Autonomous District Councils: The Pawi- Lakher Regional Council created under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India was a semi-autonomous body that existed from 1953 to 1972 in the southern part of Mizoram.¹⁶⁰ The first election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was held in 1953, which comprised nine seats and three nominated seats. During this period, the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union (PLTU) was the only existing political organization in

¹⁶⁰Opcit, Nunthara. p. 75.

the region. The PLTU decided not to field official candidates on its behalf and instead advised those who were to be contested to do it as independent candidates. In the second election, the PLTU again did not have its official candidates; rather, those candidates were contested as independent candidates. The seat distribution was adjusted in the second term election as the general seat was increased from nine to ten by reducing the nominated seats from three to two. From the ten elected (general) seats, the Lakhers and the Pawis held four seats each, one seat for the sub-tribe of Pawi called the *Tlanglaus*, and another seat for the Riangs (Bru) and the Chakmas.¹⁶¹

The third election held in 1964 was boycotted by the Mara Freedom Party and the Lais (Pawis), and the Chakmas contested in the election. The fourth election held in 1970 was mainly fought by the Mara Freedom Party and two factions of the Indian National Congress party. The term of this election was remarkable in the sense that it was dominated by the Lakhers for the first time and the newly created post of Deputy Chairman was occupied by Kumar Dewan to become the first Chakma to hold an official political post in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.¹⁶² Between 1953-1972 in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, there were no women elected or nominated members.

As a result of the attainment of union territory in 1972, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council has been divided into three new councils, the Pawi District Council, the Lakher District Council and the Chakma District. Each of these councils has been created to subsume the three sub-ethnic groups, the Pawis (Lai), the Lakhers (Mara) and the Chakma.¹⁶³

2.5.1. Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC): From the first election in 1972 to the fifth election in 1993 to the CADC, no female was elected to the Council. The sixth term of the CADC election held in 1998 was fought by a total of 39 contestants in 13 constituencies. In this election, the INC won 10 seats and the BJP won 1 seat, whereas the other seats were won by independent candidates. The

¹⁶¹Jangkhongam Doungel. (2022). *Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram*. Meerut: Balaji Publication and Distributors. p. 40.

¹⁶²Ibid. pp. 45, 46.

¹⁶³Opcit, Nunthara. p. 75.

elected BJP party candidate was a Chakma woman named Sneha Dini Talukhdar, who has created history by becoming the first female elected member and the first BJP elected candidate in the District Council of MADC. In this term, one nominated seat was given to a female out of the three nominated seats. So, the sixth term of MADC was the first time that witnessed both elected and nominated female members for the first time since the first election held in 1972.

In the following elections of 2003, 2008, and 2013, there were no female elected members. One nominated seat given to a female from 1998 was increased to two from the ninth term in 2013. In the 2018 election, a woman named Kusum Lota Chakma from the BJP was elected, who was later appointed as an executive member in the BJP-led government during that term. She became the second elected Chakma woman and the first female executive member of the Chakma District Council.

The eleventh election to the CADC was held on 9 May 2023. In this election, there were a total of 35,885 voters, and 18,208 were males and 17,677 were females.¹⁶⁴ The BJP won 5 seats and the INC won 4 seats, while the rest of the seats were won by the MNF. Kusum Lota Chakma, the lone woman elected member in the previous term, has re-contested from the ticket of ZPM. She and all the other ZPM candidates lost the election, and there were no female elected candidates in this election. So, from the first election in 1972 to 2023, there are a total of 151 general seats out of which 2 seats are occupied by females, which is 1.32%. As for the nominated seat, there are a total of 29 seats, out of which 9 seats are given to females, which is 31.03% in total.

¹⁶⁴Vanglaini. April 6, 2023.

Table 2.4: Chakma Autonomous District Council (1972 - 2023)

Individual performance of women			
Year	Total No. of Seats	No. of Female	Percentage
1972	8 +1 Nominated	Nil	0 %
1977	8+1 Nominated	Nil	0 %
1982	9+1 Nominated	Nil	0 %
1988	11+1 Nominated	Nil	0 %
1993	13+2 Nominated	Nil	0 %
1998	13+3 Nominated	1 (Elected) 1 (N)	7.69% 33.33 %
2003	12+4 Nominated	1 (N)	25 %
2008	17+4 Nominated	1 (N)	25 %
2013	20+4 Nominated	2 (N)	50 %
2018	20+4 Nominated	1 (Elected) 2 (N)	5% 50 %
2023	20 +4 Nominated	2 (N)	50 %
Total	151 (General) 29 (Nominated)	2 (Elected) 9 (Nominated)	1.32% 31. 03%

Sources: State Election Commission, Mizoram <https://sec.mizoram.gov.in>

K. Sachho. (2013). *Zoram Thlirvelna*.

2.5.2. Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC): Up until the fifth election in 1992, a nominated seat was never given to women in the Lai District Council. The general seat was increased from 16 to 19 in the fifth election in 1992, and the nominated seat was also expanded to include women. Out of the four nominated seats, one seat was occupied by a female. In the ninth election in 2010, the nominated seats was decreased from four to three while the general seat was increased from 23 to 25. Before the 2015 election, women occupied one nominated seat, which was changed from the 2015 election as two seats were given to women.

In the tenth LADC election in 2015, a woman named N. Sangnawni was elected from the M. Kawnpui constituency in Lawngtlai District from the Congress party. In this election, out of the total 25 general seats, the INC won 16 seats. N. Sangnawni was appointed as chairman of the Town Committee. From the first election in 1972 to 2020, there were a total of 220 general seats, out of which one seat was occupied by a female who was elected in the 2015 election. So, between

1972-2020, women's representation in the general seats of the Lai District Council is 0.45%. With regard to the nominated seat, there are 37 seats in total, out of which 9 seats are given to females. The percentage of female representation in the nominated seat is 24.32%.

Table 2.5: Lai Autonomous District Council (1972 - 2020)

Individual performance of women			
Year	Total No. of Seats	No. of Female	Percentage
1972	12 +2 Nominated	Nil	0%
1977	12 +3 Nominated	Nil	0%
1982	17 +2 Nominated	Nil	0%
1988	16 +4 Nominated	Nil	0%
1992	19 +4 Nominated	1 (N)	25%
1997	23 +4 Nominated	1 (N)	25%
2002	23+4 Nominated	1 (N)	25%
2006	23 +4 Nominated	1 (N)	25%
2010	25 +3 Nominated	1 (N)	33 %
2015	25 +3 Nominated	1 (Elected) 2 (N)	4% 66 %
2020	25+4 Nominated	2 (N)	50 %
Total	220 (General) 37 (Nominated)	1 (Elected) 9 (Nominated)	0.45% 24.32%

Sources: State Election Commission, Mizoram. <https://sec.mizoram.gov.in>

K. Sachho. (2013). *Zoram Thlirvelna*.

T. Chalngingluia., PC. Chuaudinga. (2019). *PLRC-LADC Hun Inthlak Dan 1953- 2018*.

2.5.3. Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC): In the first election in 1972, a woman named Ngony was elected as a member of the Mara District Council. Ngony, ‘a daughter of the Serkawr chief’¹⁶⁵ was elected as an independent candidate from the Serkawr constituency in Siaha District along with eight others who were all elected from the Mara Freedom Party (MFP).¹⁶⁶ From the first to the fifth election in 1990, a nominated seat was given to men only. After thirteen years from the first election, nominated seat was occupied by female for the first time in the 1995 election. In the following elections in 1995, 2000 and 2005, out of the four nominated seats in each election, one seat was given to women in each election but there were no elected female candidates.

In the 2007 election, a woman named N. Naphie was elected to the Mara District Council. She held the post of deputy chairman between 2008- 2009 and was later appointed as an executive member till 2012.¹⁶⁷ In this term, one nominated seat out of the four nominated seats was given to a woman.

The nominated seat in the ninth term of the MADC (2007- 2012) was enlarged as two more men were appointed as nominated members in 2011, and as a result, the total nominated members in this term was increased to six. From the 2012 election, nominated seats was reduced to three, but the number of women in the nominated seats was increased. In the elections of 2012 and 2017, out of the three nominated seats, two were given to women. However, there were no elected female candidates in either of the elections.

The 12th election was held on 5 May 2023 in which the BJP and the MNF have fielded candidates in all the 25 constituencies while the INC has fielded candidates in 23 constituencies. The ZPM has fielded candidates in eight constituencies and four other candidates were contested as independents. In this election, female voters outnumbered male voters in the 25 constituencies.¹⁶⁸ The BJP

¹⁶⁵Interview with R.T. Zachono, former Chief Executive Member (CEM) of MADC, January 10, 2023.

¹⁶⁶Opcit, Thanhanga. p. 114.

¹⁶⁷K. Sacho. (2013). *Zoram Thlirvelna*. Aizawl: JP Offset Printers. pp. 66-67.

¹⁶⁸Vanglaini. May 5, 2022.

won 12 seats while the MNF and the Congress both won nine and four seats respectively. Among the total 85 candidates, two candidates from the Congress and one candidate from the MNF were female. However, no women candidates were elected in this election. Two nominated seats out of four were given to women in this term.

So, from the first election in 1972 to the present term, only two females have been elected in the MADC election. From 1972 to the 2022 elections, there were 218 general seats in total out of which only two seats were occupied by females which is 0.91%. As for the nominated seat, out of the total 37 nominated seats, 10 seats are occupied by females which is 27.02 %.

Table 2.6: Mara Autonomous District Council (1972-2022)

Individual performance of women			
Year	Total No. of Seats	No. of Female	Percentage
1972	9 +1 Nominated	1 (Elected)	11.11%
1977	14 +1 Nominated	Nil	0 %
1982	14 +1 Nominated	Nil	0 %
1985	14 +3 Nominated	Nil	0 %
1990	10 +3 Nominated	Nil	0 %
1995	19 +4 Nominated	1 (N)	25 %
2000	19 +4 Nominated	1 (N)	25 %
2005	22 +4 Nominated	1 (N)	25 %
2007	22 +6 Nominated	1 (Elected) 1 (N)	4.54 % 16.66 %
2012	25+3 Nominated	2 (N)	66.66 %
2017	25+3 Nominated	2 (N)	66.66 %
2022	25 + 4 Nominated	2 (N)	50 %
TOTAL	218 (General) 37 (Nominated)	2 (Elected) 10 (Nominated)	0.91% 27.02%

Sources: State Election Commission, Mizoram. <https://sec.mizoram.gov.in>

K. Sachho. (2013). *Zoram Thlirvelna*.

T. Chalnghingluia., PC. Chuaudinga. (2019). *PLRC-LADC Hun Inthlak Dan 1953-2018*.

Therefore, among the three Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram, the Lai Autonomous District Council elections from the first in 1972 to the eleventh in 2020 are the largest in terms of composition, by having a total of 220 general seats and 37 nominated seats from the beginning. So far, there is one elected and nine nominated female members in the LADC. With regards to women's representation in the District Council, it scores the lowest amongst the three by having a 0.45% rate of elected females from the total general seats and a 24.32% rate of nominated females from the total nominated seats. From the first in 1972 to the twelfth in 2022 elections, the Mara Autonomous District Council has elected two female members from the total 218 general seats, which is 0.91%, and nominated ten female members out of 37 nominated seats, which is 27.02%.

From the first in 1972 to the eleventh in 2023 elections, the Chakma Autonomous District Council has elected two women and nominated nine women in the District Council. It has scored the highest among the three in terms of female representation, both in the general and nominated seats, by having 1.32% of elected females out of the total 151 general seats and 31.03% of nominated females out of the total 29 nominated seats. The five female elected members in the three District Councils were directly elected in the sense that they were not nominated members before. And among the total 28 female nominated members of the three District Councils, one from the LADC held two consecutive terms.

2.6. Local Urban Government

Part IXA under the Constitution Seventy Fourth Amendment Act, 1992 contains the municipality, which is defined as an institution of self-government that every state shall constitute based on the population of the area. Article 243Q classified Municipalities into three types: The Nagar Panchayat for an area transitioning from rural to an urban area. The Municipal Council for a smaller urban area and the Municipal Corporation for a larger urban area. Article 243T mentions

the nature of seat reservation for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and women.¹⁶⁹

2.6.1. Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC): The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 (Act No.6 of 2007) was passed by the Mizoram State Legislative and received the assent of the Governor on 16th April 2007. However, the Act left out the provision of seat reservation for women under Article 243T as per the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. The Act was amended in 2009, and Article 234T was inserted in the Mizoram Municipalities (Amendment) Act, 2009. The term of office is five years. The Aizawl Municipal Council comprises 19 members and others appointed by the Governor of the state. Among the 19 members, 6 of them are female as per the one-third seat reservation policy, and the reserved seats are subject to rotation every five years.

On 16 November 2010, the first AMC was inducted, and among the three executive councillors, two were women. On 22 July 2014, the Congress-ZNP alliance government of the AMC was dethroned, and the MNF-ZNP alliance formed the government on 30 July 2014. Among the three executive councillors, one of them was a woman. The MNF-led government could not survive long as the new Congress-led government was formed again on 12 February 2015. During this period, among the three executive councillors, one of them was a woman. On 15 October 2015, the Aizawl Municipal Council was promoted to the status of a Corporation, and since then, it has been changed to the Aizawl Municipal Corporation. As a result, the names of Chairman and Vice Chairman were also changed to Mayor and Deputy Mayor, accordingly.¹⁷⁰

The first election to the Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) was held on 3.11.2010, in which there were a total of 19 wards, out of which six wards were reserved for women. In every election to the AMC, wards were rotated for the reserved seat. In this election, the Indian National Congress (INC) and Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) alliance defeated the Mizo National Front (MNF) and

¹⁶⁹PM Bakshi. (2020). *The Constitution of India*. Gurgaon: LexisNexis. p.297.

¹⁷⁰Vanglaini. November 26, 2020.

Mizoram Peoples Conference (MPC) alliance. Among the contested female councillors from reserved seats, each of the two candidates from INC, MNF, and ZNP was elected. No female candidate was contesting the general seat in the election.

In the second election held on 26 November 2015, the MNF won the election and formed the Executive Council. Five INC female candidates and one MNF female candidate were elected from the reserved seat. Again, in this election, no female candidate contested for the general seat.

The third election was held on 16 February 2021, in which the INC, MNF, and the ZPM were contested in all 19 wards, while the BJP had fielded candidates in 9 wards. The MNF party has won the election in eleven wards, and nine males and two females were elected. From the ZPM, the elected candidates were five females and one male, while the two elected candidates from the INC were both male and female. Among the female candidates, both from reserved and general wards, five ZPM candidates, one INC candidate, and two MNF candidates won the election. Among the total eight female elected candidates, two candidates from both the MNF and the INC contested for the general seat and became the first two female councilors elected from the general seat in the three elections of AMC.

From the first election in 2010 to the present term of the AMC, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are all men. Regarding the Executive Councilors, during the first term (2010- 2015), there were three women Executive Councilors. During this term, the government was changed in 2014 and as a result, the members of the Executive Councilors were also changed which increased the number of women in the Executive Councilors. During the second term, there were no women Executive Councilors, and for the present term, one among four is a woman.¹⁷¹

2.6.2. Lunglei Municipal Council (LMC): The meeting of the council of ministers under the leadership of the state chief minister has resolved to approve the

¹⁷¹List of Chairman, Mayor, Vice- Chairman, Deputy Mayor, Executive Councillors obtained from the AMC office.

setting up of the Lunglei Municipal Council on 16 November, 2021.¹⁷² The Lunglei Municipal Council comprises 11 wards including 4 reserved wards for women. The first election to the LMC was held on 29 March, 2023 at Lunglei. The INC, MNF and ZPM parties have fielded candidates in all 11 wards whereas the BJP has fielded candidates in 9 wards. There were 42 candidates and among the female candidates there was only one who contested in the general seat.

In the election, ZPM has swept all the wards and won the election against the ruling party MNF. The lone female candidate in the general seat was among the elected candidates from the general seat. As a result, there are five elected female candidates and 6 elected male candidates who were all contested in the ticket of ZPM.¹⁷³ The new LMC government was inducted on 18 April 2023, with two elected male candidates elected as chairman and vice chairman. Aside from the chairman and vice chairman, there are two executive councilors appointed by the chairman, and the elected female candidate from the general seat was appointed as an executive councilor.¹⁷⁴

This chapter gives an overview of the status of women's representation starting from the chieftainship period to the present-day legislative assembly and the three autonomous districts as well as the two urban local governments in Aizawl and Lunglei. In the traditional political institution of chieftainship, women were excluded from the decision-making body. The beginning of the British administration marked the changing political system and brought changes in the relationship between the people and the government. The introduction of electoral politics by the setting up of the advisory council is discussed, and how women, through the reservation of seats, were brought into electoral politics. Women's seat reservation was abolished in the district council; instead, seat nomination was introduced, in which a few women participated in the district council and the legislative assembly of the union territory.

The chapter also discusses the status of women's representation in the state legislative assembly and the number of women candidates fielded by the political

¹⁷²Vanglaini. August 24, 2022.

¹⁷³State Election Commission Mizoram, Retrieved July 11, 2023, from [https:// sec.mizoram.gov.in](https://sec.mizoram.gov.in)

¹⁷⁴Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Retrieved July 11, 2023 from dipr.mizoram.gov.in

parties. It also discusses women's representation in the three autonomous district councils. From the beginning in 1972 in the three autonomous district councils, very few women had been able to win the elections from the general seat, and few women were given nominated seats. Among the three major parties in the state, from the first state legislative assembly election in 1987 to the latest election in 2023, the Congress has nominated eight female candidates (including bye-election in 2014). Among the eight, one of them had contested the election thrice, and one of them had contested the election twice. As a result, the actual number of women who had contested the MLA elections from the Congress is five. The MNF has nominated seven female candidates so far. Among the seven, one of them had contested the legislative assembly elections four times, which resulted in the actual number of women from the party to four. The ZPM has nominated four women as their party candidates in the MLA elections in 2018 and 2023. Among the four women party candidates, one of them contested in both the 2018 and 2023 elections. In the next chapter, women's representation in the decision-making processes in political parties, civil society and some important government offices will be discussed.

CHAPTER III

PROFILE OF WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

This chapter attempts to understand women involvement and exposure in society and examines the decision-making body in civil society. Political parties, different churches, civil society organizations and students' associations are selected for the study to understand the level of women involvement at the decision-making level. Participation of women in political parties and the number of women in leadership positions are examined. Manifestos of different political parties are analysed to understand if women-related interests and issues are included in policy formulation.

The organizational structure of different churches in Mizoram to understand the decision-making bodies within the organization of the church is analysed to understand the level of involvement of women in this space. The number of women at the decision-making level in civil society organizations and students' associations is also discussed in this chapter. This chapter also describes women in state government and the number of women at the decision-making level in some selected state government departments and offices.

3.1. Political Parties: There are different regional and national parties in Mizoram. Among them, national parties like the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and regional parties like the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Zoram Peoples Movement (ZPM) are the most active ones in present times. The People's Conference (PC) party is still functioning however, it did not contest in the 2023 legislative assembly election. This study focuses on four political parties such as, BJP, MNF, MPCC and ZPM. The number of women in leadership positions and party office bearers is studied to understand the level of women's involvement within the party organization which may also help us in understanding the issue of women's representation. Manifestos of these political

parties in the legislative assembly elections of 2018 and 2023 are also analyzed to see if women-related issues gained importance for political parties.

Bharatiya Janata Party Mizoram Pradesh (BJP): BJP Mizoram Pradesh was established in 1996 and the first president of the party was PL Chhuma. The current president (2022) is the eighth president of the party. As one of the units of the central BJP, the BJP Mizoram Pradesh has nine organizational districts, 40 blocks and several units.¹⁷⁵ Although BJP Mizoram Pradesh was formally established in 1996, there were eight candidates of the BJP in the legislative assembly election in 1993. For the first time, a candidate of the party was elected in the 2018 MLA election. In the latest election held in 2023, two candidates from the party won the election. As of August 2022, there are 12 state office bearers and one of them (8.33%) is female. The core committee is comprised of 9 members and all of them are male. Among the 45 executive committee members, five of them (11.11%) are female.¹⁷⁶

Mizo National Front (MNF): The Mizo National Front is a regional political party that was established on October 22, 1961.¹⁷⁷ The first president of the party was Laldenga,¹⁷⁸ under whose leadership the MNF had declared Mizoram independence from the government of India in 1966. The secessionist movement, which lasted for about two decades had ended in 1986 with a peace agreement (also known as the peace accord) signed by the government of India, the government of Mizoram, and the MNF. After the signing of the peace accord, the MNF has been actively involved in Mizoram politics. The party won the first state legislative assembly election in 1987 and formed the government. After 1987, the party won the legislative assembly elections of 1998, 2003 and 2018.

The leadership position within the party organization is completely dominated by men. No woman has ever occupied the elected office bearer posts in the party. No woman in the party has ever been selected as a member of important

¹⁷⁵Interview with Vanlalhmuaaka, President of BJP Mizoram Pradesh. March 24, 2022.

¹⁷⁶Interview with K. Laldinthara, State spokesperson BJP Mizoram Pradesh. August 4, 2022.

¹⁷⁷Mizo National Front. *Dan Bul (Constitution)*. 8th Edition, 2020, p. 5.

¹⁷⁸R. Vanlawma. (2022). *Ka Ram leh Kei (My Country and I)*. Aizawl: MCL Publications. p. 279.

committees like the national core committee, the political affairs committee and the nomination committee.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, the youth wing of the party mainly consists of men and no woman has ever been elected to the office-bearer posts of the youth wing of the party.

According to the constitution of the party, office bearers of the general headquarters includes the president, senior vice-president, two vice presidents, treasurer, national core committee members, political affairs committee members, advisers, 15 general secretaries, 30 secretaries, council of ministers, members of parliament, mayor, chief organizer, chief receptionist and presidents of frontal headquarters.¹⁸⁰ As of 2022, there are 26 general secretaries, and all of them are male. There are 99 secretaries and four of them (4.04%) are female. Usually, former leaders of the women's wing are recruited to the post of secretary after their period in the women's wing is over. So, a few women who held the post of secretary in the party are former leaders of the women's wing. Besides this, few women are appointed as party advisers (three out of 113).¹⁸¹ Besides the posts of secretary and party adviser, all the other posts are filled by males alone.

Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC): The Congress party in Mizoram has existed since 1961. Congress lost the first legislative assembly election in 1972 against the Mizo Union. In 1973, the Mizo Union party merged with the Congress and as a result, the Congress became the ruling party till 1977 when Presidential rule was declared in Mizoram. The Congress lost the legislative assembly elections of 1978 and 1979 against the People's Conference. But it won the 1984 election and established itself as one of the major parties in Mizoram politics since then.¹⁸² After statehood, the party formed the government in 1989, 1993 (coalition government), 2008 and 2013.

¹⁷⁹Interview with K. Lalrengpuii, President of the Mizo National Women Front. July 2, 2022.

¹⁸⁰Mizo National Front. Dan Bul (Constitution). 8th Edition, 2020. p. 15.

¹⁸¹Mizo National Front General Headquarters. Telephone Directory 2022. (For the assessment of the party data, the Telephone Directory 2022 is used as per the advice of the party office workers for it contained all the lists of the office bearers).

¹⁸²Opcit, C. Nunthara. p. 281.

According to the constitution of the party, office bearers of the MPCC headquarters includes the elected office bearers, general secretaries, and secretaries appointed by the president.¹⁸³ Among the party's office bearers, few women held the general secretary and secretary posts. Based on the party's office bearers list of 2019-2022, out of 32 general secretaries, two (6.25%) are female. Out of 84 secretaries, 12 (14.2%) are female.¹⁸⁴ Besides this, party advisers, advisers to the president, political secretary to the president, and permanent secretaries are all male. Among the 145 executive members, nine are female as of 2023.¹⁸⁵

Furthermore, the youth wing of the party is also mainly dominated by males. Currently, there is no female among the leaders of the youth wing called the Mizoram Pradesh Youth Congress Committee (MPYCC). So far, Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu, a former MLA, is the only woman who has ever held the post of president of the MPYCC. Before she was elected to the presidential post, she was previously elected to the post of treasurer.¹⁸⁶ There are no female members in important committees like the political affairs committee and the nomination committee which is responsible for the selection of candidates in the legislative assembly election.

Former leaders of the women's wing of the party are usually recruited to the post of general secretary. The practice of recruiting former leaders of the women's wing to the post of general secretary seems to arise from the pressure of the All India Congress Committee (AICC). Former president of the mahila, Zothankimi said that way back in 2005, the president of the MPCC requested her to join the post of general secretary when she held the president post of the mahila. She recounts 'when the list of the MPCC office bearers was to be sent to the AICC, the president told me about his hesitation to send the list of the general secretary without women being included in the list. So, he requested me to join the post of general secretary'. When asked about her opinion of the president's move on that matter, she said, 'It was not

¹⁸³ Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. Dan Bu (Constitution) as amended in 2016. p. 7.

¹⁸⁴ Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. List of Office Bearers 2019-2022.

¹⁸⁵ Attendance Sheet, MPCC Executive and Special Invitees. September, 2023.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu. January 21, 2022.

mandatory, but there has been some pressure (to include women in the party's office bearers) from the AICC'.¹⁸⁷

Congress has been practising the reservation of seats for women in the executive committee. According to Zothankimi, it was the mahila who pressed the party to adopt seat reservation in the executive committee. She says, 'around 1999 or 2000, when I was the general secretary of the mahila, just about two days before the election of the MPCC, I told the mahila president about my idea of fighting for seat reservation for women in the executive committee. The upcoming election was competitive, and our party leaders needed our (mahila) votes. The party committee was about to be held the next day, and submitting our letter (for women's seat reservation) beforehand was crucial. The president of the mahila agreed with me, and we submitted a letter to the party, which was later accepted. On the first election of the executive committee after this, we (mahila) could not find candidates to contest the election among ourselves initially. I finally contested and got elected as the executive member of the MPCC. Subsequently, I was appointed as one of the secretaries of the MPCC. Fortunately, I was appointed as secretary of the constitutional amendment sub-committee. So, we had incorporated the policy of the '7 out of 40 seat reservation for women in the MPCC executive committee' in the constitution of the party'.¹⁸⁸

However, the current constitution of the party does not mention about seat reservation for women in the 40 elected seats of the executive committee. Instead, it mentioned about ten appointed members of the executive members by the president of the party.¹⁸⁹ Although the current constitution of the party does not specifically mention about seat reservation for women in the executive committee, 'the party elected women in a seat reserved for them in the executive committee'.¹⁹⁰ In the

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Zothankimi. February 27, 2022.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Zothankimi. February 27, 2022.

¹⁸⁹ Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee Dan Bu (Constitution). As Amended in 2016. p. 8.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Vanlalawmpui Chawngthu, President of the Mahila. January 21, 2022.

election of the party's executive members in 2024, 10 women and 50 men were elected.¹⁹¹

Zoram People's Movement (ZPM): ZPM is an alliance of various political parties and organizations formed on 15 August 2017.¹⁹² Notable parties that joined the ZPM are the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) and the Mizoram People's Conference (MPC). However, in 2019, the MPC left the ZPM. The party fought the 2018 legislative assembly election with its candidates running as independent candidates. In 2023, the party won the legislative assembly election and formed the government.

The organizational structure of the ZPM is slightly different from other regional parties that exist in Mizoram in terms of leadership. At the general headquarters, there is a council of elders called the *Val Upa Council*, a guardian of the party and the ZPM government with the role of advisory and disciplinary. Some of its roles are: formation of the structure of the (ZPM) government, appointing the House Leader, and the Council of Ministers will be appointed by the chief minister in consultation with the *Val Upa Council*. In case of disagreement or conflict within the party, the matter can be referred to the *Val Upa Council* and its decision will be considered as final.¹⁹³ *Val Upa*¹⁹⁴ *Council* is purely composed of men especially the older age group of men. There are three male elected office bearers and nine male members in the *Val Upa Council* as of April, 2024.¹⁹⁵

The party's office bearers at the general headquarters include the following: elected office bearers (president, vice president, and treasurer), present MP's and MLA's of the ZPM party, consultants, political affairs committee members, nomination committee members, advisers, secretary general, general secretaries, chairman of the sub-committee, cell, wing, and board, secretaries, chief organizer,

¹⁹¹Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. List of Elected Executive Members 2024.

¹⁹²Kalphung Thar. The Manifestos of the Zoram People's Movement 2018. p.4.

¹⁹³Constitution of Zoram People's Movement: Dan Pui. 2022. p. 9.

¹⁹⁴The term *Val Upa* in traditional Mizo society referred to a male leader of Zawlbuk, who attained his position because of his *tlawmgaihna* and good quality of leadership. The word *Val* in Mizo denotes male. So, the literal meaning of *Val Upa Council* of the ZPM is Council of Male Elders.

¹⁹⁵Val Upa Council Member-Te. (List of *Val Upa Council*). Obtained from the party's general headquarters office.

chief receptionist, frontal presidents, southern headquarters elected office bearers (invitee), district presidents (invitee).¹⁹⁶

As of 2022, few women held the post of secretary. Out of 117 secretaries, 10 (8.54%) are women. Besides the secretary post, a few women were appointed as consultants and political affairs committee. Among 12 consultants, one of them (8.3%) is female. Among 23 members of the political affairs committee, one of them (4.34%) is female. Additionally, 18 out of 387 (4.65%) members of the executive committee are women. Elected office bearers, advisers, secretary general, general secretaries, chief organizer and chief receptionist are all male.¹⁹⁷

As of 2024, out of eight consultants, one of them is female. One out of 14 general secretaries is a woman. Five out of 63 secretaries are women.¹⁹⁸ So, among the various positions of the party office bearers, consultant, general secretary and secretary posts are where women are present but with a very small percentage. Few women held posts like joint secretary, deputy chief organizers, organizers and receptionist which are not included in the office bearers as per the constitution of the party. In the election of the executive committee members of the party in 2024, 10 out of 100 (10%) elected members are women.¹⁹⁹

Political Party and Women: In the 2018 MLA election manifesto, the BJP highlighted three targets to achieve for women's empowerment. Empowerment of women in entrepreneurship and job-oriented training for women were some of its targets to accomplish.²⁰⁰ BJP was the only party that created a separate category for women in the election manifesto in the 2018 election. Congress manifesto of 2018 election mentioned women-related issues only once, which was about widow assistance.²⁰¹ The manifesto of ZPM in 2018 election mentioned social issues that the party would address such as human rights violation, adoption, child abuse, rape,

¹⁹⁶Constitution of Zoram People's Movement: Dan Pui. 2022. p. 22.

¹⁹⁷Zoram People's Movement. General Headquarters. List of Office Bearers 2022 and Executive Member lists as of 19.5.2022.

¹⁹⁸Zoram People's Movement. General Headquarters. Lists of Office Bearers 2024.

¹⁹⁹Zoram People's Movement, General Headquarters Executive Committee Members Election Results 2024.

²⁰⁰Bharatiya Janata Party Mizoram Pradesh. *Vision Document*.

²⁰¹Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. *Election Manifesto, 2018 MLA General Election*.

human trafficking and physical torturing and child labour. It also mentioned formulating policy for the welfare of women and protecting them.²⁰² MNF's manifesto of the 2018 election mentioned women once, which was in the 'social security' category, and stated to 'protect the rights of women and children.'²⁰³

Manifestos of various parties in the 2023 MLA election did not differ much from their 2018 manifestos. Among parties, the BJP was the only party that categorically stated women and give detailed points of target to accomplish for the empowerment of women. Its points of targets were assistance for girl child, 33% reservation in government jobs and setting up of maternity and children hospital as per its 2023 manifesto.²⁰⁴ Congress manifesto promised to increase assistance to old age, widow and person with disability under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP). It also aimed to propose recruitment of more women in the police department.²⁰⁵ The ZPM manifesto talked about protecting the rights of children and women.²⁰⁶ The MNF manifesto of 2023 election on issues related to women was a bit different than its 2018 manifesto as its focus was shifted to 'empower and strengthen the Women Commission in the state'.²⁰⁷

3.2. Church: The church plays an important role in the social and political life of Mizoram. In 1966, the Mizo National Front (MNF) under the leadership of Laldenga declared Mizoram independence from India. Since then, political disturbances and instability have disrupted the normal life of the people until a peace agreement was signed in 1986. During this period, the church played a significant role in bringing peace and normalcy by acting as a mediator between the MNF and the government of India. The worsening situation and suffering of the people as a result of political disturbance motivated church leaders to take necessary steps 'to stop the growth of the deteriorating situation in Mizoram by restoring goodwill and mutual understanding between the MNF and the general public,' and, 'between the

²⁰²Kalphung Thar. The Manifestos of the Zoram People's Movement 2018.

²⁰³Mizo National Front. *MLA Election Manifesto 2018*.

²⁰⁴Huapzo Mizoram. *Hmathlir Document 2023*.

²⁰⁵Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. *Manifesto 2023 General Election*.

²⁰⁶Zoram People's Movement 2023 *General Election Manifesto*.

²⁰⁷Mizo National Front. *Election Manifesto 2023*.

Security Forces and the Mizo.’ The Christian Peace Committee was formed in July 1966 by the Mizoram Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church of Mizoram to bring peace and normalcy.²⁰⁸

The first peace talk was held between delegates of the Christian Peace Committee and leaders of the MNF in November 1966. Peace delegates were also sent to meet the government of Assam and the central government to find a political solution. The second peace talk was held in April 1967 between delegates of the Committee and the leaders of the MNF. In this meeting, they discussed the possibility of initiating direct talks between the MNF leaders and the Government of India.²⁰⁹ Following the meeting, the leaders of the church met with some officials of the central government to seek an arrangement for talks between the government of India and the MNF. The third and fourth peace talks were held in 1969 with the leaders of the MNF. No significant progress had been made in bringing peace despite the tireless efforts by the church leaders during this period.

In 1982, Zoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee (Zoram Church Leaders Committee) was formed at the request of the Governor, ‘with the purpose of raising its voice to bring peace in Mizoram.’²¹⁰ The ZKHC met with leaders of the MNF and political parties in Mizoram to find a peaceful solution and bring peace and normalcy. A meeting of the ZKHC leaders in 1985 decided to send delegates to meet the prime minister of India for the third time. As a result, they met with the prime minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, in April 1985 and submitted a memorandum that contained the MNF’s willingness to find peace under the Constitution of India.²¹¹ The church also plays an important role in promoting good governance, free and fair elections under a peaceful environment and total prohibition of liquor in the state.²¹²

In Mizoram, there are different Church denominations. Notable ones among them are the Presbyterian Church Mizoram Synod, Baptist Church of Mizoram,

²⁰⁸ H. Lalrinthanga. (2013). *Church and State: Relationship in the Mizo Socio-Political Life 1952 to 2006*. Delhi: ISPCK. pp. 117, 118.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 121.

²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 154.

²¹¹ Ibid, p. 159.

²¹² Ibid, p. 267.

United Pentecostal Church of North East India (UPC NEI), United Pentecostal Church of Mizoram (UPC Mizoram), Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Roman Catholic, Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM), Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran (LIKBK), and Isua Krista Kohhran (IKK). The statistical data (2020- 2021)²¹³ of the membership is as follows: Presbyterian (626, 983), Baptist (172, 219), UPC NEI (83,944), UPC M (70,907), Salvation Army (62,666), ECM (46,446), LIKBK (30,692), Roman Catholic (24,670), Seventh Day (17,809) and IKK (10,661).²¹⁴ In this study, the system and organizational structure of the top three largest church denominations such as the Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church and the UPC (NEI) is specifically analyzed to see the decision making bodies within the three churches and to understand the level of women involvement and their position within the church administration.

Presbyterian Church of India:

Formerly known as the Presbyterian Church in Assam, then later known as the Presbyterian Church of North East India is now known as the Presbyterian Church of India (PCI). The meeting of the synod at Silchar, Assam in 1953 ‘decided that that the highest church court with authority over the churches of the Presbyterian Order in Assam (now Presbyterian Church of India) should be called the Assembly and that the constituent bodies should henceforth be called Synods.’ The name of the Assembly was changed to the General Assembly in 2002.²¹⁵

The church is the product of the missionary work of the Presbyterian Church of Wales ‘which has its roots both in Reformation movements of the 16th century and the Methodist Revival of the 18th century.’ In June 22, 1841 the first missionary of the Welsh Church, Rev. Thomas Jones I reached cherrapunji which signified the beginning of the church mission work in khasi jantia hills. The church mission work grew rapidly and was expanded to the sylhet-cachar plains, the lushai hills and the cachar hills. In Mizoram, the first Welsh missionary named Rev. D.E. Jones was

²¹³Mizoram Statistical Abstract 2021 is used for the description of Church membership of different denominations. The data may slightly be different from the data provided in the websites or in other sources of these denominations.

²¹⁴Mizoram Statistical Abstract 2021. p. 281.

²¹⁵The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of India. 2022. pp. xi, xviii.

arrived on 31st August 1897. After eleven years, the first presbytery of the church was formed in April 22, 1910.²¹⁶

The administration of the Presbyterian Church of India (PCI) is managed by church courts which are hierarchically arranged from the local level to the highest level such as the local church (*tualchhung kohhran*), the district/pastorate (district/pastor *bial*), the presbytery, the synod and the general assembly. Before exploring the organizational structure of church courts, it is important to understand the leaders of the church who occupy a central place in the whole administrative setup of the church.

Permanent Office Bearers of the Church: The constitution of the church states that the ministers, the probationary pastors, and the elders (*upa*) as the permanent office bearers of the church (*kohhran puipa nghet*). ‘Pastors are ministers appointed for the spiritual care and nurture of one or more local churches.’ ‘Probationary pastors are those appointed on probation to do pastoral work under the supervision of a minister before being ordained to the full work of ministry.’ Elders are representative office bearers elected by the local church members. They assist and work alongside the pastor ‘in the spiritual care and governance of the church, the care of the poor, and the administration of the finances of the church.’²¹⁷ Ministers, probationary pastors and elders are the backbone of the church and are responsible for the administration and management of the church.

Women and ordination: Elders are elected by the church members and ordained in the presbytery. One has to secure two-thirds of votes cast to be declared as elected. The constitution of the church laid down that ‘no one shall be elected as an elder who has not been a communicant for at least five years or who has fallen into sin of adultery after being received into full communion’. It also urges the churches to ‘exercise the greatest possible care with regard to the character of those chosen as elders.’²¹⁸ The constitution does not contain specific part that exclude or disqualify women as an elder and probationary pastor. The absence of written law prohibiting women from being elected as an elder however, does not mean that the

²¹⁶Ibid, pp. xv, xvi.

²¹⁷Ibid, p. 7.

²¹⁸Ibid, pp. 51, 52.

church ordained women in practice. In 1949 Assembly,²¹⁹ the church rejected women ordination for pastors, which was resolved in response to the question on that matter.²²⁰ In 1978, Saptawni, a resident of *mission veng* locality was elected as an elder in the *mission veng* church. However, the synod rejected her ordination.²²¹

Local Church (*Tualchhung Kohhran*): The church is governed by the church committee which consist mainly of ministers, pro- pastors and elders.²²²

The District/Pastorate (*Pastor Bial*): Two or more local churches joining together is called a district/pastorate and its meeting is called district/pastorate meeting (*bial inkhawmpui*). Office bearers are as far as possible elected from among the ‘permanent office bearers of the church’. Members of a pastorate meeting are: ministers, probationary pastors, elders, office bearers of the district/pastorate and members of the district/pastorate committees. It also includes members of the local church committee, delegates elected by the local church, delegates (the number prescribed by a pastorate) of both women fellowship and youth fellowship. A district/pastorate supervise ‘the local churches and church activities within its area’. Usually the meeting is held annually.²²³ Various committees in a district/pastorate are usually consist of permanent office bearers of the church.

Presbytery: Three or more districts/pastorates joining together is called a presbytery. The selection process of members of the presbytery meeting is almost the same as that of pastorate, but larger than the latter. Delegates (the number prescribed by a presbytery) of women’s fellowship are also included in the list of members. The presbytery meeting is also held annually. Office bearers of the presbytery are as far as possible elected from the among ‘the permanent office office bearers of the

²¹⁹ In 1953 the highest church body, the Synod was renamed as Assembly while each of the constituent Assemblies was called Synod. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of India. 2022. p. xviii.

²²⁰ H. Remthanga. (2020). *Synod Thurel Lak Khawm. Volume I & II (1910- 1970)*. Aizawl: Synod Literature and Publication Board. p. 117.

²²¹ Vanhnuaithanga, R. (2007). *Zalenna Thurin leh Mizo Hmeichhiate*. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press. p. 235.

²²² Opcit, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of India. pp. 14, 15.

²²³ Ibid, pp. 17, 18.

church.’²²⁴ Various committees in a presbytery are mainly consist of ministers, probationary pastors and elders.

Synod: The highest church court of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, synod, holds its meeting once a year. Synod is authorize to ‘ordain, transfer, admit, retire, discipline and dismiss ministers; install and release pastors; license, discipline and dismiss probationary pastors.’²²⁵ Among the members of the synod meeting (*synod inkhawmpui*) are delegates of women’s fellowship (selected by women fellowship as per the prescription of the number of delegates by synod).²²⁶ The elected office bearers and members of various committees under synod are mainly consist of pastors/ministers and elders. They are essentially the key holders of the overall functioning and governance of the church.

Women being disapproved of ordination for both ministers and elders automatically disqualified them to fully participate in the church. Women as a group through their fellowship have participated in the three church courts (pastorate, presbytery and synod), yet they are systematically excluded as individual from participating in church courts by denying their ordination which acts as a key to access decision-making body within the organization of the church. Ordained ministers and elders are the leaders and decision-makers who execute and lead all the committees not the selected few delegates of women fellowship. As a result, views and opinions of women church members are not properly represented in the deliberative process in the governance of the church.

Although the church adopted a conservative view toward ordination of women, some have different view about it. A former moderator of the Mizoram synod emphasized the importance of contextualizing the Bible when it comes to women ordination. He said literal interpretation of the Bible without contextualizing it has been dominating the church.²²⁷ About the church rejection of women ordination, a feminist theologian T. Vanlaltlani simply stated ‘they said it is more of a cultural problem rather than a theological problem, but I believe the simple reason is they don’t want to.’ Explaining why women ordination is important she said

²²⁴Ibid, pp. 20, 21.

²²⁵Ibid, p. 27.

²²⁶Ibid, p. 26.

²²⁷Interview with Rev. Lalramliana Pachuau. August 16, 2023.

‘women in need of spiritual support and strength especially in private matter may find it easier to seek help from women (elders/ministers) than men (elders/ministers) for it would be easier for them to open up to their own gender’.²²⁸ Rejection of women ordination has also an impact on the pay scale and service in the Aizawl Theological College (ATC), a theological institution of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. Ordained ministers (who are men) working in the college have received higher salary and have longer service than women (who are not ordained).²²⁹

As per the church report (1st September 2021 to 31st August 2022), being the largest church in Mizoram, out of a total 6,18,854 members, there are more female church members than male church members (female 3,18,575 and 3,00,279 male). There are 571 ministers (including 122 pensioned ministers), 45 pro- pastors, 5,725 elders, and 2150 deacons. There are 1,130 churches, 297 pastorates, and 47 presbyteries. Between April 2022 to October 2022, the women’s fellowship project called *buhfaitham*²³⁰ (handful of rice) collected Rs. 10,96,76,493, making the project one of the largest sources of income of the synod.²³¹

Baptist Church of Mizoram:

Two Arthington missionaries, Rev. F.W. Savidge and Rev. J.H. Lorrain Mizoram in January 11, 1894 and this day is declared as the date of the establishment of Baptist Church of Mizoram.²³² The general headquarters of the church is located at Serkawn, Lunglei. The organizational structure of the church consists of local church called *tualchhung kohhran*, pastorate called *pastor bial*, Area Baptist Council (ABC), and the assembly. The organizational structure of the church is almost the same as the Presbyterian Church. Few differences are mainly in terms of the nomenclature of some church courts.²³³

²²⁸Interview with T. Valaltlani, Adjunct professor, Aizawl Theological College. February 27, 2022.

