Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter highlights my research findings and analysis of the NGOs in Tamei sub-division of Tamenglong district, Manipur. This is followed by my suggestions on certain improvements that can be made. Each NGO in the Tamei sub-division is unique in nature as it has certain specific characteristics. However, they also share a few similar features in their commitment to serve the marginalized people. It is observed that NGOs are seen as an important agent of social change by the local community. So far, NGOs have emphasized that the poor are their subject matter and the people’s participation is their paramount concern.

Social activists in Tamei sub-division have been encouraging the marginalized people to develop and nurture their potentiality for self reliance in every sphere. At times, NGOs encourage the local community at the grass-roots level to do things by themselves with the resources at their disposal without waiting for external sources to arrive. The vital aspect of NGOs is the capacity building of the poor. These NGOs are found to be governed by values, norms and principles.

These NGOs have been involved in training leaders among the marginalized people and play an advocacy role. They also strive to sensitize and create awareness in gender equality that has become a global issue. The main agenda of NGOs is to collaborate not only with the donor agencies and beneficiaries but to apprise the government for changing the policies in favour of the marginalized people. It is observed that NGOs have been striving to achieve a value based society and act as the catalyst of empowerment.
In terms of ethnic communities, a huge majority of beneficiaries were drawn from the Liangmai Nagas followed by others such as Zeme, Rongmai, Meitei and Kuki. The findings are based on a sample from Tamei sub-division but it may be generalized that the scenario of underdevelopment is noticeable in a few other districts in Manipur such as Chandel and Senapati. Tamei is 119 kms away via Kangpokpi, I.T. Road from the capital city of Manipur. Traveling through hilly terrain in this area is a breath-taking experience as the road is bumpy with curves and extremely rough stretches. During the monsoon season, the frequent landslides bring everything to a halt. Often, the local community would be cut off from the rest of the world for several days or weeks with the result, prices of basic commodities would shoot up till normalcy is restored.

Many surrounding villages can only be reached on foot as roads are not favourable for the vehicular transport. The Liangmai Nagas that inhabits the Tamei area still practices shifting cultivation and the living standards of the community have not yet improved on par with the communities of the mainstream India. The pace of changes has not accelerated over the past years due to poor transport and communication systems, lack of political will, weak motivations and ethnic conflict.

As mentioned earlier, negligence of the State government, lack of basic amenities, problems of unemployment, deteriorating ecosystems and endemic poverty have spurred NGOs into action. The local community has begun to attach a great deal of significance to NGOs because of their interventionist role. Over a period of time, NGOs emerged as an important organization in the society which they have worked. The perceptions and attitudes of the beneficiaries reveal that sixty-nine percent of them believed in the potential of NGOs in transforming their lives to a certain extent.
To explore the main objectives of this study, five NGOs in Tamei subdivision of Tamenglong district, Manipur were selected. The rationale behind selection of these NGOs was to capture the different categories and types of organizations that exist. The techniques of data collection included structured questionnaires, interview methods and focus group discussions. The main offices of all the NGOs are located at Tamei Bazaar but two of them have branch offices at Imphal.

Data pertaining to the profile of specific NGOs, its vision statement, registration, programmes, structures, approach and strategy were collected from the Founder or Chief Functionary. NGOs were formed by concerned individuals having a zeal and passion to work for the cause of the downtrodden people. These individuals are the ones willing to take initiative in helping the poor and needy. It is observed that the number of employees from the local Liangmai Nagas in each NGO is comparatively more than the Meiteis (Manipuris). It clearly indicates that these NGOs are partially involved in generating employment opportunities for the local tribal community. They directly recruited some local people by imparting both skills and trainings.

DIFFICULTIES AND RISKS OF NGOs:

NGOs also have difficulties in managing their organizations because of their stress on flexibility and the shortage of trained personnel. NGOs do not stress enough on the significance of human resource development, financial management and on rules and regulations. Moreover, there is intense unhealthy competition among the NGOs created by the members of the employees of the NGOs who set up their own NGOs once they gain some experience.
Sometimes, these new NGOs compete with the existing NGOs for scarce funds. Such an atmosphere breeds hostility and friction. In addition, with the formation of unions and associations, the focus is on the rights of the employees and the spirit of voluntarism with which such NGOs were in the first place created seems to be on the decline.

The NGOs have to be accountable to the State Government and this imposes a strain on them. The Foreign Contributions Regulations Act (FCRA) can be used by the government to deny them funds from foreign donor agencies. NGOs also face the risk of being branded as anti-social organizations if they challenge the government.

**SCOPE OF NGOs:**

There is enormous scope for the NGOs to mobilize the youth in contemporary society. Some of the more successful NGOs have become well-known among the general population. The growth of NGOs and diversification of their development activities have made the NGOs the third sector in a globalized world. With globalization, NGOs network with one another to coordinate for tackling important issues such as HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, illiteracy, poverty and so on.

The Government of India has been formulating policies that would be conducive for the NGOs to increase their scope of activities especially in empowering women. At present, main focus of NGOs in Tamei sub-division is on empowerment of women and to carry out health-care projects. NGOs have been implementing awareness campaigns on hazardous health issues like HIV/AIDS which has become an alarming global problem. NGOs also stress on the need to
build leadership qualities and to enhance management skills within their own organizations.

The findings of this study are as follows:

- This research presents a comparative study of several programmes being implemented by five different NGOs that have been working for more than a decade in Tamei sub-division. It is found that one of them is defunct today although the members are trying to revive it. The four other NGOs have explicit goals for bringing about transformation and structural change from the micro level. They also have explicit aim of preserving and promoting the rich culture, arts and crafts of the Liangmai Nagas.

- Individuals are driven to establish NGOs or work in the NGO sector due to unemployment problems rather than their genuine concern to work for the marginalized groups. NGOs have created and facilitated a few jobs for a handful of committed and dynamic individuals but it obviously can not offer employment to all educated youth in the district.

- Out of the five NGOs that were selected for this study, two of them have acquired the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) of 1976 under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. These two NGOs that have been receiving funds from the International Donor Agencies have wider networks at the regional as well as the national level. The other three NGOs, out of which one is defunct but trying to revive as mentioned earlier, struggle to acquire resources from donor agencies.

- The five NGOs in the Tamei sub-division have worked in agriculture, horticulture, health-care, social forestry, literacy, formation of self-help
groups (SHGs), environmental issue, animal husbandry, empowerment of women and the preservation of art and culture. Their work focuses on ensuring that their projects are sustainable.

- Three of the NGOs in Tamei sub-division depend mostly on external donor agencies. It is observed that two of the NGOs are making efforts at becoming self-reliant by introducing self-financing and sustainable programmes.

- The projects being implemented by NGOs such as low cost latrine construction and drinking water pipe-lines failed miserably due to lack of leadership, skill, financial aid, communication and mobilization of the people.

- An impact of NGO interventions over the past few decades is that, opportunities for self-reliance are created through several programmes.

- The study reveals that these NGOs have been spending a larger amount of funds in the administrative work rather than in implementing the projects at the grass roots level.

- There is a need for the NGOs to strictly evaluate their management system so that huge amount of money reaches the grass-roots. NGOs have to make an effort in improving their strategies and approaches in order to make greater impact on the society.

- The study found that NGOs are more accountable to the government and foreign funding agencies rather than to the local community and
beneficiaries. This is because NGOs have been working on the strategies of donor agencies and the government in order to receive more financial support.

- The NGOs in this district have developed mutual respect and appreciation for each other's programmes. It is indeed a unique trait of the NGO movement.

- NGOs also suffer from intermittent contact with the donor agencies. Besides, communication and accessibility to the external world is deficient as a result of physical, geographical and economic isolation of the district.

- The culture based NGOs strongly emphasize on revivalism and reformism of the Liangmai Naga culture than the other types of NGOs.

- It is found that NGOs have made a positive impact in the society but at the same time they need to reflect and make necessary improvements in order to contribute in a more dynamic way.

- The study also examined the composition of gender among the employees of the NGOs. It was found that there is a small representation of women who constitute 28.13% of the NGO employees. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the concept of working women is gaining momentum in the contemporary Liangmai Naga society.

- The respondents among the employees of the NGOs revealed that social security for them such as provident funds, life insurance, medical reimbursement and the like were not available in all the NGOs.
The methods of choosing beneficiaries in this area are on the basis of poverty, illiteracy, age and gender. It is found that 64% of the beneficiaries came from the nuclear family wherein their income level is low. Thus, the trend indicates that majority of the beneficiaries or target groups predominantly came from the poor family background.