²²⁹Interview with Lalrindiki Ralte. Professor, Aizawl Theological College. March 21, 2022.

²³⁰In almost every houses of church members, rice is collected by women’s fellowship once a week usually on sunday. The donated rice is sold on monday morning. This handful of rice project remains as one of the largest sources of income of the synod.

²³¹Synod Bu. 2022. pp. 160, 182, 219, 220.

²³²Baptist Church of Mizoram Constitution. 2021 Revised Edition. p. 2.

²³³For example, Area Baptist Council is similar to the presbyterian’s presbytery and the assembly to the presbyterian’s synod likewise.

Permanent Office Bearers of the Church (*Puipa Nghet*): Ministers, pastors, and elders are called the ‘permanent office bearers’ of the church. The constitution of the church mention that ‘church elder can be elected only from among the local deacons (*rawngbawltute*)’.²³⁴ A deacon (*rawngbawltu*) is elected from the church members for a period of four years.²³⁵

Women and ordination: The constitution of the church does not contain specific part of discriminatory law against female members of the church in ordination. Yet, there has been no woman ordained minister before 2012. In 2012, R. L. Hnuni, a principal of the Academy of Integrated Christian Studies (AICS), Mizoram was ordained by the church becoming the first woman ordained minister in the history of the church. She was ordained in accordance with a new law of ordination for minister that has been made in 2011 by the church.²³⁶ After her, there has been no woman ordained minister till today in the church. The church ordained women as an elder.

Local Church (*Tualchhung Kohhran*): Local church is mainly headed by the local church committee. Members of the local church committee include permanent office bearers of the church, probationary pastor and deacons.²³⁷

Pastorate Baptist Council: The second lowest church court, called the pastorate baptist council, is consists of two or more local churches with members including ministers, pastors, elders, probationary pastors, deacons. President and secretaries of women fellowship, youth fellowship and male fellowship are also included in the list of members.²³⁸ The meeting is held annually.

Area Baptist Council (ABC): Two or more pastorates joining together is called the Area Baptist Council (ABC). The meeting is held annually. In the Area Baptist Council, ex officio members are permanent office bearers, probationary pastors, ABC executive committee members, and secretaries of the local churches. The elected members are the deacons selected by the executive committee of the

²³⁴Opcit, Baptist Church of Mizoram Constitution. p. 18

²³⁵Ibid. p. 22.

²³⁶Retrieved October 11, 2023, from <https://mizobaptist.org/posts/dr-rl-hnuni-ordain-dawn-ta>

²³⁷Opcit, Baptist Church of Mizoram Constitution. p. 23.

²³⁸Opcit, Baptist Church of Mizoram Constitution. p. 36

pastorate. The office bearers of the ABC are elected among the ministers, pastors, and elders for two years' term.²³⁹

Assembly: The highest church court is called assembly. Members are divided into two groups: ex-officio and elected members. Secretary of women's fellowship is included among the ex-officio members. One representative of women's fellowship is also included in the list of elected members.²⁴⁰ As the highest church court, the assembly decides all important matters pertaining to the whole governance of the church. Making and amending the constitution and rules of the church, ordination of ministers are some of the power of the assembly.²⁴¹

As per the church statistics of 2022- 2023, the total member of the church is 176, 404 (89168 females and 87236 males). There are 183 ministers/pastors, 35 probationary pastors and all of them are men. Total number of male elder is 3267 whereas 27 are female. There are 3896 male deacons and 404 female deacons.²⁴²

United Pentecostal Church of North East India (UPC NEI):

United Pentecostal Church was established in North East India in mid-February 1950 by two missionaries, Rev. Ellis Luther Scism and Roxie Artelie Dover. In 1969, the church was divided into two units, The United Pentecostal Church in India and The United Pentecostal Church of North East India mainly because of its vast geographical location and administrative convenience.²⁴³ The general headquarters office of the church is at Mualpui, Aizawl, Mizoram and before that Shillong, Meghalaya was the general headquarter of the church.

The structural organization of the church has no significant difference from the above two churches. The highest church court of the church is called general followed by the district,²⁴⁴ pastorate (*pastor bial*) and the local church (*tualchhung kohhran*) at the local level. In comparison with the above two churches, the UPC (NEI) has followed a different system of ordination which is done by license system.

²³⁹Ibid. pp. 49, 50.

²⁴⁰Ibid. pp. 55, 56.

²⁴¹Ibid. pp. 57, 58.

²⁴²Baptist Church of Mizoram. Statistical Handbook, 2022-2023.

²⁴³Manual United Pentecostal Church of North East India. Mizo Tawng. pp. v, vi.

²⁴⁴The 'District' covers all the areas in North East India. It includes Aizawl East, Barak, Central, Chandel, Chhimitupui, Churachandpur, Imphal, Lawngtlai West, Lunglei, North Mizoram, South East Nagaland and Tripura.

There are different types of license for ministerial purpose and ordination is done through license system. There are four types of licenses such as local license, bible woman certificate, general license and ordination license. The law of the church requires its members to hold general license (which can be applied only after having local license for evangelical work for at least three years) for a minimum of two years to be eligible for the application of ordination license.²⁴⁵ For women, only bible woman certificate is permissible. A bible woman is an evangelist within a local church, specifically women fellowship called Ladies Auxiliary Department (LAD). However, in a missionary field outside Mizoram, if there is no male pastor within the mission area, bible woman is allowed to perform the roles of pastor.²⁴⁶

At the general, the executive board is the highest decision-making body of the church. The district board is the district level highest committee, and the pastorate is administered by the *bial* board (board of pastorate). There are four departments, such as mission department, sunday school department, Pentecostal Youth Department (PYD) and Ladies Auxiliaries Department (LAD). While the leaders of the other three departments are members of the three boards (executive, district, and bial/pastorate), the women's department called LAD is excluded from the list of members of the three boards.²⁴⁷

At the local church committee (*tualchhung kohhran committee*), not only women in general but even bible woman is excluded. The constitution of the church lays down members of the local church committee as under:

- (a) Chairman
- (b) Secretary
- (c) Treasurer
- (d) Statistician
- (e) Elders/ Deacons
- (f) Appointed members

²⁴⁵Manual United Pentecostal Church of North East India. English. pp. 20-22.

²⁴⁶Interview with Rev. H. Lalropuia, Treasurer of Aizawl East District, UPC of NEI. 14th August, 2023.

²⁴⁷Manual United Pentecostal Church of North East India. pp. 53, 65, 73.

(g) License holder (excluding bible woman)

(h) Sectional Pastor (ex-officio member).²⁴⁸

Under this system, even bible women are excluded from participating in the decision-making body of local church called local church committee. From around 2015, the church adopted a new rule that prohibited consumption of tobacco²⁴⁹ for the church elders (*upa*). For about three years, the policy mainly targetted the newly appointed elders (first timers). About three years later, it was reformulated that requires not only first timers but also those who are about to be reappointed to abstain from tobacco. As a result of this new rule, in a few areas, there emerged a shortage of qualified men for church elders. Consequently, to fill the post of elder, due to the unavailability of qualified men based on this rule, women were elected as elders.²⁵⁰

However, there were few cases of shortage of qualified men based on this rule. When asked if he knew such cases in local churches, Rev. H. Lalropuia says ‘within the area of Aizawl East District, Leng village and Bawngkawn Brigade Church in Aizawl both have women elders’. When asked about his opinion on ordination of women, he said among different churches in the state, ‘they (the church) may have the hardest time in accepting women ordination.’ He also mentioned his concern about women physical mobility to administer pastorate (pastor *bial*) especially in rural areas.²⁵¹ A conservative view of literal interpretation of the Bible coupled with social attitudes toward women seems to be the biggest factor responsible for the disapproval of ordination of women. Apart from this, there is some level of concern pertaining to women ordination that involves with women physical mobility in managing churches as pastors especially in rural areas.

The Salvation Army Church Mizoram adopted the laws of the Salvation Army International in matters of ordination for women. Based on the church

²⁴⁸Ibid. p. 78.

²⁴⁹Tobacco in Mizo society generally includes smoking, consumption of betel nut and others that contain tobacco.

²⁵⁰Interview with Rev. H. Lalropuia, Treasurer of Aizawl East District, UPC of NEI. August 14, 2023.

²⁵¹Ibid.

statistics of 2023, there are 160 female and 141 male army officers²⁵² and 1855 local officers.²⁵³ As per the law of the church, the title of army officer applies to both the husband and wife for married couple. As a result, the combination of wife and unmarried women among the army officers made the number of female army officer higher than men. Among other denominations in Mizoram, Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran (LIKBK) ordained women for elders but not for minister.

The study of the structure and system of the above three largest denominations of church indicated that ordination acts as a key to participate in decision-making processes in church. The disapproval of women ordination caused women to have limited space within the administration of church and they are prevented from taking part in formal leadership roles. Women religiously participated in church and their exposure in society is most visible in church regardless of their denial of access to leadership roles. Disapproval of ordination of women, however prevented them to fully participate in church causing women to remain absent in decision-making processes in church.

3.3. Mizoram Peoples Forum (MPF)

The Presbyterian Church Mizoram Synod established the Synod Social Front in 1979. Among others, one of the important roles that the Synod Social Front has been playing is to educate church members to exercise their right to vote correctly. However, the Presbyterian Church Synod had felt serious concern about the campaigning period of the 2003 MLA election. As a result, the Synod Executive Committee (SEC), the highest committee in the Synod, appointed the Synod Social Front Committee to investigate the effectiveness of the initiative of the church in conducting free and fair election to the church members.²⁵⁴

From 84 pastorates, 3480 questionnaires have been collected up until 1st June, 2004, by the Synod Social Front. Some of the findings based on this study were: the

²⁵²Army officer and local officer in the Salvation Army is equivalent to pastor and elder in other churches in Mizoram.

²⁵³Salvation Army Church. Disposition of Forces, 2023.

²⁵⁴Mizoram People Forum Chanchin (2002-2016). p. 1.

2003 MLA election was corrupted by extensive use of money, increasing practice of corruption in every elections and use of threats and intimidation by an outlaw group during the campaigning period. Based on these findings and after studying other important issues, the Synod Social Front concluded that the Presbyterian Church initiative alone was not enough anymore to conduct free and fair election in the state. As a result, it suggested to find ways to collaborate with other churches and civil society organizations in the state.²⁵⁵

The Mizoram People Forum (MPF) was finally formed in June 21, 2006. Members of the MPF are Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Catholic Church, Lairam Isua Krista Kohhran (LIKBK), Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM), Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI), Wesleyan Methodist Church, Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA), Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP) Headquarters, Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) Headquarters, Mara Thyutlia Py (MTP) Headquarters, Siaha, Young Lai Association (YLA) Headquarters, Lawngtlai.²⁵⁶

The office bearers as per the constitution of MPF are as under:

President : Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Synod

Sr. Vice President : Executive Secretary i/c Social Front, Mizoram Synod

Vice Presidents : Administrative Secretary of ECM and LIKBK

President, MUP Headquarters

President, Central YMA

General Secretary : Appointee of synod

Secretary : Central YMA

Joint Secretaries : Representative of the Catholic Church

²⁵⁵Ibid, p. 2.

²⁵⁶Ibid, pp. 3, 14.

District Superintendent of the Wesleyan Methodist Church

District Superintendent of EFCI

Co-ordinator of Synod Social Front

Treasurer : Representative of MHIP headquarters

Finance Secretary: Representative of MUP headquarters.²⁵⁷

MPF as an election watchdog has been successfully maintaining a peaceful environment to conduct free and fair election by collaborating with political parties in the state. Political parties in the state, such as the BJP, the MNF, the MPCC, the MPC, and the ZPM, are in cooperation with the MPF by signing the MPF's election rules. The largest women's organization in the state, the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) holds treasurer post in the MPF.

3.4. Civil Society Organizations:

Young Mizo Association (YMA): Young Mizo Association, formerly called Young Lushai Association (YLA), was established on 15 June 1935 by the English missionaries and some church leaders at the time. The Central YMA published book described the reason for the establishment of the YMA like this: 'for the encouragement of young men to spend their leisure time productively and to lead a good character and a healthy life. By following the Christian virtues, it will exist as a Christian association. The association will organize debates, discussions, and drama. For health purpose, sports like hockey, football, badminton, and others sports and book reading will be practiced'.²⁵⁸

Among the first office bearers of the YMA, the president, vice president, and treasurer were all English missionaries, namely Rev. L. Evans, Rev. David Edward, and Miss K. Hughes. Two Mizo men as secretaries and seven Mizo men as committee members were appointed. Different sub-committees like debate and

²⁵⁷Ibid, pp. 21, 22.

²⁵⁸C Vanlallawma. (2020). *YMA History 1935-1995*. Aizawl: Central YMA. pp. 8, 9.

discussion, lecture and address, drama, newspaper and magazine, competition, sports, and games were set up. Then the YLA was set up in different villages outside Aizawl and different localities in Aizawl. As the association was growing rapidly, steps had been taken to organize the association more systematically. So, a committee of leaders of the YLA in various localities of Aizawl was held, and it elected the office bearers of the YLA in October 1940. This was considered as the beginning of the Central YLA. Mizo regionalism grew and heightened, especially during the Second World War, the Central YLA committee in October 1947 resolved to change the word ‘Lushai’ to Mizo to be more inclusive of all the Mizo. Therefore, the name of the Young Lushai Association was changed to Young Mizo Association.²⁵⁹

The identity of the YMA is described as a ‘non-political voluntary organization’. The objectives of the organization are: productive use of leisure time, to seek for development of the *Zofate*,²⁶⁰ and upholding good Christian life.²⁶¹ As per the annual report between December 16, 2021- October 27, 2022,²⁶² there are 819 branches, 50 groups, and 8 sub-headquarters of the YMA. There are a total of 473872 YMA members, of which 276689 are males and 197183 are females. Outside Mizoram, YMA groups and branches exists in states like Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, and Nagaland. Outside India, one branch of YMA exists in Bangladesh. The eight sub-headquarters of the YMA are Lunglei, Champhai, Kolasib, Mamit, Serchhip, Saitual, Khawzawl, and Hnahthial.²⁶³ All the branches, groups, and sub-headquarters are operated under the apex body of the association called the Central YMA, which has its office at Tuikhuahtlang locality in the capital of the state, Aizawl. Below the branch YMA, section YMA is existed as the smallest unit of YMA in almost every locality in Mizoram except in the three autonomous district councils. Any Mizo youth can be a member of YMA, and there is no maximum age limit.

²⁵⁹Opcit, C. Vanlallawma, p. 37.

²⁶⁰It implies all the Zo ethnic people.

²⁶¹Malsawmliana. (2019). *YMA History 1996-2019*. Aizawl: Central Young Mizo Association. p. 5.

²⁶²Young Mizo Association Rorel Inkhawm. Vawi 3-na. 27th October, 2022. p. 5.

²⁶³The Sub-headquarters are the district capital of eight districts, excluding autonomous district council areas.

From its inception, Miss K. Hughes, a non-mizo woman was the only known woman to hold post in office bearers of the Central YMA. In groups and sub-headquarters YMA, no woman has been known who held office bearer posts. In 2023, the Sakawrtuichhun branch YMA, a locality in Aizawl, has elected an unmarried woman (*nula*) as its president. Before her, the Sairang branch YMA had elected a woman as its president.²⁶⁴ These two women are the only women known to occupy the post of president in branch YMA. At the Central YMA, the highest executive body is the Central Executive Committee (CEC). In the beginning, the CEC consisted of 20 members.²⁶⁵ As of 2022, there are 60 members of the CEC.²⁶⁶ From 1979, there are seven women who were members of the CEC with the last one in 2012.²⁶⁷

The three communities, Lai, Mara and Chakma have their own voluntary organizations.

Young Chakma Association (YCA): Until recently, no woman has ever occupied the post of office bearers in the Central YCA, the apex body of the YCA. In the 2023 election of the Central YCA, all the office bearers are elected with no opposing side. Among the elected office bearers, one is female who is occupying the vice-president post. Few women are members of the various committees and hold posts like treasurer, finance secretary, and secretary in the Central YCA. As per the annual statistics of 2021- 2022, there are 155 YCA branches and 16991 total members, of which 9752 are males and 7239 are females.²⁶⁸

Young Lai Association (YLA): Established in September 23, 1974, the YLA is the largest voluntary organization among the Lai community in Lawngtlai district. As of 2024, the total number of YLA is 56, 360. 36,540 members are male and 19, 820 members are female. The YLA has 119 branches and seven sub-

²⁶⁴Retrieved May 23, 2023 from <https://zalen.in/detail/nula-yma-president-hmasa-ber-rebecca-lalruatkimi>

²⁶⁵Opcit, Malsawmliana. p. 10.

²⁶⁶Young Mizo Association Rorel Inkhawm Vawi 3- na. 27th October, 2022. pp. 7-9.

²⁶⁷Malsawmliana (2019) wrote that there were three female members of the CEC after 1995. The other four members are also known from him. Interview with him. June 29, 2022.

²⁶⁸Telephone Interview with Jyoti Bikash Chakma. President of CYCA, March 14, 2023.

headquarters. Till today, only two women have held office bearer posts in the Central Young Lai Association (CYLA), the apex body of the Young Lai Association. The two women office bearers of the CYLA held the post of treasurer during 1974-1986. After them, there are no women in the office bearers of the CYLA.²⁶⁹

Mara Thyutlia Py (MTP): The largest voluntary organization among the Mara community in Siaha District, Mara Thyutlia Py (MTP) was founded on 9th October, 1954. From its inception, there were eight female office bearers of the MTP general headquarters, among them one is in the present term of 2022- 2025. Among the eleven office bearer posts, all of them held the post of treasurer. In the Executive Committee comprise of 20 members, about two or three women were appointed as Committee members in each term.²⁷⁰ As per the annual statistics of 2020- 2021, there are 75 MTP branches with 12,848 total members.²⁷¹

The examination of leadership position in the above four organizations reveals that there have been only few women at decision making level. Aside from the top position of these four organizations, women rarely held leadership posts like president and vice-president even at the lowest level. Malsawmliana, Assistant Secretary of the Central YMA gave his thought about why women rarely held leadership position in YMA. ‘In branch YMA, there are some women office bearers. But for women, they are not in a position of continuing to participate in YMA when they get married which caused them to participate in YMA for a short period of time’.²⁷²

Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah, General Secretary of the Central YLA said that the reason why women are absent in leadership position in YLA is simply because of the nature and activities of the organization. Voluntary community work called (*hnatlang*), digging the graves (*thlanlaih*), consoling bereaved family at their home overnight (*tlaivar*) and making decision in under tense situation are what the organization has been doing. ‘These types of roles are more suitable to men than

²⁶⁹Young Lai Association. Golden Jubilee (1974-2024). pp. xiii, 1-3.

²⁷⁰Interview with T. Chatlua. Former president of the MTP General Headquarters. January 6, 2023.

²⁷¹Mizoram Statistical Abstract 2021. pp. 278, 279.

²⁷²Interview with Malsawmliana. June 29, 2022.

women. As a result, the decision making space within the organization is inevitably dominated by men'.²⁷³

Similar to the above view, Lalfakzuala Chenkual, corporator of the AMC and former member of the CEC of Central YMA said that the activities of YMA mainly involves with consoling bereaved family at their home overnight (called *tlaivar* in Mizo), and voluntary community work (*hnatlang*) which is tough for women. Additionally, women have not continued to participate in YMA after they get married while men continue to participate in YMA even after they married. To hold leadership position in branch YMA, one has to hold leadership position in section YMA for about ten years. In such a way, leadership position in YMA requires long and constant dedication towards the organization.²⁷⁴

'Women are busy doing household chores, they don't have time to actively participate in MTP' says K. Beisa, former president of the MTP General Headquarters.²⁷⁵ Pachi Hlychho, former president of the MTP General Headquarters pointed out two factors that contributed for the low participation of women in MTP. According to him, women's lack of free time because of domestic chores and women's lack of involvement in social activities in Mara society from historical period could be the main reason why women participate much less than men in MTP.²⁷⁶

Civil society organizations like YMA, YCA, YLA and MTP are mainly headed by men and women in general participated in these organizations as members. The nature of their activities is, to a large extent, physical in nature. Voluntary community work called (*hnatlang*), digging the graves (*thlanlaih*), consoling bereaved family at their home overnight (*tlaivar*), are some of the most common activities that organizations like YMA has been doing in the society. These activities are more suitable to men than women.

²⁷³Interview with Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah. May 14, 2023.

²⁷⁴Telephone Interview with Lalfakzuala Chenkual. March 2, 2023.

²⁷⁵Interview with K. Beisa. January 6, 2023.

²⁷⁶Interview with Pachi Hlychho. January 6, 2023.

Additionally, to hold leadership position or occupy decision-making spaces in these organizations requires long and constant active participation as leadership is mainly counted more so based on one's contribution toward these organizations. Women's participation in these organizations would usually stop after they get married whereas for men, it mainly depends on their personal choice. Majority, if not most, of the leaders (office bearers) of these organizations, from the local level to the central/ headquarters level are usually married men. As a result, the duration of women's participation towards these organizations is much shorter than men. Evidently, membership of males outnumbered females in these organizations whereas female voters outnumbered male voters in various elections. In a society where traditional gender roles are sharply divided between male and female, women have no free time to actively participate in social activities. Historically, women have not involved in the 'public sphere', not only in political sphere but also in social sphere which may contributed for the low participation of women in these civil society organizations.

3.5. Student Associations.

Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP): The largest student association in Mizoram, MZP was established in October 27, 1935 in Shillong, Meghalaya, by the Mizo students who studied there at the time.²⁷⁷ The operational area not only covers Mizoram, there are two headquarters outside Mizoram in Manipur and Tripura. Besides the general headquarters at Aizawl, there are 13 headquarters, 47 sub-headquarters, and 105 branches within the state. There are eight students' associations affiliated under the MZP.²⁷⁸

From its inception, there were 13²⁷⁹ female elected office bearers at the general headquarters of the MZP, with the first one in 1951 and the last one in the 1994 election. Among the female elected office bearers, Zokhumi and Thangzuali were both elected as vice-president and assistant general secretary, respectively, in

²⁷⁷ Mizo Zirlai Pawl (Mizo Students' Association). Dan Bu. 2016 Amendment. p. 3.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 35.

²⁷⁹ A woman finance secretary in 1952 was re- elected as assistant G.S in 1953. And a woman finance secretary in 1971 was re – elected as treasurer in 1972.

the 1953- 1954 term. The rest of them held the posts of treasurer and finance secretary. At the general headquarters, about 10 women are appointed as executive committee members in each term.²⁸⁰ At the headquarters level, important posts like president, vice president, and general secretary are rarely held by women. Even if they are elected, they usually held posts like of treasurer and finance secretary. Currently, there are female office bearers in Zawlnuam, Darlawn, and Serchhip MZP headquarters in the present term.²⁸¹ Student's union in colleges are also dominated by men. But recently, a female student was elected as vice-president in Government Champhai college.²⁸²

Mizo Students Union (MSU), established in February 12, 2001, is also an active student organization that continuously raises issues of different kind towards the state government. The structural organization of the MSU consists of General Headquarters, Regional Headquarters, District Headquarters, Headquarters, Sub-Headquarters, Joint Headquarters and Branch.²⁸³ From the beginning in 2001 till today, there have been no female elected office bearers at the general headquarters of MSU. However, some women are appointed as secretary and monthly magazine editor. At the general headquarters, the work requires full time dedication to hold office bearers posts which might be a challenge for women considering their responsibility at home.²⁸⁴

Mizoram Chakma Students Union (MCSU): MCSU is a student union of the Chakma community in Mizoram established on 24 May 1983. The MCSU consists of three categories of office- the branch office at the village level and the zonal and the central offices. According to the constitution of the MCSU, the Central Executive Committee comprise of not exceeding 29 members including the office bearers. Among the 29 members, 25 are to be elected directly and four are to nominated from girl's student.²⁸⁵ The headquarters of the apex body called Central

²⁸⁰ Interview with F. Lalramnghaka. Vice-President, MZP General Headquarters. June 24, 2022.

²⁸¹ Interview with Lalkhawngaiha. Secretary, MZP General Headquarters. September 12, 2023.

²⁸² Interview with Jacob Lalmuanpuia. General Secretary, MZP General Headquarters. June 23, 2022.

²⁸³ The Constitution of Mizo Students Union (MSU Dan Bu). Revised and Enlarge, 2022. pp. 1, 8.

²⁸⁴ Interview with J. Lalmuanzuala. President, MSU General Headquarters. June 23, 2022.

²⁸⁵ Revised Constitution of the Mizoram Chakma Students' Union, 2004.

Mizoram Chakma Students Union (CMCSU) is located at Kamalanagar (Chawngte), Lawngtlai district. The MCSU has several zones and branches, among which Aizawl and Lunglei are the most active ones in terms of student participation. The present study can only trace from the 2011 term of the list of office bearers of the CMCSU. Out of the fifteen office bearer posts, between the 2011- 2013 term, there were two female office bearers who held the posts of cultural secretary and religious secretary. Between the 2013- 2015 term, there were two female office bearers who held the posts of cultural secretary and treasurer. So, since 2011, there have been four female office bearers in the CMCSU.²⁸⁶

Mara Students' Organization (MSO): Established in November 4, 1965 at Shillong, Meghalaya, the Mara Students Organization is the largest student body of the Mara community, having its general headquarters at Siaha.²⁸⁷ There are 9 sub-headquarters and 2 joint-headquarters with multiple branches. The elected six office bearer posts are mainly held by men, just like any other student organizations. In 1996, one female was elected to the post of treasurer, becoming the first female elected office bearer at the general headquarters of MSO. After the 1996 election, there are four other female elected office bearers, among whom one is in the term of 2022- 2024. So, in total, there are five elected female office bearers in the general headquarters of the MSO till 2022-2024 term. Till 2022-2024 term, there have been fifteen women at the highest executive committee called '*Kophua*' which comprises six members.²⁸⁸

Lai Students Association (LSA): It was established in 1958 at Shillong, Meghalaya.²⁸⁹ Till 1992, Shillong remained the general headquarters of the association, which is now the sub-headquarters. The general headquarters is at Lawngtlai, while Siaha and Aizawl are the headquarters and joint headquarters, respectively. Below these, there are sub-headquarters and branches in multiple places. LSA, as a student body of the Lai community, is an active organization that

²⁸⁶Interview with Hujee Chakma, Vice President CMCSU. March 2, 2023.

²⁸⁷Mara Students' Organisation. Dah Bu. Revised and Amended Edition 2019.

²⁸⁸Telephone Interview with Byhna Chozah. General Secretary, Mara Students Organisation General Headquarters. February 28, 2023.

²⁸⁹Lai Students Association Dan (Constitution) Bu. Updated 2021. Pdf version.

deals with various issues concerning students' welfare and education.²⁹⁰ From its inception, the leaders of the association are males and important posts like president, vice president, and general secretary have never been held by female students till today.

Till 2021-2023 term, there are 13²⁹¹ female elected office bearers in the general headquarters of the LSA, in which 10 held the post of treasurer, while the other 2 held the post of finance secretary in the six elected office bearer posts. The last elected female office bearer was during the term of 1999- 2001.²⁹²

The analysis of women in leadership position in various student's associations reveals that women rarely held leadership position which also points to the low participation of women in these associations. Educational field is the area where progress of women is seen at a higher level than other areas. Yet, women have not participated and involved in student's politics to hold leadership position. Men have participated in student's politics and involved in student's associations which helped them in getting expose to a larger social and political interactions. They carved out their political career through student's associations and learned the art of leadership, established relationships that helped them in getting recognition. Women on the other hand, have not explored other realms to get social exposure that would help them in getting more confidence and skills about leadership and interests articulation.

On the other, leadership position of any kinds including student's association requires active involvement and dedication. The role and responsibilities of women in the home limit their chance to actively participate in social activities and exposure.

3.6. Women's Organizations: There are several women's groups and organizations in Mizoram. The first women's organization, MHT, established in 1945, is still functioning but not active in voicing and addressing women related

²⁹⁰Telephone Interview with F. Vanlalruatpuia. President of the Lai Students Association General Headquarters.

²⁹¹A female finance secretary in the 1978 term was re-elected in 1979 term.

²⁹²Incumbency Chart of the Office Bearers of the Lai Students Association.

issues in the state. Right now, it runs a children's home and provides free training in tailoring for girls at its office in Khatla locality, Aizawl. Some of the other women's organizations are the All- Mizoram Women's Federation, Chakma Mahila, Lai Women Association (LWA), Mara Chano Py (MCHP), Mahni Thlai Thar Zuar Pawl, Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl (MHIP), Mizoram Bru Women Federation, Mizoram Mahila Sanghatham, Mizoram Gorkha Women Association, Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhyan (PMSA), and Women with Purpose. In this study, the largest and most active ones the MHIP is highlighted to understand their role and contribution for the political representation of women.

Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP): The State Social Welfare Advisory Board (SSWAB) that deal with the welfare of children and women in all the states in India was established in Mizoram in 1972 as a constituent unit of the Central Social Welfare Advisory Board (CSWAB). State Social Welfare Advisory Board was responsible in handling different projects coming from the Central Social Welfare Advisory Board. There has been some consideration about setting up of women's federation that would provide helpful cooperation with the government. Step was taken to unite all the existing women federations and form a single and comprehensive women federation for all the women in Mizoram. So, under the leadership of Mr. Bonthanga Poonte, a social welfare officer and secretary of the Mizoram SSWAB, the Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) was established in July 6, 1974. The nomenclature 'Mizoram' was changed to 'Mizo' to include all the Mizo women even those living outside the state in August 20, 1998. So, the original name of Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl was changed as the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (Mizo Women Federation) also known as MHIP.²⁹³

The MHIP has eleven aims and objectives including empowering women for the development of the society and preparing them to enter higher decision-making body, working to improve the status of women both in the family and society and protecting the rights and dignity of women. Education and skills development for

²⁹³Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl. Dan Bu. 5th Ed. p. vii, viii.

women, child care, development for the society and fight against violence toward women are the other important aims of the organization.²⁹⁴

Between 1997- 2003, the yearly theme of the organization was '*hmeichhe kum*' (year of women). From 2003 to 2011, the organization used 'women empowerment' as their yearly theme. Here are some of the initiatives of the organization for women's political empowerment:

- (a) Submitted a memorandum for 33% seat reservation for women in legislative assembly and parliament to the prime minister of India who visited the state on 29. 6. 1996.
- (b) In 1998 MLA election, the two major parties the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Indian National Congress (INC) have no women candidates. As a result, the MHIP met the presidents of different political parties in the state to field women candidates in MLA election.
- (c) Passed a resolution at the General Assembly in 1999 for the implementation of Panchayati Raj Institution in Mizoram.
- (d) Hosted meetings with leaders of the women's wing of political parties to discuss the issue of women's political representation and seat reservation for women. The meeting held on 13.3.2002 could not pass the resolution for '10 seat reservation for women in legislative assembly election.'
- (e) Passed a resolution at the General Assembly in 2003 for a quota of 'not less than five seats for female candidates' by every political parties in the upcoming MLA election. It also resolved to encourage female voters to support women candidates in the MLA and Village Council (VC) elections.
- (f) The MHIP formulated an Action Plan for the MLA election of 2008. Among the three plans, one was to request all political parties to field female candidates from the women's wing of their parties.
- (g) On February 24, 2009 the MHIP made a press release to newspapers requesting people to vote for women candidates in the VC election. After the

²⁹⁴Ibid, pp. 2, 3.

election, the successful candidates (31) were handed appreciation certificate at the MHIP General Assembly in 2009.²⁹⁵

The MHIP took steps to address different issues and interests of women in the state. Aside from helping the victims of sexual abuse and violence and extending help among individuals and groups, the issue of women ordination in church, Mizo customary law, legal rights of women, economic empowerment of women and health care for women were some of the other issues that the organization has taken up for the empowerment of women.²⁹⁶

3.7. Women in State Government

As per the state government data in 2014,²⁹⁷ among the permanent state government employees, around 27 per cent were females while 38 per cent of non-permanent employees were females. Among group 'A' officer, around 29 percent were females while around 16 per cent of group B 'G' officer were females. From the total number of government employees, around 30 percent were women as per the 2014 statistics. In 2009,²⁹⁸ around 23 per cent of permanent state government employees were females while around 29 percent of non-permanent state government employees were females. Comparison of 2014 data with 2009 shows that the overall number of women in state government has been increased within this five-year gap. At the decision-making level in different departments under the state government, around 26 per cent of group 'A' officer were women in 2009 and around 18 per cent of group B 'G' officer were women. The upward trend of women in this area within this short period indicates the progress women have made and their increasing improvement in education.

²⁹⁵B. Sangkhumi. (2009). *Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl MHIP Chanchin 1974-2009*. Chaltlang: Efatha Press. p.p. 138-141.

²⁹⁶*Ibid.*

²⁹⁷The last three editions (2019, 2021 and 2023) of statistical data of Mizoram by the Economics and Statistics department does not provide the gender wise number of state government employees or the overall number of state government employees. So, the Statistical Abstract of Mizoram, 2015 is used.

²⁹⁸The data is from the Statistical Abstract of Mizoram 2011 which provided 2009 data of government employees. Statistical Abstract of Mizoram, 2011. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Mizoram. p. 88.

Table 3.1: Gender wise number of state government employees as on 31.3.2014

Sl. No.	Group	Males	Females	Total
1	2	3	4	5
1	A	2,793	1,180	3,973
2	B 'G'	980	191	1,171
3	B 'NG'	7,482	5,527	13,009
4	C	14,403	3,392	17,795
5	D	6,037	1,966	8,003
	Sub-total	31,695	12,256	43,951
6	Contract	755	671	1,426
7	Work Charge	365	98	463
8	Muster Roll	5,536	1,958	7,494
9	Officiating	11	4	15
10	Co- Terminus	3,030	3,233	6,263
	Sub-total	9,697	5,964	15,661
	Grand Total	41,392	18,220	59,612

Source: Statistical Abstract of Mizoram: 2015. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Mizoram.

Few departments/offices of the state government are highlighted here to further understand the number of women at the decision-making level. The selected departments and offices are the Chief Secretary, Mizoram Public Service Commission (MPSC), District Commissioner, District and Sub-Divisional Education Officer, and District Medical Officer. Aside from this, the number of female college principals under the Mizoram University-affiliated colleges is also mentioned here.

Table 3.2: Number of female Deputy Commissioner

District	Period	Women	Total	Percentage
Aizawl	1972-2021	2	33	6.06 %
Champhai	1998-2022	1	13	7.69 %
Hnahthial	2019-2021	Nil	3	-
Kolasib	1998-2022	Nil	16	-
Khawzawl	2019-2021	Nil	3	-
Lunglei	1972-2021	4	31	12.90 %
Lawngtlai	1998-2020	Nil	18	-
Mamit	1998-2022	1	21	4.76 %
Serchhip	1998-2022	2	18	11.11 %
Siaha	1972-2022	Nil	20	-
Saitual	2019-2020	Nil	2	-

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the list of the Deputy Commissioners displayed in the office of Deputy Commissioner in all the districts in Mizoram.

Table 3.3: Number of Mizo female chief secretary and chairperson of MPSC.

Chief Secretary	Period 1972-2021	Women 1	Total 33	Percentage 3.03%
MPSC Chairperson	Period 1991-2022	Women 1	Total 11	Percentage 9.09%

Sources: Mizoram Public Service Commission Office. Aizawl, Mizoram, and

Personal Branch, Chief Secretary Office, Secretariat Khatla, Aizawl.

Table 3.4: Number of female Chief Medical Officer

District	Period	Women	Total	Percentage
CMO Aizawl East	1989-2022	5	11	45.45%
CMO Aizawl West	1989-2021	1	12	8.33%
Champhai	2001-2020	2	8	25%
Hnahthial	2019-	1	1	100%
Kolasib	2001-2021	1	10	10%
Khawzawl	2019-	Nil	1	-
Lunglei	1973-2021	1	17	5.88%
Lawngtlai	2001-2021	1	9	11.11%
Mamit	2001-2021	2	9	22.22%
Serchhip	1989-2021	1	10	10%
Siaha	1999-2022	2	11	18.18%
Saitual (Medical Officer)	1971-2021	8	26	30.76%

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the list displayed in the concerned offices.

Table 3.5: Number of female District Education Officer

District	Period	Women	Total	Percentage
Aizawl	1967-2019	1	26	3.84%
Champhai	2002-2019	1	10	10%
Hnahthial (SDEO)	2008-2020	Nil	4	-
Kolasib	2002-2021	1	8	12.5%
Khawzawl (SDEO)	2008-2022	1	1	100%
Lunglei	1973-2019	1	30	3.33%
Lawngtlai	2002-2019	2	6	33.33%
Mamit	2002-2022	1	11	9.09%
Serchhip	2002-2022	1	11	9.09%
Siaha	1979-2021	Nil	29	-
Saitual (SDEO)	2008-2023	1	7	14.28%

Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the list displayed in the concerned offices.

Table 3.6: Number of female principals/directors in the affiliated/constituent colleges of Mizoram University (MZU) between the period of 2022- 2023.

Sl/No	Name of Colleges	Principal
1	Govt. T. Romana College	Female
2	Govt. Kamalanagar College	Female
3	Mizoram College of Nursing	Female
4	Divine Mercy College	Female
5	College of Nursing Synod Hospital	Female
6	Faith College	Female
7	B. N. College of Nursing	Female

Source: Details of the Affiliated/ Constituent Colleges of Mizoram University (2022-23)

Among the forty-one affiliated/constituent colleges of MZU, seven colleges have female principals. Out of these seven colleges, three are nursing colleges, while one is privately run college opened recently. Besides this, the two theological colleges in Mizoram, namely the Aizawl Theological College (ATC) by the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram and the Academy of Integrated Christian Studies (AICS) by the Baptist Church of Mizoram, both have four (out of 31) and three (out of 21) female faculty members respectively between the years 2020- 2021. In Mizoram University, there are 93 female teachers and 194 male teachers. The constituent college of MZU, Pachhunga University College (PUC), has 43 female teachers out of 121 between the years 2020- 2021.²⁹⁹ In the Mizoram Police Service (MPS), which started functioning from 1974, the first woman MPS was seen in 2009, who also secured first position among the candidates. In 2014, five women were recruited into MPS.³⁰⁰

Few women have explored the field of journalism. As of 2022-24 term, Mizoram Journalist Association (MJA) has 193 members from nine districts. Aizawl, the general headquarters, has 94 members, out of which six are females. Lunglei and Serchhip districts both have only one female out of 19 and 15 respectively. In

²⁹⁹Mizoram Statistical Abstract 2021. pp. 150-152.

³⁰⁰Vanlalhlmpuii, Janet., Lalrintluanga. (2018). Women in Mizoram Police: Coming out of the Shadow. In Lalneihzovi (Ed.), *Gender Equality and Sustainable Development with special reference to North East India* (pp. 91-102). New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

Champhai district, out of 14 members, two are females. Lawngtlai and Mamit districts both have one female out of 10 and 8 members, respectively. Kolasib, Siaha, and Hnahthial districts have no female MJA members.³⁰¹ So, out of the total 193 MJA members, only 12 (6.21%) are females.

This chapter examines women's participation in political and social spheres and highlights few points about status of women in state government. In different political parties in the state, there are few women in the office bearers. Between the two oldest parties the Congress and the MNF, former leaders of women's wing are recruited to general secretary and secretary positions after their period in women's wing was over. Even with this practice, women made up only a small percentage in the office bearers of the two parties. Women are mainly concentrated at the women's wing and only few women are elected in the executive committee. Considering the position of women within the hierarchical structure of political parties, it is not surprising to learn that only few women in the history of the elections of the legislative assembly have had secured major party nomination.

This chapter also highlights church, civil society organizations, student's associations to understand the level of women involvement in society in general. It also analyses the contribution and role of women's organization, MHIP for political representation of women. Way before the introduction of reserved seat for women in village council and municipal corporation, the MHIP demanded reservation of seat for women in legislative assembly and even voiced their support for panchayati raj institution in the state that provided seat reservation for women. The organization appealed political parties to field women candidates in legislative assembly elections and demanded quota by political parties to increase political representation of women. It also took steps to encourage women elected members of village council.

³⁰¹List of Mizoram Journalist Association Members by MJA General Headquarters. 2022-2024.

CHAPTER IV

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TOWARDS WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

This chapter analyses government initiatives that aim to increase women's representation. It explains the historical development of local self-government in India and the landmark enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. The chapter discusses the amendment of the Village Council Act in 2014 and the nature of seat reservation for women under the Amendment Act. The Lai Autonomous District (Village Councils) Amendment Act, 2011, the Chakma Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) Amendment Act, 2011 and the Mara Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) Amendment Act, 2012 are discussed to understand the nature of seat reservation for women under these acts. The chapter discusses the introduction of the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007, for local urban government and the Amendment Act 2009, which provided seat reservation for women. It also highlights some laws relating to women that the state government has enacted over the years.

4.1 Local Self-Government in India: In India, local self-government is not a new concept introduced after the British came to India. Instead, even before the British came to India, Indian villages were managed as self-governing village communities. These self-governing village bodies that look after the village affairs slowly evolved and took the form of panchayats. After the British came to India, the traditional Indian village system began to lose its significance and villages were administered as a formally constituted institution. In such a way, the nature of village administration was changed and local self-government was evolved as an accountable representative institution after the British came to India.³⁰²

In 1688, the first municipal body was formed in Madras. After Madras, municipal bodies were established in Bombay and Calcutta. The administrative setup of these municipal bodies were done without any legislation instead, they were set up as per the instructions of the Directors of the East India Company which was done

³⁰²Goerge Mathew. (1995). Introduction. In Institute of Social Sciences, *Status of Panchayati Raj in the States of India 1994*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. pp. 1, 2.

with the approval of the Crown. These municipal bodies were mainly responsible for sanitation in the Presidency towns. They were not representative institution in the modern understanding since members were not elected by the people. Members were purely nominated members from among the non-native population.³⁰³

To formally constitute municipal bodies in India, the Act X of 1842 applicable only to the Bengal Presidency was introduced. It provided for the setting up of a Town Committee for the purpose of sanitation. Under this Act, Town Committees were set up in the two hill stations of Mussoorie and Nainital in 1842 and 1845, respectively, while the Act remained inoperative in Bengal. After 1850, municipal bodies were established in various places in the country and about 540 municipal bodies were established between 1850 and 1870.³⁰⁴

Under the viceroyalty of Lord Mayo, a Resolution for the decentralization of power was passed in 1870. The financial challenge faced by the government after the revolt of 1857 had motivated the Resolution, which aimed to finance local services out of local taxation. So, Lord Mayo's Resolution was adopted out of fiscal compulsion.³⁰⁵ The Resolution, which provided for the policy of fiscal decentralization gave the responsibility for the allocation of funds for education, sanitation, medical relief, and public works to the provincial governments that were expected to depend on local taxation. As a result of this reform policy, provincial governments like North-West, Punjab, Bengal, and Madras introduced municipal taxation.³⁰⁶

Lord Ripon's Resolution on local self-government of 18th May 1882 took a further step to reform the system of local self-government. The Resolution, among others, focused on the importance of political education, the setting up of rural boards similar to municipal boards, and holding elections. However, the legislation introduced after the Resolution did not follow the principles of the Resolution.

³⁰³B. K. Joshi. (2012). Exploring the Conceptual roots of Local Government in India. *Journal of Social and Political Studies* III (1), p. 15.

³⁰⁴Ibid, p. 15.

³⁰⁵Opcit, Goerge Mathew. p. 2.

³⁰⁶Opcit, B.K. Joshi. p. 17.

Nevertheless, the number of elected or partly elected municipal boards and the proportion of elected members in the boards slowly increased over the years. Between 1881 and 1885, the number of wholly or partly elected municipalities was increased from 166 to 472, despite the number of municipalities remain almost unchanged. Meanwhile, a significant number of membership of municipalites were elected members in some provinces. Although municipalities was moved toward democratic process of election, elections were not held in a true democratic form during these periods. Instead of constituencies or wards, members were selected based on caste or religious groups. Electorate also comprised only a small percentage of the population. Additionally, open voting system was used which contributed for the low percentage of voters turn out in elections. As a result, ‘municipalities in the 19th century could hardly be called democratic bodies in the modern sense of the term.’³⁰⁷ At the same time, the term ‘self-government’ had begun to gain currency after the Ripon Resolution despite its slow progress in reforming the system of local self-government.³⁰⁸

In 1907, the Royal Commission on Decentralization was appointed, which recommended the setting up of village panchayats to administer local affairs. However, the recommendation of the Royal Commission did not produce any significant change to strengthen local government and it remained largely on paper.³⁰⁹ The Government of India Act, 1919, introduced a new system of administration, ‘dyarchy’. Under this system, there were two subjects and local government was transferred to provincial governments in which provincial ministers took charge of it. Within a short period of time between 1919 and 1925, eight provincial governments passed legislation for the establishment of village panchayats, and 27 native states passed legislation between 1919 and 1948.³¹⁰

Although limited system of election was introduced, only a small number of the population enjoy the right to contest the election. During this period, women did not participate as voters or candidates in the elections of Panchayats and were totally

³⁰⁷Ibid, pp. 17, 18.

³⁰⁸Opcit, Goerge Mathew. p. 2.

³⁰⁹Ibid. pp. 2,3.

³¹⁰Opcit, Joshi. pp. 20, 21.

excluded from the election of Panchayats. For instance, the Central Province and Berar Village Panchayat Act, 1920 and Bombay Village Panchayat Act, 1920 mentioned about creating village panchayats on the application of 'male residents' of a village and they specifically targeted 'resident members other than females' to be elected.³¹¹

The idea of village panchayats had occupied an important place even during the national movement. Mahatma Gandhi had a vision of village panchayats:

'My idea of village *Swaraj* is that it is a complete republic independent of its neighbours for its vital wants and yet interdependent for many others in which independence is a necessity.... The Government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, males and females, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishment in the accepted sense, the Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary, and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference, even from the present government, whose sole effective connection with the villages is the execution of the village revenue...Here, there is a perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his Government.'³¹²

B. R. Ambedkar, who experienced caste discrimination and was chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, on the other hand, had a negative view of the village panchayats. In the Constituent Assembly on 4 November 1948, he remarked:

'I hold that these village republics have been the ruination of India. I am, therefore, surprised that those who condemn provincialism and communalism should come forward as champions of the village. What is the village but a sink of localism,

³¹¹Nirmala Buch. (2007). Women and Panchayats: Opportunities, Challenges and Supports. In L. C. Jain (Ed.), *Decentralisation and Local Governance* (Reprinted). New Delhi: Orient Longman Private Limited. p. 344.

³¹²Opcit Goerge Mathew. p. 4.

a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and communalism? I am glad that the Draft Constitution has discarded the village and adopted the individual as its unit.³¹³

Although the first draft of the Constitution of India did not contain a provision for panchayats, it was included in the Constitution of India in part IV.³¹⁴ Village panchayats was included in the Directive Principles of State Policy in Article 40. Under Article 40, states are instructed to form village panchayats which would function with necessary powers and authority in administering local self-government. The administration of local government is put under the state government as per the Seventh Schedule of the State List.³¹⁵

4.2. Post-Independent Period: After independence, the issue of local self-government was revived. In 1952, the Community Development Programme (CDP) was initiated to improve and strengthen the socio-economic development of rural areas in India. Just one year later, the National Extension Service was also introduced in 1953. To assess the works and effectiveness of the CDP and National Extension Service, the government of India appointed the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957. The Committee observed that the absence of people's participation in development projects caused the failure of the CDP and suggested the involvement of people through elected representatives in local administration for the successful implementation of development projects. The Committee accordingly suggested the creation of a three-tier system of democratic decentralization comprised of elected representatives in local bodies with necessary resources, power, and authority. The three-tier system of democratic decentralization, also known as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), consists of the village panchayat at the village level, the panchayat samiti at the block level, and the zilla parishad at the district level.³¹⁶

³¹³Ibid. p. 1.

³¹⁴Ibid. p. 4.

³¹⁵PM Bakshi. (2022). *The Constitution of India*. Gurgaon: Lexisnexis. pp. 132, 473.

³¹⁶Partha Nath Mukherji. (2012). Representative and Participatory Democracy: Indigenisation of Indian Democracy. In Bishnu C. Barik., Umesh C. Sahoo. (Eds.), *Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural Development*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications. pp. 39—57. Also Gaurang R. Sahay. (2012).

Decentralization, Panchayati Raj and the Rights of Marginalised Groups in India: A Case for Civil Society. In Bishnu C. Barik, Umesh C. Sahoo. (Eds.), *Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural*

The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee report in 1957 suggested the inclusion of two women who have interest in working among women and children in a Panchayat. Besides this, the issue of women political representation was discussed in earlier deliberations of national level meetings of ministers from the states which recommended co-option or nomination of one or two women if no women were elected. The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) 1974 recommended the setting up of a statutory women's Panchayats as part of the Panchayat structure as a transitional measure to empower women in local government. The issue of the status of women, especially in decision-making bodies gained widespread interest in India and abroad in the 1980's. Notable development such as the International Women's Year 1975 and the UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 led to the increasing focus on the issue of women status. The Sixth and Seventh Five Year Plans also focus on women in development. The National Perspective Plan for women (NPP) in 1988 recommended that 30 per cent positions of decision-making structures including Panchayats should be filled by women.³¹⁷

Following the recommendation of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, Rajasthan adopted the new scheme of Panchayati Raj on October 2, 1959. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu also adopted the recommendation of the Committee and formed the Panchayati Raj in 1959. Between 1960-61, states like Assam, Karnataka, Orissa, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh adopted the PRI in their states. Although several states adopted the PRI, the organizational structure of the PRI in different states was not necessarily the same. Some states avoid multi-level Panchayati Raj, and in some states, power was mainly concentrated in the panchayat samiti.³¹⁸ By the mid-1960s, Panchayats had reached all parts of the country. However, the performance of the Panchayati Raj system in many states has been unsatisfactory and has not functioned as an effective local government, mainly because of a lack of financial resources.³¹⁹

Development. Jaipur: Rawat Publications. pp. 103-123.

³¹⁷Nirmala Buch. (2019). *From Oppression to Assertion: Women and Panchayats in India*. (Reprint). New Delhi: Routledge. p.p. 5-7.

³¹⁸R. P. Joshi., G. S. Narwani. (2011). *Panchayati Raj in India: Emerging Trends Across the States*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications. pp. 32, 33.

³¹⁹Opcit, Goerge Mathew. p. 6.

4.3. Ashok Mehta Committee: The Ashok Mehta Committee, which was appointed to review the Panchayati Raj system, submitted its report in 1978 and recommended a two-tier system consisting of zilla parishad at the district level and mandal panchayat covering a population of 15,000 to 20,000. For members of the zilla parishad and mandal panchayat, the Committee suggested including two women who secured the highest votes in the elections. The Committee further recommended that in case of no women candidates, two women should be appointed as co-opted members. Aside from this, the Committee also recommended the formation of a 'Committee of Women'. As per the recommendation, a 'Committee of Women' shall consist of all women members of the Panchayats and it should take responsibility over the welfare and development programmes of women and children in the mandal panchayat. The Committee also suggested the inclusion of Schedule Tribes and Schedule Castes in all PRIs based on the proportion of their population.³²⁰

Based on the recommendations of the Ashok Mehta Committee, West Bengal reconstituted its Panchayati Raj system in 1978. Other states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir also reconstituted their Panchayat Raj system.³²¹ The recommendation of the Ashok Mehta Committee was not legislated by the Union Government due to the fall of the Janata Party government in 1980. Later on, the new Congress government appointed different committees to make an assessment about the performance and effectiveness of the PRI. In 1985, the G. VK. Rao Committee was formed and in 1986 the L.M. Singhvi Committee was formed to study the functioning and performance of the PRI and make necessary suggestions. Both of the Committees recommended for empowering and strengthening the Panchayati Raj system.³²²

4.4. Constitutional Amendments: In 1989, the 64th and 65th constitutional amendment bills were introduced in the Parliament, which aimed to strengthen both the rural and urban local government with constitutional status. The Lok Sabha

³²⁰Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions. 1978. *Asoka Mehta Committee Report*. Retrieved May 20, 2023 from <http://14.139.60.153/bitstream/123456789/211/1/report-committee%20on%20panchayati%20raj%20institutions.pdf>

³²¹Opcit, Goerge Mathew. p. 9.

³²²Opcit, Gaurang R. Sahay. p. 108.

approved the two bills, but the Rajya Sabha rejected them.³²³ In 1990, the National Front government attempted to revive the issue of local governments, and it introduced the 74th Amendment Bill (comprising panchayats and municipalities). No significant progress was achieved during this period and the bill was not deliberated by the parliament. In September 1991, the new Congress government introduced the 72nd (Panchayats) and 73rd (Nagarpalikas) constitutional amendment bills. Finally, the bills were passed by the Lok Sabha on 22nd December 1992 and the Rajya Sabha on 23rd December 1992. The President of India gave his assent on 20th April 1993. The Panchayats Act became effective on 24th April 1993 as the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992.³²⁴ Likewise, the urban local government was also given constitutional status, and it came into existence as the Constitution (Seventy-fourth Amendment) Act, 1992, which came into effect from June 1, 1993.³²⁵

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act that deals with Panchayats is not applicable to Scheduled Areas (Fifth Schedule) and tribal areas (Sixth Schedule) under Article 243 (M) of the Constitution. At the same time, article 243 (M) clause (4) sub-clause (b) provided that the provisions of the Act will be extendable to Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas by a law made by the Parliament. The Act also excluded its applicability to states like Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and hill areas in the state of Manipur.³²⁶ States like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, and Rajasthan have Scheduled Areas. Four states such as Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura have Tribal Areas. Despite the 73rd Amendment Act being not applicable to Scheduled Areas without an act of the Parliament, Panchayat elections were held in most of the states having Scheduled Areas. As a result, the extension of the Act in the Scheduled Areas was challenged in the High Courts of three states, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra. To study the matter, a Committee of members of parliament belonging to Scheduled Tribe communities and experts under the chairmanship of Dileep Singh

³²³Opcit, B. K. Joshi, p. 24.

³²⁴Opcit, Goerge Mathew. p. 11.

³²⁵The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992. Retrieved May 20, 2023 from https://mohua.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/74th_CAA13.pdf

³²⁶Opcit, P. M. Bakshi. p. 296.

Bhuria (MP from Madhya Pradesh) was formed by the Government in June 1994 which submitted its report in January 1995. The Committee recommended a three-tier Panchayat structure at the village, intermediate and district levels in Scheduled Areas. Establishing participatory democracy without harming the customary laws, 'social practices and traditional management of common resources' was the main focus of the report of the Committee.³²⁷

On 24th December, 1996, the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 came into force. Accordingly, this act extends the Panchayats in the Fifth Schedule Areas of eight states in India. According to this act, not less than half of the total number of seats in all the three tiers of Panchayats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. The chairpersonship at all levels of the Panchayats is also reserved for ST's. This act stipulated that reservation for other communities mentioned in Part IX of the Constitution shall be in proportion to their population.³²⁸

The provision of the Panchayats was inserted in part IX of the Constitution. Panchayat simply means an institution of self-government. The Constitution laid down that a three-tier system of Panchayat shall be constituted at the village, intermediate and district levels. It also provides the freedom not to constitute an intermediate-level Panchayat for states with below twenty lakhs. The Constitution mandated the reservation of not less than one-third of the total number of seats and one-third of the offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level for women. Seat reservation is also provided for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population.³²⁹

Municipalities were inserted in Part IXA of the Constitution. Municipalities or urban local bodies are classified into three types under Article 243Q. Nagar Panchayat for a transitional area, Municipal Council for a smaller urban area, and Municipal Corporation for a larger urban area. The 74th CAA, 1992, mandated seat

³²⁷P.S.K. Menon., Bakshi D. Sinha. (2003). *Panchayati Raj in Scheduled Areas: A Critical Study*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. pp. 9, 10, 78, 79, 80.

³²⁸Ibid, pp. 80, 81.

³²⁹Opcit. PM. Bakshi. pp. 290-292.

reservation for women, SCs, and STs in municipalities. For women, one-third of the total number of seats is reserved. Apart from this, the constitution also laid down that the offices of chairpersons in the municipalities shall be reserved for women, SCs, and STs. The constitution leaves the option of reservation for the backward class in the hands of the states.³³⁰

Before the parliament passed the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, Orissa had implemented the 33 percent reservation of seats for women in municipalities and panchayats, becoming the first state to do so.³³¹ Before Orissa, seat reservation for women in Panchayat was already introduced in Karnataka. Through a new Panchayat law in 1983, a 25 per cent of seats was reserved for women in the panchayats in Karnataka.³³² The introduction of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts opened a new door for women in India to participate in local governance freely and be involved in the process of administration. It provided an opportunity for women to engage and participate in rural and urban local bodies in India. With reservation being mandated by the Constitution, women in India are empowered to participate in the decision-making processes in local government. As a result of the 73rd Amendment Act, there are now more than one million women elected representatives in all three tiers of Panchayati Raj.³³³

4.5. Mizoram: When most of the other states in India adopted the Panchayati Raj as per the constitutional provision. Mizoram is given the freedom not to implement the 73rd CAA under Article 234M. Before the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) were constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India in 1952 and 1953, village administration was run by a chief with the help of a council of advisers called *Upa*. The Mizo District Council, formerly called the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council, passed the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act in 1953. Lakher Regional Council also enacted the Pawi-Lakher Region (Village Councils) Act in

³³⁰Ibid, pp. 293-299.

³³¹Goerge Mathew. (2002). *Panchayati Raj: From Legislation to Movement*. (Reprinted). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. p. 74.

³³²Opcit, Nirmala Buch. p. 345.

³³³Opcit, Gaurang R. Sahay. p. 115.

1954. This Act was meant for the establishment of a democratic system of local government where people participate in the affairs of local government through their representatives. As a result of the implementation of this Act, the traditional political institution of chieftainship was abolished by the Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Rights) Act, 1954.³³⁴

As per the Mizo Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953, Village Courts, Subordinate and Additional District Council Courts, and District Council Court were established in 1954. The Village Court was empowered to try civil and criminal cases based on the tribal laws and customs. In 1954, there were 288 Village Council Courts, and in 1963, the number was increased to 296. On the other hand, the PLRC, which framed the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1954, had constituted two courts to administer justice in its areas, namely, the Village Council Courts and the Regional Council Court. When the Village Council Courts were constituted in 1985, there were 41 Village Council Courts under the PLRC.³³⁵

According to the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act 1953, the village council comprises five to eleven members, depending on the number of houses in a village; for example, five members for a village having fewer than sixty houses and eleven village council members for 260 or above houses. When this provision was amended in March 1970 by the District Council, the number of members of the village council and houses were changed as follows: Four members in 100 and below houses, five members in 102-200 houses, six members in 201-300 houses, seven members in 301-400 houses, eight members in 401-500 houses, nine members in 501-600 houses and ten members in 601 and above houses.³³⁶

The duration of a village council was three years. Two-thirds of members were to be elected based on adult franchise, whereas one-third were to be nominated

³³⁴C. Nunthara. (1995). Mizoram. In Institute of Social Sciences, *Status of Panchayati Raj in the States of India 1994*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. p. 147.

³³⁵R.N. Prasad. (1995). Administration of Justice in Mizoram. In R.N. Prasad., A.K. Agarwal. (Eds.), *Landmarks: A Study of Public Administration in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Indian Institute of Public Administration. pp. 252-254.

³³⁶Opcit, C. Nunthara. p. 148.

by the executive committee of a village council. In comparison with panchayats in other states, village council authority was less than the panchayats. Village council was not endowed with the power to levy taxes on houses, professions, trades, and vehicles. The function and responsibility of the village council were also limited to certain local affairs.³³⁷ The village council was entrusted with the responsibility of allotment of land for jhumming in every village and it was authorized to call for voluntary community works when needed.³³⁸

4.6. Amendment of Village Council Acts: From 1972, village administration in Mizoram was carried out as per the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953, and the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Village Councils) Act, 1954 for the Pawi and Lakher regions. The village council, with no power to impose tax, has suffered from a lack of financial resources, political power, and responsibilities to the village council. Not only that, there was no seat reservation for women in the village council, like Panchayati Raj Institutions adopted in other states.³³⁹ Women's representation in the village council remained negligible for a long period until the reservation policy was adopted recently.

Attempts have been made to reform the village council system to make it more effective local government. Even though Mizoram was exempted from implementing the Panchayati Raj Institution, the Government of India put pressure on the government of Mizoram to form the PRIs in Mizoram. The Government of India directed the Government of Mizoram to constitute a committee on Panchayati Raj. As a result, a committee was formed, which made a draft bill called the Mizoram Panchayati Raj Bill, 1981. The draft bill recommended a two-tier system of local government. As per the recommendation, the lower tier shall consist of a group of villages having a population between 15,000 to 20,000, and the upper tier shall

³³⁷Ibid, p. 149.

³³⁸Lallianchunga. (2018). A Comparative Study of Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Critical Appraisal. *Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* (3)2, 33-44. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <https://senhri-journal.pucollege.edu.in>

³³⁹R.N. Prasad. (1995). New Pachayat System in India and its Relevance in Mizoram. In R.N. Prasad., A.K. Agarwal. (Eds.), *Landmarks: A Study of Public Administration in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Indian Institute of Public Administration. pp. 337, 340.

consist of the development councils covering the area of revenue subdivisions. However, the bill was not introduced in the Legislative Assembly.³⁴⁰

The Mizoram Legislative Assembly, on September 9, 1983, passed a resolution to increase the remuneration and facilities of the village councils. On March 18, 1994, another resolution to increase the remuneration and to enlarge the power and functions of the village council was passed by the Legislative Assembly. Following the resolution, a committee consisting of twelve members was constituted to examine the existing laws of village councils and to review the remuneration, powers, and responsibilities of the village council and make recommendations. However, no change has been made toward the power and privilege of the village council.³⁴¹

Another step taken to review the village council system is the appointment of the Administrative Reforms Commission on September 29, 1995. The Commission was assigned to review the existing administrative arrangements and to study the applicability of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in Mizoram. The Commission submitted its interim report in 1998 and recommended a three-tier system of local government institutions in rural areas comprising the village council at the village level, Area Development Council at the intermediate level, and District Development Council at the district level. It is also recommended for the establishment of Municipalities in urban areas. The Mizoram Panchayats Bill, 1999 was prepared, which provided for a two-tier system of local government institutions consisting of Gram Panchayat at the village level and Zilla Parishad at the district level. However, the government of Mizoram had not taken concrete steps to strengthen or reform the village council.³⁴²

While the state government was reluctant to constitute the Panchayati Raj system in Mizoram, the largest women's organization, MHIP, supported it and

³⁴⁰Nunthara. (2000). Mizoram. In Institute of Social Sciences, *Status of Panchayati Raj in the States and Union Territories of India 2000*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. p. 219.

³⁴¹J. Zahluna. (2008). Village Councils in Mizoram: The Structure and Function. In Jagadish K. Patnaik (Ed.), *Mizoram: Dimensions and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. p. 276.

³⁴²*Ibid*, pp. 276, 277.

demanded its introduction in Mizoram to increase women's political representation. The MHIP discussed the issues of Panchayati Raj and urban local self-government that provided seat reservation for women in its General Assembly held in 1997. It passed a resolution for the implementation of both the 73rd and 74th CAA in Mizoram and submitted a letter to the state government. The issue of Panchayati Raj was brought up again in the MHIP General Assembly in 1999, and a resolution for the implementation of Panchayati Raj Institutions to increase women's political representation was passed again.³⁴³ Despite their support and demand for the implementation of Panchayati Raj, no positive outcome had been seen following the MHIP's efforts during this period.

In contrast to the MHIP, the largest civil society organization, the YMA did not support the implementation of the Panchayati Raj in Mizoram. The Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA), the apex body of the Young Mizo Association (YMA), discussed the issue of Panchayati Raj at the Annual General Conferences of YMA in 2001 and 2004. In these Conferences, Panchayati Raj was presented as one of the issues to discuss. The Conferences decided not to pass the implementation of the Panchayati Raj in Mizoram. On the other hand, the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2000-2002) recommended the reconstruction of the local self-government system in Mizoram and suggested a two-tier system of local self-government, both at the village and district levels.³⁴⁴

The former president of the MHIP, B. Sangkhumi, said how the MHIP had fought for the successful implementation of Panchayati Raj in Mizoram, saying, 'During my presidency of the MHIP, an Additional Secretary of the Panchayati Raj Ministry, Government of India, contacted me and we met in April 2012 in Aizawl. He told me about the Ministry wanting to change the existing Village Council system in Mizoram to enable funding for local area development and introduce seat reservation for women. He said his failure to convince political parties and civil society organizations of the implementation of Panchayati Raj in Mizoram as none of

³⁴³Opcit, B. Sangkhumi. pp. 49, 138, 139.

³⁴⁴Opcit, Lallianchhunga. pp. 36, 38.

them supported it. He sought our (MHIP) help and support in his fifth time of visit to our state relating to the issue of Panchayati Raj.’

Sangkhumi further commented that ‘after our meeting, I did some research about the implementation of Panchayati Raj in other states and compiled them to distribute to the attendees of a meeting held at the MHIP headquarters office. In this meeting, civil society organisations like Mizo Upa Pawl (MUP), Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Mizo Students Union (MSU), and Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) were invited and attended the meeting. After our first meeting, the second meeting was held again, and MUP, MSU, and MZP supported the amendment of the village council act, but the CYMA decided not to attend the second meeting. Following this, we organized a seminar at the I & PR (Information and Public Relations) Conference Hall, Aizawl, in which four experts were invited to explain the implications of Panchayati Raj in Mizoram. In this seminar attended by civil society organizations and other women’s organizations, there was a consensus for the amendment of the Village Council Act, including mandatory seat reservation for women. As a result, we submitted a letter to the state government to amend the existing village council Act.’³⁴⁵

Not only the MHIP, other women’s organization like the Core Committee-Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan (PMSA) also demanded the amendment of the existing village council act to increase women’s political representation as per the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in Mizoram. The PMSA demanded the amendment of the village council act to provide 33 per cent reservation of seats for women. They also fought to increase the number of women candidates in legislative assembly elections by political parties. They demanded not less than 33 per cent of seats for women in party nominations in the elections of the legislative assembly by submitting a representation to all leaders of political parties in the state.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵Interview with B. Sangkhumi. June 30, 2022.

³⁴⁶Lalneihzovi. (2018). Participation of Women in Politics and in the Church in Mizoram. In Lalchawiliana Varte., K. Lalchhuanawma (Eds.), *Religion and Women: Pilgrims in Search of Justice and Equity*. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press. pp. 220, 221.

The government of Mizoram amended the Village Councils Act, 1953, in 2014 to enlarge the power and responsibilities of the village council and introduced seat reservation for women. Based on the Amendment Act, seat reservation for women is done based on the number of houses in villages. One seat is reserved for women among the three members of the village council in a village having 200 houses or below. The number of seats reserved for women remains the same in a five-member village council having below 500 houses. Two seats are reserved for women among the seven members of the village council in a village of more than 501 houses. Three seats are reserved for women in the nine-member village council, having more than 1000 houses.³⁴⁷

Before the government of Mizoram introduced seat reservation for women in the village council in 2014, the three autonomous district councils had already introduced seat reservation for women in the village councils. The basis of seat reservation for women, however, is different as the number of reserved seats remains the same irrespective of the total number of village council members. From the total number of seats, not less than one seat is reserved for women. The LADC amended its village council act in 2011 and provided ‘not less than one seat from the total number of seats’ for women.³⁴⁸ The CADC through its village council’s amendment act in 2011 introduced seat reservation for women in village council. Irrespective of the number of houses and the number of members of village council, the seat reserved for women remains the same which is ‘not less than one seat’.³⁴⁹ The MADC also followed the footsteps of the other two autonomous district councils in

³⁴⁷The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act 1953 as amended in 2014. Retrieved July 3, 2024, From <https://sec.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/2022/05/d50flc9db8ad93e89a096761e2d9cada/the-lushai-hills-district-village-councils-acts-1953-amended-in-2014.pdf>

³⁴⁸The Lai Autonomous District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from <https://ladc.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/2023/09/c6eb315b85d0e15e09b058f7e377007b/ladc-vc-act-2010.pdf>

³⁴⁹The Chakma Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from <https://www.cadc.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/acts-rules/2.CADC-Village-Council-Amendment-Act-2011.pdf>

2012. It introduced women seat reservation in village council of ‘not less than one seat from the total number of seats’.³⁵⁰

4.7. Women’s Representation in Village Council: Before the reservation of seats for women was adopted as per the village council amendment in 2014, only a few women were elected as members. In the first village council election held in 1954 for 338 village councils, two women were elected. There were no women elected candidates in the village council elections in 1957 and 1960. There were 422 village councils in the 1963 election, and only one woman was elected. Again, in the 1975 election, only one woman was elected. Two women were elected in the village council election in 1982, followed by no woman being elected in the 1983 election.³⁵¹

From the 1984 village council election, the number of women elected candidates slowly began to increase, but without significant numbers. There were 412 village councils in the 1984 election, and six women got elected, but the number has dropped to four in the 468 village councils’ election in 1987. In the bye-election of 16 village councils in 1988, there were three women elected candidates. In the village council elections held in 1990 and 1994, eighteen and twenty-three women candidates were elected, respectively. In the 1997 and 1999 elections, fifteen and twenty women were elected as members of the village council. In the village council election held in 2002, the number of village councils was increased to 532, and in this election, fifty-four women were elected. The number of village councils in the 2006 election was 556, with 2036 seats. In this election, thirty-four women were elected as members of the village council. In the 2009 village council election for

³⁵⁰The Mara Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2012. Retrieved October 3, 2024, from <https://madc.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachment/bfdd442a0e0bf26e7aea08aa77e57b5e/village-councils-amendment-act-2012.pdf>

³⁵¹Harendra Sinha. (2012). Empowerment of Women at the Grassroots: Relevance of New Panchayati Raj Institutions in Mizoram. In Harendra Sinha., J. Zorema (Eds.), *Empowerment of Women in North East India: Socio-Economic Perspectives*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd. pp. 249.

555 village councils, thirty-one elected candidates were women out of the total 2071 elected candidates.³⁵²

4.8. Urban Local Government: The Mizo District Council had enacted the Mizo District (Administration of Town Committees) Act in 1995 for the establishment of Town Committees in the Mizo Autonomous District (now Mizoram) as a unit of urban local self-government. However, no step was taken to implement the act for the administration of town areas. In 1967, the act was amended as the Mizo District (Administration of Town Committees) (Amendment) Act, 1967. When the Mizo Autonomous District was elevated to a union territory, the act was adapted as a state law. The Mizoram Town (Sanitation) Rules, 1980 were framed under the act.³⁵³ The government adapted the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953, in 1972 for the administration of villages in which rural and urban areas were not separated but administered by village councils in their respective areas. Meanwhile, the government had created and notified twenty-three towns without constituting an urban governance structure to look after the affairs of the urban population of the notified towns.³⁵⁴

As the government of Mizoram had not implemented the 74th CAA, the issue of urban local government has caught the attention of the urban population in Mizoram. On March 29, 1999, the Mizoram Municipal Steering Committee (MMSC), a voluntary organization, was formed that advocated for the implementation of an urban governance structure and democratic decentralization of power to the people. A seminar about urban local self-government was organized in 2004 for all the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Aizawl. The seminar was received positively, and it was decided that for the enactment of ‘The Draft Mizoram Municipalities Bill, 2002’ request should be made to the state chief minister. There was also pressure from the central government on the state

³⁵²Ibid, pp. 249, 250.

³⁵³P. Chakraborty. (2006). Perspective and Prospect of Municipal Government in Mizoram. In R.N. Prasad (Ed.), *Urban Local Self Government in India with Reference to North Eastern States*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. pp. 32, 34.

³⁵⁴R. N. Prasad. (2006). Urban Administration: Democratic decentralized Governance Perspectives in Mizoram Municipalities. In R. N. Prasad (Ed.), *Urban Local Self- Government in India with Special Reference to North-Eastern States*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 19.

government to introduce urban local self-government in Mizoram. The President of India directed the chief secretary of Mizoram to prepare the groundwork for the establishment of Municipal Councils in the urban centres of the state. Later on, 'The Draft Mizoram Municipalities Bill 2002' was approved by the Council of Ministers of Mizoram on February 27, 2007, which was later passed by the Legislative Assembly. The Mizoram Municipalities Act 2007 came into being, which established urban local self-government in Mizoram as enumerated by the 74th CAA.³⁵⁵

Among the north eastern states, Assam went far ahead in constituting urban local bodies as it has enacted the Assam Municipal Act, 1956 for the administration of Nagar Panchayats or Town Committees and the Municipal Boards. It also has a separate act for municipal corporations called the Guwahati Corporation Act, 1969. Meghalaya has adopted the Assam Municipal Act, 1956, under which Municipal Boards have been constituted, while Town Committees have been constituted by the District Councils. Manipur has enacted the Manipur Municipalities Act, 1994, which provides administrative provisions for all three types of urban local bodies in the state. Both Tripura and Sikkim have enacted the Tripura Municipal Act, 1994, and the Sikkim Municipalities Act, 1995, for urban local governance in their states.³⁵⁶ States like Mizoram, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh have now also enacted their municipal laws in their states.

4.9. The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007: According to this act, municipalities are to be constituted based on the population of the area. For a population of not less than ten thousand, a Municipal Board for a transitional area; for a population of one lakh fifty thousand, a Municipal Council for a smaller urban area, and a population of five lakhs, a Municipal Corporation for a larger urban area. The Mizoram Municipalities (Amendment) Act, 2009 added that it shall be possible to specify a town having a population of less than ten thousand as a transitional area. Regarding the number of wards, for Municipal Board, there shall be five to nine

³⁵⁵Lalrintluanga. (2016). Empowering Aizawl Municipal Council for the Improvement of Urban Governance. In Lalneihzovi (Ed.), *State and Participatory Governance in North East India*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. pp. 178, 179.

³⁵⁶U.B. Singh. (2012). *Urban Governance in North-Eastern Region: Legal Issues and Practices*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

wards, eleven to twenty-three wards in Municipal Council, and for Municipal Corporation, fifteen to thirty-one wards. The Mizoram Municipalities (Second Amendment) Act, 2015 re-classified urban areas. Under this amendment act, a population below five thousand is regarded as a transitional area, a population below fifty thousand is recognized as a smaller urban area while a population above three lakhs is regarded as a larger urban area.

The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 did not provide for a reservation of seat for women. To make necessary changes for the inclusion of seat reservation for women, the Core Committee-Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan (PMSA) pushed the government and demanded the incorporation of seat reservation as per the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act.

Zothankimi, a former two-time MLA candidate of the Congress party, said that following the advice of her friend from another state, she wanted to form Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan (PMSA) in Mizoram for the empowerment of women. Since Mizoram has not implemented Panchayati Raj, the concerned Minister at the union government told her that it was not possible to set up PMSA. ‘But I insisted’, she said. ‘Eventually, he (the Minister) agreed to form the Core Committee (of PMSA) in Mizoram, and I was appointed as convener. But the ruling government in our state could not accept me as convener (as she was an active politician from another party) and advised me to suggest another neutral figure. I became a Committee member’.

She goes on to say how the Committee challenged the state government and fought for the inclusion of the provision of women's seat reservation as mandated by the Constitution in the Mizoram Municipal Act. ‘As the state government tried to hold Municipal election based on the Mizoram Municipal Council Act, 2007, which did not include the provision of women's seat reservation, the Committee strongly opposed that move’, she said. ‘A copy letter about our intention to seek justice through the court if the Municipal election is to be held without women's seat reservation was sent to the Chief Minister and all the members of the legislative assembly. As a result, municipal election had not been held. The new state

government amended the Municipal Act in 2009, in which the provision of seat reservation for women was inserted'. She further said that the Committee also fought for the mandatory seat reservation for women in the Local Council and Village Council.³⁵⁷

The Mizoram Municipalities (Amendment) Act, 2009, provided for seat reservation for women in municipalities. The reservation of seats for women, however is not 33 per cent as mandated in the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. Instead the reservation is based on the total number of seats in which one-third of seats is reserved for women. The Amendment Act also stipulated the reservation of seats for STs and SCs in proportion to their population. For the offices of chairperson, there is no reservation of seats for women.³⁵⁸ According to the Mizoram Municipalities (Ward Committee and Local Council) Rules, 2010, members of the Ward Committee includes elected councillor, two members from the local council, and three appointed members. As per this rule, one female should be included among the three appointed members.³⁵⁹

The Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) was constituted, and the first election was held in 2010. The AMC has 19 Wards, of which six Wards are reserved for women. Reserved wards are allotted on a rotation basis in every election. In 2015, Aizawl Municipal Council was changed to Aizawl Municipal Corporation, but the number of Wards remains the same. Recently, the Lunglei Municipal Council (LMC) was constituted, and the first election was held in 2023. The LMC has 11 Wards, of which four are reserved for women.

³⁵⁷Interview with Zothankimi. February 27, 2022.

³⁵⁸The Mizoram Municipalities (Amendment) Act, 2009 (Act No. 14 of 2009). Retrieved August 5, 2024, from https://www.mizoramassembly.in/gazette?_token=kyih6te5oeneDIB40E

³⁵⁹The Mizoram Municipalities (Ward Committee and Local Council) Rules, 2010. Retrieved August 5, 2024, from <https://amcmizoram.com>.

4.10. Some Laws Relating to Women: There are laws legislated specifically for women in India.³⁶⁰ In Mizoram, one of the most important initiatives of the state government concerning the lives of women was the introduction of a new act in 2015 that deals mainly with the property rights of women in the family. A law legislated in 2014 by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly has corrected some of the issues relating to women's property rights, at least to some extent. Marriage, divorce, and inheritance laws were governed under customary laws, which put women in a disadvantaged position, leaving to have almost no rights to property under normal circumstances. The issue of women's property rights was first addressed by the first Mizo women's organization, Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual (MHT), from 1946. The MHT attempted to reform the marriage system, divorce settlement, and inheritance law under the Mizo customary law.

In 1956, the Mizo Autonomous District Council revised the Mizo customary law compiled by N.E. Parry and made a few adjustments to divorce settlement and inheritance law. Despite the MHT's effort to change the customary law, the revised Mizo customary law made no significant change toward the issue of women's property rights.³⁶¹ A more profound impact of MHT's fight for women's property rights could be considered as the enactment of the Mizo District (Inheritance of Property) Act, 1956. This act neutralized gender bias in customary laws on inheritance by giving the freedom to the testator to dispose of his or her property by 'will'.³⁶² Before this act, under the Mizo customary law, 'no Lushai (Mizo) can make

³⁶⁰The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (Amended in 1986); The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986; The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987; The National Commission for Women Act, 1990; The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005; The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006; The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. There are also laws relating to women, like the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872. National Commission for Women. *Articles on initiatives of the Government*. Retrieved August 20, 2024 from <http://ncw.nic.in/articles-initiatives-government>

³⁶¹Mizo Hnam Dan (2nd ed.), Mizo District Council. 1957.

³⁶²Act No. 1 of 1956. The Mizo District (Inheritance of Property) Act, 1956.

a will' except on the occasion that a man has no relations at all, which was very rare.³⁶³

After the MHT, the issue of personal law was addressed by the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), a voluntary women's organisation from the 1980s. In 1980, the union territory government under the law department set up the Mizo Customary Law Sub-Committee, which later became the Mizo Customary Law Committee to review the Mizo customary law. In 1981, MHIP requested the government to include at least five MHIP members in the Committee, which was rejected. This rejection was responded to by the MHIP with the publication of their discontentment in newspapers, and they even met the chief minister at the time. The MHIP headquarters Executive Committee on 16 February 1982 had resolved to submit their proposal for the division of family property on divorce to the Legislative Assembly. After five years in 1986, the president of MHIP headquarters was appointed as a member of the Mizo Customary Law Committee.³⁶⁴

On 26 February 1991, the MHIP headquarters organized a meeting with all the branches of the MHIP within Aizawl to review and discuss the Draft Mizo Customary Law prepared by the Committee. In this meeting, a resolution against the Draft Mizo Customary Law was passed, and the resolution was submitted to the Committee. The MHIP headquarters Executive Committee held on 6 May 1996 reviewed the Draft Mizo Customary Law again. They prepared a letter containing different provision needed to be changed in the customary law. and submitted to the chairman of the Committee. Besides submitting their letters for the amendment of the customary law, the MHIP General Assembly in 1997 had passed a resolution to make demand for review of the Draft Mizo Customary Law and to appeal for 40% or 30% representation of women in the Mizo Customary Law Committee. Apart from the president of MHIP headquarters, two other women were also appointed as members of the Committee. The number of women representatives from MHIP in the

³⁶³N.E. Parry. (2009). *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*. Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited. pp. 82, 86.

³⁶⁴Opcit, B. Sangkhumi. pp. 40-42.

Committee gradually increased, and some of them were included in the Screening Committee.³⁶⁵

The government released the revised Mizo customary law and notified it in the Gazette in 2005. Since the Mizo Customary Law (2005) does not incorporate what the MHIP had hope for in changing the position of women about marriage, divorce and inheritance and after learning the complexity of the nature of customary law to amend, the MHIP decided to take a new approach to change the disadvantageous position of women. The Executive Committee of MHIP headquarters held on May 9, 2005, decided to prepare three bills, namely, The Mizo Christian Marriage Bill, The Mizo Divorce Bill, and The Mizo Inheritance and Succession Bill. On December 16, 2005, the MHIP organised a workshop on ‘women empowerment’ at Aizawl in which the three draft bills were discussed. On 24 March 2006, a review meeting of the draft bills was held, and on June 1, 2006, the three final draft bills were submitted by the MHIP headquarters to the Law Department to be introduced and discuss in the Legislative Assembly.³⁶⁶

Among the three bills, ‘The Mizo Divorce Bill 2006’ was, after reviewing and deleting some provisions contained in the original bill, passed by the Mizoram Cabinet as an Ordinance³⁶⁷ in 2008. So, among the three bills submitted by the MHIP to the Law Department, only one was put forward and passed as an ordinance just before the MLA election held in November 2008. The new government constituted the State Law Commission in 2009 to identify irrelevant laws and to suggest codification of customary laws.³⁶⁸

The Mizo Divorce Ordinance 2008 was not passed by the legislative assembly within six months to become an act. Instead, the three bills submitted by the MHIP were reviewed by the State Law Commission. Then the Commission prepared the Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Bill, 2014, which

³⁶⁵Ibid, 42, 43.

³⁶⁶Ibid, 125-127.

³⁶⁷The Mizo Divorce Ordinance 2008 (Ordinance No.1 of 2008) notification No. H.12018/162/06-LJD/21, the 4th October, 2008.

³⁶⁸Mizoram State Law Commission Rules. Mizoram Gazette Notification No. A.49011/29/2009-LJD, the 4th March, 2009.

was introduced in the legislative assembly on November 12, 2014. During the discussion of this bill, the only woman MLA at the time, Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu, said that the bill is about upgrading the status of women and made an appeal to all the members to support and vote in favour of the bill to get it passed. The bill was unanimously passed by the Legislative Assembly on the same day, and the Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 came into existence.³⁶⁹

The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 has corrected some of the issues of personal laws under the customary laws. The marriage system in general remains the same. Under this act, women have the right to acquire property in divorce depending on the nature of the divorce. As for inheritance of property, this act gives women the right to inheritance of property in various capacities such as widow, unmarried daughter, married daughter, youngest sister and illegitimate daughter.³⁷⁰

Not too long after the National Commission for Women was set up in 1992,³⁷¹ Mizoram State Commission for Women was set up in August 21, 1998 and the president of MHIP headquarters at the time was appointed as the first chairperson of Mizoram State Commission for Women. Although the set-up of the Commission was a milestone for women, it was set up without legislation. The MHIP pressed the state government to pass the State Commission for Women Act to provide the Commission the legal safeguard to effectively function in the state. In May 27, 2004, the Executive Committee of MHIP headquarters resolved to press the government for the passing of Mizoram State Commission for Women bill as soon as possible and

³⁶⁹Seventh Legislative Assembly of Mizoram (Fourth Session). Retrieved March 18, 2024, from https://mizoramassembly.in/storage/Assembly/Proceedings/State/Seventh_Assembly/4th_Session/Mizo/2014/mi_pro12112014.pdf

³⁷⁰The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 (4th print). Law and Judicial Department. Government of Mizoram. 2016.

³⁷¹Among the four autonomous organisations of the Ministry of Women and Child Development is the National Commission for Women (NCW), set up as a statutory body in January 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. The NCW was constituted mainly to deal with legal and policy matters relating to and affecting women in a way to review the Constitutional and legal safeguards for women, to recommend remedial legislative measures, and facilitate redressal of grievances. It also plays an advisory role towards the government on policy matters affecting women. National Commission for Women. Retrieved July 20, 2024 from <http://ncw.nic.in/commission/about-us>

they submitted letter to the state government. The Mizoram State Commission for Women Act, 2004 (Act. No. 12 of 2004) was finally passed by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 2004.³⁷²

Mizoram State Commission for Women was entrusted to protect the rights of women under the constitution of India and other laws. The Commission is empowered to make necessary recommendations to amend existing laws affecting women and make suggestions for correction. It is also empowered to take up cases of any violation of women's rights under the constitution and other laws. The Commission is also authorized to take suo moto notice on deprivation of women's rights, denial to implement protective laws for women and rejection to comply with decisions or guidelines that aims to ensure welfare and help to women.³⁷³ In 2007, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly passed the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, to implement in Mizoram.³⁷⁴

Aside from the above laws that are related to women that have been enacted in the state, there are few government initiatives towards women in recent years which may worth mentioning.³⁷⁵ The Government of Mizoram amended the regulations of the Mizoram Civil Services (Combined Competitive) Examinations along the lines of the Union Public Service Commission's 'Civil Service Aptitude Test' in 2012. As per the new regulations, the mandatory physical test for Mizoram Police Service was removed.³⁷⁶ The removal of mandatory physical test in Mizoram

³⁷²Opcit, B. Sangkhumi. p. 47.

³⁷³The Mizoram State Commission for Women Act, 2004. No. H. 12018/146/04-LJD/4, the 16th December, 2004.

³⁷⁴Opcit, B. Sangkhumi. pp. 28.

³⁷⁵The researcher visited some state government departments like social welfare department, women and child department, health and family welfare department to see state government initiatives targetting women. Some officers in the concerned departments said that there are no specific state government initiatives or schemes targeting women other than those schemes of central government carried out by the state government that aims to empower women and girls. Women and Child Development, Government of Mizoram carried out these central government schemes for women: Mission Shakti, Hub for Empowerment of Women in the directorate and in every districts, Shakti Sadan in eight districts, One Stop Centre (OSC) in eight districts, Universal Women Helpline, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), PALNA-Aganwadi-cum-creche and Sakhi Niwas (Working Women Hostel).

³⁷⁶Janet Vanlalhlimpuii., Lalrintluanga. (2018). Women in Mizoram Police Service: Coming Out of the Shadow. In Lalneihzovi (Ed.), *Gender Equality and Sustainable Development with Special Reference to North East India*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 92.

Police Service would be more beneficial for women than men. This move may open opportunity for women to explore the traditionally unexplored areas for women.

Recently, the Mizoram government has introduced Gender budget³⁷⁷ for the first time in Mizoram. Government policies and schemes that aim to improve the lives of people in various ways can have differential impacts on men and women because of their differences. A gender budget aims to analyze the budgetary allocation and see how it would make a difference to people. Gender budgeting is not about making separate budget for women, rather it is more about making government budget to have positive gender specific impact. For the first time in Mizoram,³⁷⁸ the gender budget statement 2024-25 was introduced in the budget speech by the finance minister. It covers three departments, such as the home department, the school

³⁷⁷The publication of the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in 1974 has shed light on the need to incorporate a gender perspective on public expenditure in India. The Eighth Five-Year-Plan (1992-97) highlighted the necessity to adopt gender sensitive approach in development programmes and integrate women into development processes in different sectors. The Ninth Five-Year-Plan (1997-2002) adopted the Women Component Plan, and both the Central and State governments were directed to allocate not less than thirty per cent of funds and benefits to women-related sectors. The budget announcement in 2000-01 by the finance minister highlighted the importance of women's access to resources and integrating women into economic development. With this objective, a Task Force will be set up by the government to review existing legislation and government schemes concerning the involvement of women in the national economy. In addition, the Task Force will lay out plans for the observance of 2001 as 'Women Empowerment Year'. To consolidate this plan, the Ministry of Women and Child Development adopted the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in 2001, which pointed out the need to include a gender perspective in the budgeting process while drawing plans by Ministries. In 2003, the Ministry of Finance formed an Expert Group to review the Classification System for Government Transactions. In the Budget speech of 2005-06, the finance minister introduced a Gender Budget Statement in India. Ministry of Women and Child Development. *Gender Budgeting Handbook*.

Retrieved September 21, 2024, from

<https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/GB%20-%20Handbook%20October%202015.pdf>

Under the Expert Group, a Sub-Group was constituted to prepare the institutional framework of gender budgeting, which is to be introduced in India. The Sub-Group made several recommendations about gender budgeting, and the Expert Group believed that women-centric allocations should be depicted in the budget documents. Ministry of Finance Government of India. *Classification of Government Transactions: Report of the Expert Group Constituted to Review the Classification System for Government Transactions*.

Retrieved September 20, 2024, from <https://dea.gov.in/sites/default/files/ReportExpGrGovTrans.pdf>

³⁷⁸Some states have implemented gender budgeting early on, such as Odisha (2004-05), Tripura (2005-06), Uttar Pradesh (2005), Karnataka (2006-07) and Gujarat (2006). Among north eastern states, after Tripura, early adopters of gender budgeting are Arunachal Pradesh, which adopted in 2007-08, followed by Nagaland in 2009. Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Gender Budgeting Handbook.

Retrieved September 21, 2024, from

<https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/GB%20-%20Handbook%20October%202015.pdf>

education department and the social welfare department.³⁷⁹ In July 2024, the government of Mizoram increase the rate of pension schemes of old age, widow and persons with disability under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP). The state share of Rs.100 in the three categories of pension schemes is increased to Rs.1000.³⁸⁰

In this chapter, government initiatives to increase women's representation in rural and urban local government are explained. The evolutionary process of local government as a representative institution from the British period and the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts in India is explained in detail. The village council system in Mizoram and the amendment of the village council acts which provide seat reservation for women are discussed. Women's representation in the village council before the introduction of seat reservation is highlighted to give a glimpse of the low representation of women in local government. Women's organizations attempt to increase the representation of women in politics to understand their contribution which may also point towards the state government's lack of concern to increase women's political representation. A few laws that are related to women enacted by the state government are also mentioned in this chapter. Although the state government played a significant role in increasing women's political representation and in changing the lives of women by enacting new laws related to women, the roles and contributions of women's organizations in fighting for the rights of women and their political representation should be recognized.

³⁷⁹Government of Mizoram. Gender Budget Statement 2024-2025. As laid before the Mizoram Legislative Assembly on 27th February, 2024.

³⁸⁰Government of Mizoram. Social Welfare, Tribal Affairs, Women and Child Development Department. Notification No.B.13012/54/2023-SWD. Dated Aizawl, the 16th July, 2024.

CHAPTER V

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN WOMEN REPRESENTATION

In this chapter, the socio-economic and political profiles of women MLAs, women corporators of the AMC, women former and current members (elected and nominated) of the three Autonomous District Councils and women leaders of political parties are analyzed to understand who they are, their journey, their participation in political parties and exposure in society. The socio-economic background focuses on age, marital status, type of family, educational and occupational status, religion, and church affiliation. The political background mainly focuses on political experience (the length and nature of their experience), how they joined politics and their family network. Their opinions on reservation, low representation of women, obstacles they have faced and the problem of securing party nomination are examined. Problems of women's representation and the issue of proxy representation are also analyzed in this chapter.

Since there are only a few women (seven in total) elected in the legislative assembly from the first legislative assembly election in 1972 during the union territory to the latest election in 2023, some of the women MLA candidates especially from major party candidates is also included in this study to know their background and to identify some of the problems in women representation in politics. In such a way, the analysis of the socio-economic and political profiles of some women MLA candidates and their opinions on various issues is done first and then the profiles of the elected women MLAs are provided later.

The socio-economic and political profiles of male and female corporators of the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) are compared to compare and understand their background. After analyzing their background, the experience and opinion of female corporators of the AMC on various topics relating to women representation is analyzed. The analysis of the socio-economic and political background of women MLA candidates, male and female corporators of the AMC, women members of the three Autonomous District Councils, and women leaders of the political parties and

their opinions on various topics relating to women representation is done based on interviews conducted with them.

Apart from this, the socio-economic profile of the MLAs of 2018 and 2023 is also analyzed to see any differences with the profiles of women representatives and leaders studied in this research. The analysis of the socio-economic profile of MLAs of 2018³⁸¹ and 2023³⁸² is done using the 'Who's Who' published by the Mizoram legislative assembly secretariat and the bio-profile of MLA candidates of the 2023 election compiled by political parties³⁸³ And some of the candidates' profiles were distributed on social media during the election campaign period.

Their biographical details in the 'Who's Who' include education, marital status, and number of children, party affiliation, hobby, special interest, 'social activities/ experiences', favourite pastime and recreation, as well as countries visited. In the 'social activities/ experience' section, positions held in organizations, associations, societies, and churches were usually highlighted. Their bio-profile compiled by political parties generally contains contact details, educational qualifications, marital status and number of children, denomination of church and positions held in church, and positions held in various organizations, associations, or societies. Occupation is not mentioned in the 'Who's Who' and the document of political parties. To analyze the occupation of MLAs, the data published by the Association for Democratic Reforms³⁸⁴ is used in this study. The political experience of male MLAs (positions held in political parties and experience in political offices) is not included in the analysis due to inadequate information in the above sources used in this study.³⁸⁵ Therefore, their educational qualification, marital status,

³⁸¹Mizoram legislative Assembly Secretariat. (2019). *Who's Who*. Aizawl.

³⁸²Mizoram legislative Assembly Secretariat. (2024). *Who's Who*. Aizawl. Retrieved April 7, 2025 from <https://mizoramassembly.in/storage/downloads-forms/July2024/vJtaahmm0J07CdUfkNkK.pdf>

³⁸³MNF official candidate for 2023 general election compiled by MNF general headquarters and ZPM candidate bio-data compiled by ZPM general headquarters.

³⁸⁴Retrieved May 5, 2025 and February 4, 2025 from

https://www.myneta.info/Mizoram2023/index.php?action=show_winners&sort=default

https://www.myneta.info/mizoram2018/index.php?action=show_winners&sort=default

³⁸⁵ In the 'social activities/experience' section in the 'who's who', most of them usually highlighted their activities in various organizations and church, but political experience is mentioned only by few. In the documents of political parties, some of them mentioned their political experience in elected offices but only few of them mentioned their experience in political parties. The 2024 published

occupation/profession, social activities, and religion/church denomination are analyzed.

5.1. Women candidates of MLAs: The study of female candidates of MLAs is conducted on nine women who had contested MLA elections, and the period covers from the 1984 to 2018 elections.³⁸⁶ Among them, three were elected and six were unelected. From the first state legislative assembly election in 1987 to the latest election in 2023, the Congress has nominated eight female candidates (including a bye-election in 2014). Among the eight, one of them had contested the election thrice, and one of them had contested the election twice. As a result, the actual number of women who had contested the legislative assembly election from the Congress is five. In this study, three women from the Congress are interviewed and included in the analysis. The MNF has nominated seven female candidates so far. Among the seven, one of them had contested the legislative assembly election four times, which resulted in the actual number of women from the party to four. Among the four women MLA candidates from the MNF, two of them are interviewed and included in the analysis. Besides three women from the Congress and two women from the MNF, one female candidate each from the BJP³⁸⁷, PC, ZPM, and one independent candidate, a total of nine women were interviewed in this study.

‘who’s who’ added information about the number of times they were elected in the legislative assembly. In order to avoid inaccurate description of the political experience of MLAs, their political experience is excluded in the analysis since the focus of this study is one’s political experience in political parties and elected offices before they were elected into the legislature.

³⁸⁶ Interview was conducted before the 2023 election and the year of their contest span from the oldest one in 1984 and the latest one in 2018. It is also important to note that two women interviewed as AMC corporators in this study have contested the MLA election in 2023 and one of them won. Additionally, the socio-economic and political background of the three women elected in the 2023 MLA election is separately analyzed along with the male MLAs of 2023.

³⁸⁷ All BJP female candidates in the legislative assembly elections had forfeited their election deposit. One candidate who secured the highest vote among them was selected in this study.

5.1.1. Socio-Economic and Political Profiles

Age: The analysis reveals that two women belong to the 40-45 age group, one woman belongs to the age group of 50-55 years, three women belong to the age group of 60-70 years, two women belong to the age group of 71-80 years and one of them belongs to the age group between 81-90 years. At the time of the interview, only two people in the age group between 40-45 years were actively engaging in politics.

Marital Status: Seven were married at the time of their contest in the MLA election, among them three are now widows or divorced. Two were unmarried.

Type of Family: The data reveals that four of the respondents live in a joint family, while five of the respondents live in a nuclear family.

Educational Status: The analysis of educational status shows that among the nine women, four were post-graduate, three were graduate, and the other two completed class twelve.

Occupational Status: About the occupation, three were retired government employees. Two respondents held teaching jobs in college and high school. Two were unemployed but active in a political party. One of them identified her occupation as self-employed, and one of them has her own business (shop). The three retired government employees joined politics after their retirement. About their financial condition, 88 per cent of them could be considered as financially secure or economically well off, whether on their financial resources or as a family.

Religion/ Church Affiliation: All of them were Christian and members of the Presbyterian church.

Political experience before contesting for MLA: Though having political experience before one contests for MLA or for any other political offices is not a prerequisite to win an election, yet understanding the political experience of women who have contested for MLA is considered necessary in shedding light to understand more about their background. Out of nine women interviewed in this study, four of

them have been contested once, while the rest of five have been contested more than once. In the case of respondents who have contested more than once, their experience is counted from the time of their active involvement in politics to their first contest for MLA. Out of the five that have been contested more than once, three of them were elected as MLAs in their first attempt.

Among the nine respondents, eight of them claimed to have experience before they contested for MLA. However, the level of their experience was varied. 33 per cent of them (three out of nine) have had more than six years of political experience before they contested for MLA. 22 per cent of them (two out of nine) have had around three years of political experience before they contested in the MLA election. 33 per cent of them (three out of nine) have had less than three years of political experience, including one who has had around six months of experience before she contested for MLA. One out of nine said that she had no political experience before she contested for MLA, except for being appointed as a longtime adviser of the women's wing of a party.

Besides the length of their experience, the nature of their political experience, and the level of their involvement in political parties are also analyzed. 55 per cent of them (five out of nine) were office bearers of the women's wing in a political party at the time of their contest (three of them were directly recruited to their position without having prior involvement in the parties). 33 per cent of them (three out of nine) have had political experience as elected members (two were elected through reservation) in local government. One of them held the president post of the youth wing of the party before and during her contest. One respondent also said that she was a member of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) of the party before and during her contest.

Among the respondents, only 33 per cent of them (three out of nine) have started their political journey from grassroots politics. Only 22 per cent of them (two out of nine) have held an elected post outside of the women's wing in their party before or during their contest for MLA. Among the eight respondents (out of nine) that claimed to have past political experience, 62 per cent (five out of eight) were

party workers, 25 per cent (two out of eight) had experience both as party workers and elected village council members while 12 per cent (one out of eight) had experience as corporators in urban local government. Except for one who contested as an independent candidate, six of them (out of eight) said that they were continuing to participate in their party after they had contested in the MLA election. The majority of them were solely engaged in the women's wing of their party. Those who have longer experience as active party workers and have been able to hold elected posts outside of the women's wing within the party organization before they contested for MLA are from political families having male family members who pursued active politics.

How they Joined Politics: 55 per cent of them (five out of nine) said that they joined politics after they were invited by political parties, mostly by party leaders. 44 per cent of them (four out of nine) said that they joined politics on their own decision because of their interest in politics to serve and help people in society. All of them said that they were aware of politics before they joined, and two of them said that they were always interested in politics while growing up and plan to be actively involved in politics. One respondent who joined politics on her own decision said that the reservation policy in the village council was the main reason she joined politics, which encouraged her to fight the village council election as an independent candidate. Overall, two respondents were first brought into politics through the reservation policy in local government, from which they climbed up the ladder of state politics.

Understanding the specific reason for them to join politics, however, is not that simple in the case of those respondents joining politics after they were invited by political parties. Just like one respondent who joined politics on her own decision but mainly because of encouragement and motivation she got from the reservation policy in the village council, joining politics because of an invitation by political parties does not mean having no other reason(s) to join politics for those who have been brought into politics after they were invited. They claimed to have had some reason(s) to join politics when asked about it. About the reason(s) they decided to

join politics, ‘to help people and contribute to society’ and ‘to help the poor’ were the most common answers given by the respondents. Therefore, it can be said that some joined politics because of the motivation of political parties by inviting them. When asked if they had any intention to represent women’s interests while joining politics, more than half of them said that they wanted to represent women and work for the empowerment of women.

Family: After attempting to answer the questions of why and how nine women who had contested the MLA election joined politics, their family network is also looked into, which may help in understanding their background. One of them is a close relative of a male politician (MLA). Two of them have spouses who were actively involved in local and block-level politics. Two of them have male relatives (father-in-law, uncle), like the leader of a political party and the leader of a political movement.

Most of them have someone, either as paid help or relatives, to do domestic chores while joining politics. For some of them, child care had to come along the way of their political career. One of them said that she had to pause her involvement in the party to take care of her young children and continue to actively participate in politics after she was free from child care. One of them said that she had rejected an invitation from a political party to be the party’s MLA candidate long before she had contested, mainly because of her being a mother of young children and her husband’s rejection of that on that ground. Except for one of them who did not get the support from her family in the initial period of her political career, all of them said that they were supported by their family.

Social activities: Regarding their social activities, many of them participated and held some positions in the church and women’s organization. Six out of nine were former leaders (office bearers) of the women’s organization (MHIP). Seven out of nine were active members of the church. Among them, five were Sunday school teachers in the adult department, and two were leaders of women’s fellowship in the church, including one who held both positions simultaneously. While they participated in church and women’s organizations at such a level, their level of

participation in any other organizations, associations, or unions was negligible. Only one out of nine said that she held the office bearer post (secretary) in the YMA branch of her locality (before she married). One of them also said that she was once appointed as a committee member of the YMA group.

Two of them said that before joining politics, they got involved in other associations (mainly cultural associations). Among them, only one respondent said that she had participated in a student's association during her study (outside Mizoram) and held office bearer post. One respondent who contested for MLA twice said that she has participated in a sports association at the state level and held office bearer post after her contest for MLA.

Among the nine women interviewed in this study, three of them were elected as MLAs (in their first attempt, including one who was a nominated MLA before). Two of them were post-graduates, and one of them was a graduate. In terms of occupation, two of them were in teaching jobs, while one of them was unemployed but worked as a full-time party worker. As a family, they were economically well off. One of them came from a political family, while two of them have male relatives who were involved in politics (but mainly before their active participation in politics). All of them were active church members (two of them were Sunday school teachers in the adult department, one was the leader of the women's fellowship). One of them held the office bearer post of YMA in her locality before she joined politics. Two of them held the office-bearer post of the women's organization at the local level. Before and during their contest for MLA, two of them were leaders of the women's wing of political parties, while one of them held the president's post of the youth wing in the political party.

5.1.2. Problems: Respondents were asked about their opinion on the low representation of women in politics and if they had faced any obstacles as women while joining politics and contesting for the MLA. Most of them said that they did not face any obstacles. Though they denied facing any obstacles as women by most of them, some of them disclosed problems they had faced before. Their opinion on

the reason for the low representation of women and some of the problems of the representation of women they have highlighted are provided below:

- (a) Some of them believed that the unacceptance of women as leaders is still prevailing in society. Some of them disclosed that they had faced rejection from the people of their constituencies before the election because of their gender, on the reason that ‘they don’t want to be a constituency represented by women’ (*hmeichhe bial nih duh lo*). This kind of rejection was not only faced by women candidates from the older generation, but one candidate from the younger generation said that she had faced rejection and complaints from her constituency before the election because of her gender. One candidate also said that even though she did not personally experience rejection from her constituency but felt there was doubt about her being a leader because of her gender. The experience and views expressed by some women MLA candidates about the unacceptance of women as leader is also shared by some male politicians. A former MLA said that people including women themselves generally have low confidence in women to be leaders which caused women's low representation in politics.³⁸⁸ Some of the women party leaders interviewed in this study also revealed that there were instances where people (constituencies) did not want to be a constituency represented by women.
- (b) Some of them said that women are viewed as inferior and their status is low in society which contributed to the low representation of women in politics. The internalization of inferiority among women also causes them to be reluctant to explore the political sphere which acts as a problem in women's political representation. Gender bias in society is still prevailing which acts as an obstacle to women representation.
- (c) Some of them said that the level of women’s participation in political parties is low and unsatisfactory. Some of them said that the majority of

³⁸⁸ Interview with R. Vanlalvena, former MLA and General Secretary MPCC. June 23, 2022.

women who are participating and involved in political parties are unlikely to secure party nomination because of their low level of education and social background. Educated women and women with the ability to win the election are rare among women party workers.

(d) A few of them mentioned that the church might influence the mindset of the people by rejecting the ordination of women in the church which acts as a barrier to women political representation.

(e) Few of them said that political parties nominated women in MLA elections only in a small proportion causing the low representation of women in politics.

Those unelected candidates mainly pointed out factors such as ‘lack of time for campaigning’, ‘political party’, and ‘strong opponents’ as the reasons they did not win the election. Almost all of them said that they did not have enough time for campaigning (commonly around two or three months).³⁸⁹ Many of them (including the elected candidates) did not monitor any constituencies before they secured party nominations.

5.1.3. Their view on the Reservation: Respondents were asked about their opinion on the reservation in the legislative assembly. One of them clearly rejected it, and one of them was hesitant in her support for it, while the rest of them supported it. But, among the supporters of the reservation, some of them have concerns. Their main concern about reservations in the legislative assembly is the possibility of recruiting women who are known by the public or socially active instead of women who are actively participating in political parties. They pointed out the AMC as an example where women with such of background were nominated by parties as their candidate. According to them, the problem is the lack of interest in politics, which is evident

³⁸⁹For some, campaigning period lasted around only two-three weeks mainly because of electoral politics. Zothankimi said that a constituency which she was prepared for was changed suddenly and has had around two-three weeks for campaigning period in the 2008 election. Interview with her, February 27, 2022.

from the fact that only a few of them have continued to participate in political parties after their period as AMC corporators was over.

Women and men who are considered media personalities or sports personalities were nominated by political parties in the elections of the AMC. So far, three women with such of background were elected in the AMC. Two of them have secured party nominations in the legislative assembly elections, of which one was elected as MLA. At the same time, two men who are known to the public were also elected as corporators/ councillors. When asked about the participation of women corporators (former and current ones) of the AMC in political parties, R. Zomuanpuii, a former corporator of the AMC and president of the All Mizoram Elected Women Representatives said that only very few of them continue to participate in political parties after their period as AMC councillors/corporators was over and mentioned that even those of them who are appointed to some positions in the party rarely attended party meetings.³⁹⁰ Meanwhile, most of the male former councillors/ corporators are still active in politics.³⁹¹

Respondents who supported reservation in the legislative assembly gave some reasons for their argument for reservation in the legislative assembly. Some of them justified their reservation because of the problem of securing party nominations for women. Some of them said that affirmative action is necessary for women as there is gender discrimination (of not accepting women as leaders/representatives) in society. One of them said that there is a cultural factor that inhibits women's participation in politics, and the reservation policy will shatter the barrier as it will encourage women to join politics.

³⁹⁰Interview with R. Zomuanpuii. June 25, 2022.

³⁹¹Interview with Laltlanzova Khiangte, a two term elected corporator of the AMC, August 2, 2022.

5.2. Socio-economic profile of the MLAs of 2018: All of the MLAs of 2018 are male.

Educational qualification: Among the 40 elected MLAs of the 2018 election³⁹², 45 per cent (18 of them) were graduates, 27.5 per cent (11 of them) were post-graduates and above. 10 per cent (four of them) passed higher secondary level education (class 12 or PU), and 7.5 per cent (three of them) passed high school. Another 7.5 per cent (three of them) did not finish high school, and one of them has a diploma. Among graduates, three of them were from the medical line, while one of them had a law degree. All of them were married.

Profession: 35 per cent (14 out of 40) identified themselves as politician, 27.5 per cent (11 out of 40) identified their profession as business and 15 per cent (six out of 40) were teachers in college or university. 7.5 per cent (three out of 40) were medical practitioners while a few others identified their profession as advocate, contractor, public servant and self-employed.

Social activities/ experience: Regarding ‘social activities/ experience’, their involvement and leadership position they held in church and civil society organizations like YMA, students’ associations, sports associations, as well as their political experience, are usually highlighted. Among the 40 MLAs of 2018, 70 per cent (28 of them) were active church members who hold important positions in the church. Among them, 12 were church elders, 14 were Sunday school teachers in the adult department, and two were members of committees in the church. Besides those 28 active church members, another three them were active church members who had held important positions in the church, like deacon, teacher of Sunday school, before they were elected in 2018. Overall, this study estimated that around 77.5 per cent (31 out of 40) MLAs of 2018 were active church members. Among the 31 active church members, 77.41 per cent (24 of them) were Presbyterian, three of them were Baptist, two of them were ECM, and another two were LIKBK.

³⁹²In the 2018 election, Lalduhoma was elected from two constituencies. One of his seat was filled in the 2019 bye-election. The Assembly published ‘Who’s Who’ in 2019 which included the newly elected MLA in the bye-election. Calculation is done on the basis of that.

40 per cent (16 of them) were former leaders of civil society organizations such as YMA, YCA in Chakma, MTP in Mara, while another 40 per cent were former leaders of students' associations (generally in college). 17.5 per cent (7 of them) were former or current leaders of sports associations, either at the local or district, or state levels of sports associations. Additionally, five of them had joined the MNF movement,³⁹³ And some of them were leaders of the movement and the party itself.

5.3. Socio-economic profile of the MLA of 2023: Among the 40 MLAs of 2023, 37 are male and three them are female.

Educational qualification: Among the 37 male MLAs of 2023, graduates and post-graduates and above comprised the largest proportion with 75.67 per cent (14 graduates and 14 post-graduates and above). While two of them passed higher secondary school, five of them passed high school. One among them studied up to class 8 and one of them has a diploma certificate. All of them were married.

Regarding the educational qualification of female MLAs of 2023, two of them were post-graduates while one of them was a graduate. Among them, two were married while one was unmarried.

Profession: 29.72 per cent (11 out of 37) of male MLAs of 2023 identified their profession as business, which comprised the highest proportion, followed by politician with 27.02 per cent (10 of them). Others are mainly self-employed, journalists, teachers, pensioners, and medical practitioners. Among the three female MLAs, two of them identified their profession as pensioners (one was a teacher), and one of them was a corporator of the AMC and a media personality.

Among the 37 male MLAs of 2023, 75.6 per cent (28 of them) were active church members who held important positions in the church. Among active church members, Sunday school teachers in the adult department comprised the highest

³⁹³The MNF declared Mizoram independence from India in 1966. Following the MNF declaration, Mizoram was declared as 'disturbed area' and political unrest in Mizoram lasted for about 20 years before the Government of India, Government of Mizoram and the MNF had signed memorandum of settlement in June 30, 1986.

proportion with 32.43 per cent (12 of them), followed by church elders with 24.32 per cent (9 of them). Other active church members were deacons, members of committees, or the board. Besides them, three other elected MLAs were also active church members who had held important positions like elder and deacon before. Overall, it is estimated that around 83.78 per cent (31 out of 37) of male MLAs of 2023 were active church members. Among the active church members, 72.97 per cent (21 out of 31) belong to the Presbyterian, followed by the Baptist with 10 per cent (four) and the Salvation Army with 5.4 per cent (two). The other four belong to LIKBK, ECM, UPC (NEI), and the Seventh day Adventist.

Among the three elected female MLAs of 2023, two of them were Christians from Presbyterian and Baptist churches. One of them was a Sunday school teacher in the senior department (teenage section). The other one was a former teacher and superintendent of Sunday school in the children's department and a former leader of women's fellowship in the local church and the wife of ordained minister.

Among 37 male MLAs of 2023, 43.24 per cent (16 of them) were former leaders of YMA and MTP. Most of them held the president's post at the branch level, while a few of them were members of the executive committee. Among them, one was a former office bearer of CYMA, and one was a former president of MTP general headquarters. 27.02 per cent (10 of them) were leaders of sports associations either at the local or district, or state level. 16.21 per cent (six of them) were former leaders of the students' association, including two who were former presidents of the MZP general headquarters.

Regarding the 'social activities' of the three female MLAs of 2023, one of them was an executive committee member of YMA at the branch level and an office bearer at the section level. One of them was a former president of the Mizo community association while living outside Mizoram and a former leader (secretary) of a women organization (MHIP). Another one of them was a longtime leader of the women's organization in her locality and an office bearer of the teachers' association. About their political experience and participation in political parties, one of them was a former president of the women's wing and president of the district-level party

organization. One of them has political experience as a corporator in urban local government.

Based on the analysis of the socio-economic profile of male MLAs of 2018 and 2023, the majority of them are graduates and post-graduates and above. The majority of them identified their profession as a businessperson or politician. The majority of them are active church members who hold important positions in the church. Those active church members are predominantly Sunday school teachers in the adult department, followed by church elders. About their participation in various organizations/ associations, societies or unions as highlighted in their 'social activities', former leaders of civil society organizations such as YMA, YCA in Chakma, MTP in Mara comprised the highest proportion. The percentage of former leaders of students' associations among the 2018 MLAs was the same as that of the former leaders of civil society organizations but the number dropped among the 2023 male MLAs. Another area of social activities where male MLAs of 2018 and 2023 took an active part is in sports associations. Based on their profile, there are other organizations, associations, societies, or unions where they took an active part or held a leadership post, but overall, civil society organisations like YMA, students' associations, and sports associations are the most common ones.

Among the 40 male MLAs of 2018, 40 per cent (16 of them) were former leaders' civil society organisations such as YMA, YCA in Chakma, MTP in Mara, while another 40 per cent were former leaders of students' associations (generally in college). 17.5 per cent (7 of them) were former or current leaders of sports associations, either at the local or district, or state levels of sports associations.

Among the 37 male MLAs of 2023, 43.24 per cent (16 of them) were former leaders of civil societies such as YMA and MTP. Most of them held the president's post at the branch level, while a few of them were members of the executive committee. 27.02 per cent (10 of them) were leaders of sports associations either at the local or district, or state level. 16.21 per cent (six of them) were former leaders of the students' association.

Comparing the socio-economic background of male MLAs of 2018 and 2023 with female candidates of MLAs between 1984- 2018 and elected female MLAs of 2023 reveals that there is no significant difference in educational status and economic background between them. The biggest difference lies in social activities or the leadership position one holds in various organizations.

5.4. Socio-economic and political profiles of women MLAs: After analyzing the socio-economic and political profiles of women MLA candidates (between 1984-2018) based on the interview conducted with them and the three women elected MLAs of 2023 based on secondary sources, the socio-economic and political profiles of six women MLAs are identified and provided as under.

The six women MLAs are educated (graduates and above). More than half of them came from economically well-off families and none of them is a housewife. Among the six MLAs, three of them are former teachers, two of them are formerly employed, and one of them is pursuing a full-time political career. By the time they were elected, five of them were in the age group of 30-50, and one of them was over 60 years old. They are active church members and hold important positions in the church (Sunday school teacher and leaders of women fellowship) except one who is a non-Christian. Among the five Christians, four of them are members of the Presbyterian church and one of them is a member of the Baptist Church. More than half of them are former leaders of women's organizations.

Besides the church and women's organization, a few of them participated in other organizations. One of them held office bearer post in the branch YMA and one of them held office bearer post in the section YMA before they were elected as MLAs. One of them was the former leader (president) of the community association. About their political experience, two of them held leadership posts in the women's wing of political parties, and two of them held leadership posts outside of the women's wing within the party organization around the time they were elected. One of them has political experience as an elected corporator in urban local government, while one of them has no political experience.

5.5. Socio-economic and political profiles of female AMC corporators

Among the nineteen wards of the AMC, six wards are filled by women as per the mandatory reservation of one-third of the seats for women. In the AMC election of 2020, two women who were previously elected from reserved seats were elected from general seats, resulting in a total number of elected women to eight. An interview was conducted with eight women and eight male corporators. Besides analyzing their socio-economic and political background of both men and women, women corporators were asked different questions relating to women representation and the issue of 'proxy' women is also examined.

Age: Regarding the age of respondents, one of them was in the age group of 20-30, three of them were in the age group of 31-40, two were in the age group of 41-50, one was in the age group of 51-60 and one of them fell in the age group of 61-70. The youngest was 27 while the oldest was 64.

Marital Status: Five of them were married, two were unmarried, and one was a widow.

Type of Family: Six of them have nuclear families, while two of them have joint families. Those who are married, four of them were middle-aged women (36-45 years), having young children to take care of. Most of the married ones among them have paid domestic help.

Educational Status: Five of them were post-graduates, two of them were graduates, while one of them studied up to high school.

Occupational Status: Two of them were doing business, two of them were retired government employees, and three respondents were formerly employed. Only one among them has no income or was financially dependent before she was elected.

Religious/Church Affiliation: All of them were Christian and members of the Presbyterian Church.

Family: More than half of them came from economically well-off families. About half of them have male family members (father-in-law, father, husband) who were active church members, like church elders and Sunday school teachers. Two of them have fathers-in-law (whom they were not living with) who had been elected as MLAs and members of the village council. One of them has a male relative of a politician like an MLA. Among the married women, none of them has a husband who was involved in politics.

Social activities: Four of them were active church members who held some positions in the local church (two of them were Sunday school teachers in the adult department, and two of them were Sunday school teachers in the senior department). One of them was a long-time active member and former office bearer of the Christian Women's Association.

Two of them were actively involved in the church and had held positions like committee members in youth fellowship or Sunday school teachers before they were married. They were now in a child-caring stage. One Sunday school teacher in the adult department also said that she was a long-time Sunday school teacher in the children's department before she married, and did not hold that position after she married. After she was free from child care, she was appointed to her current position recently. Based on the analysis of their participation in church, it can be said that most of them are active church members who are well-known within the local church community.

Except for one unmarried woman who held an office-bearer post in section YMA and a committee member in branch YMA, none of them participated in YMA as active members since most of them were married. Before getting married, four of them had held some posts in the section YMA or branch YMA (mainly as committee members). This group of women, who had participated in YMA as active members before they got married, are middle-aged women in the age group of 36-45. Women's active participation in organisations like YMA would usually stop when they got married. At the lowest level, which is section YMA, few women held office

bearer posts, and none of them held office bearer posts in branch YMA. A committee member is the highest position they have held in branch YMA.

One of them was a long-time leader of a women's organisation (MHIP). Besides YMA and MHIP, two of them were involved and held leadership positions in sports clubs/associations at the local and district levels (one of them discontinued her participation after she married). Among them, two were media personalities. Among the eight female corporators, only one has not held any positions either in the church, YMA, or any other organizations/associations before she was elected. Overall, most of them are socially active women.

Based on the analysis of their participation in church, the level of women's active participation in church has usually gone down, and the positions they held in church would generally cease after they get married and have children. After freeing from childbearing and rearing, they have a chance to continue to participate in the church as active members and hold some positions in the church. On the other hand, women's participation in YMA as active members would usually stop when they get married. Unlike the church, women generally have not been involved in YMA even after they are free from childcare. This could be one good reason why women did not occupy leadership positions in the largest civil society organization, YMA, which requires constant active participation and dedication to hold a leadership position.

Women who held leadership positions in women's organizations are generally an older age group of women, and women interviewed in this study who held leadership positions in women's organizations before they were elected or nominated, or contested, are generally older age women. Evidently, the younger or middle-aged group of women, like the majority of corporators of the AMC, are not actively involved in women's organizations nor hold any type of leadership position. Besides the church, women's social participation is mainly toward women's organizations through which they gained recognition in society. With the negligible presence of women in leadership positions in organization like YMA or any other organizations, women's organizations are a space where women, especially the older-aged group of women, could actively participate in society.

Political experience: None of them has political experience, and they have never been involved in any political parties before. Seven of them (out of eight) said that if it were not for the reservation, they would not have joined politics, while one of them said that if there was an opportunity, she would not hesitate to enter politics even without reservation. Some of the female corporators were persuaded by more than one party to contest in the election. One woman councillor said that she had initially declined the invitation of a political party to contest in the election due to her being a mother of young children, but later agreed to contest in the election after the president of a political party came to their home and persuaded her to be the party candidate. When asked if they are willing to continue and move forward in politics after their present term is over, half of them said ‘yes’ while the answers given by the other half of them reflect uncertainty.

5.5.1. Their view on reservation: All of the women corporators were in favour of reservation in local urban government. They commonly highlighted that the reservation of a seat gave them the opportunity and confidence and encouraged them to enter politics. Two women corporators who were elected from general seats after they were first elected from reserved seats, said that reservation helped them realize their capability to work for the people. They were hopeful that the reservation would continue to encourage women to fight the election from the general seat in the future. As most of them are well educated, they were articulate and have a clear opinion on why reservation is justified in local urban government.

Many of them said that they support reservations because of women’s low status in society from a historical perspective, which discouraged them from entering politics. Some of them also mentioned that there is an unacceptance of women as leaders, largely because of doubt about women’s capability, and reservations helped them overcome that obstacle. Such a problem was experienced by one woman. Zodingpuii, who was elected first from a reserved seat and then went on to win from the general seat in 2020, said that she had experienced criticism mainly about unacceptance or rejection as a leader while campaigning for the general seat. But the

‘unacceptance’ came more so from women than men.³⁹⁴ Most of them generally supported reservations in the legislative assembly, but some of them believed that 33 per cent may be too high. One of them said that a reservation in the legislative assembly is not necessary.

5.5.2. Proxy representation: Women corporators were asked about how they decided in relation to their official work, whether they had decided by themselves to carry out their responsibilities. All of them said yes at the same time, many of them said that they have sought advice from others, such as their husband, parents, in-laws, leaders of their locality, and sometimes party leaders in a situation when an important specific issue arises. All of them entered the field of electoral politics after they were persuaded by political parties for their candidates. After they were invited by political parties, they consulted their husbands or family. After having their consent, they said ‘yes’ to political parties to contest in the election. None of them said that they were forced or persuaded by their families (other than encouragement) to enter politics. From the analysis of their family background, how they were recruited, and how they approach decision making relating to their work, the women corporators do not fit the label of ‘proxy’ women who are ‘stand-ins for male relatives’.³⁹⁵

Women corporators were asked if they had faced any obstacles as women while joining politics. Most of them said that they did not face obstacles or hindrances as women while joining politics. But some of them who have young or infant children had faced some problems, mainly during the campaign period, while they were struggling to maintain a balance between motherhood and their road to political office. Those of them who were married, child care was mostly done by them, and they were not completely free from doing domestic chores despite having paid help. When it comes to representing women’s interests, three of them said to have an interest in representing women’s interests while joining politics.

5.5.3. Socio-economic and political profiles of male corporators of AMC

³⁹⁴Interview with Zodingpuii, corporator of the AMC, January 26, 2022.

³⁹⁵John, Mary E. (2007). Women in Power? Gender, Caste and the Politics of Local Urban Governance. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42 (39), 3986-3993.

Age: Out of eight, six of them were in the age group of 41-50, one of them was in the age group of 51-60 and one of them was in the age group of 61-70.

Marital Status: All of them were married.

Educational Status: Four of them were graduates, three of them were post-graduates and one of them had studied up to higher secondary school (class twelve).

Occupation: Two of them were retired government employees, and two of them owned shops. Others were contractors, journalists and one of them identified himself as a social worker.

Religious/Church Affiliation: All of them were Christians from the Presbyterian Church.

Political experience: Among the eight male corporators interviewed in this study, half of them have no political experience before they were elected, while the other half have past political experience. Among the four corporators who claimed to have had political experience before the AMC, two of them were former members of the village council and the local council. One of them was an active party worker who started from local party politics and was later promoted to the party headquarters. One of them held a leadership position in the party headquarters (for around three years) without having prior involvement in local party politics before he was elected as a corporator. Around half of them joined politics after they were invited or persuaded by political parties. When asked if they were willing to continue to be involved and move forward in politics after their present term is over, only one of them said no, while the rest of them said yes.

Except few of them, most of the male corporators were not in favour of women's reservation in the local urban government. Their main points of argument against reservation were: rotation of seats for reservation can potentially harm the effectiveness of work and accountability of male corporators, and women who were not interested in politics were forced into politics. To look into the performance and how they discharge their duties is beyond the scope of this study; however, when

asked about their opinion on the performance of female corporators, some of them were generally impressed, while some of them were not. At the same time, one male corporator said that among male and female corporators, some performed very well while others did not; it mainly depends on the individual.³⁹⁶ However, some of them mentioned that in a situation when outside activity was called for as part of their official duty, those who tend to have excuses and miss those events were often women.

Social activities: Most of them were active church members and leaders of YMA. Six of them were former leaders (office bearers) of YMA, mainly at the branch level, and one of them was an adviser of YMA. One of them was a church elder, and one of them was a Sunday school teacher in the adult department. Six of them were former leaders of a youth fellowship called KTP (Kristian Thalai Pawl, a youth fellowship in the Presbyterian church). Among them, one was a well-known sports personality, and one of them said that he used to participate in a student association during his college days and held a leadership position. None of them has come from a political family, yet a few of them have parents or relatives who used to be involved in party politics. Based on the analysis of their socio-economic profile, most of the male AMC corporators are educated and socially active citizens who hold leadership positions in YMA and are active members of the church.

5.6. Female Members of the three Autonomous District Councils

From the first election in 1972 to the latest election in 2022, a total of 12 women have been recruited to the District Council of Mara, of which two were elected and 10 were nominated. Among the 12 women members of the District Council of Mara, five women were interviewed in this study. Among them, three were Congress and two were MNF members. In the District Council of Lai, a total of 10 women have been recruited from the first election in 1972 to the latest one in 2022. Among the 10 women members, only one was elected, while the rest of them were recruited through nomination. From the members of the Lai District Council, seven women were interviewed in this study. Among them, four were MNF and three

³⁹⁶Interview with Laltlanzova Khiangte, corporator of the AMC, August 2, 2022.

were Congress. In the District Council of Chakma, 11 women have been recruited so far, among them two were elected while the rest of them were nominated. Only one woman who belonged to the BJP was interviewed in this study.³⁹⁷ Overall, a total of 13 women members (former and current ones) of the District Councils of the three Autonomous District Councils were interviewed in this study. Among them, two were elected, and the rest were nominated members. The year of their election or nomination was varied. One of them was from the first batch of women nominated members in the District Council politics in 1992, while some of them were from the latest election.

5.6.1. Socio-economic and political profiles:

Age: The data relating to the age of respondents shows that the age group between 61-70 years comprises the highest number with five, followed by three in both the age groups of 71-80 years and 51-60 years. Another two respondents fall under the age group of 20-30 years and 41-50 years. The youngest was 29 years who was nominated as a member in 2020.

Marital Status: During and before they were member of the District Council, ten were married, two were unmarried, while one was a widow. Among the ten married women, eight of them have husbands of government employees, while the husbands of the other two were involved in local-level politics (village council). At the time of the interview, seven of them were married, three of them were widows, two were unmarried, and one was divorced.

Type of Family: Among the respondents, only a few of them have a nuclear family while the majority live in a joint family.

Educational Status: With regard to educational status, the analysis of data shows that out of the thirteen respondents, one was post-graduate, three of them have completed high school, and one of them studied up to class nine. Three respondents

³⁹⁷For the Chakma's, language barrier created some problems and some of them could not be contacted. As a result, only one from women members of the Chakma Autonomous District Council was interviewed in this study.

have studied up to class eight and three of them have completed class seven while there was one respondent who did not attend school.

Occupational Status: Among thirteen respondents, seven were housewives, and three had been engaged in small businesses like running a small shop and a tailoring shop before they were recruited as members of the District Council. Two were employed at the government (health worker and mustered roll) before they were recruited to the District Council. One respondent used to work at a private school before she was nominated as a member of the District Council. Some of the respondents have opened shop, and some of them supplemented their family income by working in the field or looking after livestock after their period as members of the District Council was over.

Religious/Church Affiliation: Except for one who follows Buddhism, all the other respondents were Christian. Members of the Lai District Council were members of the Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran (LIKBK) church and the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM). Members of the Mara District Councils belonged to the Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM).

Political Experience and how they joined politics: More than half of them were party workers, leading the women's wing in their party. Sixty-one per cent of them (eight out of thirteen) were leaders of the women's wing in their party, which the respondents gave credit for them to be selected as nominated members of the District Council (except one who was an elected member). Usually, they were presidents of the women's wing of their party; however, there are some cases where vice-presidents were recruited in the nominated seat mainly due to the person holding the president's post not being born in the land (in their area). One common route that these women party workers followed was that they would join politics after they were invited by leaders of women's wings of the party or local leaders of the party, either to join the women's wing of their party or to contest in the village council election due to a lack of candidates.

Among the former leaders of the women's wing of parties, about 23 per cent of them (three out of thirteen) were previously elected as members of the village council before they were nominated members of the District Council. Those women usually had been involved in politics longer than those who did not have experience in local politics, as their length of experience ranged from twelve to twenty-two years before they were recruited as nominated members of the District Council.

While more than half of them were recruited as nominated members because of their active participation in the party, some of them had not gone through party politics and were short-circuited to the nominated seat. Out of thirteen respondents, thirty per cent of them (four out of thirteen) were directly recruited as nominated members. Among them, three were recruited through the patronage of party leaders because of their family connection, while one was selected by a party as recommended by the governor of the state at the time. About the reason she was selected by a party, the first female nominated member of LADC, K. Zapari said, 'they told me that the governor directed them to include women in the District Council and to select someone who is an active member of the church and involved in social work, who passed matriculation education. They told me they selected me based on that criterion.'³⁹⁸

Regarding the two elected members, one of them was the leader of the women's wing of a party, while the other one had directly fought the District Council election without having experience either in local politics or in the party. About the reason why they could secure party nomination, two elected members gave credence to the role of party leaders. N. Sangnawni, the only woman elected member of LADC, said that she had benefited through the patronage of the party leaders to contest the election twice in 2010 and 2015, in which she won in her second attempt with the help of a male politician.³⁹⁹ Kusum Lota Chakma, elected in 2018 in CADC said that she joined the BJP in 2016 and held the post of president of mahila morcha which gave her the platform to persuade party leaders coming from outside the state

³⁹⁸Telephone interview with K. Zapari, nominated member of Lai District Council 1992, March 1, 2023.

³⁹⁹Telephone interview with N. Sangnawni, elected member of Lai District Council 2015, March 1, 2023.

for party nomination. Aside from this, her party as a national party ‘intended to nominate a woman candidate in the election despite a tough fight among men for a party ticket’, she added.⁴⁰⁰

As party workers, respondents mainly worked in the women’s wing of the political parties. Only one out of thirteen was involved in the main party organization (in addition to her being a leader of the women’s wing) who held the treasurer post at the block level. Another respondent also said that she was once appointed as the adviser of the local unit of her party.

Family: Out of thirteen, three of them have male family members like husband, father and brother who made their mark in the political party or District Council politics.

A few of them were able to afford paid help in the home while joining active politics, and some of them have other female family members to do domestic chores. But most of them did domestic chores while pursuing politics and most of them joined active politics after they were free from childcare. Among the married women, most of them said that they have received support from their husbands, and they usually sought their husbands’ approval to join politics. But one of them said that she could not travel to other places in relation to her work because of her husband’s disapproval.

Social Activities: 46 per cent of them (six out of thirteen) were leaders of women’s organizations. Around the same number were active church members who held leadership positions in women’s fellowship in the church. Besides the church and women’s organizations, none of them participated in other organizations or associations as active members.

From the analysis of the opinion and experience of women former and current nominated members in the Autonomous District Council, one’s contribution towards the party plays a significant role in the recruitment process to the District

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with Kusum Lota Chakma, elected member of Chakma District Council, January 23, 2022.

Councils for women. Former chief executive member of Mara District Council and former minister, S. Hiato said that contribution to the party as active members was the main criterion in selecting women nominated members, followed by one's level of activities in church and organizations, and educational qualification. He added that if there are constituencies less represented than others, that would also be considered. Personality to be an effective member is important too.⁴⁰¹ At the same time, a long-time member of the Mara District Council said that women nominated members were given nominated seats mainly because of their contribution to the party. Family influence or one's level of participation in church or organizations were not factors in selecting women nominated as members.⁴⁰²

5.6.2. Problems: Almost all of them said that the social and cultural view about public and private distinction was pervasive and discouraging for women to pursue active politics. They said that gender norms were prevailing in society, which acts as a hindrance for women to participate in politics and discourages them from going further in their political careers. One former nominated member revealed that she had faced discouragement even from her family members not to attempt to fight the District Council election from a general seat because of her gender.

When asked the former nominated members if they had any interests in contesting the District Council election from the general seat, almost all of them said 'no'. Lack of confidence, problem of securing party nomination, and financial problem for election expenses were the main reasons they pointed out for not aiming to fight for the general seat. Very few among them said that they wanted to go further, but expressed their doubt and lack of confidence about it, mainly because of their low educational status and gender discrimination (women should not be involved in politics) toward women in society. They have extremely low self-esteem and a lack of confidence to go further and fight from the general seat in the District Council. Some of them pointed out the absence of educated women in political parties as one of the problems facing women's representation in politics (District Council).

⁴⁰¹Interview with S. Hiato, January 10, 2023.

⁴⁰²Interview with H.C. Lalmalsawma Zasai. Member of Mara District Council. January 10, 2023.

However, one current nominated member, a postgraduate and young unmarried woman said that she was supported while joining politics and did not personally experience such kind of societal view against women in politics. However, it is important to note that she was recruited to her position through the patronage of party leaders and had no experience of working in local party politics. For nominated female members, attending meetings and sessions is what they mostly do as nominated members.⁴⁰³ Among the elected and nominated female members, a few of them were appointed as chairpersons of the Town Committee. But the Committee is not functioning and is left with no duties to perform.⁴⁰⁴

5.7. Women Leaders of Political Parties:

To understand the problem of securing party nomination and to examine the work and level of involvement within the party organization, women leaders of four parties were interviewed in this study. Their socio-economic background, their political journey and experience in political parties are examined in detail. Their opinion on the problem of the representation of women and the issue of reservations is also analyzed in this section. The respondents comprised the office bearers (president, vice-president, and treasurer) of the women's wing of Congress and MNF. From ZPM, the president, senior vice-president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary were interviewed. From the BJP, the president and general secretary, and from the PC party, the president and secretary were interviewed.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³Telephone interview with P. Lalrinpuui, nominated member of District Council LADC 2010, February 5, 2023.

⁴⁰⁴Telephone interview with N. Sangnawni, elected member of District Council LADC 2015, March 1, 2023.

⁴⁰⁵Women's wing of other parties was less organized compared to the Congress and the MNF. For the MNF and the Congress, office bearers include president, vice-president and treasurer in which the president was appointed by the party president while the rest of women leaders were appointed by the president of the women's wing. However, it was not the same with other parties as some of the women party leaders (who were not president) said that they were appointed by party president. The general secretary of the women's wing of the PC party suggested the researcher to include the newly appointed secretary who was living outside the state in the sample mainly because she thought she would be a better candidate than others. On the other hand, the vice-president of the BJP women's wing declined interview. As a result, only two from the BJP and PC were interviewed in this study.

5.7.1. Socio-economic and political profiles:

Age: Among the respondents, three were in the age group of 30-40, and four were in the age group of 41-50. Three of them were in the age group between 51-60, four women were in the age group between 61-70 years, and one of them was above eighty years. Overall, the youngest is thirty-eight years old, and the oldest is eighty-one years old. The average age of women party leaders is BJP 41, INC 46, MNF 50, PC 51, and ZPM 64. The overall average age of women party leaders is 53.

Marital Status: The analysis of data shows that six of them were married and four of them were unmarried. Four of them were widows and one of them was divorce.

Type of Family: Eight among fifteen respondents were living in a nuclear family while the rest of seven respondents were living in a joint family.

Educational Status: Among the fifteen respondents, seven were post-graduates (master's degree), and three of them were graduates. Two of them have finished high school, and two of them have finished middle school, while one respondent has studied up to class five. Among the seven master's degree holders, six of them were more recent recruits, including three who had joined their parties about two years ago.

Occupational Status: Regarding the occupation, two of them were retired government employees, while three of them were formerly employed. Three of them have their own business, while two of them have been working or contributing to managing the family shop or business. Two of them were currently working and employed. The rest of the three were unemployed. Among the three of them, one was a full-time party worker, and another one used to engage in business back in the day. So, analyzing the occupational status of the respondents reveals that only one or two out of fifteen can be considered as housewives.

Religious/Church Affiliation: All of them were Christian. Ten of the respondents belong to the Presbyterian church. Two of them belong to the Salvation Army church, while the rest of three respondents belong to the Baptist church, the Roman Catholic church, and UPC (NEI).

Social Activities: Among the fifteen respondents, three of them were leaders of women fellowship in the church and four of them were teachers of Sunday school in the church (three of them at the adult department while one was at the teenagers' department called the senior department). Generally, leaders of women's fellowship in church are an older-aged group of women while Sunday school teacher at the adult department is composed of a middle-aged group of men and women as well as older older-aged group of men and women. Another three of them said that they had been actively involved in church before they got married.

Among the fifteen respondents, none of them held a leadership position (office bearers) at the section, branch, group, or central YMA. However, four of them have held office bearer posts like treasurer in the section YMA or committee members in the branch and group YMA before. For married women, their active involvement in YMA has stopped after they got married. Four out of fifteen respondents were either former or current leaders of women's organization, MHIP at local or headquarters levels (three of them at the local level while one of them was a former office bearer of MHIP general headquarters). All four of them are above the age of 50 years. Besides the church, YMA and women's organization, one of them said that she has participated in other organization (community organization) and one of them said that she used to participate in sports associations at the local level before she married. None of them participated in student associations during or after their study, and none of them has held a leadership position in any student association. However, one of them said that she was appointed as the adviser of a student association in her village.

How they joined politics: Among the respondents, more than half of them (eight out of fifteen) said that they joined politics after they were invited. They were either invited by party leaders or leaders of the women's wing of parties. Among the

respondents who joined politics after they were invited, half of them were either elected or unelected candidates of the Aizawl Municipal Corporation who were recently recruited to their current posts in the women's wing of parties. Another half of them that joined politics as a result of being invited have joined politics after they were invited by women leaders of parties, and in some cases, direct appointment to some positions in the women's wing at the local level was given to them to get them to participate in parties. In general, those who joined politics after they were invited said that their interest in politics was developed after learning about party policy.

Some of them came from families that have allegiance to parties as strong and loyal supporters, and those respondents coming from this type of background participated in parties with the knowledge and interest in politics and strong party feelings toward their parties that were generated in their families. Four of them (out of fifteen) came from this type of background and pursued active politics. Among them, those who were coming from a regional party, especially the MNF, have strong feelings toward the party based on party ideology instead of party policy.

Based on the analysis of their political journey and experience, the opportunity to hold posts in the women's wing within the party organization is greater for new or smaller parties like the BJP and PC compared to parties like the Congress and the MNF. Some of them from smaller parties hold their positions in the women's wing mainly because of a lack of other women in their parties. One of them told the researcher that she would not be holding her current position if there were others to appoint. Besides, their political experience within the party organization is also short-circuited, as none of them started their political journey from the local or unit level of party politics.

Political Experience: Among the fifteen women party leaders interviewed in this study, about three of them have occupied some posts within the party organization outside of the women's wing. Besides holding some posts within the party organization, a few of them have gone through local, block, and district-level party politics and held important posts along the way. Two women leaders from the MNF have held important posts like elected block president, chairwoman of the local

council, and elected member of the national executive committee. The President of the women's wing of the Congress was formerly elected as president and treasurer of the youth wing of the party. The president of the women's wing of the BJP also once held the vice president post of the party at the district level.

The length of their experience is also different, mainly based on parties rather than on individuals. Women leaders of the two oldest parties, the Congress and the MNF, have started their political journey as party workers from the local level and spent a long period in their parties, except for two newly recruited women. Women leaders of the ZPM were former leaders of the women's wing of two parties, the MPC and the ZNP, except one newly recruited woman. Leaders of the BJP and the PC were more recently recruited to their current posts.

Furthermore, when asked if they were interested in or have plan to take further step such as contesting for MLA, only two of them confidently said 'yes' and five of them said 'yes' but more so less confidently. 'if opportunity comes', and 'I will not fight for party nomination, but if they give me party ticket I would not hesitate to contest' were the most common answers. However, one of them said that she has no plan to enter electoral politics; instead, occupying a leadership position within the party organization was her focus. The rest of them said that they were willing to continue to work for the party, but had no plan or interest in contesting for MLA. Among those who showed unwillingness, most of them were elderly women. Age, low educational status, and lack of confidence were their main reason for not wanting to take further steps.

5.7.2. Their reservation view: There were mixed reactions about reservations for women in the legislative assembly among women party leaders. Women party leaders of ZPM and BJP were generally in favour of reservation for women in the legislative assembly. Some of the leaders of Congress and MNF were not in support of it while some of them support it but with some concern about reservations. One of them said that reservation would be the only way to secure party nomination for women as there is a cultural barrier that puts women at a disadvantage in comparison with men. But the problem is that political parties picked women of good social

background (those who were active members of civil society organizations or known by the public) who were not involved in political parties and lacked interest in politics instead of those who pursued active politics in political parties. What some of the women leaders, especially those of them who pursued active politics for a long period of time complain about is that most of the women representatives in urban local government in Aizawl have not continued to participate in political parties after their term was over.

5.8. Women's Wing and Political Parties: Campaigning during elections, visiting and forming women's wing units, and participating in various functions in the party are some of the most common tasks done by the women's wing of the parties. Securing party nomination is a necessary step to be elected, and one of the problems facing women's political representation is securing party nomination. All of the presidents of the women's wing of the parties interviewed in this study said that they never pressed political parties to nominate women in MLA elections. When asked about internal pressure from the women's wing on the party to nominate women candidates, the president of the ZPM women's wing, said that they have not done that and 'they are willing to press the party if there are good women'. When asked whether the women's wing made recommendations about party policy, she simply said their position in the party is low, and they are not in a position to do much.⁴⁰⁶ On the other hand, the president of the women's wing of MNF said that she has been included in those committees that dealt with the formulation of party policy and voiced women's interests and concerns. But said that holding important posts within the (main) party not in the forefront is the key to making a difference or exerting influence whether in policy formulation or in the selection of candidates. Unfortunately, women are in a position of power within the party organization.⁴⁰⁷

Despite the women's wing's inactivity towards parties to nominate women candidates, parties like Congress have been practicing an unwritten rule to nominate women party leaders, according to the president of the Congress women's wing, Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu. She said that the presidents of Mahila were given party

⁴⁰⁶Interview with Catherine Sangzuali, president of women's wing ZPM, June 29, 2022.

⁴⁰⁷Interview with K. Lalrengpuii, president of women's wing of MNF, July 2, 2022.

tickets in the MLA election (s) as per ‘the party’s unwritten rule’.⁴⁰⁸ From the 2003 election, Congress has nominated female candidates in every election, and most of them were mahila presidents.⁴⁰⁹ Based on the answers given by leaders of women’s wings of parties, women’s wing of political parties has never or rarely put pressure on political parties to nominate women candidates in the legislative assembly elections.

However, there are some reasons raised by women leaders and male politicians for why parties do not nominate more women candidates. The president of MNF’s women’s wing pointed out the lack of women possessing qualities to win in elections in the political parties, saying, ‘In every party, not only us, there are not many women who have qualities to win, who actively pursue politics in the field’. She added that she had visited all the unelected women candidates of the party in the AMC election after the election and invited them to participate in the party with the hope that ‘educated women would join active politics’.⁴¹⁰ Vice president of the MNF’s women’s wing also mentioned the problem of selecting women as candidates and the lack of educated women or women possessing qualities to win who pursue active politics in the party. In addition to this, she pointed out the competitive nature of securing party nominations in MLA elections in which ‘a single constituency would be monitored by multiple men while women did not do the same’.⁴¹¹

Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu talked about the unacceptance of women as leaders in relation to the problem of securing party nomination saying ‘people choose men over women and women themselves also choose men over women in elections. Because of this reason, parties unavoidably choose men over women to be their candidates.’⁴¹² Vice president of the MNF and former member of the Lok Sabha, Vanlalawma, said that women have not been deeply involved in parties and also in

⁴⁰⁸Interview with Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu, president pf women’s wing of Congress, January 21, 2022.

⁴⁰⁹Zothankimi, the INC candidate in 2003 and 2008 elections held president post of the mahila when she was first contested in 2003 and held the post of general secretary MPCC by the time she contested in 2008. In the 2014 bye-election, the party nominated a female candidate who was not the mahila president at that time.

⁴¹⁰Interview with K. Lalrengpuii, July 2, 2022.

⁴¹¹Interview with Florence Vanlalrengpuii, vice-president of women’s wing of MNF, June 25, 2022.

⁴¹²Interview with Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu, January 21, 2022.

other areas, even though they have participated to some extent to secure party nomination. He adds female ‘vote bank’ as another reason why parties do not nominate women as candidates in MLA elections, saying ‘women do not necessarily vote for women’.⁴¹³ Catherine Sangzuali also pointed out ‘vote bank’, saying ‘we (women) do not support each other’.⁴¹⁴ Former president of the MHIP, Lalthlamuani said that despite the continuous attempt of the MHIP to increase political representation of women whether in local or state level elections, by various means, people give importance to political parties instead of gender.⁴¹⁵

From the first state legislative assembly election in 1987, the two oldest parties, the Congress and the MNF, have never nominated more than one female candidate until the 2023 election, in which they have nominated two. The Congress has nominated women in seven legislative assembly elections, including one bye-election, while the MNF has nominated women in six legislative assembly elections. In total, the Congress has nominated eight female candidates, while the MNF has nominated seven female candidates. The MNF has nominated the same person in four legislative assembly elections. The Congress has nominated the same person in three legislative assembly elections, including a bye-election, and one female Congress candidate has contested twice. The PC (also called as MPC before) and the ZNP have nominated four and three female candidates, respectively, while the ZPM (the agglomerate of the MPC, the ZNP, and others) has nominated four. The BJP has historically nominated a greater proportion of female candidates than others, and 2018 was the party’s highest with six women. The majority of women candidates in the history of the legislative assembly elections are nominated either by smaller or new parties, or they contest as independent candidates. For example, the BJP, which nominated the greatest proportion of female candidates, has won only one seat in 2018 for the first time, followed by two seats in 2023.

Generally, women party workers are mainly working at the women’s wing, and as a result, the experiences of women party leaders and those who have contested for

⁴¹³Interview with Vanlalawma, August 3, 2022.

⁴¹⁴Interview with Catherine Sangzuali, June 29, 2022.

⁴¹⁵Interview with Lalthlamuani, January 18, 2024.

political offices seem to be limited. Moreover, the women's wing as a separate unit of the party is not as competitive as others, like the youth wing. Presidents are appointed by the party president, and other office bearers are appointed by the president of the women's wing. In this way, there is no election for office bearer posts even in the two oldest and largest parties, MNF and Congress, while the office bearers post of other frontals like the youth wing has to go through an election. Low participation of women in the party is one common problem raised by women party leaders and the uncompetitive nature of the leadership of the women's wing points to the low participation of women in political parties.

The status of the women's wing within the party organization is somehow reflected by the posts held by women party leaders within the party organization. Both the Congress and the MNF have promoted former leaders of the women's wing to some posts in the party. Congress has adopted a more progressive approach when it comes to promoting women party workers. The former president of the women's wing of the Congress is promoted to the post of general secretary in the main party organization. For the MNF, they are promoted to the post of secretary in the party after their period in the women's wing as president is over. Based on this practice, two out of 32 (6.25 per cent) general secretaries of the MPCC are women who are former leaders of the mahila as of 2022.⁴¹⁶ Four out of 99 (4.04 per cent) secretaries of the MNF are women who are former leaders of the 'women front' as of 2022.⁴¹⁷

5.8.1. Problems: Based on the opinion of the women's party leaders interviewed in this study, there are some problems of representation of women in politics. Many of them mentioned their dissatisfaction with the level of women's participation in political parties, which they believed is one of the factors responsible for women's low representation in politics. Women party leaders, especially those of them who have had a long period of experience as party workers, said that educated women having political interests do not join politics or are not in political parties, which results in the problem of selecting women candidates in the MLA election amidst tough competition among men in political parties.

⁴¹⁶Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. 'MPCC Office Bearers 2019-2022'.

⁴¹⁷Mizo National Front. General Headquarters. Telephone Directory 2022.

Some of them opined that the internalization of women not being involved in politics is prevailing in society, which acts as a barrier to women's participation in politics. Many of the women party leaders also said that low self-esteem and lack of confidence among women are one of the problems that contribute to the low representation of women in politics and their low participation in political parties. At the same time, some of the women party leaders interviewed also said that women who joined party politics are not viewed with high regard by society.

Despite the existence of women's wings functioning in parties, many of them said that those who are actively working in their parties are generally less educated and less likely to be nominated as candidates. Based on this notion, educational qualification seems to play an important role for women to be perceived at least, as desirable for a candidate. Regarding the educational qualification of women party leaders interviewed in this study, seven of them (out of fifteen) are post-graduates; however, six of them are more recently recruited, and the majority of them are from small parties (in the Mizoram context) like the BJP and PC. Additionally, among the three graduates (out of fifteen) of women party leaders, two of them joined active politics not long ago. The rest of them (five out of fifteen) have received high school and below high school levels of education. But this group comprises the most experienced as a group, as most of them have spent a long period as active party workers and have started their political journey from local-level party politics and then climbed to their present position in the party headquarters.

To recruit 'educated women' into political parties, the Congress, the MNF and the ZPM have recruited AMC corporators (who possessed graduate and above qualifications) as the office bearers of the women's wing, while the BJP has done the same but with an unelected AMC candidate. Based on the analysis of the background of women party leaders and their views and opinions on the problem of women's representation, the problem lies in the low participation of women, especially educated women, in political parties as active party workers which would be the important and necessary step to secure party nomination in elections. Among the women party leaders who have started their journey from local/unit party politics and

have comparatively longer experience as party workers in parties, only two (out of fifteen) were either post-graduate or graduate. At the same time, out of the total seven elected female MLAs from the union territory, four of them (66.6%) were postgraduates and three of them (42.85%) were graduates.

Another problem and concern is the nature of women involvement within the party organization as only a few among women party leaders have been involved in the party outside of the women's wing. Even those who are involved outside the women's wing do not hold important elected positions within the party organization. Except for women party leaders like the president who were appointed as members in committees like the national executive committee whose title as leader of the women's wing automatically qualified them for or women party leaders elected in the executive committee through reservation as in the case of the Congress, only a few women party workers have been able to get elected in the party executive committee.

For instance, in MNF, one of the oldest and largest political parties in the state, no woman has been elected as general secretary (in the headquarters), and the secretary post is the highest that women party workers could reach as of now. A few former presidents of the MNF women's front are appointed as national executive committee members. Around ten women in total are appointed as members of the national executive and national council.⁴¹⁸ As a result, office-bearer posts and almost all the other important committees within the party organization are solely dominated by men. Women are not in a position of power as important posts within the party organization are completely occupied by men which would impact their influence and voice within the party organization. Looking at the position of women party leaders within the party organization also reveals that they are not in a position of power to raise issues concerning women in formulating party policy. Generally, the women's wing itself has played a less significant role compared to other fronts like the youth wing and has not made a mark within the party organization given the position that women party leaders have secured within the party.

⁴¹⁸Interview with K. Lalrengpuii. President of Mizo National Women Front, July 2, 2022.

This chapter explores various topics and issues surrounding the representation of women in politics. In the first section, the background, opinions and experiences of former female candidates of MLA are analyzed to understand their characteristics, their experiences and their views as women. Based on the analysis of their experiences and opinions on various issues, some of the problems about women's political representation are highlighted. The socio-economic and political profiles of elected women MLAs are provided later. In the second section, the socio-economic profiles of male MLAs of 2018 and 2023 are examined to help us understand the standard of recruitment in the legislative assembly, at least in recent years, if not in general. The third section of this chapter focuses on the male and female corporators of the AMC. The issue of proxy representation and the hindrances faced by women corporators which were largely of structural barriers are highlighted. The fourth section focuses on women members of the three Autonomous District Councils. This section attempts to answer how women nominated members were recruited into the District Council and why nominated women have not fought the District Council election from a general seat. The problems of representation of women such as cultural barriers, lack of education, lack of confidence and low self-esteem are identified in this section. The last section of this chapter focuses on women party leaders. Their socio-economic and political profiles are highlighted to understand who they are and see if they fit the standard of recruitment in the legislative assembly. Focus is also made toward the position of the women's wing within the party organization and the role they played in advancing women's interests and concerns in the formulation of party policy and in pressing the party to nominate women candidates in elections. The issue of reservation is also analyzed in this chapter which further suggests a more nuanced and complex issue of women's political representation in Mizoram. The next chapter will summarize the whole study and the findings of the research.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Women in Mizoram began to participate in electoral politics from 1948 through the reservation of seats in the Lushai Hills Advisory Council. From the District Council period in 1952, seat reservation for women was abolished and nomination of seats was introduced which had been continued during the union territory period. After statehood in 1987, seat nomination was abolished and a few women have been elected to the legislative assembly over the years.

The universal adult franchise that was introduced since independence in 1947 allows both adult males and females to freely participate in politics. Adult males and females, irrespective of gender, caste, religion, or class, can vote and contest whether in the national legislature, legislative assembly or local government. Despite having equal political rights for men and women in the constitution of India and some prominent women at the forefront of Indian politics, the political status of women continues to be low. 74 women were elected as MPs of Lok Sabha in 2024 lower than the previous 2019 election in which 78 women MPs were elected. Despite the increasing pattern of women representation in the lower house in India in recent years, India remains at a low ranking position at the global level.⁴¹⁹

Among the northeastern states, Assam has the highest number of women Lok Sabha MPs. From the first to sixth Lok Sabha (1977-80), Assam has elected women MPs of the Lok Sabha in each term. Between the seventh and eleventh Lok Sabha, Assam has no women MP. After a gap of about 18 years, Assam elected a woman MP again in 1998 and has continued to elect women since then in every Lok Sabha election except in 2004. In Nagaland, the first female MP of the Lok Sabha was elected in 1977. Sikkim elected its first woman Lok Sabha MP in 1985. One woman

⁴¹⁹India ranked at 151 in the Inter Parliamentary Union's rankings as of 1st July 2025'. Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments. Retrieved July 3, 2025 from [https:// data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_month=7&date_year=2025](https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_month=7&date_year=2025)

was elected in 1991 in Tripura and Manipur elected its first woman Lok Sabha MP in 1998. In 2004, Meghalaya elected its first female Lok Sabha MP.⁴²⁰

In 2019, a total of three women from the states of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura were elected. Only two women from the states of Assam and Tripura won the Lok Sabha 2024 election among the northeastern states.⁴²¹ Among the northeastern states, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are the only states that have not elected women MP of Lok Sabha. Manipur and Nagaland too have not elected women MP again after they have elected the first time in 1998 and 1977 respectively.

No woman has been elected as MP of the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha in Mizoram. Major political parties in the state have never fielded women candidates in the elections of Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. After one woman had unsuccessfully contested in the 1977 Lok Sabha election, one woman had contested the Lok Sabha election in 2024. The only woman candidate in this election was from an unrecognized political party with no chance of winning based on the party's previous electoral performances in the legislative assembly elections. Since the attainment of statehood in 1987, only five women were elected in the state legislative assembly that too with the latest election in 2023, when three women were elected.

6.1. Summary: The first chapter is an introductory chapter that discusses the meaning and theory of representation. Feminist arguments for descriptive representation of women are explained in this chapter. The concept of representation is understood as standing up for an individual or group of people and acting on behalf of the interests of the group of people.⁴²² Representation is a process that builds a medium of two-way communication, expressing aspirations and producing responses between the state and society. The term representation of women emphasizes the notion to mean 'increasing the number of women in political office because of the assumption that women in power would be more responsive to

⁴²⁰Opcit, Shirin M. Rai., Carole Spary. pp. 133, 134.

⁴²¹Retrieved January 11, 2025, from <https://www.eci.gov.in/general-election-to-loksabha-2024-statistical-reports>

⁴²²Andrew Heywood. (2014). *Politics*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 356.

women's interests than men would be'.⁴²³ This chapter traces the evolution of the women's movement for suffrage in India and abroad. It contains the statement of the problem, review of literature, methodology, objectives, research questions, as well as limitations of the study.

The second chapter deals with women's status in politics from the traditional period to the present. It deals with women's political status during the chieftainship period, which provides a historical context and how they enter electoral politics as a result of the changing political situation from traditional institution to democracy. It provides the electoral performance of women in elections from the District Council period to the present day legislative assembly. The introduction of electoral politics after the setting up of the advisory council is examined, and how women, through the reservation of seat, were brought into electoral politics. Women's seat reservation was abolished in the district council and seat nomination was introduced, in which a few women were participated in the district council and the legislative assembly of the union territory. The chapter also discusses women's representation in the state legislative assembly and the number of women candidates fielded by the political parties. It also discusses women's representation in the three autonomous district councils.

Chapter three examines women's participation in political and social spheres and highlights a few points about the status of women in state government. In different political parties in the state, there are few women in the office bearers. Between the two oldest parties the Congress and the MNF, former leaders of the women's wing are recruited to general secretary and secretary positions after their period in the women's wing was over. Even with this practice, women made up only a small percentage of the office bearers of the two parties. Women are mainly concentrated in the women's wing and only a few women are elected to the executive committee. This chapter also highlights the church, civil society organizations, and students' associations to understand the level of women's

⁴²³Opcit, Virginia Sapiro. p. 180.

involvement in society in general. It also analyses the contribution and role of women's organization, MHIP for the political representation of women.

In chapter five, government initiatives to increase women's representation in rural and urban local government are explained. The evolutionary process of local government as a representative institution from the British period and the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts in India is explained in detail. The village council system in Mizoram and the amendment of the village council acts which provide seat reservation for women are discussed. Women's representation in the village council before the introduction of seat reservation is highlighted to give a glimpse of the low representation of women in local government. Women's organizations attempt to increase the representation of women in politics to understand their contribution. A few laws that are related to women enacted by the state government are also mentioned in this chapter.

Chapter five deals with the analysis of the socio-economic and political background of women MLAs, women corporators of the AMC, women members of the three Autonomous District Councils, and women party leaders. It analyses the problems about women's political representation and addresses some issues related to women in politics. The concluding chapter summarizes the main themes and issues analyzed in the preceding chapters and provides the main findings of the study. This study attempts to provide the nature and issues of women's representation in Mizoram. It highlights women's journey towards electoral politics and their presence in decision-making processes. It seeks to present the status of women in politics and the problems of the representation of women.

Before the British administration in Mizoram, a traditional political institution of chieftainship existed where the chief called *Lal* in Mizo ruled their territory with the help of a council of advisers. By custom, Mizo women did not have the right to inheritance and succession. The Advisory Council was set up and the first election for the chiefs and commoners was held on 23 March and 15 April 1948. Among the elected representatives of commoners, two women named Lalsangpuii and Remthangi were elected. The Advisory Council became 'the first popular

government elected by the people'.⁴²⁴ The Advisory Council was short-lived and finally dissolved on 12 November 1951 by the government of Assam to hold the election of the District Council in January 1952.⁴²⁵ The setting up of the 'Advisory Council' with the policy of seat reservation for women opened the door for women's political representation as they were included in the decision-making process for the first time.

During the District Council period (1952- 1972), four elections (1952, 1957, 1962, 1970) were held. No women contested in the four elections and two women were nominated as members during the first and second terms. Of all the four elections combined, the total number of nominated seats was twelve, out of which two seats were given to women. Mizoram was elevated to a union territory in 1971. In the second election in 1978, Thanmawii from PC was elected and became the first female elected member of the legislative assembly. She was elected again in the 1979 election. In the last election held during the union territory period in 1984, the only female candidate in the election, K. Thansiami, a nominated member in the previous term, won the election. The Congress formed the government and appointed a woman named Rokungi as a nominated member in this term.

Overall, the total number of women candidates in the MLA election during the union territory period within fifteen years (1972-1987) is nine. Among the nine women candidates, only three secured major party nominations (all from the PC) and the rest of the six women MLA candidates were mostly independent candidates. Aside from this, a total of three women were nominated as members during the union territory period.

After the attainment of statehood, the nominated seat was abolished, and the assembly seat was enlarged from 33 to 40 seats. In the first Mizoram state legislative assembly election held in 1987, one woman named Lalhlipuii was elected. Almost 30 years later, one woman was elected in the 2014 bye-election. In the 2023 election, the two oldest parties in Mizoram, the Congress and the MNF, both have fielded

⁴²⁴Opcit, Chaltuahkhuma, pp. 109-113.

⁴²⁵Opcit, Chaltuahkhuma, p. 140.

more than one candidate for the first time as both of them have fielded two. The ZPM has fielded two and the rest of the other three who secured party nominations were from the BJP. Except for the INC, the MNF and the ZPM candidates, all the other candidates have forfeited their election deposits. For the first time in the history of the Legislative Assembly election, three women were elected. So, from the 1972 election, there are seven women elected members of the Legislative Assembly in Mizoram and one of them was elected twice in the 1978 and 1979 elections.

From the first election in 1972 to the latest election in 2020 in the Lai Autonomous District Council, there are one elected and nine nominated female members. From the first election in 1972 to the latest election in 2022 in the Mara Autonomous District Council, two women were elected and ten women were nominated. In the Chakma Autonomous District Council, from the first election in 1972 to the latest election in 2023, two women were elected and nine women were nominated.

The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 (Act No.6 of 2007) was passed by the Mizoram State Legislative and received the assent of the Governor on 16th April 2007. However, the Act left out the provision of seat reservation for women under Article 243T as per the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. The Act was amended in 2009, and Article 234T was inserted in the Mizoram Municipalities (Amendment) Act, 2009. The term of office is five years. The Aizawl Municipal Council comprises 19 members and others appointed by the Governor of the state. Among the 19 members, 6 of them are female as per the one-third seat reservation policy, and the reserved seats are subject to rotation every five years. In the first and second elections, six women out of 19 seats were elected in the AMC. The third election was held on 16 February 2021. In this election, a total of eight female candidates were elected. Among them, two were elected from the general seats who were previously elected from the reserved seats.

The first election of the Lunglei Municipal Council (LMC) comprising 11 wards including 4 reserved wards for women was held on 29 March, 2023 at Lunglei. In this election, one female contested from the general seat and won the

election. As a result, there are five women elected councillors in the first Lunglei Municipal Corporation.

6.2. Findings: The major findings of the study are listed as under:

(1) This study examines the status of women in decision-making processes, and some of the major findings are:

(a). *Political Parties:* In the Mizoram BJP, there are 12 state office bearers, and one of them (8.33%) is female. The core committee is comprised of 9 members, and all of them are male. Among the 45 executive committee members, five of them (11.11%) are female as of August 2022.

In MNF, the leadership position in the party organization is solely occupied by men. As of 2022, there are 26 general secretaries, and all of them are male. Among the 99 secretaries, four of them (4.04%) are female. Few women who can occupy the post of secretary in the party are former leaders of the women's wing. Besides this, few women are appointed as party advisers (three out of 113).

Congress and the MNF have promoted former leaders of the women's wing to some posts in the party. Congress has adopted a more progressive approach when it comes to promoting women party workers. Former presidents of the women's wing in the Congress are promoted to the post of general secretary in the main party organization. For the MNF, they are promoted to the post of secretary in the party after their period in the women's wing as president is over.

In the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC), based on the party's office bearers list of 2019- 2022, out of 32 general secretaries, two (6.25%) are female. Out of 84 secretaries, 12 (14.2%) are female. Congress has been practicing reservation of seats for women in the executive committee. In the election of the party's executive committee members in 2024, 10 women and 50 men were elected.

In ZPM, as of 2022, out of 117 secretaries, 10 (8.54%) are women. Besides the secretary post, a few women occupied the posts of consultant and political affairs committee. Among 12 consultants, one of them (8.3%) is female. Among 23

members of the political affairs committee, one of them (4.34%) is female. Additionally, 18 out of 387 (4.65%) members of the executive committee are female. In the election of members of the executive committee of the party in 2024, 10 out of 100 (10%) elected members are women.

Except few women who hold office bearer posts (mainly secretary and general secretary), leadership in political parties is mainly concentrated in the hands of men. Women party workers are generally concentrated in the women's wing. Women's wings in political parties played no significant role in the formulation of party policies/manifestos. National parties like the BJP and INC are more progressive in their approach toward issues relating to women whether in policies or recruitment of women party workers.

(b). Church: In the Presbyterian church, based on the organizational structure of the Church, only church elders and ministers are qualified to hold leadership positions within the church administration. Starting from the local level, women are automatically excluded from participating in the decision-making body of the local church called the Local Church Committee (*Tualchhung Kohhran*) mainly because they are denied ordination. Since the ministers and elders alone are in a position of decision-making at any level, women church members who are denied ordination for both ministers and elders are in no position at all to get access to the decision-making body within the hierarchical structure of the Church.

At the local level, women are absent from the decision-making body. At the pastorate, presbytery, and synod, few women representatives attended meetings (*Inkhawmpui*). However, the actual decision makers in these church courts are the office bearers and committee members in various committees set up under each court. Members of each of the committees from the local church to the synod are 'permanent office bearers' of the church. In short, ordination acts as a way of access to a leadership role at various stages in the organizational structure of the church.

In the Baptist Church, as per the church statistics of 2022- 2023, there are 183 ministers/ pastors and 35 probationary pastors and all of them are men. The total

number of male elders is 3267 whereas 27 are female. There are 3896 male deacons and 404 are female deacons.⁴²⁶ Women as a group through their fellowship send representatives to the meetings of the second lowest (Pastorate Baptist Council) and the highest (Assembly) church courts.

In the United Pentecostal Church North East India (UPC NEI), there are different types of licenses for ministerial purposes and ordination is done through the License system. There are four types of licenses such as local license, bible woman certificate, general license and ordination license. The law of the Church requires its members to hold a general license (which can be applied for only after having a local license for evangelical work for at least three years) for a minimum of two years to be eligible for the application of an ordination license. For women, only the bible woman certificate is permissible.

(c). Civil Society Organizations:

Civil society organizations like YMA, YCA, YLA and MTP are mainly headed by men and women in generally participate in these organisations as members. The nature of their activities is, to a large extent, physical in nature. Voluntary community work called (*hnatlang*), digging the graves (*thlanlaih*), consoling bereaved family at their home overnight (*tlaivar*), are some of the most common activities that organizations like YMA have been doing in the society. These activities are more suitable for men than women.

To hold a leadership position or participate in decision-making in these organizations requires long and constant active participation as leadership is mainly counted more so based on one's contribution toward these organizations. Women's participation in these organizations would usually stop after they get married whereas for men, it mainly depends on their personal choice. The majority, if not most, of the leaders (office bearers) of these organizations, from the local level to the central/headquarters level are married men. As a result, the duration of women's participation towards these organizations is much shorter than men. Evidently,

⁴²⁶Baptist Church of Mizoram. Statistical Handbook, 2022-2023.

membership of males outnumbered females in these organizations whereas female voters outnumbered male voters in various elections. In a society where traditional gender roles are sharply divided between male and female, women have no free time to actively participate in social activities. Historically, women have not been involved in the 'public sphere', not only in the political sphere but also in the social sphere which may have contributed to the low participation of women in these civil society organizations.

(d). *Student's Association:* In Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), from its inception, there have been 11 female elected office bearers at the general headquarters of the MZP, with the first one in 1951 and the last one in the 1994 election. From the beginning in 2001 till today, there have been no female elected office bearers at the general headquarters of Mizo Students Union (MSU). In Central Mizoram Chakma Students Union (CMCSU), two women out of fifteen office-bearer posts were elected during the 2011- 2013 term. Between the 2013- 2015 term, two among the office bearers are women.

In the general headquarters of the Mara Students Organization (MSO), there are five female elected office bearers so far. In the general headquarters of Lai Students Association (LSA), there are 12 female elected office bearers so far, of which 10 held the post of treasurer while the other 2 held the post of finance secretary in the six elected office bearer posts. The last female office bearer was elected during the term of 1999- 2001.

The analysis of women in leadership positions in various students' associations reveals that women rarely hold leadership positions which also points to the low participation of women in these associations. The educational field is the area where the progress of women is seen at a higher level than in other areas. Yet, women have not participated and been involved in students' politics to hold leadership position. Men have participated in students' politics and been involved in students' associations which helped them in getting exposure to a larger social and political environment. They carved out their political career through students' associations and learned the art of leadership and established relationships.

Leadership position of any kind including a student's association requires active involvement and dedication. The role and responsibilities of women in the home limit their chances of having exposure to actively participate in social activities.

(2). Government initiatives towards women's representation.

In 1989, the 64th and 65th constitutional amendment bills were introduced in the Parliament, which aimed to strengthen both the rural and urban local government with constitutional status. The Lok Sabha approved the two bills, but the Rajya Sabha rejected them.⁴²⁷ In 1990, the National Front government attempted to revive the issue of local governments, and it introduced the 74th Amendment Bill (comprising panchayats and municipalities). No significant progress was achieved during this period and the bill was not deliberated on by the parliament. In September 1991, the new Congress government introduced the 72nd (Panchayats) and 73rd (Nagarpalikas) constitutional amendment bills. Finally, the bills were passed by the Lok Sabha on 22nd December 1992 and the Rajya Sabha on 23rd December 1992. The President of India gave his assent on 20th April 1993. The Panchayats Act became effective on 24th April 1993 as the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992.⁴²⁸ Likewise, the urban local government was also given constitutional status, and it came into existence as the Constitution (Seventy-fourth Amendment) Act, 1992, which came into effect from June 1, 1993.⁴²⁹

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act that deals with rural local self-government contained a provision under Article 234 (M) of the Constitution that excluded its applicability to Scheduled Areas (Fifth Schedule to the Constitution) and tribal areas (Sixth Schedule to the Constitution). The Act also excluded its applicability to states like Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and hill areas in the state of Manipur. States like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan have Scheduled Areas. Four states

⁴²⁷Opcit, B. K. Joshi. p. 24.

⁴²⁸Opcit, George Mathew. p. 11.

⁴²⁹The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992. Retrieved May 20, 2023 from https://mohua.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/74th_CAA13.pdf

have tribal areas, such as Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. Article 243 (M) clause (4) sub-clause (b) provided that the provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act will be extendable to the Schedule and tribal areas by a law made by the Parliament. To extend the Act to the Schedule Areas, the Panchayats (Extension to the Schedule Areas) Act, 1996 came into force on 24th December 1996.⁴³⁰

Before the parliament passed the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, Orissa had implemented the 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in municipalities and panchayats, becoming the first state to do so.⁴³¹ The introduction of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts opened a new door for women in India to participate in local governance freely and be involved in the process of administration. It provided an opportunity for women to engage and participate in rural and urban local bodies in India. With reservation being mandated by the Constitution, women in India are empowered to participate in the decision-making processes in local government. As a result of the 73rd Amendment Act, there are now more than one million women elected representatives in all three tiers of Panchayati Raj.⁴³²

The government of Mizoram amended the Village Councils Act, 1953, in 2014 to enlarge the power and responsibilities of the village council and introduced seat reservation for women. Seat reservation for women is done based on the number of houses in villages. One seat is reserved for women among the three members of the village council in a village having 200 houses or below. The number of seats reserved for women remains the same in a five-member village council having below 500 houses. Two seats are reserved for women among the seven members of the village council in a village of more than 501 houses. Three seats are reserved for women in the nine-member village council, having more than 1000 houses.⁴³³

⁴³⁰P.S.K. Menon., Bakshi D. Sinha. (2003). *Panchayati Raj in Schedule Areas: A Critical Study*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

⁴³¹Opcit, Goerge Mathew, p. 74.

⁴³²Opcit, Gaurang R. Sahay. p. 115.

⁴³³The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act 1953 as amended in 2014. Retrieved July 3, 2024, From <https://sec.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/2022/05/d50flc9db8ad93e89a096761e2d9cada/the-lushai-hills-district-village-councils-acts-1953-amended-in-2014.pdf>

Before the government of Mizoram introduced seat reservation for women in the village council in 2014, the three autonomous district councils had already introduced seat reservation for women in the village councils. The basis of seat reservation for women, however, is different as the number of reserved seats remains the same irrespective of the total number of village council members. From the total number of seats, not less than one seat is reserved for women. The LADC amended its village council act in 2011 and provided ‘not less than one seat from the total number of seats’ for women.⁴³⁴ The CADC through its village council’s amendment act in 2011 introduced seat reservation for women in the village council. Irrespective of the number of houses and the number of members of the village council, the seat reserved for women remains the same which is ‘not less than one seat’.⁴³⁵ The MADC also followed the footsteps of the other two autonomous district councils in 2012. It introduced women seat reservation in village councils of ‘not less than one seat from the total number of seats’.⁴³⁶

The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 did not provide for a reservation of seats for women. To make necessary changes for the inclusion of seat reservation for women, the Core Committee-Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan (PMSA) pushed the government and demanded the incorporation of seat reservation as per the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. The Mizoram Municipalities (Amendment) Act, 2009, provided for seat reservation for women in municipalities. The Amendment Act also stipulated the reservation of seats for STs and SCs in proportion to their population. For the offices of chairperson, there is no reservation of seats for women.

⁴³⁴The Lai Autonomous District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011. Retrieved July 3, 2024 from <https://ladc.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/2023/09/c6eb315b85d0e15e09b058f7e377007b/ladc-vc-act-2010.pdf>

⁴³⁵The Chakma Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from <https://www.cadc.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/acts-rules/2.CADC-Village-Council-Amendment-Act-2011.pdf>

⁴³⁶The Mara Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2012. Retrieved October 3, 2024, from <https://madc.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachment/bfdd442a0e0bf26e7aea08aa77e57b5e/village-councils-amendment-act-2012.pdf>

In Mizoram, one of the most important initiatives of the state government concerning the lives of women was the introduction of a new act in 2015 that deals mainly with the property rights of women in the family. The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 has corrected some of the issues of personal laws under the customary laws. The marriage system in general remains the same. Under this act, women have the right to acquire property in divorce depending on the nature of the divorce. As for inheritance of property, this act gives women the right to inheritance of property in various capacities such as widow, unmarried daughter, married daughter, youngest sister and illegitimate daughter.⁴³⁷ Mizoram State Commission for Women was set up on August 21, 1998 and the Mizoram State Commission for Women Act, 2004 (Act. No. 12 of 2004) was passed by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 2004.⁴³⁸ In 2007, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly passed the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, to implement in Mizoram.⁴³⁹

Women's organizations played a pivotal role in protecting women's rights, and they have actively pressed the state government to implement laws pertaining to women. Women's representation is one of the issues that women's organizations have been raising for a long time. They requested and persuaded the government and political parties to take positive actions to increase the representation of women. They actively pressed the state government to enact and implement laws for the protection of women and justice.

(3). The socio-economic and political profiles of women MLAs, women corporators of the AMC, women members of the three District Councils, as well as women leaders of various political parties are as follows:

(a) Women MLAs: The six women MLAs are educated (graduates and above). More than half of them came from economically well-off families and none of them are housewife. Among the six MLAs, three of them are former teachers, two

⁴³⁷The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 (4th print). Law and Judicial Department. Government of Mizoram. 2016.

⁴³⁸Opcit, B. Sangkhumi. p. 47.

⁴³⁹Opcit, B. Sangkhumi. pp. 28.

of them are formerly employed, and one of them is pursuing a full-time political career. By the time they were elected, five of them were in the age group of 30-50, and one of them was over 60 years old. They are active church members and hold important positions in the church (Sunday school teacher and leaders of women fellowship) except one who is a non-Christian. Among the five Christians, four of them are members of the Presbyterian church and one of them is a member of the Baptist Church. More than half of them are former leaders of women's organizations.

Besides the church and women's organization, a few of them participated in other organizations. One of them held an office-bearer post in branch YMA and one of them held an office-bearer post in section YMA before they were elected as MLA. One of them was the former leader (president) of the community association. About their political experience, two of them held leadership posts in the women's wing of political parties, and two of them held leadership posts outside of the women's wing within the party organization around the time they were elected. One of them has political experience as an elected corporator in urban local government, while one of them has no political experience.

(b). Women corporators of the AMC: Many of the women corporators were well educated and had a source of income before they were elected. More than half of them were married, and none of them were housewives. More than half of them were in the age group between 20-50. Based on the analysis of their social activities, most of them were active church members. More than half of them came from economically well-off families. Around half of them were religious families who held important positions in the church. Besides their personal educational and social background, many of them have a good family background, which may have helped them in getting selected as candidates and getting elected.

In comparison with male corporators, female corporators were younger than males on average. Female corporators held proportionately more postgraduate qualifications than male corporators. At the same time, the lowest educational qualification (matriculate) holder was a woman. In regard to political experience, among the eight male corporators interviewed in this study, half of the male

corporators have no political experience, while all of the female corporators have no political experience before they were elected. Most of the male corporators were educated and socially active citizens. Most of them were former leaders of YMA and the youth fellowship in the local church. Meanwhile, most of the female corporators were active church members, and about half of them held positions in the local church. Besides the church, a few of them have participated in YMA, sports association, women's organization, as well as in the media.

Most of the corporators of AMC have a good social background, mainly through their activities in the church and YMA, in addition to their educational status. In comparison with male corporators, the biggest difference in social activities between male and female corporators lies in their participation in YMA, as most of the male corporators held leadership positions in YMA, while the level of participation in YMA by female corporators was low in terms of leadership and short in duration compared to men.

(c). Women members of the three District Councils: Among the thirteen former and current women members of the three District Councils interviewed in this study, except one, all of them received very little education (the highest studied up to class ten, and the lowest did not attend school) and the majority of them were housewives.

More than half of them were party workers leading the women's wing in their party. Among the former leaders of the women's wing of parties, few of them (three out of thirteen) were previously elected as members of the village council before they were nominated as members of the District Council. Those women usually had been involved in politics longer than those who did not have experience in local politics, as their length of experience ranged from twelve to twenty-two years before they were recruited to be nominated members of the District Council.

While more than half of them were recruited to be nominated members because of their active participation in the party, some of them had not gone through local party politics and were short-circuited to be nominated members. Out of

thirteen respondents, thirty per cent of them (four out of thirteen) were directly recruited as nominated members of the District Council. Among them, three were recruited through the patronage of party leaders because of their family connection, while one was selected by a party as recommended by the governor of the state at the time. As party workers, respondents mostly worked in the women's wing of the political party. Only one out of thirteen held an office-bearer post outside of the women's wing in the party. Less than half of them were former or current leaders of women's organizations. Around the same number were active church members who held leadership positions in the women's fellowship in the church.

From the analysis of the opinion and experience of women former and current nominated members in the Autonomous District Council and the opinion of male politicians in the District Councils, one's contribution towards the party plays a significant role in the recruitment process to the District Councils for women. Women former nominated members of District Councils interviewed in this study were mainly recruited because of their contribution to their parties. Yet, they lack education which gives them insecurity to continue their political career after their period as nominated member was over. They find fighting the election from the general as financially challenging and securing party nomination was something they had no high expectation for.

(d). Women leaders of political parties: Among the fifteen women leaders of political parties interviewed in this study, the majority of them were educated women (graduates and above), and less than half of them received very little education (matriculate and below). Seven of them are post-graduates, however, six of them are more recently recruited, and the majority of them are from small parties (in the Mizoram context) like the BJP and PC. Additionally, among the three graduates (out of fifteen) of women party leaders, two of them joined active politics not long ago. The rest of them (five out of fifteen) have received high school and below high school levels of education. But this group comprises the most experienced as a group, as most of them have spent a long period as active party workers and have started their political journey from local-level party politics and then climbed to their

present position in the party headquarters. Among the women party leaders who have started their journey from local/unit party politics and have comparatively longer experience as party workers in parties, only two (out of fifteen) were either post-graduate or graduate. At the same time, out of the total seven elected female MLAs, four of them (66.6%) were postgraduates and three of them (42.8%) were graduates.

Less than half of them were married. Only one or two of them can be considered as housewives. The majority of them were members of the Presbyterian church and the majority of them were active church members who held some positions in the church. Less than half of them (four of them) were either former or current leaders of a women's organisation.

Among them, about three of them have occupied some posts within the party organization outside of the women's wing. Besides holding some posts within the party organization, a few of them have gone through local, block, and district-level party politics and held important posts along the way. The length of their experience is also different, mainly based on parties rather than on individuals. Women leaders of the two oldest parties, the Congress and the MNF, have started their political journey as party workers from the local level and spent a long period in their parties, except for two newly recruited women. Women leaders of the ZPM were former leaders of the women's wing of two parties, the MPC and the ZNP, except one newly recruited woman. Leaders of the BJP and the PC were more recently recruited to their current posts.

Based on the analysis of their political journey and experience, the opportunity to hold posts in the women's wing within the party organization is greater for new or smaller parties like the BJP and PC compared to parties like the Congress and the MNF. Some of them from smaller parties hold their positions in the women's wing mainly because of a lack of other women in their parties. Besides, their political experience within the party organization is also short-circuited, as none of them started their political journey from the local or unit level of party politics.

Women's wing of political parties has never or rarely put pressure on political parties to nominate women candidates in the legislative assembly elections. However, there are some reasons raised by women leaders and male politicians for why parties do not nominate more women candidates. Some of the reasons they mentioned are: lack of women possessing qualities to win in elections in the political parties, lack of educated women or women possessing qualities to win who pursue active politics in the party, cultural barrier causing parties to select men over women as candidates and 'female vote bank' (that women do not necessarily vote for women).

Generally, women party workers are mainly working at the women's wing, and as a result, the experiences of women party leaders and those who have contested for political offices seem to be limited. Moreover, the women's wing as a separate unit of the party is not as competitive as others, like the youth wing. Presidents are appointed by the party president, and other office bearers are appointed by the president of the women's wing. In this way, there is no election for office bearer posts even in the two oldest and largest parties, MNF and Congress, while the office bearers post of other frontals like the youth wing has to go through an election. Low participation of women in the party is one common problem raised by women party leaders and the uncompetitive nature of the leadership of the women's wing points to the low participation of women in political parties.

(4). Some of the major findings of the problems and issues as mentioned in one of the objectives are:

(a). Many of the women party leaders, elected and unelected MLA candidates, nominated and elected members of the three autonomous district councils and corporators of the AMC said that social and cultural attitudes toward women in leadership positions are a problem facing the representation of women. Some of the women MLA candidates personally experienced rejection from their constituency just before the election because of their gender, on the reason that the people in their constituency do not want to be a constituency represented by women (*hmeichhe bial nih duh lo*).

(b). Except for women corporators, all the other groups of women interviewed in this study have raised their concern about the lack of educated women in political parties pursuing active politics and are dissatisfied with the level of women's participation in politics. One problem about women's representation is the lack of women who are perceived to have 'qualities to win' in active politics.

(c). In the case of women members of the three district councils, the biggest problem they have mentioned is the socio-cultural views that disapprove of women getting involved in politics. Most of the nominated members interviewed in this study have extremely low self-esteem and a lack of confidence because of their low educational status and gender discrimination stemming from the socio-cultural view that disapproves of women in the 'public sphere', which discouraged them from running the election from the general seat.

(d). Lack or low level of educational status, which results in lack of confidence and low self-esteem, hindering one from taking further steps in politics, is most visible among women members of the three district councils and some women leaders of the political parties. At the same time, education plays a significant role for women to secure party nomination especially in legislative assembly elections and the AMC.

(e). Even among the most educated group of women (the AMC) interviewed in this study, many of them said that they would not join politics if there is no reservation. Many of them said that they were unsure about continuing their political career after their term is over. Lack of educated women pursuing active politics is one concern of leaders of women's wing while educated women pursuing politics like women corporators may not continue to actively participate in political parties.

One of the problems about women's representation in decision-making bodies especially in the legislative assembly is the participation of women in civil society organisations other than women's organizations and the church. Looking at the social activities of male MLAs of 2018 and 2023 reveals that most of them are socially active men who held leadership positions in various organizations like YMA (MTP

for mara, YLA for lai, and YCA for chakma) and various students' associations and sports associations. Though women participated in these types of organizations to some extent, their presence in leadership positions is negligible in which lies the problem, as the position of leadership is what counts the most when it comes to recruitment in the decision-making office in the context of Mizoram.

On the other hand, there is a structural barrier that prevents women from taking an active part in any social activities. Based on the analysis of their participation in church, the level of women's active participation in church has usually gone down, and the positions they held in church would generally cease when they get married and have children. After freeing from childcare, they have a chance to continue to participate in the church as active members to hold some positions within the church organization. On the other hand, women's participation in various organizations, like YMA, as active members, usually stops when they get married. Unlike the church, women generally have not been involved in YMA after they are free from child care which could be one good reason why women did not occupy leadership positions in organizations like YMA, which require constant active participation and dedication to hold leadership positions.

Women who held leadership positions in women's organizations are generally an older age group of women, and women interviewed in this study who held leadership positions in women's organizations before they were elected or nominated, or contested, are generally older age women. Younger or middle-aged groups of women, like the majority of corporators of the AMC, are not actively involved in such organizations nor hold any type of leadership position. Besides the church, women's social participation is mainly in women's organizations through which they gained recognition in society. With the negligible presence of women in leadership positions in other organizations, women's organizations are a space where women, especially the older-aged group of women, can actively participate in society.

(5.) *The issue of proxy women:* All female corporators said that they decided about their official work and duties by themselves. At the same time, many of them

said that they have sought advice from others, such as their husband, parents, in-laws, leaders of their locality, and sometimes party leaders in a situation when an important specific issue arises. All of them entered the field of electoral politics after they were persuaded by political parties. After they were invited by political parties, they consulted their husbands or family. After having their consent, they contested in the election. None of them said that they were forced or persuaded by their families (other than encouragement) to enter politics. None of them has a husband who is involved in politics. From the analysis of their family background, how they were recruited, and how they approach decision-making relating to their work, the women corporators do not fit the label of 'proxy' women.

(6). *The issue of reservation:* Among the women elected and unelected MLA candidates, women corporators, and women party leaders interviewed in this study, there was a mixed reaction about reservation in the legislative assembly. More than half of them supported the reservation yet, some of them who supported the reservation have concerns about it. Their main concern about reservation in the legislative assembly is the possibility of recruiting women who are known by the public or socially active but lack interest in politics as has been experienced. It seems like the concern, especially of some women party leaders, is sidelining women who are pursuing active politics and have a real interest in politics, for women who are socially active or known by the public, but lack interest in politics based on their participation in political parties.

However, based on the analysis of the background of women party leaders, many of those who pursued active politics and spent a long period of time in political parties are low educated and less confident which points to the problem of low participation of women, especially educated women in political parties. To secure a party nomination especially a major party nomination in an election, educational status plays a significant role considering the educational status of the seven women MLAs as well as male MLAs. On the other hand, those who secured party nomination in the elections of urban local government like the AMC with good educational and social background generally did not continue to be actively involved

in politics. This is where the problem lies in women's political representation. If this kind of pattern continues, then women's political representation may not increase in the near future.

APPENDIX- I

A MONOGRAPH ON LUSHAI CUSTOMS & CEREMONIES

N E PARRY I.C.S (1928, 2009 Reprint)

CHAPTER I: THE CHIEF AND THE VILLAGE (pp 8-21)

28. The *Zawlbuk*: Every Lushai village possesses a *Zawlbuk* or bachelor's house. It is usually built near the chief's house in the middle of the village and all the young men and boys sleep there at night. The *Zawlbuk* is the centre of village life and is a most useful institution. The younger boys are under discipline in the same way as in a boarding house in a public school, the young men use it as a club and dormitory, travellers can put up in it for the night and the chief uses it as a meeting place where he can make known his orders. As all the young men are concentrated there, they are always available for any unexpected emergency or for any urgent work. It is here that the boys learn wrestling and other games. Wrestling is compulsory for all the inmates and the smaller boys are first made to wrestle among themselves and no skrimshanking is allowed. If a leopard comes into the village and kills a pig or a wild cat comes and kills fowls all the inmates of the *Zawlbuk* rush out as soon as the hue and cry is raised and pursue the intruder. The existence of a *Zawlbuk* facilitates matters enormously if a grave has to be dug or a sick man carried to hospital, as the chief then knows exactly where the young men are to be found. Where there is no *Zawlbuk* and the young men are scattered all over the village, it is very difficult to get hold of them for these emergencies, not only because of the time it takes to find them but because when they are not under *Zawlbuk* discipline they are reluctant to respond when called upon to help. In villages where there are *Zawlbuks*, the people are better disciplined, more industrious and keener hunters than in villages where there are none. According to Lushai custom the most industrious young man and the best hunter among the young men in the *Zawlbuk* get a special cup of *Zu* as a reward. These rewards are known as the *Taima Zuno* and the *Huai Zuno* respectively and are given when *Sumdengzu* is distributed at the *Chawng*, *Sechhun* and *Khuangchawi* sacrifices and also when a party of hunters return home and drinks *Zu* together.

(a) The Zawlbuk has a regular system of self-government, very much in the same way as in a public school. The inhabitants are divided into two classes, the *Tlangvals* or young men and the *Thingfawm Naupang* or boys. The latter are the fags and have to carry wood for the *Zawlbuk* fire and do any odd jobs that the young men chose to give them, such as washing their shirts, going errands for them, etc. They also have to carry wood, bamboos and stones when a grave is being dug.

(b) There is a curious system for deciding whether a *Thingfawm Naupang* has attained to the status of a *Tlangval* and acquired the freedom of the *Zawlbuk*. When a boy appears to be growing up and to have reached the age of puberty he is examined by the *Tlangvals*, one of the hairs from round his private parts is pulled out and if it is long enough to go round the stem of a bamboo pipe the owner of the hair is thenceforth classed as a *Tlangval* or young man, if the hair is too short to go round the pipe stem its owner has to continue work as a *Thingfawm Naupang*. If after two or three examinations a boy still fails to pass the test, he is generally given a grace pass when he is obviously too big to be classed as *Thingfawm Naupang* any longer. The inhabitants of the *Zawlbuk* usually call upon boys to come and be examined but any boy who thinks that he is too big to work as a *Thingfawm Naupang* any longer can claim to be examined.

(c) To control the *Thingfawm Naupang* and to maintain discipline in the *Zawlbuk*, monitors who are known as *Thingfawm Hotu*, are appointed from among the younger *Tlangval* (youths). There are usually about four monitors but the numbers varies with the size of the village and usually one is appointed for each of the village streets, so that there may be complete control over all the boys living in different parts of the village. The job of monitor is much sought after as the monitors do not have to do any of the ordinary *Zawlbuk* work and enjoy a good deal of power over the boys. These monitors have to see that the *Thingfawm Naupang* collect sufficient wood every day for the *Zawlbuk* fire. This involves a good deal of work, as a large fire is always kept up in the *Zawlbuk* for drying cloths etc. Just after the sunset between 6 and 7 P.M. the boys are all called up for a roll call and the monitors find out whether the boys have all carried out the tasks assigned to them.

Skrimshankers who have failed to carry their quota of wood or water are punished by being given double tasks next day and if they continue to skrimshank are given treble or quadruple tasks. If certain boys are known to skrimshank habitually, a balance is rigged up in the *Zawlbuk* and the loads are tested and if they are found to be below the standard, the boys who have been shirking their duty are severely punished. In the cold weather when constant fires are necessary, the *Tlangvals* also have to bring in big logs for the fire and if they fail to do so are made to do so by the *Tlangval Upas*.

(d) Discipline is strictly enforced in the *Zawlbuk* and no interference from outside is tolerated. If a boy complains to his father that he has been ill-treated by a monitor and the irate parent in consequence beats or abuses the monitor, all the inmates of the *Zawlbuk* combine to punish the father of the sneak, They go off to the offender's house sit down on the floor, catch hold of the posts and away their bodies to and fro until the whole house sways with them and nearly falls down. After having thoroughly frightened the householder they go away. This punishment is known as *Sawi* it is intended to show the man they are punishing that they have no respect for him and do not care if he migrates to another village or not.

(e) Among the young men, there are also certain leaders who are known as *Tlangval Upas*. They have to arrange for all work to be done by the young men such as digging graves, carrying sick people to hospital or any other work that may be necessary. Special arrangements are made for fetching water at night in case the inmates of the *Zawlbuk* get thirsty and boys are specially told off for this duty and are changed every week. These boys can claim water as of right from any of the houses near the *Zawlbuk*, the householder is not entitled to refuse to give water and if he does so is fined a Salam of Rs. 5.

(g) The only person who may throw a stone on to the *Zawlbuk* roof with impunity is the chief. If any other person throws a stone on the roof, because there is too much noise going on or for any other reason, he is fined. When a new *Zawlbuk* is being built the chief usually gives the villagers a feast as soon as it is completed.

This, however, is optional on the chief's part and cannot be claimed by the villagers as a right.

42. TLAWMNGAIHNA: *Tlawmngaihna* is a word which has no exact equivalent in English. It really represents the Lushai's code of morals and good form. A person who possesses *Tlawmngaihna* must be courteous, considerate, unselfish, courageous and industrious, he must always be ready to help others even at considerable inconvenience to himself and must try to surpass others in doing his ordinary daily tasks efficiently. In theory *Tlawmngaihna* should enter into every branch of a Lushai's life. A man who practices the precepts of *Tlawmngaihna* is looked up to and respected. *Tlawmngaihna* can really only be explained by examples.

Helping the sick: It is the custom in Lushai villages if a man is sick, for all the villagers to combine and carry him into hospital. Supposing someone from a far away village has to be carried into hospital, he is carried by his own villagers to the next village and thence by the inhabitants of that village to the next and so on until the hospital is reached. When anyone has to be carried in this way, two young men who are known as *Zualko* are sent on to next village to inform the villagers that a sick man is on the way. As soon as they get the news the villagers abandon whatever they are doing and go to meet the sick man. A village that possesses *Tlawmngaihna* will go to meet the convoy at the boundary of their lands and offer to carry the sick man from there. If the villagers who are already carrying are also keen on *Tlawmngaihna* they will refuse to hand over their burden and will insist on carrying it right up to the village. A village that does this is showing the right spirit and actually practicing *Tlawmngaihna*. *Tlawmngaihna* can thus be practiced by a village as a corporate body as well as by individuals.

If a man falls sick in the cultivating season, his fellow villagers are expected to weed his fields for him. The chief will probably call for volunteers for this work and if the rules of *Tlawmngaihna* are properly followed in the village there will be numerous volunteers who will vie with each other to get the work done.

Thlenin Dan: According to custom all travelers in the hills are entitled to food and lodging free for a night. Some people churlishly refuse to give the hospitality required by custom but any one who follows the rules of *Tlawmngaihna* will never refuse hospitality to a stranger and the more strangers a man puts up the more *Tlawmngaihna* he is held to possess.

When out hunting or shooting: A hunting expedition offers many opportunities for the exhibition of *Tlawmngaihna*. A man who possesses endurance and is able to go on all day with very little food, who is courageous in following up wounded wild beasts, who thinks of his friends before himself, takes less than his share of the food, is industrious in building the shelter for the night and in collecting wood for the fire is said to possess *Tlawmngaihna* and according to the dictates of good form the young men are supposed to vie with each other in these respects. If two men one of whom has a gun come up to an animal, the man with the gun, if he follows *Tlawmngaihna* will offer his friend first shot. If a man gets hurt by a wild animal, his companions must stay and look after him and must not continue the chase and leave him alone. If a man got caught by a wounded bear or other animals it would be a fearful disgrace if his companion ran away and left him to his fate, they are bound to stay and help him.

On a journey: People who are travelling together must help each other. If one of the party gets ill and falls behind, his companions should wait for him, if they do not they are lacking in *Tlawmngaihna*. Water is scarce in the hills and during the hot weather people severely from thirst, a man who goes a long distance down the hill side and fetches water for his companions is doing his duty and practicing *Tlawmngaihna*.

At feasts such as *Sechhun* and *Khuangchawi*: At feasts the young men and girls in the village help the giver of the feast in many ways by pounding rice, collecting materials, dancing and in other ways. They are expected to do these things as a matter of *Tlawmngaihna*. The giver of the feast for his part is expected to give them food and drink in the same way. The more and better food and drink he gives the more *Tlawmngaihna* he possesses.

Damage by fire: If a whole village is burnt down, the neighbouring villages contribute food, clothing and household utensils to replace those that have been burnt and also help to rebuild it this is due to *tlawmngaihna*. In the same way, if a man's house is burnt down and his property and paddy is destroyed, his fellow villagers help him with contributions of food and cloths and also help him to rebuild his house. Many other instances could be given of the operation of *Tlawmngaihna* but the above are enough to show what it is. It is really a very good moral code enforced solely by public opinion. Unfortunately, with the growth of enlightenment there is a tendency to neglect *tlawmngaihna*. Formerly there was great competition among the young men as to who possessed most *tlawmngaihna* and people were respected or otherwise according to the extent to which they practiced *tlawmngaihna*. This rivalry has decreased a great deal and it is hard to say whether it will revive or not. At present far more *tlawmngaihna* is found in the more distant villages than in the centres which pride themselves on being enlightened and progressive. As yet however *tlawmngaihna* still exists and it is to be hoped that it will not die out as it is of great value in a country like the Lushai Hills, where it probably grew up in the beginning because in a wild country it is essential for people to help each other. *Tlawmngaihna* therefore deserves every encouragement, as if it were allowed to fall into desuetude it would be most detrimental to the whole of the tribe.

APPENDIX II

DICTIONARY OF THE LUSHAI LANGUAGE

JAMES HERBERT LORRAIN (PU BUANGA) (1940, 2008 Reprint)

(pp 513, 514)

Tlawm' ngai (-ngaih), v. **1.** to be self- sacrificing, unselfish, self-denying, persevering, stoical, stouthearted, plucky, brave, firm, independent (refusing to help); to be loth to lose one's good reputation, prestige, etc; to be too proud or self-respecting to give in, etc. **2.** to persevere, to endure patiently, to make light of personal injuries, to dislike making a fuss about anything. **3.** to put one's own inclinations on one side and do a thing which one would rather not do, with the object either of keeping up one's prestige, etc. or of helping or pleasing another, or of not disappointing another, etc. **4.** to do whatever the occasion demands no matter how distasteful or inconvenient it may be to oneself or to one's own inclinations. **5.** to refuse to give in, give way, or be conquered. **6.** to not like to refuse a request; to do a thing because one does not like to refuse, or because one wishes to please others. **7.** to act pluckily or show a brave front. (Also used as *adj.* and *adv.*).

Tlawm' ngaih, v. modifn. of tlawm' ngai.

Tlawmngaih, *n.* self-sacrifice, unselfishness, etc; or being self-sacrificing, being unselfish, etc. (as under the verb **tlawm' ngai** above).

Tlawmngaih' chhuah, v. to practice self-sacrifice, unselfishness, self-denial, etc. (as under **tlawm' ngai** above).

Tlawmngaihna, *n.* same as **tlawmngaih** above.

Tlawmngaitakin, *adv.* self-sacrificingly, unselfishly, self-denyingly, etc. (as under the verb **tlawm' ngai** above).

APPENDIX III



**THE MARA AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCIL
(VILLAGE COUNCILS)(AMENDMENT)ACT, 2012.**

**AN
ACT**

to amend the Mara Autonomous District Council (Village Council) Act, 1974 hereinafter called "the Principal Act" and to provide for the establishment of Village Councils and for other matters relating to village administration.

PREAMBLE:

Whereas it is expedient to provide for the establishment of Village Councils and their powers and for other matters relating to Village Administration including village police, public health and sanitation; and

Whereas by clauses (e) and (f) of sub-paragraph (1) of Paragraph 3 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, the District Council for an Autonomous District is empowered to make laws in respect of the establishment of Village or Town Committee or Councils or any other matters relating to the Village or Town Administration, Village or Town Police and public health and sanitation.

Now, therefore the District Council of the Mara Autonomous District (hereinafter referred to as the District Council), in exercise of the powers conferred on it as aforesaid and of all other powers enabling it in that behalf is pleased to enact and it is hereby enacted as follows:

**Short title, extent
& commencement**

1. (1) This Act may be called the Mara Autonomous District Council (Village Councils)(Amendment) Act, 2012.
- (2) It shall have like extent as the Principal Act.
- (3) It shall be deemed to have come into force with effect from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

**Amendment of
Section 2.**

2. After Section 2 (14) of the Principal Act, the following sub-sections shall be added namely:-
 - (1) "(15) 'Village Assembly' means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral roll or rolls relating to a village or villages comprised within the area of the Village Council, which shall also mean "Gram Sabha" for the purposes of Part IX of the Constitution.
 - (16) 'State Election Commission' means the Mizoram State Election Commission as constituted under clause (1) of Article 243K of the Constitution.
 - (17) 'Community assets' means any property of income which by custom belongs to or has been administered for the benefit of the villagers in common, or has been created through contribution of voluntary labour by the villagers or has been created out of Government or District Council or Village Council funds and vested with the Village Council or which has been transferred to the Village Council by any agency whatsoever".

**Amendment of
Section 3.**

3. For Section 3, sub-sections (1),(2) & (3) of the Principal Act, the following sub-sections shall be substituted, namely:-
 - (1) "There shall be a Village Council in each Village within the Mara Autonomous District having a number of not less than 50 (fifty) houses.

Provided that Village Councils in certain Villages if any, with less than 50 houses which have been in existence before the commencement of this Act shall continue to exist unless later abolished or amalgamated with any other Village Council or Councils as the case may be, by the Executive Committee.

- (2) A Village Council shall be composed of members according to the number of houses it contains as specified below:-
 - (a) For Villages where number of houses is 50 (fifty) or more, but not more than 100 (one hundred), there shall be 3 (three) members.
 - (b) For Villages with more than 100 (one hundred) houses; but not more than 160 (one hundred sixty) houses, there shall be 4 (four) members.
 - (c) For Villages with more than 160 (one hundred sixty) houses; but not more than 220 (two hundred twenty) houses, there shall be 5 (five) members and
 - (d) For Villages where the number of houses exceeds 220 (two hundred twenty), there shall be 6 (six) members.

Provided that Village Councils as defined in the proviso to sub-section (1) shall be composed of the same number of members as determined in clause (a) of this sub-section.
- (3) Members of the Village Council shall be elected by the residents of the Village concerned who are enlisted as voters in the latest electoral roll of the election to the Members of the District Council.
- (4) After sub-section (4) of Section 3 of the Principal Act, the following sub-section shall be inserted, namely:-
“(5) “Not less than 1 (one) of the total number of elected seats shall be reserved for women for the time being”.

**Amendment of
Section 6.**

4. Section 6 of the Principal Act shall be substituted by the following, namely:-
“(1) **Duration of Village Council:-**
Every Village Council, unless sooner dissolved, shall continue for five years from the date of its first meeting appointed by the Executive Committee provided that the existing Village Councils who have been elected before the Commencement of this amendment shall continue for not more than three years.
- (2) The process of election to a Village Council shall be completed before the term of the Village Council comes to an end.
- (3) The Executive Committee shall have the power to shorten or extend the term by not more than six months at a time”.

**Amendment of
Section 8.**

5. (1) In Section 8 (5) of the Principal Act, after the words “by the President” the words “and the Executive Committee shall intimate the matter to the State Election Commission” shall be added.
- (2) After sub-section (6) of Section 8 of the Principal Act, the following sub-section shall be inserted, namely:-
“(6) **Removal of the President:-**
(a) The President of a Village Council may be removed from his office by simple majority of the total number of members if in their opinion the President is too inefficient to carry on the Village

Administration or is indulging in corrupt practices or misbehavior or is habitually involving in intoxicating drinks or substances, and shall elect a new President.

Provided that removal motion shall initially be submitted in writing to the President in which at least half of the members shall put their signature or left thumb impression in support of the motion and the President shall, within five days of the receipt of such motion, lay it before the Village Council meeting for discussion and decision by means of secret ballot.

Provided further that if the President refuses to bring the motion for decision in the Village Council meeting or willfully absents himself from the Village Council meeting, then after expiry of ten days the Secretary or any other member of the Village Council shall be able to preside over the Village Council meeting and conduct the deliberation and voting for removal of the President or election of a new President as the case may be.

- (b) The Secretary shall forward the detailed proceedings with the result of the removal motion to the Executive Committee as soon as possible for formal approval and further notification to all concerned".

**Amendment of
Section 9.**

6. (i) For the words "the District Council" which appeared in sub-section (18) of Section 9 of the Principal Act, the words "the Governor or the Executive Committee" shall be substituted.
- (ii) The following new sub-sections shall be inserted after Section 9(20) of the Principal Act, namely:-
- "(21) Selection of individual beneficiaries under various welfare and development schemes as may be delegated to them from time to time.
- (22) The Village Council shall be accountable to the Village Assembly for all its functions, expenditure, approval of plans and approval of utilization certificates.
- (23) The accounts of the Village Council shall be kept properly and shall be liable to audit by the Executive Committee or any officer appointed on its behalf by the Executive committee.

**Amendment of
Section 10.**

7. (i) In Section 10 (6) of the Principle Act, for the words and figure that appeared as "not exceeding Rs.7/- per Tlarai or Vatlarai day" the words "not exceeding Rs.100/- per Tlarai or Vatlarai day" shall be substituted.
- (ii) In Section 10 (8) of the Principle Act, for the words and figure that appeared as "not exceeding Rs.5/-per Tlarai or Vatlarai day" the words "not exceeding Rs.50/-per Tlarai or Vatlarai day" shall be substituted.

**Insertion of new
Section 20 A and 20B.**

8. After Section 20 (d) of the Principal Act, the following Sections shall be inserted, namely:-

"20-A. The Governor on the recommendation of the Executive Committee from time to time may allocate all or any of the functions listed in the

Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution of India to the Village Council or Councils as a supplement to the powers of the District Council as provided under sub-paragraph (1) of Paragraph 6 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and demarcate the roles of the Village Council and the District Council in these areas.

20-B (1) Village Assembly :-

- (i) Every Village Assembly shall, subject to approval of the Executive Committee, approve the plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development in respect of the village concerned before such plans, programmes and projects are taken up for implementation.
- (ii) Village Assembly shall be responsible for the identification and selection of persons as beneficiaries under the poverty alleviation and other programmes.
- (2) Ordinarily a Village Assembly will be convened and presided over by the President of the Village Council. However, in the absence of the President or due to his incapacity to convene such meeting the Vice President or the Secretary may convene the meeting.
- (3) Quorum of a Village Assembly shall be half of the total number of registered house holders.
- (4) Every Village Assembly shall be responsible to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, and management of community assets.
- (5) The Village Assembly shall be consulted (a) before making any acquisition of land; and (b) before re-settlement and rehabilitation of persons affected by such projects. However, the final decision shall rest with the Executive Committee.
- (6) There shall be at least three Village Assembly meetings in a year.
- (7) The minutes of the meeting of each Village Assembly shall be recorded in a Register and shall be maintained by the Secretary of the Village Council.

Amendment of Section 26.

9. For Section 26 (1) of the Principal Act, the following sub-section shall be substituted, namely :-

“(1) **Dissolution of Village Council** :- The Executive Committee may, by public notification, order the dissolution of any of the Village Councils for the following reasons or on the following grounds :-

- (a) If in its opinion, the Village Council is too inefficient or is not able to carry on the Village administration, or is involved in financial mismanagement or misappropriation of public money, or is acting in a manner prejudicial to the interest of the District Council or of the State, or for any other reason considered sufficient for such dissolution.

Provided that in such cases there shall be constituted an inquiry commission who shall enquire into the Village Council concerned on the spot and submit his/her finding to the Executive Committee and the dissolution shall be done on the basis of the recommendation of such inquiry commission.

Provided further that no such dissolution shall be done unless the Village Council has been given a reasonable opportunity to explain as to why it should not be dissolved.

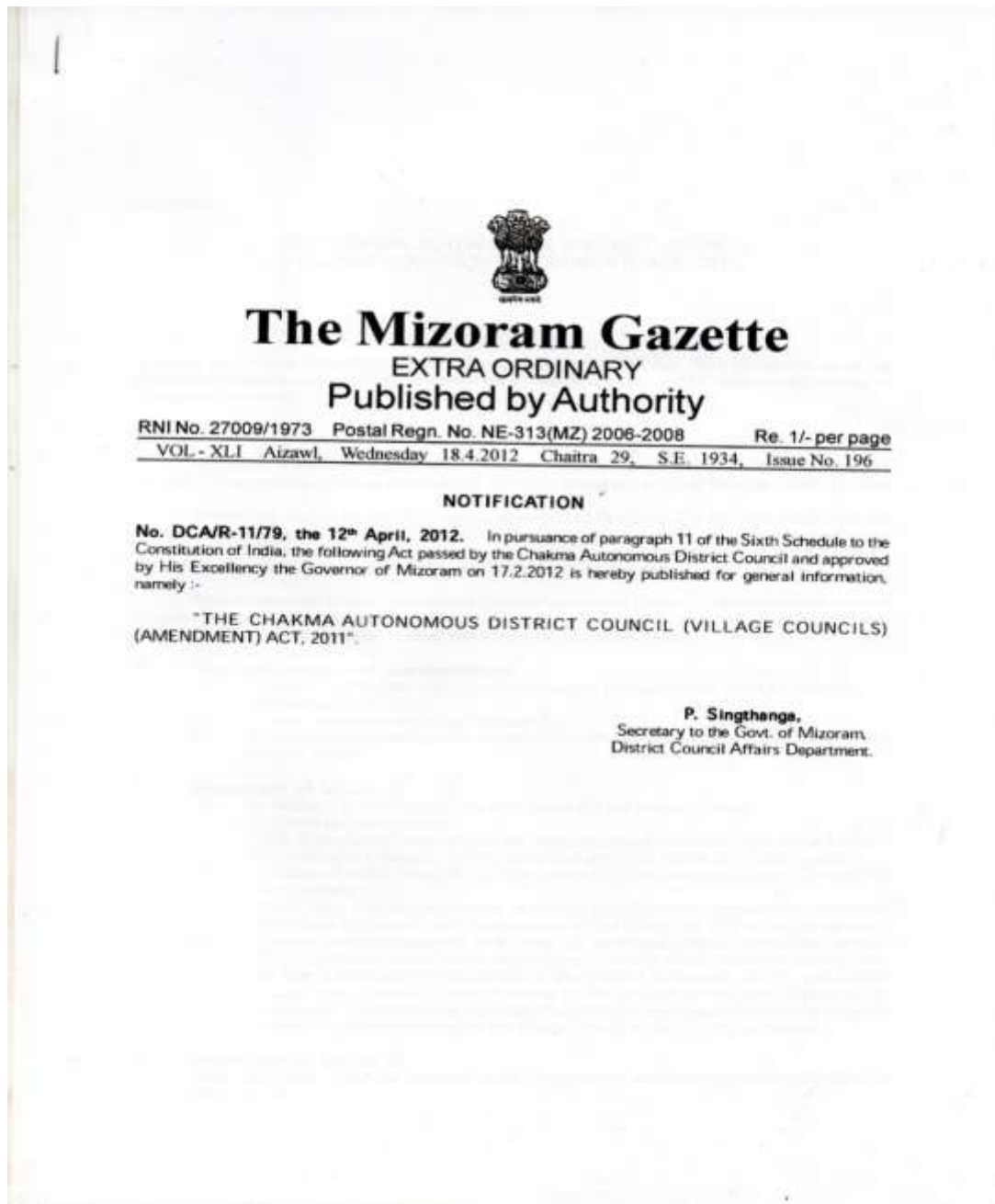
- (b) If at least half of the members resigned from membership due to difference in policy matters or for any other reason.

Provided that a member shall submit his resignation or members shall collectively submit their resignation in writing, under his hand or their hands to the President of the Village Council and the President shall forward the resignation or resignations as the case may be, to the Executive Committee within ten days.

Provided further that if for any reason, the President fails to forward the resignation or resignations to the Executive Committee within ten days, then after expiry of fifteen days the Executive Committee shall be competent to take necessary action as it may deem appropriate or necessary.

- (c) In case of dissolution of a Village Council the Executive Committee shall forward the matter to the State Election Commission for holding fresh election within six months.

APPENDIX IV



**THE CHAKMA AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCIL
(VILLAGE COUNCILS) (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2011.**

AN

ACT

to amend the Chakma Autonomous District Council (Village Council) Act, 2003 (hereinafter called the Principal Act) and to provide for the establishment of Village Councils and for other matters relating to village administration.

PREAMBLE :-

Whereas it is expedient to provide for the establishment of Village Councils and their powers and for other matters relating to Village administration including village police, public health and sanitation; and

Whereas by clauses (e) and (f) of sub-paragraph (1) of Paragraph 3 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, the District Council for an Autonomous District is empowered to make laws in respect of the establishment of Village or Town Committees or Councils or any other matters relating to the Village or Town Administration, Village or Town Police and Public health and sanitation.

Now, therefore the District council of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (hereinafter referred to as the District Council), in exercise of the powers conferred on it as aforesaid and of the other powers enabling it in that behalf is pleased to enact and it is hereby enacted as follows :

1. Short title, extent and Commencement:

- (i) This Act may be called the Chakma Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011.
- (ii) It shall have like extent as the Principal Act.
- (iii) It shall be deemed to have come into force with effect from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

2. Amendment of Section 2-

- (1) In Section 2 of the Principal Act, after clause (7), the following clause (7a) shall be added, namely :-
“(7a) ‘Gram Sabha’ means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral roll or rolls relating to a village or villages comprised within the area of the Village Council”.
- (2) In Section 2 of the Principal Act, after clause (10), the following clause (10a) shall be added, namely :
“(10a) ‘State Election Commission’ means the State Election Commission as constituted for the State of Mizoram under the provisions of Part IX and Part 1XA of the Constitution.”
- (3) In Section 2 of the Principal Act, after clause (12), the following clause shall be added, namely :
“(13) ‘Community assets’ means any property of income which by custom belongs to or has been administered for the benefit of the villagers in common, or has been created through contribution of voluntary labour by the villagers or has been created out of Government or District Council or Village Council funds and vested with the Village Council or which has been transferred to the Village Council by any agency whatsoever”.

3. Amendment of Section 3-

After Sub-Section (4) of the Section 3 of the Principal Act, the following Sub-Sections shall be added, namely: -

"(5) The MDCs shall be Ex-Officio Members of the Village Councils within the territorial jurisdictions of their respective MDC Constituencies. However, they shall not have voting rights during no-confidence motions if any, in the Village Council.
(6) Not less than one of the total number of seats shall be reserved for women for the time being.
(7) The conduct of elections to the Village Councils shall vest in the State Election Commission. However, the Officers/ Officials to be detailed for the Village Council Elections, shall be selected from the employees of the District Council".

4. Substitution of Section 5-

Section 5 of the Principal Act shall be substituted as follows, namely-

" 5 Removal of President, Vice President and Members of a village council-

(1) The President and the Vice- President, if any, of a village council may be removed by a vote of No- Confidence passed by a majority of the members of the Village Council, showing reasonable grounds for such motion.

(2) A Member of a Village Council may be removed if he absents himself from attending Village Council meetings on three consecutive occasions, when convened by the President with due intimation to the Members.

5. Amendment of Section 6-

Section 6 of the Principal Act shall be substituted by the following, namely -

"(6) **Duration of Village Council :** (1) Every Village Council, unless sooner dissolved, shall continue for five years from the date of its first meeting appointed by the State Election Commission, provided that the existing Village Councils which have been elected before the commencement of the Chakma Autonomous District (Village Councils)(Amendment) Act, 2011 shall continue for not more than three years.

(2) The process of election to a Village Council shall be completed before the term of the Village Council comes to an end.

(3) In the case of dissolution of a Village Council, election for the new Village Council shall be completed within six months of the date of order of dissolution".

6. Amendment of Section 8-

"(1) In sub-section(1) of section 8 of the Principal Acts, between the words 'President' and 'in each village', the words ' and a Vice- President' shall be inserted.

(3) In sub-section (5) of Section 8 after the words ' Executive Committee by the President ' the words, ' who shall subsequently report the matter to the State Election Commission' shall be added."

7. Amendment of Section 9 -

In Section 9 of the Principal Act, after sub-section (3), the following sub-section (4), shall be added, namely -

"(4) The Village Council shall be accountable to the Gram Sabha for all its functions, expenditure, approval of plans and approval of Utilization Certificate."

8. Amendment of Section 11 -

In section 11 sub-section (6) and (8) of Section 11 of the Principal Act, for the figures "Rs.12/-" and "Rs.10/-", the figures "Rs.100/-" and "Rs. 100/-" shall be substituted respectively.

9. Amendment of Section 14 -

In Section 14 of the Principal Act, the following Clause shall be added, namely-" (1) The Executive Committee shall have the rights to interfere in Village Administration in case of Mismanagement of Village Council Funds or mal-administration in the Village Council".

10. Amendment of Section 15 -

In section 15 of the Principal Act, the following clause shall be added, namely- " There shall be at least 4 (four) Village Council meetings in a year.

11. Insertion of Section 20A and 20B – After Section 20, of the Principal Act, following new sections shall be added, namely:

"20A. Allocation of Functions to the Village Councils -

The Governor, on the recommendations of the Executive Committee, may allocate from time to time all or any of the functions listed in the Eleventh Schedule to the constitution, to any Village Council and demarcate the roles of the Village Council, the District Council and the State Government in these areas.

20-B Gram Sabha -

- (1) Every Gram Sabha shall approve the plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development in respect of the village concerned before such plans, programmes and projects are taken up for implementation. The Plans & Proposal so approved and the Utilization Certificate(s) thereby shall be submitted to the Local Administrative Department of the District Council for further necessary action.
- (2) The Village Council be responsible for the identification and/or selection of persons as beneficiaries under the poverty alleviation and other programmes.
- (3) Ordinarily a Gram Sabha will be convened and presided over by the President of the Village Council. However, in the absence of the President or due to his incapacity to convene such meeting, the Vice President or the Secretary may convene a meeting.
- (4) Quorum of a Gram Sabha shall be 10 % of the total number of registered voters of the village or villages concerned.
- (5) Every Gram Sabha shall be responsible to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, and management of community assets.
- (6) Every Village Council shall be required to obtain from the Gram Sabha a certificate of utilization of funds for the plans, programs and projects executed by them.
- (7) The Gram Sabha and the Village Council shall consult with the Executive Committee (a) before making any acquisition of land; and (b) before re-settlement and rehabilitation of persons affected by such projects.
- (8) The recommendations of the Gram Sabha and Village Council shall be mandatory for grant of concession for the exploitation of minor minerals by auction, in consultation with the Executive Committee of the District Council.
- (9) Subject to sub-section (1), all individual beneficiaries under various welfare and development schemes shall be selected by the Village Council.
- (10) There shall be at least four Gram Sabha meetings in a year.
- (11) The Gram Sabha may decide that any of its functions may be performed by the Village Council.
- (12) The minutes of the meeting of each Gram Sabha shall be recorded in a Register and shall be maintained by the Secretary of the Village Council."

12. **Amendment of Section 26:-**

The following proviso shall be added to sub-section (1) of Section 26 of the Principal Act, namely – "Provided that no such dissolution shall take place unless the Village Council has been given a reasonable opportunity to explain as to why it should not be dissolved."

Susen Chakma,
Executive Member i/c LAD,
Chakma Autonomous District Council,
Kamalanagar.

APPENDIX V



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NOTIFICATION

No.H. 12018/28/98-LJD, the 4th December, 2014. The following Act is hereby re-published for general information.

The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils)(Amendment) Act, 2014
(Act No. 10 of 2014)

(Received the assent of the Governor of Mizoram on the 28th November, 2014).

Zahmingthanga Raite,
Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of Mizoram.

THE LUSHAI HILLS DISTRICT (VILLAGE COUNCILS) (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2014

Act No. 10 of 2014

AN ACT

further to amend The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953.

Whereas it is expedient further to amend The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953 (Act No. 5 of 1953) (hereinafter referred to as the Principal Act).

It is enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Mizoram in the sixty fifth year of the Republic of India as follows, namely :-

1. Short title and commencement.

- 1) This Act may be called The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014.
- 2) It shall come into force from the date of its publication in Mizoram Gazette.

2. Amendment of Section 2.

In Section 2 of the Principal Act, after clause 20, the following new clauses shall be added, namely:-

- (21) "Gram Sabha" (Village Assembly) means a body consisting of persons registered in the Electoral Rolls relating to the Village Council.
- (22) "State Election Commission" means the State Election Commission referred to in Section 345 of the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007.
- (23) "Community Assets" means any property or income which by custom belongs to or has been administered for the benefit of the villagers in common, or has been created through contribution of voluntary labour by the villagers, or has been created by the State Government".

3. Amendment of Section 3.

- (1) Clauses (i) (ii) (iii) & (iv) of sub-section (2) of Section 3 of the Principal Act, shall be substituted by the following clauses namely: -
 - "(i) For Village not exceeding 200 households, there shall be 3 (three) elected members, of whom 1 (one) shall be woman.
 - (ii) For Village with more than 200 households, but not exceeding 500 households, there shall be 5 (five) members, of whom 1 (one) shall be woman.
 - (iii) For Village with more than 500 households, but not exceeding 1000 households, there shall be 7 (seven) elected members, of whom 2 (two) shall be women.
 - (iv) For Village with more than 1000 households and above, there shall be 9 (nine) elected members, of whom 3 (three) shall be women".
- (2) After the proviso, a new proviso shall be added as follows, namely:-
 "Provided further that the process of election for constitution of the Village Councils shall be completed before the expiry of one year from the date fixed for the first meeting of the Village Council".

4. After sub-section (6) of Section 3 of the Principal Act, the following sub-section shall be added, namely :-

- "(7) The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for and the conduct of elections to the Village Council shall vest in the State Election Commission".

5. Amendment of Section 4.

In Section 4 of the Principal Act, after clause (f), a new clause (g) with Explanation shall be added, namely:-

- "(g) He holds any office of profit under the Central Government or the State Government.
 Explanation: In this clause, "office of profit" means a regular payment made in the form of Salary or wages".

6. Amendment of Section 5.

Section 5 of the Principal Act, shall be substituted by the following, namely :-

"Every Village Council, unless sooner dissolved under the provision of section 25 of this Act shall continue for 5 (five) years from the date appointed for its first meeting.

Provided that the State Government may, by order, extend or shorten the life of a Village Council for such periods not exceeding eighteen months in the aggregate.

Provided further that the process of election to a Village Council shall be completed before the term of the Councils comes to an end".

7. Amendment of Section 6.

In sub-section (3) of section 6 of the Principal Act, the word "ten" that appears in sub-section 3 shall be substituted by the word "three".

8. Amendment of Section 7.

In Section 7 of the Principal Act,

(1) First paragraph shall be substituted by the following, namely: -

"Executive- There shall be a President, a Vice President, a Treasurer and a Secretary in each Village Council and the executive functions of the Village Council shall be vested in these four.

Provided that if a Village Council having 3 (three) seats has only two members due to any reasons, the Vice President shall hold the post of Treasurer".

(2) In sub-section 2, the lines "on the advice of the President of the Village Council" shall be substituted by "on the recommendation of the executive body of the Village Council".

(3) In sub-section 7, after the last sentence, a new sentence "The State Government shall declare the seat as vacant" shall be added.

(4) After sub-section (10), the following new sub-sections (11) and (12) shall be added, namely:-

"(11) If the President has lost the support of the majority of members, and if a report is received in writing by the State Government, a meeting of Village Council shall be convened by the officer appointed by the State Government to elect a new President. The officer appointed by the State Government shall serve a notice of such meeting specifying the date and time and place thereof and send a copy of notice to the State Government. Such meeting shall be presided over by any officials appointed by the State Government. The report on election of the new President shall be sent to the State Government without delay.

(12) If the majority of members demand re- shuffle of the executive body of the Village Council and if such report is received in writing by the State Government for reshuffle of the executive body, the same procedure as per sub-section (11) of section 7 shall be applied".

9. Amendment of Section 8.

After sub-section (3) of Section 8 of the Principal Act, the following new sub-sections (4) and (5) shall be added, namely:-

"(4) The Village Council shall be accountable to the Gram Sabha for all its functions and decisions taken in its meetings.

(5) Every Village Council shall prepare a report in respect of its administration in such form and with such details as may be prescribed and such report shall be submitted twice in a year to the State Government. If the report is not submitted, the State Government may withhold the payment of grants and remunerations due to the Village Councils thereafter".

10. Insertion of new Section 8 A.

After Section 8 of the Principal Act, a new Section 8A shall be inserted as follows, namely:-

"8A. The Village Council shall have the following powers and duties:

(1) To formulate village development schemes, to supervise development works received from the State Government through various agencies.

(2) To help various Government agencies in carrying out development works in the village.

(3) To take up development works on its own initiative or on request by the Government.

(4) To convene regular social audit for successful implementation of development works in the village.

(5) To collect property tax as prescribed by the State Government.

(6) To realize registration fees for each litigation within its jurisdiction.

(7) To raise fund for public utility within its jurisdiction by passing a resolution subject to the approval of the State Government.

(8) To administer relief and rehabilitation to the people during calamities.

(9) To assist the State Government in public distribution system.

(10) To initiate or assist the State Government in all preventive measures on the outbreak of an epidemic or infectious disease.

- (11) To co-operate with Government officials in charge of any of the above functions within its jurisdiction".

11. Insertion of new Section 11 A.

After Section 11 of the Principal Act, a new section 11A shall be inserted, namely:-

"11 A. Gram Sabha (Village Assembly):

- (1) Every Gram Sabha shall:
 - (i) approve the annual plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development in respect of the village concerned before such plans, programmes and projects are taken up for implementation.
 - (ii) be responsible for the identification or selection of persons as beneficiaries under the poverty alleviation and other programmes.
- (2) Ordinarily a Gram Sabha will be convened and presided over by the President of the Village Council.
- (3) Quorum of a Gram Sabha shall be 10% of the registered voters of latest electoral roll of the Village Council.
- (4) Every Gram Sabha shall be responsible to safeguard and preserve community assets.
- (5) The Gram Sabha and the Village Council shall be consulted before making resettlement and rehabilitation of persons affected.
- (6) There shall be at least 3 (three) Gram Sabha meetings in a year".

12. Amendment of Section 12.

In section 12 of the Principal Act, the existing section shall be renumbered as sub-section (1) thereof, and after sub-section (1) as so renumbered the following sub-section (2) shall be inserted, namely:-

"(2) There shall be at least 6 (six) Village Council meetings at regular intervals in a calendar year. Resolutions made in such meetings shall be properly recorded and shall be signed both by the President and the Secretary".

13. Amendment of Section 16.

In sub-section (2) of section 16 of the Principal Act, the word "Deputy Commissioner" shall be substituted by "the State Government"

After sub-section 4 of Section 16 of the Principal Act, the following new sub-sections (5) and (6) shall be added as follows namely:-

- "(5) The President shall be responsible to pass on the letters received by him to the Village Council Secretary for records.
- (6) He shall fully relinquish Village Council charge and hand over Village Council records, documents, properties and assets including Village Council seal to the new Village Council President as the case may be".

14. Insertion of new Section 17A.

After Section 17 of the Principal Act, the following new section 17A shall be inserted, namely:-

"17A-Treasurer: The Treasurer of a Village Council shall keep all money of the Village Council and properly maintain cash book and register as prescribed by the State Government.

In the event of the Treasurer ceasing to function for any reason he shall forthwith hand over the charge of Treasurer to the newly appointed Treasurer or any other person authorized by the State Government".

APPENDIX VI



Office of the M.H.T at Khatla, Aizawl visited on 30.05.2023

APPENDIX VII



Office of the MHIP General Headquarters visited on 20.04.2023

APPENDIX VIII



1st Row: Offices of the women's wing of Mizo National Front and Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee visited during field work.

2nd Row: Offices of the women's wing of Zoram People's Movement and Mizoram Bharatiya Janata visited during field work.

APPENDIX IX



List of chairperson of the Mizoram Public Service Commission.

CHIEF SECRETARIES OF MIZORAM		
UNION TERRITORY		
Sl. No.	Name & Service	Period
1	Pu R.M. Agrewal, IAS	21.01.1972 - 18.03.1975
2	Pu Surendra Nath, IPS	18.03.1975 - 03.12.1978
3	Pu A.J. Kundan, IAS	04.12.1978 - 08.09.1981
4	Pu A.H. Scott, IPAS	08.09.1981 - 16.07.1984
5	Pu Lalchamli, IAS	17.07.1984 - 20.02.1987
STATE		
Sl. No.	Name & Service	Period
1	Pu Lalchama, IAS	20.02.1987 - 14.07.1987
2	Pu P. Rohmingthanga, IAS	11.08.1987 - 13.09.1988
3	Pu Lalchama, IAS	14.09.1988 - 20.09.1989
4	Pu M. Lalmatanzala, IAS	03.10.1989 - 23.08.1990
5	Pu F. Pabmua, IAS	23.08.1990 - 21.09.1993
6	Pu Lalfak Rhual, IAS	21.09.1993 - 02.12.1998
7	Pu H.V. Lalthinga, IAS	01.03.1999 - 01.08.2003
8	Pu Hengkham Hmuel, IAS	01.08.2003 - 20.01.2009
9	Pu Van Hela Pachuau, IAS	20.01.2009 - 31.08.2012
10	Pu L. Tichhong, IAS	31.08.2012 - 31.10.2014
11	Pu Lalmatanzama, IAS	01.11.2014 - 28.02.2018
12	Pu Arvind Ray, IAS	28.03.2018 - 12.02.2019
13	Pu Lalnunmawia Chuaucho, IAS	12.02.2019 - 29.10.2021
14	Dr. Renu Sharma, IAS	01.11.2021 -

List of Chief Secretaries of Mizoram.

APPENDIX X

The following table summarizes the data presented in the photographs of the Deputy Commissioners' lists:

District	Year	Number of Commissioners
Aizawl	2010	13
Champhai	2010	13
Kolasib	2010	13
Hnahthial	2010	13
Lunglei	2010	13
Mamit	2010	13
Saitual	2010	13
Lawngtlai	2010	13
Serchhip	2010	13
Saiha	2010	13

Lists of Deputy Commissioners: 1st Row: Aizawl, Champhai, Kolasib, Khawzawl
 2nd Row: Hnahthial, Lunglei, Mamit, Saitual
 3rd Row: Lawngtlai, Serchhip, Saiha

APPENDIX XI



1st Row: Interview with Rev. H. Lalropuia. Treasurer of Aizawl East District UPC NEI on 14.8.2023. Interview with Lalhlimpuii, former MLA elected in 1987 on 25.3.2022.

2nd Row: Interview with Zothankimi, MLA candidate in 2003 and 2008 elections on 27. 2. 2022. Interview with Kusum Lota Chakma. Elected member of Chakma District Council 2018 on 23.1.2022. Interview with K. Thansiami, former MLA elected in 1984 on 15.01.2024.

APPENDIX XII

[illegible]

CIVIL SURGEON/CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER LUNGLEI DISTRICT			
Sl.	NAME	FROM	TO
1	DR. THAKHARA	1. 1972	12. 1974
2	DR. JONGHARA	1. 1974	10. 1976
3	DR. P. N. SINGH, IFTT	11. 1976	10. 1977
4	DR. THAKHARA	11. 1977	10. 1978
5	DR. P. N. SINGH	1. 10. 1981	4. 9. 1983
6	DR. NATHAKHARA	5. 9. 1983	12. 1988
7	DR. FOLU SONGHARA	17. 1988	12. 1989
8	DR. FOLU SONGHARA	17. 1989	10. 5. 1993
9	DR. FOLU SONGHARA	11. 5. 1993	6. 5. 1999
10	DR. CHATHANHARA	12. 3. 1999	7. 1. 2004
11	DR. CHATHANHARA	12. 3. 2004	6. 5. 2009
12	DR. WALS SONGHARA	1. 4. 2009	12. 7. 2009
13	DR. FALAH SONGHARA	13. 7. 2009	16. 5. 2012
14	DR. V. M. SINGH, IAS	17. 5. 2012	10. 12. 2013
15	DR. THAM. PACHOU	11. 2. 2015	6. 5. 2019
16	DR. LATHAKHARA	7. 6. 2020	12. 7. 2021
17	DR. C. L. JANA	12. 1. 2021	

SUPPLEMENTARY LIST OF POLICE			
LUNGLING DISTRICT - LUNGLING			
LUNGLING - THIRUPUR			
No.	Name	(Inclusive)	Duration of post
1	A. Chandyrasekhar	1970	01.01.1972 - 01.06.1972
2	A. K. Ramesh	1970	27.06.1972 - 01.07.1972
3	A. K. Ramesh	1970	13.07.1972 - 01.08.1972
4	A. K. Ramesh	1970	01.08.1972 - 01.09.1972
5	A. K. Ramesh	1970	01.09.1972 - 01.10.1972
6	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.10.1972 - 01.11.1972
7	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.11.1972 - 01.12.1972
8	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.12.1972 - 01.01.1973
9	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.01.1973 - 01.02.1973
10	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.02.1973 - 01.03.1973
11	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.03.1973 - 01.04.1973
12	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.04.1973 - 01.05.1973
13	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.05.1973 - 01.06.1973
14	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.06.1973 - 01.07.1973
15	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.07.1973 - 01.08.1973
16	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.08.1973 - 01.09.1973
17	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.09.1973 - 01.10.1973
18	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.10.1973 - 01.11.1973
19	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.11.1973 - 01.12.1973
20	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.12.1973 - 01.01.1974
21	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.01.1974 - 01.02.1974
22	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.02.1974 - 01.03.1974
23	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.03.1974 - 01.04.1974
24	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.04.1974 - 01.05.1974
25	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.05.1974 - 01.06.1974
26	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.06.1974 - 01.07.1974
27	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.07.1974 - 01.08.1974
28	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.08.1974 - 01.09.1974
29	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.09.1974 - 01.10.1974
30	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.10.1974 - 01.11.1974
31	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.11.1974 - 01.12.1974
32	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.12.1974 - 01.01.1975
33	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.01.1975 - 01.02.1975
34	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.02.1975 - 01.03.1975
35	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.03.1975 - 01.04.1975
36	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.04.1975 - 01.05.1975
37	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.05.1975 - 01.06.1975
38	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.06.1975 - 01.07.1975
39	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.07.1975 - 01.08.1975
40	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.08.1975 - 01.09.1975
41	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.09.1975 - 01.10.1975
42	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.10.1975 - 01.11.1975
43	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.11.1975 - 01.12.1975
44	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.12.1975 - 01.01.1976
45	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.01.1976 - 01.02.1976
46	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.02.1976 - 01.03.1976
47	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.03.1976 - 01.04.1976
48	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.04.1976 - 01.05.1976
49	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.05.1976 - 01.06.1976
50	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.06.1976 - 01.07.1976
51	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.07.1976 - 01.08.1976
52	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.08.1976 - 01.09.1976
53	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.09.1976 - 01.10.1976
54	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.10.1976 - 01.11.1976
55	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.11.1976 - 01.12.1976
56	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.12.1976 - 01.01.1977
57	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.01.1977 - 01.02.1977
58	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.02.1977 - 01.03.1977
59	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.03.1977 - 01.04.1977
60	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.04.1977 - 01.05.1977
61	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.05.1977 - 01.06.1977
62	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.06.1977 - 01.07.1977
63	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.07.1977 - 01.08.1977
64	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.08.1977 - 01.09.1977
65	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.09.1977 - 01.10.1977
66	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.10.1977 - 01.11.1977
67	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.11.1977 - 01.12.1977
68	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.12.1977 - 01.01.1978
69	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.01.1978 - 01.02.1978
70	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.02.1978 - 01.03.1978
71	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.03.1978 - 01.04.1978
72	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.04.1978 - 01.05.1978
73	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.05.1978 - 01.06.1978
74	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.06.1978 - 01.07.1978
75	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.07.1978 - 01.08.1978
76	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.08.1978 - 01.09.1978
77	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.09.1978 - 01.10.1978
78	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.10.1978 - 01.11.1978
79	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.11.1978 - 01.12.1978
80	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.12.1978 - 01.01.1979
81	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.01.1979 - 01.02.1979
82	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.02.1979 - 01.03.1979
83	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.03.1979 - 01.04.1979
84	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.04.1979 - 01.05.1979
85	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.05.1979 - 01.06.1979
86	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.06.1979 - 01.07.1979
87	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.07.1979 - 01.08.1979
88	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.08.1979 - 01.09.1979
89	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.09.1979 - 01.10.1979
90	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.10.1979 - 01.11.1979
91	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.11.1979 - 01.12.1979
92	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.12.1979 - 01.01.1980
93	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.01.1980 - 01.02.1980
94	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.02.1980 - 01.03.1980
95	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.03.1980 - 01.04.1980
96	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.04.1980 - 01.05.1980
97	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.05.1980 - 01.06.1980
98	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.06.1980 - 01.07.1980
99	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.07.1980 - 01.08.1980
100	B. K. Ramesh	1970	01.08.1980 - 01.09.1980

The image shows two wooden plaques mounted on a wall. The left plaque is for the 'JENNIFER J. WILSON' and the right is for the 'JENNIFER J. WILSON'.

 UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM STUDENT EMPLOYMENT REPORT			
Year	Month	Day	Time
1	1990	10/10	10:00 - 11:00
2	1990	10/10	11:00 - 12:00
3	1990	10/10	12:00 - 13:00
4	1990	10/10	13:00 - 14:00
5	1990	10/10	14:00 - 15:00
6	1990	10/10	15:00 - 16:00
7	1990	10/10	16:00 - 17:00
8	1990	10/10	17:00 - 18:00
9	1990	10/10	18:00 - 19:00
10	1990	10/10	19:00 - 20:00
11	1990	10/10	20:00 - 21:00
12	1990	10/10	21:00 - 22:00
13	1990	10/10	22:00 - 23:00
14	1990	10/10	23:00 - 24:00
15	1990	10/10	24:00 - 25:00
16	1990	10/10	25:00 - 26:00
17	1990	10/10	26:00 - 27:00
18	1990	10/10	27:00 - 28:00
19	1990	10/10	28:00 - 29:00
20	1990	10/10	29:00 - 30:00
21	1990	10/10	30:00 - 31:00
22	1990	10/10	31:00 - 32:00
23	1990	10/10	32:00 - 33:00
24	1990	10/10	33:00 - 34:00
25	1990	10/10	34:00 - 35:00
26	1990	10/10	35:00 - 36:00
27	1990	10/10	36:00 - 37:00
28	1990	10/10	37:00 - 38:00
29	1990	10/10	38:00 - 39:00
30	1990	10/10	39:00 - 40:00
31	1990	10/10	40:00 - 41:00
32	1990	10/10	41:00 - 42:00
33	1990	10/10	42:00 - 43:00
34	1990	10/10	43:00 - 44:00
35	1990	10/10	44:00 - 45:00
36	1990	10/10	45:00 - 46:00
37	1990	10/10	46:00 - 47:00
38	1990	10/10	47:00 - 48:00
39	1990	10/10	48:00 - 49:00
40	1990	10/10	49:00 - 50:00
41	1990	10/10	50:00 - 51:00
42	1990	10/10	51:00 - 52:00
43	1990	10/10	52:00 - 53:00
44	1990	10/10	53:00 - 54:00
45	1990	10/10	54:00 - 55:00
46	1990	10/10	55:00 - 56:00
47	1990	10/10	56:00 - 57:00
48	1990	10/10	57:00 - 58:00
49	1990	10/10	58:00 - 59:00
50	1990	10/10	59:00 - 60:00
51	1990	10/10	60:00 - 61:00
52	1990	10/10	61:00 - 62:00
53	1990	10/10	62:00 - 63:00
54	1990	10/10	63:00 - 64:00
55	1990	10/10	64:00 - 65:00
56	1990	10/10	65:00 - 66:00
57	1990	10/10	66:00 - 67:00
58	1990	10/10	67:00 - 68:00
59	1990	10/10	68:00 - 69:00
60	1990	10/10	69:00 - 70:00
61	1990	10/10	70:00 - 71:00
62	1990	10/10	71:00 - 72:00
63	1990	10/10	72:00 - 73:00
64	1990	10/10	73:00 - 74:00
65	1990	10/10	74:00 - 75:00
66	1990	10/10	75:00 - 76:00
67	1990	10/10	76:00 - 77:00
68	1990	10/10	77:00 - 78:00
69	1990	10/10	78:00 - 79:00
70	1990	10/10	79:00 - 80:00
71	1990	10/10	80:00 - 81:00
72	1990	10/10	81:00 - 82:00
73	1990	10/10	82:00 - 83:00
74	1990	10/10	83:

[illegible]

GOVERNMENT OF MIZORAM



**LIST OF
DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS
KOLASIB DISTRICT : MIZORAM**

2004

S.NO.	NAME	POSTING
1.	D. KALAKHAKHAKH, B.A. (HONS) B.Sc.	01.07.2000 - 04.04.2008
2.	D. LITLITLITLIT, M.A. B.A.	04.04.2000 - 07.11.2010
3.	M. KHAMKHAM, B.A. B.Sc. B.L. B.Ed. B.Sc.	08.12.2010 - 08.04.2015
4.	MAHAKHAKHAKH, M.A. B.A.	08.04.2015 - 04.04.2018
5.	S. LITLITLITLIT, M.A. B.A.	04.04.2015 - 08.11.2018
6.	MAHAKHAKHAKH, M.A. B.A.	08.11.2018 - 04.04.2021
7.	MAHAKHAKHAKH, M.A. B.A.	04.04.2021 - 01.07.2023
8.	MAHAKHAKHAKH, B.A. (HONS) B.Sc.	01.07.2023

SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE

LAWNGTLAI

Sl. No.	Name	Payable	To
1.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
2.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
3.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
4.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
5.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
6.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
7.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
8.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
9.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
10.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
11.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
12.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
13.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00
14.	Adm. Salaries	3000/-	11,12,00

LIST OF DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS			
SERVING			
S.N.	NAME	FROM	TO
1	SHRINIVAS, V. N. S.	14.08.60	24.08.60
2	SHARMA, S. S.	17.08.60	04.09.60
3	SHARMA, N. S.	04.09.60	01.10.60
4	SHARMA, S. S.	01.10.60	01.10.60
5	SHARMA, S. S.	01.10.60	14.10.60
6	SHARMA, S. S.	14.10.60	14.10.60
7	SHARMA, S. S.	14.10.60	14.10.60
8	SHARMA, S. S.	14.10.60	14.10.60
9	SHARMA, S. S.	14.10.60	14.10.60
10	SHARMA, S. S.	14.10.60	14.10.60
11	SHARMA, S. S.	14.10.60	14.10.60

1st Row: List of Chief Medical Officers- Aizawl West, Mamit and Lunglei

2nd Row: List of Superintendent of Police- Champhai, Lawngtlai and Lunglei

3rd Row : List of District Education Officers: Kolasib, Serchhip and Saiha

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2. Andrew F. Lalramnghaka. Vice-President, MZP General Headquarters.
3. B. Lalawmpuii. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
4. B. Sangkhumi. MLA Candidate 2018, Former President, MHIP General Headquarters.
5. Baryl Vanneihsangi. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
6. Byhna Chozah. General Secretary, Mara Students Organisation General Headquarters.
7. C. Biakthansangi. MDC Lai, 2020.
9. C. Lalchhandami. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
26. Catherine Sangzuali. President of women's wing, ZPM.
10. Christina Roluahpuii Sailo. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
11. Chuauzikpuii. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
12. David Zohmangaiha. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
13. F. Lalringluangi. MLA Candidate 2018, Ex-Vice President of women's wing, ZPM.
14. F. Laldangveli. Treasurer of women's wing, ZPM.
15. F. Vanlalruatpuia. President of the Lai Students Association General Headquarters.

16. Flawrence Vanlalrengpuii. Vice President of women's wing, MNF.
17. Gracie Vanlalawmpuii Pachuau. Secretary of women's wing, BJP Mizoram.
18. H.C. Lalmalsawma Zasai. MDC Mara.
19. H. Lalropuia, Treasurer of Aizawl East District UPC of NEI.
20. H. Ngunkungi. MDC Mara, 2012.
21. H. Remhnuni. MDC Lai, 2002.
22. Hujee Chakma. Vice President, Central Mizoram Chakma Students Union.
23. J. Lalmuanzuala. President, Mizo Students Union, General Headquarters.
24. Jacob Lalmuanpuia. General Secretary, Mizo Zirlai Pawl, General Headquarters.
25. Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah. General Secretary, Central Young Lai Association.
26. John Zosangliana Ralte. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
27. Jyoti Bikash. President, Central Young Chakma Association.
28. K. Thansiami. Former MLA (1984).
29. K. Zapari. MDC Lai, 1992.
30. K. Laldinthara. State Spokesperson, Mizoram BJP.
31. K. Beisa. Former president of the MTP General Headquarters.
32. K. Lalrengpuii. President of women's wing, Mizo National Front.
33. Kusum Lota Chakma. MDC Chakma, 2018.
34. Lalhlimpuii. Former MLA (1987).
35. Lalmalsawmi. MLA Candidate 2018.

36. Lalremsangi Fanai. MLA Candidate 2018, President of women's wing BJP Mizoram.
37. Laltlanzova Kiangte. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
38. Lalmangaihi. Senior Vice-President of women's wing, ZPM.
39. Lalringliana. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
40. Lalrindiki Ralte. Professor Aizawl Theological College.
41. Lalremsiami. Vice-President of women's wing of Congress.
42. Lalrinmawii Fanai. General Secretary of women's wing of PC party.
43. Lalbiaktluangi. MDC Mara, 2000.
44. Lalfakzuala Chenkual. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
45. Lalkhawngaiha. Secretary, MZP General Headquarters.
46. Malsawmliana. Assistant Secretary, Central Young Mizo Association.
47. Malsawmzuala. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
48. N. Ngothlua. MDC, 2005.
49. N. Sangnawni. MDC Lai, 2015.
50. Ngunsuii. MDC Mara, 2017.
51. Ngursailovi. Vice-President of women's wing of ZPM.
52. P. Lalringpuui. MDC Lai, 2010.
53. Pachi Hlychho. Former president of the MTP General Headquarters.
54. R. Vanlalvena. Former MLA and General Secretary MPCC.
55. R. Lalawmpuui. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.

56. R. Zomuanpuii. President of All Mizoram Elected Women Representatives.
57. Ramthanzauvi. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
58. Rev. Lalramliana Pachuau. Former Moderator, Synod Mizoram.
59. Ringchhungi. MDC Lai, 2006.
60. Rosiamngheta. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
61. T. Chatlua. Former president of the MTP General Headquarters.
62. T. Vanlaltlani. Adjunct Professor, Aizawl Theological College, and
President of All Mizoram Women Federation.
63. Tlangthanmawii. MLA Candidate 2013, Former president of women's wing of Congress.
64. Vanlalzawma. Former MP Lok Sabha and Vice President of Mizo National Front.
65. Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu. Former MLA and president of women's wing of Congress.
66. Vanlalneia. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
67. Vanlalhmuaka. President, BJP Mizoram.
68. Z. Ngunchhini. MDC Lai, 2020.
69. Zothankimi. MLA Candidate 2003 & 2008 and former president of women's wing of Congress.
70. Zonunmawii Ralte. Secretary of women's wing of PC party.
71. Zodingpuii. Corporator, Aizawl Municipal Corporation.
72. Lalthlamuani. Former President of MHIP General Headquarters.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Journal Publications

1. Melody Kawlramchhani & Suwa Lal Jangu (2024). Urban Local Government in Mizoram: Women and Political Participation. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 11(7), 72-75.
2. Melody Kawlramchhani & Suwa Lal Jangu. Women and Political Representation in Mizoram. *Guwahati University Institute of North East India Studies (GUINEIS) Journal*, Vol XII, 2024.

Paper Presented in National Seminars/ Conferences

1. Presented a joint-paper titled, “Inclusive Growth and Development: Women Empowerment in Mizoram” in the National Seminar, NAVIGATING G20’S PRESIDENCY: STRATEGIZING INDIA’S LEADERSHIP organized by the Department of Political Science, Pachhunga University College, Constituent College of Mizoram University held on 1st & 2nd June, 2023 at Pachhunga University College, Aizawl, Mizoram.
2. Presented a paper titled, ‘British Colonial Rule & Education: Its implication on Women’s Political representation in Mizoram’ in the National Seminar, THE POLITICS OF BOUNDARIES: MAPPING THE MIZO ETHNIC TERRITORIAL AND CULTURAL SPACE jointly organized by Mizoram Political Science Association (MIPSA) & Dept. of Political Science, Govt. T. Ramana College on 1st & 2nd November, 2023 at Govt. T. Romana College, Aizawl, Mizoram

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ABSTRACT

**WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING
PROCESSES IN MIZORAM**

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DECEMBER, 2025

**WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN
MIZORAM**

BY
MELODY KAWLRAMCHHANI
Department of Political Science

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Submitted
In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Political Science of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

Introduction

The issue of women's representation is a complex and widely debated topic. To understand the problem of women's representation, it is important to comprehend the culture, history and institutional structure of a society. In every society, whether in western developed countries or underdeveloped countries elsewhere, women are under-represented in decision-making bodies. Among others, different factors like social-cultural, economic and historical forces could have contributed to the low representation of women in politics. Although women have made progress in different fields, there is no significant increase in their presence in decision-making bodies in many countries of the world. To raise the number of women and empower them, some countries have adopted measures that increased the number of women in the national legislature and local government. Yet, women remain under-represented on average globally.¹

Traditionally, there has been a distinction of gender roles in most societies. Men were primarily responsible for affairs in the public sphere like politics and the economy. The private sphere like the home and the family was considered the domain of women. Historically, the denial of women's right to vote and the argument against it came from fear of disturbing 'the balance between the public and private spheres'. While the strict division of the public-private spheres has been diminishing, it continues to manifest itself in different ways across cultures and societies.² Some argue that representation of women in positions of power not only 'symbolizes greater legitimacy of public institutions' but also changes people's perception about the public sphere of politics as the domain of men.³

¹According to Inter-Parliamentary Union, global average of women in Lower chamber and unicameral is 27.3 percent and 27.6 percent in Upper chamber as of 1st July, 2025. Retrieved July 3, 2025 from https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_month=7&date_year=2025

²Farida Jalalzai., & Mona Lena Krook. (2010). Beyond Hillary and Benazir: Women's Political Leadership Worldwide. *International Political Science Review*, 31 (1), 5-21. Retrieved March 9, 2022, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25652937>

³Kirsten Haack. (2014). Breaking Barriers? Women's Representation and Leadership at the United Nations. *Global Governance*, 20 (1), 37-54. Retrieved March 9, 2022, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24526180>

The problem of the representation of women points toward different things, and ‘it raises economic, psychological, sociological, and biological questions.’⁴ The Government of India appointed the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) in 1971 to examine the condition and status of women in India and to evaluate ‘the impact of the constitutional, legal and administrative provisions’ in improving the lives of women in different areas. The CSWI report ‘Towards Equality’ (1974) criticized the political process and the low political status of women. It also found that government policies and programmes had no adequate positive outcome in changing the status of women in India.⁵ Even after 50 years, women’s representation in the parliament and legislative assembly continues to be low with regional differences.

Representation: Meaning and Theory

Before adopting representation in the political context in modern usage, it was historically used in the contexts of theatrical and symbolic representation in Latin, French, and English. The Latin word ‘repraesentare’ in ancient Rome referred to something close ‘to present’. The modern political usage of the term representation is more similar to the usage of the theatrical term ‘persona’. A different meaning of representation was developed in the Middle Ages Christian thinking and practice in the spiritual and corporate realm as ‘Christ representing God and the pope representing Christ to Christendom’. The modern understanding of consent underpinning the authority of political representatives emerged around the English Civil War. As the meaning of representation has evolved, the modern usage of representation ‘moved toward more political senses of a king’ or a parliament representing a constituency. ‘The latter set of meanings moved from acting for a collectivity without actual authorization, to acting for smaller groups and individuals with authorization.’⁶

⁴Virginia Sapiro. (1988). When are Interest Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women. In Anne Phillips, (Ed.), *Feminism and Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press. p. 163.

⁵Zoya Hasan. (2023). *Democracy and the crisis of Inequality*. Delhi: Primus Books. pp. 232, 233.

⁶Micheal Saward. (2010). *The Representative Claim*. Oxford New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 4, 5.

Cambridge dictionary defines representation as ‘a person or organization that speaks, acts, or is present officially for someone else’.⁷ The Britannica dictionary defines representation as ‘a person or group that speaks or acts for or in support of another person or group’.⁸ Oxford learner dictionaries defines it as ‘the act of presenting somebody/something in a particular way; something that shows or describes something’.⁹ Pitkin defines representation as ‘the making present of something which is nevertheless not literally present’. She further argues that ‘political representation is primarily a public, institutionalized arrangement involving many people and groups, and operating in the complex ways of large-scale social arrangements’.¹⁰

Rehfeld argues that political representation is about performing a specific function by someone who stands for a group of people. And representation comes from the audience’s judgment using a set of ‘rules of recognition’.¹¹ So, according to him, political representation occurs if the audience approves or recognizes a person as representative, and the representative is someone who performs some specific function that they are assigned.

A different meaning of representation is provided by Saward who argues that political representation is not just about political life or status achieved from elections but goes beyond that. It is a ‘dynamic process of claim-making and the reception of claims.’¹² Representation, according to him, is ‘an ongoing, dynamic process in which a great variety of actors and organizations take part.’ ‘Representation is a process of claim-making rather than a fact established by

⁷Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved October 11, 2023, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

⁸The Britannica Dictionary. Retrieved October 11, 2023, from <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary>

⁹Oxford Learners Dictionaries. Retrieved October 11, 2023, from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>

¹⁰Hanna Fenichel Pitkin. (1972). *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 144.

¹¹Andrew Rehfeld. (2006). Towards a General Theory of Political Representation. *The Journal of Politics*, 68 (1), 1-21. Retrieved November 22, 2019, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00365.x>

¹²Opcit, Micheal Saward. p. 8.

institutional election or selection; or at least, it can only be the latter by virtue of being the former.’¹³

The concept of representation is understood as standing up for an individual or a group of people and acting on behalf of the interests of the group of people.¹⁴ Representation is a process that builds a medium of two-way communication, expressing aspirations and producing responses between the state and society. The term representation of women emphasizes the notion to mean ‘increasing the number of women in political office because of the assumption that women in power would be more responsive to women’s interests than men would be’.¹⁵

One of the most influential works in the study of representation was Hannah Pitkin’s concept of representation. She offers four views of representation, which are as follows:

Formalistic views of representation: In formalistic views of representation authorization and accountability are the basic features of representation. Authorization view of representation, as seen in Thomas Hobbes’ view of representation ‘defines representation in terms of the giving and having of authority.’ It sees a representative as someone who is authorized to act while the responsibility for the consequences of that action is rested on the represented. Representing is not measured in terms of activity of the representative, ‘anything done after the right kind of authorization and within its limits is by definition representing.’¹⁶

There are three versions of the authorization view of representation. The first one is developed by a succession of German theorists who focus on the concept of *Organschaft* which views representation as a group action instead of individual action. Based on this understanding, representatives ‘need not be elected to office’ but organs of the group.¹⁷

¹³Ibid. p. 44.

¹⁴Andrew Heywood. (2014). *Politics*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 356.

¹⁵Opcit, Virginia Sapiro. p. 180.

¹⁶Opcit, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin. p. 39.

¹⁷Ibid, pp. 39-41.

An authorisation view of representation is also seen in the works of some theorists of democratic representative government. For them, the election acts as a way of transferring authority from the voters to the elected representatives. In elections, voters elect their representatives and grant them authority to act. 'The definitive election is the one which puts a man into office, for it is that election which gives him authority and makes him a representative.' In this manner, a representative is seen as someone who is elected for some time and an election is seen as a way to grant authority to someone by the voters. A third version of the authorization view emphasizes 'the need for social action' and sees a representative as 'someone whose acts are imputed to a group so that they impose obligations on that group.'¹⁸

In the accountability view, representation is understood in terms of accountability instead of authority. A representative is someone who is to be held accountable for what he does. A representative is bound by responsibility and obligation for what he does and the represented should not be held accountable for the actions of the representative.¹⁹

Descriptive representation: In descriptive representation, the composition of a representative body is emphasized to resemble the diverse population in a society. Representation means 'a presenting again, a presenting of something not present.' It focuses on making a resemblance of people or things to be seen and heard. Representation is seen as standing for the represented and representing 'depends on the representative's characteristics' and it is 'being something rather than doing something.' Descriptive representation gives importance to the characteristics and appearances of the decision-making body to accurately reflect the community and the variety of interests in society.²⁰

Symbolic representation: Understanding representation in terms of symbols is what Pitkin called symbolic representation. This kind of representation sees the representative as a symbol, just like a flag represents the nation. An example could be drawn from the existence of the king in a constitutional monarchy and the heads

¹⁸Ibid, pp. 42-47.

¹⁹Ibid, p. 55.

²⁰Ibid, pp. 61, 71.

of state in various democratic nations. At the same time, symbolic representation ‘seems to rest on emotional, affective, irrational psychological responses rather than on rationally justifiable criteria.’ People must believe in the symbol for what it represents and stands for. To be a political symbolic representative, there must be a strong belief in the symbol so that people can accept the representative.²¹

Substantive representation: In substantive representation, representation means acting or speaking for the interests of the group of people they represent. Representing involves activities as well as obligations that concern the welfare of the represented. Representatives are seen as someone who acts for or on behalf of the represented to pursue their interests. The representative needs to conduct careful activities as they are acting for others, and that actions have consequences. Substantive representation demands deliberative action on the part of the representatives since they are responsible for that action. Representing is ‘to speak for, act for, look after the interests of their respective groups.’²²

Therefore, representing according to Pitkin is ‘acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them.’ Regarding the relationship between representatives and represented, she argues that ‘the representative must act independently, his action must involve discretion and judgment.’ At the same time, ‘the represented must also be conceived as capable of independent action and judgement.’²³

Pitkin argues that in descriptive representation, what the representative is supposed to do is express the views and opinions of the represented. As a result, the representative body could be seen more like a place where popular opinion is presented instead of governing and making policies. Representation is merely reflecting and resembling the diverse population and making an accurate description of the society. Furthermore, descriptive representation relies on accurate description as if the shared experience between the representative and represented will likely make present what is absent. She argues that descriptive representation missed the

²¹Ibid, p. 100.

²²Ibid, p. 116.

²³Ibid, p. 209.

point of ‘accountability’ which is a crucial element of representation and the ‘activity of representing’ is neglected. As a result, descriptive representation ‘has no room for the creative activities of a representative legislature, the forging of consensus, the formulating of policy, and the activity of governing.’²⁴

Descriptive representation is rejected by most normative theorists and even advocates of group representation like Will Kymlicka and Iris Marion Young do not support descriptive representation.²⁵ Despite the criticism, feminist scholars have debated and argued for descriptive representation of women in positions of power. Feminist scholars have concerns about ‘the extent to which the interests of women are represented in legislative decisions’ and argued for ‘the presence of women in decision-making bodies as a necessary condition for the representation of women’s interests.’ They focus on the possibility of descriptive representation delivering a measure of substantive representation.²⁶ Descriptive representation is justified to include the voice of disadvantaged groups in decision-making bodies.²⁷

There are different arguments for increasing women’s representation in decision-making bodies. One of them is ‘symbolic equity’ which emphasizes the idea that elected office can only function democratically if all points of view are presented reflecting the diverse population in society. ‘Substantive argument claims that more women in decision-making bodies would make a substantive difference.’ Based on this perspective, increasing the number of women in positions of power is important because they represent ‘women’s distinctive values, attitudes and concerns; a

²⁴Ibid, pp. 89, 90.

²⁵Jane Mansbridge. (1999). Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘Yes’. *The Journal of Politics*, 61 (3), 628-657. Retrieved October 4, 2019 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2647821>

²⁶Rosie Campbell et al. (2010). Do Women Need Women Representatives? *British Journal of Political Science*, 40 (1), 171-194. Retrieved August 16, 2019, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40649428>.

²⁷Tali Mendelberg et al. (2014). Does Descriptive Representation Facilitate Women’s Distinctive Voice? How Gender Composition and Decision Rules Affect Deliberation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58 (2), 291-306. Retrieved October 4, 2019, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24363486>.

woman's point of view which may have an impact on legislative behaviour and the content of public policy.'²⁸

Sapiro provides the argument for increasing the representation of women in government. She argues that increasing the number of women in government 'is not sufficient but it is necessary' for different reasons. Women in positions of power made 'some difference in government responsiveness toward women's interests.' Aside from women's interests, she argues 'the mere presence of women in positions of power readjusts what is now a thoroughly inequitable distribution of political values in society: power, participation and decision-making.' Increasing the descriptive representation of women 'will affect powerful symbolic changes in politics.'²⁹

Mansbridge provides four contexts where descriptive representation may work between the disadvantaged groups (the represented) and their descriptive representatives. She argues that the experience and better communication of descriptive representatives would improve the quality of deliberation which would enhance the substantive representation of groups 'in contexts of group mistrust and uncrystallised interests.' In contexts of 'historical political subordination and low de facto legitimacy' descriptive representation helps in creating a 'social meaning of ability to rule' and enhances 'the attachment to the polity of members of the group.'³⁰

According to Phillips, there are four types of arguments for increasing the proportion of women in elected office. The first one is that increasing the proportion of women is necessary to set the role model example to raise women's confidence and encourage others and remove the 'deep-rooted assumptions on what is appropriate to women and men.' The second argument is the justice argument that justified gender parity to correct the obstacles that some groups of people in society have been experiencing resulting in the positions of political power being dominated by men. The third argument is the 'interests' argument that focuses on women's

²⁸Pippa Noris., Joni Lovenduski. (1989). Women Candidates for Parliament: Transforming the Agenda? *British Journal of Political Science*, 19 (1), 106-115. Retrieved November 5, 2019 from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/193790>

²⁹Opcit, Virginia Sapiro. p. 183.

³⁰Opcit, Jane Mansbridge.

specific needs and interests from their experience which would otherwise be discounted in a politics dominated by men. Another argument ‘points towards a revitalized democracy that bridges the gap between representation and participation.’³¹

Statement of the problem: Despite the legal and political provisions for gender equality in the constitution of India, the political representation of women is considerably low in India and around the world except in a few countries. To ensure gender equality in decision-making processes, some countries introduced quotas or reservation for women which increases women’s representation in national parliament. The problem this study addresses is the under-representation of women in decision-making processes. In Mizoram, few women have been elected as MLAs, and only a few women in the history of the elections of the legislative assembly have secured major party nominations. In the three Autonomous District Councils, a very small percentage of women have been elected and few women have occupied the nominated seats in the three District Councils over the years. In addition to this, women who have occupied the nominated seat rarely, if not never, contested the election from the general seat after their period as nominated member was over.

Besides women's organizations, most of the civil society organizations are headed by men. Women have achieved progress in the fields of education and economic activities, yet, they remain under-represented in decision-making bodies which deserve attention to understand the social and political realities of Mizoram. There is existing literature that deals with the study of women and their participation in politics. A study of women’s representation not only in the political sphere, but also in other areas in the public sphere is important to understand the social and political status of women. This study focuses on the descriptive representation of women in decision-making processes.

³¹Anne Phillips. (1998). Democracy and Representation: Or, Why Should It Matter who our Representatives are? In Anne Phillips (Ed.), *Feminism and Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 228-239.

Review of Literature:

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1972), *The Concept of Representation* analyses the concept of representation and explains the complexities of the understanding of representation by examining the historical as well as contemporary views of representation. She presents four types of representation, which are formalistic representation, descriptive representation, symbolic representation, and substantive representation.

An edited book by Rehana Ghadially (1988) entitled *Women in Indian Society* is a collection of articles that deal mainly with gender construction in Indian society. This volume attempts to understand how women's identity is largely shaped by the influence of culture and how social attitudes toward women perpetuate the subordinate position of women. It seeks to explain social practices in forming feminine identity and the implications of cultural values and norms on women's status in Indian society. It explains problems that are arising from social and cultural attitudes toward women that hold women back from their full participation in society.

A feminist critique of contemporary theories of justice is offered by Susan Moller Okin (1989) work *Justice, Gender and the Family*. She offers a comprehensive critical analysis of theories of justice and criticizes modern theories of justice for failing to include the institution of family in their analysis where inequality between males and female exists first. She contends that the understanding of justice that failed to address problems associated with the institution of family and suggests that the issue of unpaid labour of work and uneven distribution of work within the family system has to be addressed to fully understand justice.

Sangkima (1992), *Mizos: Society and Social Change (1890-1947)* offers an analytical study of the nature, growth, and development of the social and political system in Mizoram. This work has thoroughly explained the traditional Mizo society and the changing social structure as a result of the British administration. It examines women status in the traditional Mizo society where women condition was shaped by customs, traditions, and culture.

C. Nunthara (1996), *Mizoram: Society and Polity* provides a detailed analysis of the people, culture, tradition, social and political change from the pre-British era to the attainment of statehood, with an assessment of political turmoil in the state fueled by identity politics. This work examines the social, economic, and political conditions during the period of chieftainship and traditional norms and values in the then Lushai Hills now Mizoram. It also analyzes the impact of British administration and the emergence of new political consciousness among the new educated class that fought for a democratic system of government to replace the traditional political institution.

Chris Weedon (2000) analyses the feminist view on patriarchy, class, racism, and heterosexism while explaining the limitations of western feminism due to its Eurocentric view in her work *Feminism, theory and the politics of difference*. This work explains the construction of gender and the notion of superiority of white males which degrade vulnerable and marginalized sections of society, including women. It offered an in-depth analysis of various strands of feminist theories and their challenges and limitations.

Ramesh Chandra Mishra (2000), *Role of Women in Legislatures in India: A study* offers a study on the role of women legislators and examines the socio-economic background of women legislators in the state of Orissa. It analyzes the process and agents of political socialization by focusing on how family background has impacted their interest in politics. This study also analyzes the role of various agents in candidate recruitment and the nature of the support structure of women in the elections of the state legislature.

Jane Mansbridge's (2003) article *Rethinking Representation* explains different forms of representation in representative democracy. She called the traditional form of representation characterized by accountability 'promissory' and differentiated modern forms of representation as 'anticipatory representation', 'gyroscopic representation', and 'surrogate representation'. She argues that modern forms of representation have abandoned the democratic accountability character found in the traditional form of representation. Voters' influence over the

representative is less, and the power relationship between the voter and the representative is undefined.

Pitam Singh (2003), *Women Legislators in Indian Politics* is a study of women legislators in Uttar Pradesh covering the period between 1952 to 2002. It analyses the socio-economic background of women legislators and examines their role and participation in the assembly proceedings, as well as the hindrances women legislators faced while entering politics. It also examines the contributing factors and processes through which women legislators have achieved their position of leadership.

Lalrinawmi Ralte (2004), *Bible Women-te nghilhlohnna* examines church women contribution to the growth of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church through the activities of a group of women called 'bible women' set up in 1913. Besides gospel preaching, most of the roles the 'bible women' engaged with were related to social service, health, and public service. Despite their contribution to the church, 'bible women' were excluded from getting access to higher positions and service within the administration of the church. She raises concern over the motive of the church behind the discontinuation of the service of 'bible women' and criticizes the rejection of the ordination of women by the church.

Bonita Aleaz (2005), *Emergent Women: Mizo Women's Perspectives*, employs a feminist approach to analyse Mizo society and culture, largely shaped by religion and church organization. She argues that to understand women's level of engagement in the public sphere, looking beyond the political sphere is important to recognize a more powerful force, which is the religious sphere. She analyzes the influence of Christianity in Mizo society in shaping values and perspectives and examines the patriarchal structure of the church.

In her book *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*, Margaret Walters (2005) examines the women's movement and the historical development of feminism. She analyses various phases of the feminist movement, which differ from one another on different continents, including Asia. She argues that feminism as a concept and study

appears to be an academic discourse making it hard to fully grasp the meaning in the practical world in a larger context.

Prem R. Bhardwaj (2005) edited volume *Gender Discrimination: Politics of Women Empowerment* contains different articles that address some issues pertaining to the subordination of women and their lack of power in public and private spheres. This volume examines social and political factors that caused women to be subordinate and disadvantaged position and suggests policies to empower women in India. It also assesses government policies and initiatives to empower women and their impact on women's political participation at both the central and state levels.

Vanlalhlani (2005), *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh* examines the changing status of women due to the introduction of Christianity in Mizoram and women's contribution to the Presbyterian Church from its inception. She critically analyses the traditional patriarchal values that dictate the organizational structure of the church in Mizoram which caused unequal representation between men and women in decision-making bodies within the church organization.

Andrew Rehfeld (2006), *Towards a General Theory of Political Representation* points out the limitation of the understanding of political representation by contemporary theorists like Pitkin in analyzing non-democratic political representation. He argues that representation in any form or type always carries some sort of function as it stands for something or someone. According to him, the recognition and acceptance of the audience are what matter most in representation.

Devaki Jain (2006), *Women, Development, and the UN: A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice*, examines the roles and contributions of the United Nations in advocating equality and human rights in the world. This work analyses the efforts of women in raising problems and issues affecting women as well as the influence of the UN in tackling problems and challenges facing women. It also identifies areas where the UN needs to pay attention, such as the problem of women's involvement especially in less advanced societies, in the informal economy. This work points to

re-conceptualize the concept of poverty, inequality, and development to better understand the condition of women.

Dharam Vir and Kamlesh Mahajan (2006) edited volume entitled *Women's Movements: Politics and Awareness* explores issues relating to women, such as women's political representation, seat reservation policy, women's rights, as well as government initiatives through policies to redress the social, economic and political conditions of women. It also contains the assessment of the women's movement in India and abroad in fighting against injustices and advocating rights of women.

Michelle Fram Cohen's (2006) article *The Condition of Women in Developing and Developed Countries* examines the influence of legal, religious, and cultural factors in shaping the condition of women in developing and developed countries. She identifies lack of legal protection for women and the exploitation of underage girls perpetuate their subjugation in developing countries. Religion, cultural practices and values have less negative influence on women in western developed countries. She observes that women have not taken full advantage of legal reforms due to the prevalence of traditional norms and practices in many societies.

Niroj Sinha (2006) edited the work *Women in Indian Politics* contains different articles that deal with the status of women in society and women's participation in politics in various states including the north-eastern state of Assam. Theoretical explanation of gender and patriarchy, women's participation in the national freedom struggle and their role in different phases of the national movement under the leadership of Gandhi are examined. Women's participation in parliament, state legislative assembly and rural local government through reservation in various states in India is analyzed in this work.

Suruchi Thapar Bjorkert (2006), *Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices 1930- 42* analyzes different social and religious practices that acted as an obstacle for women to participate in public life during the national freedom movement. This work explores the experience and journey of ordinary Indian women in the national freedom movement as well as the influence of British colonialism in changing the role and contribution of women in private and

public spheres. It also highlights the process of the domestication of politics as well as the politicization of the private sphere during the national freedom movement.

Geraldine Forbes (2007), *Women in Modern India*, offers a comprehensive analysis of the status and condition of Indian women from the British period to post-Independence India. She thoroughly examines the context of socio-political conditions to understand the status of women in Indian society and the implications of British colonialism for Indian women. She analyses women's involvement and contribution in the national freedom movement and their fight for the enfranchisement of women in British India. She further assesses the influence of education in changing the lives of women and their social and political participation.

Mary E. John (2007) article *Women in Power? Gender, Caste and the Politics of Local Urban Governance* offers a critical analysis of the role of reservations based on caste and gender in the municipal corporations of Delhi and Bangalore. It addresses the problem of 'proxy' women and 'critical mass' and observes that the problem of proxy women is a complicated issue that needs more careful analysis to fully understand it. It also analyses the problem of 'critical mass' among women corporators and observes that the idea of women working as a group to make a positive influence is not working in local urban government.

Pamela Singla (2007), *Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj: Nature and Effectiveness* is a study about the nature and effectiveness of women's participation in panchayati raj in Haryana. The historical evolution of panchayati raj in India and Haryana and the introduction of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, which mandated reservation of seats for women are discussed in detail. To analyze the nature and effectiveness of women's participation in panchayati raj, she examines the socio-economic and political profiles of the members and the determinants of women's participation in politics.

Kiran Saksena (2008) edited the work *Women and Politics* contains twelve articles that deal with women's participation in politics in India and abroad. Women's participation in panchayati raj institutions in various states is analyzed to understand the nature and effectiveness of women's leadership in rural local

government. Women's status in other countries like Pakistan and Iran, as well as women's voting patterns in American elections, political socialization of South Asian women in British politics are also examined in this book.

Meena Dhanda (2008) edited volume *Reservations for Women* is a collection of essays that deals with the historical, theoretical and political perspectives of reservation policy in India. The historical background of the debate about seat reservation for women and the conflicting arguments about it among women leaders during the British government in India is explained. This volume contains a detail analysis of the theoretical background for affirmative action and representation of women in decision-making bodies. It contains debates about seat reservation for women and an analysis of different perspectives on the issue of reservation for women. It examines the historical development and implementation of the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts, which changed the low political status of women in rural local government by mandating the reservation of seats for women.

Monique Leyenaar's (2008) article *Challenges to Women's Political Representation in Europe* attempts to identify determinants and challenges to women's political representation in different countries in Europe. She argues that neo-liberal ideology, a weak women's movement, cultural values upheld by the new right political parties, re-emergence of patriarchal values and religious fundamentalism challenge political representation of women.

Sindhu Phadke (2008), *Women's Status in North-eastern India* offers an assessment of women's condition within the diverse cultural and social settings in different north-eastern states in India. This work examines cultural norms and traditions in north northeastern states that largely determined the status of women and their roles and responsibilities. It analyzes their involvement and participation in economic activity as well as their participation in politics. It also presents an overview of women's educational status, their living conditions, and social-cultural values to understand the status of women in different states of north-east India.

Irene Colbert (2008), *Women and Politics in Mizoram* offers a critical analysis of the status of Mizo women in public and private spheres. She points out

the condition of women in the family and criticized the customary law for leaving women at a disadvantage in matters of marriage and divorce. Women's involvement in the traditional Mizo economy without monetary source and their involvement in various economic activities in contemporary Mizo society characterized by insecurity and uncertainty are highlighted. She examines the position of women in the church and criticises the patriarchal structure in denying the ordination of women by various churches in Mizoram. She also examines the role and contribution of women's organizations for women's rights and empowerment.

Lalneihzovi (2009) edited volume *Changing Status of Women in North-Eastern States* offers an analysis of the socio-economic and political condition of women in north-east India. The Change brought by Christianity and education in the lives of women and the obstacles for women to actively involve in social and political institutions are examined to understand the influence of traditional and cultural forces.

Lalfakzuali (2010), *Changing Position of Mizo Women* assesses the changing status of Mizo women as a result of the introduction of education during the British administration. She analyses the progress made by women in educational field which helped them in improving their social and economic status in the society. She argues factors like Christianity, education, and modernization as responsible for the changing position of Mizo women. While this work mainly focuses on the role of education in changing the position of women it does not analyse the condition of women in others areas.

Lalhriatpuii (2010), *Economic Participation of Women in Mizoram* analyses the nature and extent of women involvement in economy and argues that women's economic participation is mainly concentrated in the informal and unorganized sector, resulting in women being economically unstable and insecure. She also argues lack of education and skill, engagement in household work, and patriarchal economic structure are responsible for the low participation of women in the economy.

Richard E. Matland (2010) article *Structuring Representation: Women's Access to Political Power Across the World* tries to identify factors responsible for women under-representation in politics by comparing countries based on their level

of economic development and forms of government. This article argues that western democratic country has greater women's representation because of their economy and democratic form of government. It argues that development and culture are significant determinants to change the status quo and promote women's representation.

Praveen Rai (2011) article *Electoral Participation of Women in India: Key Determinants and Barriers* seeks to identify some of the prominent barriers for women's electoral success and the determinants of women's participation in politics in India. This article identifies various factors like socio-historic forces, reservation policy, role of political parties in selecting women candidates, political structure, and role of family as the determinants for women's representation.

H. Lalrinthanga (2013) *Church and State: Relationship in the Mizo Socio-Political Life 1952-20006* examines the socio-political relationship between church and state in Mizoram by analyzing various efforts of church toward the government and the people. The introduction and growth of Christianity and the role of church to bring peace and normalcy during insurgency period which provides an understanding of the relationship between the state and church is analyzed. This work also highlights the efforts of the Presbyterian church on socio-political matters like conducting free and fair election, total prohibition of liquor, social and educational reform, combating corruption and drug addiction and political education for the church members. It offers an evaluation of the contribution of church to bring reform and change in the socio-political life of the people.

Harendra Sinha and B. Lalrinchhani (2013) edited volume *Women in Mizo Society* contains different articles addressing the socio-political and economic status of women and cultural factor that acts as a barrier for women empowerment in the society. The position of women under customary law that impeded the progress of women is analyzed to understand the cultural factor that influence the condition of women. The works and contribution of women's organizations in addressing different issues concerning women is highlighted. The political participation of

women and economic condition of women by examining their engagement in traditional agricultural economy are also analysed in this volume.

Daniel Stockemer (2015) article *Women's descriptive representation in developed and developing countries* explains different variables on women's legislative representation in the developed and developing world. The article gives an insight into how different variables work differently to increase women's representation in various parts of the world. It argues that quota rules, types of electoral system, political culture, women's participation in the workforce, and types of government plays an important role in determining women's descriptive representation. It further argues that economic development is an important factor in changing the condition of women, which enables them to enter into public sphere.

Shirin M. Rai and Carole Spary (2019), *Performing Representation: Women Members in the Indian Parliament* offers a comprehensive analysis of women's representation in the parliament and the performance of women representatives. The role of political parties in selecting women candidates and the role of family for the sustenance of women's political participation as well as the dynamics of elections for women are analysed. This work observes different factors such as numbers in parliament, political party, caste, regional, linguistic, social, and class positions, as well as constituency, have affected the performance of women representatives in the parliament.

Zoya Hasan (2023), *Democracy and the Crisis of Inequality* offers a critical analysis of various issues in Indian politics and the changing nature of state and society. It addresses different issues in Indian politics like representation, minority issues, caste and reservation, religion and gender. She analyzes the changing position of government on the issue of the uniform civil code and argues for its enactment to bring equality and justice for women. She also analyzes the debate about reservation for women and points out the importance of reservation to raise the proportion of women in decision-making bodies to bring 'structural change'.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of the study is Mizoram state including the three Autonomous District Councils, namely, the Chakma Autonomous District Council, the Lai Autonomous District Council and the Mara Autonomous District Council. The study analyse representation of women in the legislative assembly, district councils and the Aizawl Municipal Corporation. It also examines the level of women involvement in decision-making in civil society to understand not only their political status but also their social status.

There are some limitations to the present study. The study primarily focuses on the descriptive representation of women in decision-making processes, and the role and performance of women elected representatives are not included in the analysis, which may cause some limitations in the understanding of women's representation. In addition to this, interview with some former members of the three district councils could not be conducted mainly due to the problem of contacting them and a language barrier in the case of Chakma, which led to the sample size being less than originally intended. Due to lack or absence of recorded materials especially in the case of some student's associations, the exact number of women could not be provided in some cases.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the decision-making processes in Mizoram.
2. To examine the status of women's representation in decision-making processes.
3. To analyze the socio-economic and political profiles of women representatives in decision-making processes.
4. To discuss government initiatives towards women's representation.
5. To find out the problems and understand the issues about women's representation in decision-making processes.

Research Questions

1. How is the status of women's representation in decision-making processes in Mizoram?
2. What are the socio-economic and political profiles of women representatives in decision-making processes?
3. What are the initiatives of the government to increase the representation of women?
4. What are the problems and issues in women's representation?

Methodology: The present research work is based on a descriptive design. A mixed-method approach (both qualitative and quantitative) was adopted for the present study. Primary data was collected using semi structured interview schedule to conduct personal interviews with the respondents. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were used to collect the primary data. The purposive non-probability sampling method was used to select the sample. The 72 samples were selected from core and non-core respondents in this study. Selected core respondents were elected and unelected female MLA candidates, female corporators of Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC), elected and nominated women members of the three Autonomous District Councils, women leaders of political parties, and civil society organizations. The sample size of the selected core respondents is 44. The non-core respondents were male politicians like former MLAs, members of the District Council, male corporators of the AMC, leaders of political parties and civil society organizations. The sample size of the non-core respondents is 28. Therefore, the total sample size is 72.

Participant observation method was also employed during the interview process to understand the confidence and empowering ability of elected women representatives in this study. Secondary data were collected from published works and documents, i.e., books, documents of political parties and civil society organizations, journals, websites, government documents, newspapers, and other relevant materials.

Chapterization

I: Introduction: The first chapter is an introductory chapter that mainly deals with the theoretical part of the study. The theory of representation, the women's suffrage movement in India and abroad, is highlighted in this chapter. The chapter also contains the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, methodology, and chapterization.

II: The Status of Women Representation in Decision-Making Processes: The second chapter gives an overview of women's representation in politics from the traditional political institution to the present-day state legislative assembly, Autonomous District Councils, and the urban local government.

III: Profile of Women Representation in Decision-Making Processes: The third chapter discusses women's representation in the decision-making processes in political parties and civil society organizations. The chapter also discusses the number of women in decision-making bodies in various state government departments/offices.

IV: Government Initiatives Towards Women's Representation: This chapter discusses the central and state governments' initiatives towards women's political representation. It explains the historical development of local self-government in India and the landmark enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. Amendment of Village Council Acts and the introduction of the Mizoram Municipalities Amendment Act of 2009 which provided seat reservation for women are discussed. It also highlights some laws relating to women that the state government has enacted over the years.

V: Problems and Issues in Women's Representation: In this chapter, the socio-economic and political profiles of women MLA's, women corporators of the AMC, women former and current members (elected and nominated) of the three Autonomous District Councils and women leaders of political parties is analyzed to understand who they are, their journey, their participation in political parties and exposure in society. Their opinions on reservation, low representation of women,

obstacles they have faced and the problem of securing party nomination are examined. Problems of women's representation and the issue of proxy representation are also analyzed in this chapter.

Conclusion: The major findings of the study are listed as under:

(1) This study examines the status of women in decision-making processes, and some of the major findings are:

(a). *Political Parties:* Except few women who hold office bearer posts (mainly secretary and general secretary), leadership in political parties is mainly concentrated in the hands of men. Women party workers are generally concentrated in the women's wing. Women's wings in political parties played no significant role in the formulation of party policies/manifestos. National parties like the BJP and INC are more progressive in their approach toward issues relating to women whether in policies or recruitment of women party workers.

(b). *Church:* In the Presbyterian church, based on the organizational structure of the Church, only church elders and ministers are qualified to hold leadership positions within the church administration. Starting from the local level, women are automatically excluded from participating in the decision-making body of the local church called the Local Church Committee (*Tualchhung Kohhran*) mainly because they are denied ordination. Since the ministers and elders alone are in a position of decision-making at any level, women church members who are denied ordination for both ministers and elders are in no position at all to get access to the decision-making body within the hierarchical structure of the Church.

At the local level, women are absent from the decision-making body. At the pastorate, presbytery, and synod, few women representatives attended meetings (*Inkhawmpui*). However, the actual decision makers in these church courts are the office bearers and committee members in various committees set up under each court. Members of each of the committees from the local church to the synod are 'permanent office bearers' of the church. In short, ordination acts as a way of access to a leadership role at various stages in the organizational structure of the church.

In the Baptist Church, as per the church statistics of 2022- 2023, there are 183 ministers/ pastors and 35 probationary pastors and all of them are men. The total number of male elders is 3267 whereas 27 are female. There are 3896 male deacons and 404 are female deacons.³² Women as a group through their fellowship send representatives to the meetings of the second lowest (Pastorate Baptist Council) and the highest (Assembly) church courts.

In the United Pentecostal Church North East India (UPC NEI), there are different types of licenses for ministerial purposes and ordination is done through the License system. There are four types of licenses such as local license, bible woman certificate, general license and ordination license. The law of the Church requires its members to hold a general license (which can be applied for only after having a local license for evangelical work for at least three years) for a minimum of two years to be eligible for the application of an ordination license. For women, only the bible woman certificate is permissible.

(c). Civil Society Organizations:

Civil society organizations like YMA, YCA, YLA and MTP are mainly headed by men and women in generally participate in these organisations as members. The nature of their activities is, to a large extent, physical in nature. Voluntary community work called (*hnatlang*), digging the graves (*thlanlaih*), consoling bereaved family at their home overnight (*tlaivar*), are some of the most common activities that organizations like YMA have been doing in the society. These activities are more suitable for men than women.

To hold a leadership position or participate in decision-making in these organizations requires long and constant active participation as leadership is mainly counted more so based on one's contribution toward these organizations. Women's participation in these organizations would usually stop after they get married whereas for men, it mainly depends on their personal choice. The majority, if not most, of the leaders (office bearers) of these organizations, from the local level to the central/ headquarters level are married men. As a result, the duration of women's

³²Baptist Church of Mizoram. Statistical Handbook, 2022-2023.

participation towards these organizations is much shorter than men. Evidently, membership of males outnumbered females in these organizations whereas female voters outnumbered male voters in various elections. In a society where traditional gender roles are sharply divided between male and female, women have no free time to actively participate in social activities. Historically, women have not been involved in the 'public sphere', not only in the political sphere but also in the social sphere which may have contributed to the low participation of women in these civil society organizations.

(d). *Student's Association:* In Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), from its inception, there have been 11 female elected office bearers at the general headquarters of the MZP, with the first one in 1951 and the last one in the 1994 election. From the beginning in 2001 till today, there have been no female elected office bearers at the general headquarters of Mizo Students Union (MSU). In Central Mizoram Chakma Students Union (CMCSU), two women out of fifteen office-bearer posts were elected during the 2011- 2013 term. Between the 2013- 2015 term, two among the office bearers are women.

In the general headquarters of the Mara Students Organization (MSO), there are five female elected office bearers so far. In the general headquarters of Lai Students Association (LSA), there are 12 female elected office bearers so far, of which 10 held the post of treasurer while the other 2 held the post of finance secretary in the six elected office bearer posts. The last female office bearer was elected during the term of 1999- 2001.

The analysis of women in leadership positions in various students' associations reveals that women rarely hold leadership positions which also points to the low participation of women in these associations. The educational field is the area where the progress of women is seen at a higher level than in other areas. Yet, women have not participated and been involved in students' politics to hold leadership position. Men have participated in students' politics and been involved in students' associations which helped them in getting exposure to a larger social and

political environment. They carved out their political career through students' associations and learned the art of leadership and established relationship.

(2). Government initiatives towards women's representation.

The government of Mizoram amended the Village Councils Act, 1953, in 2014 to enlarge the power and responsibilities of the village council and introduced seat reservation for women. Seat reservation for women is done based on the number of houses in villages. One seat is reserved for women among the three members of the village council in a village having 200 houses or below. The number of seats reserved for women remains the same in a five-member village council having below 500 houses. Two seats are reserved for women among the seven members of the village council in a village of more than 501 houses. Three seats are reserved for women in the nine-member village council, having more than 1000 houses.³³

Before the government of Mizoram introduced seat reservation for women in the village council in 2014, the three autonomous district councils had already introduced seat reservation for women in the village councils. The basis of seat reservation for women, however, is different as the number of reserved seats remains the same irrespective of the total number of village council members. From the total number of seats, not less than one seat is reserved for women. The LADC amended its village council act in 2011 and provided 'not less than one seat from the total number of seats' for women.³⁴ The CADC through its village council's amendment act in 2011 introduced seat reservation for women in the village council. Irrespective of the number of houses and the number of members of the village council, the seat reserved for women remains the same which is 'not less than one seat'.³⁵ The MADC

³³The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act 1953 as amended in 2014. Retrieved July 3, 2024, From <https://sec.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/2022/05/d50flc9db8ad93e89a096761e2d9cada/the-lushai-hills-district-village-councils-acts-1953-amended-in-2014.pdf>

³⁴The Lai Autonomous District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011. Retrieved July 3, 2024 from <https://ladc.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/2023/09/c6eb315b85d0e15e09b058f7e377007b/ladc-vc-act-2010.pdf>

³⁵The Chakma Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from

also followed the footsteps of the other two autonomous district councils in 2012. It introduced women seat reservation in village councils of ‘not less than one seat from the total number of seats’.³⁶

The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 did not provide for a reservation of seats for women. To make necessary changes for the inclusion of seat reservation for women, the Core Committee-Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan (PMSA) pushed the government and demanded the incorporation of seat reservation as per the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. The Mizoram Municipalities (Amendment) Act, 2009, provided for seat reservation for women in municipalities. The Amendment Act also stipulated the reservation of seats for STs and SCs in proportion to their population. For the offices of chairperson, there is no reservation of seats for women.

In Mizoram, one of the most important initiatives of the state government concerning the lives of women was the introduction of a new act in 2015 that deals mainly with the property rights of women in the family. The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 has corrected some of the issues of personal laws under the customary laws. The marriage system in general remains the same. Under this act, women have the right to acquire property in divorce depending on the nature of the divorce. As for inheritance of property, this act gives women the right to inheritance of property in various capacities such as widow, unmarried daughter, married daughter, youngest sister and illegitimate daughter.³⁷ Mizoram State Commission for Women was set up on August 21, 1998 and the Mizoram State Commission for Women Act, 2004 (Act. No. 12 of 2004) was passed by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 2004.³⁸ In 2007, the Mizoram Legislative

<https://www.cadc.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/acts-rules/2.CADC-Village-Council-Amendment-Act-2011.pdf>

³⁶The Mara Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2012. Retrieved October 3, 2024, from

<https://madc.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachment/bfdd442a0e0bf26e7aea08aa77e57b5e/village-councils-amendment-act-2012.pdf>

³⁷The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 (4th print). Law and Judicial Department. Government of Mizoram. 2016.

³⁸Opcit, B. Sangkhumi. p. 47.

Assembly passed the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, to implement in Mizoram.³⁹

Women's organizations played a pivotal role in protecting women's rights, and they have actively pressed the state government to implement laws pertaining to women. Women's representation is one of the issues that women's organizations have been raising for a long time. They requested and persuaded the government and political parties to take positive actions to increase the representation of women. They actively pressed the state government to enact and implement laws for the protection of women and justice.

(3). The socio-economic and political profiles of women MLAs, women corporators of the AMC, women members of the three District Councils, as well as women leaders of various political parties are as follows:

(a) Women MLAs: The six women MLAs are educated (graduates and above). More than half of them came from economically well-off families and none of them are housewife. Among the six MLAs, three of them are former teachers, two of them are formerly employed, and one of them is pursuing a full-time political career. By the time they were elected, five of them were in the age group of 30-50, and one of them was over 60 years old. They are active church members and hold important positions in the church (Sunday school teacher and leaders of women fellowship) except one who is a non-Christian. Among the five Christians, four of them are members of the Presbyterian church and one of them is a member of the Baptist Church. More than half of them are former leaders of women's organizations.

About their political experience, two of them held leadership posts in the women's wing of political parties, and two of them held leadership posts outside of the women's wing within the party organization around the time they were elected. One of them has political experience as an elected corporator in urban local government, while one of them has no political experience.

³⁹Opcit, B. Sangkhumi. pp. 28.

(b). Women corporators of the AMC: Many of the women corporators were well educated and had a source of income before they were elected. More than half of them were married, and none of them were housewives. More than half of them were in the age group between 20-50. Based on the analysis of their social activities, most of them were active church members. More than half of them came from economically well-off families. Around half of them were religious families who held important positions in the church. Besides their personal educational and social background, many of them have a good family background, which may have helped them in getting selected as candidates and getting elected.

In comparison with male corporators, female corporators were younger than males on average. Female corporators held proportionately more postgraduate qualifications than male corporators. At the same time, the lowest educational qualification (matriculate) holder was a woman. In regard to political experience, among the eight male corporators interviewed in this study, half of the male corporators have no political experience, while all of the female corporators have no political experience before they were elected. Most of the male corporators were educated and socially active citizens. Most of them were former leaders of YMA and the youth fellowship in the local church. Meanwhile, most of the female corporators were active church members, and about half of them held positions in the local church. Besides the church, a few of them have participated in YMA, sports association, women's organization, as well as in the media.

Most of the corporators of AMC have a good social background, mainly through their activities in the church and YMA, in addition to their educational status. In comparison with male corporators, the biggest difference in social activities between male and female corporators lies in their participation in YMA, as most of the male corporators held leadership positions in YMA, while the level of participation in YMA by female corporators was low in terms of leadership and short in duration compared to men.

(c). Women members of the three District Councils: Among the thirteen former and current women members of the three District Councils interviewed in this study, except one, all of them received very little education (the highest studied up to class ten, and the lowest did not attend school) and the majority of them were housewives.

More than half of them were party workers leading the women's wing in their party. Among the former leaders of the women's wing of parties, few of them (three out of thirteen) were previously elected as members of the village council before they were nominated as members of the District Council. Those women usually had been involved in politics longer than those who did not have experience in local politics, as their length of experience ranged from twelve to twenty-two years before they were recruited to be nominated members of the District Council.

While more than half of them were recruited to be nominated members because of their active participation in the party, some of them had not gone through local party politics and were short-circuited to be nominated members. Out of thirteen respondents, thirty per cent of them (four out of thirteen) were directly recruited as nominated members of the District Council. Among them, three were recruited through the patronage of party leaders because of their family connection, while one was selected by a party as recommended by the governor of the state at the time. As party workers, respondents mostly worked in the women's wing of the political party. Only one out of thirteen held an office-bearer post outside of the women's wing in the party. Less than half of them were former or current leaders of women's organizations. Around the same number were active church members who held leadership positions in the women's fellowship in the church.

From the analysis of the opinion and experience of women former and current nominated members in the Autonomous District Council and the opinion of male politicians in the District Councils, one's contribution towards the party plays a significant role in the recruitment process to the District Councils for women. Women former nominated members of District Councils interviewed in this study were mainly recruited because of their contribution to their parties. Yet, they lack education which gives them insecurity to continue their political career after their

period as nominated member was over. They find fighting the election from the general as financially challenging and securing party nomination was something they had no high expectation for.

(d). Women leaders of political parties: Among the fifteen women leaders of political parties interviewed in this study, the majority of them were educated women (graduates and above), and less than half of them received very little education (matriculate and below). Seven of them are post-graduates, however, six of them are more recently recruited, and the majority of them are from small parties (in the Mizoram context) like the BJP and PC. Additionally, among the three graduates (out of fifteen) of women party leaders, two of them joined active politics not long ago. The rest of them (five out of fifteen) have received high school and below high school levels of education. But this group comprises the most experienced as a group, as most of them have spent a long period as active party workers and have started their political journey from local-level party politics and then climbed to their present position in the party headquarters. Among the women party leaders who have started their journey from local/unit party politics and have comparatively longer experience as party workers in parties, only two (out of fifteen) were either post-graduate or graduate. At the same time, out of the total seven elected female MLAs, four of them (66.6%) were postgraduates and three of them (42.8%) were graduates.

Among them, about three of them have occupied some posts within the party organization outside of the women's wing. Besides holding some posts within the party organization, a few of them have gone through local, block, and district-level party politics and held important posts along the way. The length of their experience is also different, mainly based on parties rather than on individuals. Women leaders of the two oldest parties, the Congress and the MNF, have started their political journey as party workers from the local level and spent a long period in their parties, except for two newly recruited women. Women leaders of the ZPM were former leaders of the women's wing of two parties, the MPC and the ZNP, except one newly recruited woman. Leaders of the BJP and the PC were more recently recruited to their current posts.

Based on the analysis of their political journey and experience, the opportunity to hold posts in the women's wing within the party organization is greater for new or smaller parties like the BJP and PC compared to parties like the Congress and the MNF. Some of them from smaller parties hold their positions in the women's wing mainly because of a lack of other women in their parties. Besides, their political experience within the party organization is also short-circuited, as none of them started their political journey from the local or unit level of party politics.

Women's wing of political parties has never or rarely put pressure on political parties to nominate women candidates in the legislative assembly elections. However, there are some reasons raised by women leaders and male politicians for why parties do not nominate more women candidates. Some of the reasons they mentioned are: lack of women possessing qualities to win in elections in the political parties, lack of educated women or women possessing qualities to win who pursue active politics in the party, cultural barrier causing parties to select men over women as candidates and 'female vote bank' (that women do not necessarily vote for women).

Generally, women party workers are mainly working at the women's wing, and as a result, the experiences of women party leaders and those who have contested for political offices seem to be limited. Moreover, the women's wing as a separate unit of the party is not as competitive as others, like the youth wing. Presidents are appointed by the party president, and other office bearers are appointed by the president of the women's wing. In this way, there is no election for office bearer posts even in the two oldest and largest parties, MNF and Congress, while the office bearers post of other frontals like the youth wing has to go through an election. Low participation of women in the party is one common problem raised by women party leaders and the uncompetitive nature of the leadership of the women's wing points to the low participation of women in political parties.

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(4). Some of the major findings of the problems and issues as mentioned in one of the objectives are:

(a). Many of the women party leaders, elected and unelected MLA candidates, nominated and elected members of the three autonomous district councils and corporators of the AMC said that social and cultural attitudes toward women in leadership positions are a problem facing the representation of women. Some of the women MLA candidates personally experienced rejection from their constituency just before the election because of their gender, on the reason that the people in their constituency do not want to be a constituency represented by women (*hmeichhe bial nih duh lo*).

(b). Except for women corporators, all the other groups of women interviewed in this study have raised their concern about the lack of educated women in political parties pursuing active politics and are dissatisfied with the level of women's participation in politics. One problem about women's representation is the lack of women who are perceived to have 'qualities to win' in active politics.

(c). In the case of women members of the three district councils, the biggest problem they have mentioned is the socio-cultural views that disapprove of women getting involved in politics. Most of the nominated members interviewed in this study have low self-esteem and a lack of confidence because of their low educational status and gender discrimination stemming from the socio-cultural view that disapproves of women in the 'public sphere', which discouraged them from running the election from the general seat.

(d). Lack or low level of educational status, which results in lack of confidence and low self-esteem, hindering one from taking further steps in politics, is most visible among women members of the three district councils and some women leaders of the political parties. At the same time, education plays a significant role for women to secure party nomination especially in legislative assembly elections and the AMC.

One of the problems about women's representation in decision-making bodies especially in the legislative assembly is the participation of women in civil society organisations other than women's organizations and the church. Looking at the social activities of male MLAs of 2018 and 2023 reveals that most of them are socially active men who held leadership positions in various organizations like YMA (MTP for mara, YLA for lai, and YCA for chakma) and various students' associations and sports associations. Though women participated in these types of organizations to some extent, their presence in leadership positions is negligible in which lies the problem, as the position of leadership is what counts the most when it comes to recruitment in the decision-making office in the context of Mizoram.

On the other hand, there is a structural barrier that prevents women from taking an active part in any social activities. Based on the analysis of their participation in church, the level of women's active participation in church has usually gone down, and the positions they held in church would generally cease when they get married and have children. After freeing from childcare, they have a chance to continue to participate in the church as active members to hold some positions within the church organization. On the other hand, women's participation in various organizations, like YMA, as active members, usually stops when they get married. Unlike the church, women generally have not been involved in YMA after they are free from child care which could be one good reason why women did not occupy leadership positions in organizations like YMA, which require constant active participation and dedication to hold leadership positions.

Women who held leadership positions in women's organizations are generally an older age group of women, and women interviewed in this study who held leadership positions in women's organizations before they were elected or nominated, or contested, are generally older age women. Younger or middle-aged groups of women, like the majority of corporators of the AMC, are not actively involved in such organizations nor hold any type of leadership position. Besides the church, women's social participation is mainly in women's organizations through which they gained recognition in society. With the negligible presence of women in leadership positions in other organizations, women's organizations are a space where

women, especially the older-aged group of women, can actively participate in society.

(5.) *The issue of proxy women:* All female corporators said that they decided about their official work and duties by themselves. At the same time, many of them said that they have sought advice from others, such as their husband, parents, in-laws, leaders of their locality, and sometimes party leaders in a situation when an important specific issue arises. All of them entered the field of electoral politics after they were persuaded by political parties. After they were invited by political parties, they consulted their husbands or family. After having their consent, they contested in the election. None of them said that they were forced or persuaded by their families (other than encouragement) to enter politics. None of them has a husband who is involved in politics. From the analysis of their family background, how they were recruited, and how they approach decision making relating to their work, the women corporators do not fit the label of ‘proxy’ women.

(6.) *The issue of reservation:* Among the women elected and unelected MLA candidates, women corporators, and women party leaders interviewed in this study, there was a mixed reaction about reservation in the legislative assembly. About more than half of them supported reservation yet, some of them who supported reservation have concerns about it. Their main concern about reservation in the legislative assembly is the possibility of recruiting women who are known by the public or socially active but lack interest in politics as has been experienced. It seems like the concern, especially of some women party leaders, is sidelining women who are pursuing active politics and have a real interest in politics, for women who are socially active or known by the public, but lack interest in politics based on their participation in political parties.

However, based on the analysis of the background of women party leaders, many of those who pursued active politics and spent a long period of time in political parties are low educated and less confident which points to the problem of low participation of women, especially educated women in political parties. To secure party nomination especially major party nomination in an election, educational status

plays a significant role considering the educational status of the seven women MLAs as well as male MLAs. On the other hand, those who secured party nomination in the elections of urban local government like the AMC with good educational and social background generally did not continue to be actively involved in politics. This is where the problem lies in women's political representation. If this kind of pattern continues, then women's political representation may not increase in the near future.

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