The study finds that Liangmai women constituted the main beneficiaries of NGOs and they actively participated in the NGO activities. The status of Liangmai women has been perceived to be better than other women in 'mainland' India. But, Liangmai women in the traditional society do not have access to land and immovable property which is a major source of income and long-term economic security. In such a scenario, NGOs are trying to focus on bringing about gender equality.

The group discussions that were held with the beneficiaries revealed that there is a distinction between the intervention programmes of NGOs and the government.

It is observed from the study that a majority of the beneficiaries have their own house, farmland and farm animals such as cows and buffaloes. Perhaps, it is due to protective Central Government policy towards 'tribal' hill people. The non-'tribals' and the Manipuris (Meities) were prohibited from purchasing land in the 'Tribal' Hill areas. Section 1 clause 2 of the Manipur Land Revenue Act and Land Reform Act of 1960 emphasized that strict measures would be adopted by the government against those people who transfer 'tribal' land to a non-'tribal' individuals or groups. Basically, the policy was implemented to protect the 'tribal' people and their land from
being exploited by outsiders. Thus, in Manipur, it is observed that the Central Government policy of protecting the 'tribal' land drives the 'tribal' people to preserve their land but the non-'tribal' people have been agitating against such Acts as they think that it works against their interests.

It is surprising to note from the study that 65% of the beneficiaries do not consider themselves to be part of the NGO from whom they have been getting benefits through several programmes. One of the reasons is that they are often not included in the decision making process.

It is found that 70% of the beneficiaries had expressed their suspicion and unhappiness about the way NGOs utilized the money. They suspected that NGOs were involved in siphoning off large amounts of the total budget for their own purposes rather than letting it reach people at the grass roots. They assumed that corruption is rampant even in the NGO sector.

**Suggestions for the NGOs to enhance its activities and services in Tamei Subdivision of Tamenglong district:**

- NGOs should be more efficient. They should continue to work effectively at the local level but need to think globally as every NGO needs to exercise constructive thinking.

- The trained professionals must also be recruited. Besides, the NGOs need to focus towards improving skills as well as competence of their employees.

- Greater Networking, lobbying and advocacy must become mandatory for all the NGOs in this district.
The target group leaders and the local leaders can be trained by the NGOs to manage their development programmes effectively. Such training can facilitate the people to equip themselves with knowledge and skills in order to help their programmes by themselves.

Instead of depending for more financial help from the donor agencies and continuously be at their mercy, the NGOs can start a "local funds drive" independently. This process of mobilizing local sources will enable the NGOs to carry out their programmes in fulfilling their objectives rather than achieving the strategies of the donor agencies. However, the methods of generating local funds must be innovative, creative and attractive.

Any kind of mal-practices such as bribery and corruption should be completely shunned.

NGOs need to intervene not only in planning and implementing projects but should also take up monitoring and evaluation. Besides, NGOs need to empower the local community to such an extent that crucial issues can be tackled by themselves without the intervention of NGOs.

Gaining massive support and winning the local people's heart in every circumstance should be the focal point of NGOs.

Some of the NGOs at Tamei sub-division have become members of the All Manipur NGOs Forum which deals with networking of various NGOs across the State. However, the local NGOs need to form a smaller network or federation at the district level to promote or build a platform for common
capacity building and information sharing with one another. Such steps will enhance the NGOs to understand the mechanism of different working-methods used by each NGO and carry out their activities more effectively under one umbrella.

> Social transformation can be further engendered through the formation of federations or network of NGOs at the district level, which have specific aims and visions. Moreover, NGOs should not carry out any political agenda in order to get mileage.

> Repeating and replicating the developmental programmes by two or more NGOs in the same village needs to be totally avoided. NGOs need to mutually plan and coordinate as they share their strategies and approaches with one another in order to avoid duplication of projects in the same target area.

> Almost 69% of the total financial budget of the project needs to reach the grass-roots instead of diverting the money in procuring the infrastructural materials for the NGOs.

> NGOs need to make self assessment and appraisal of their achievements on a regular basis. Moreover, it is necessary for the NGOs to conduct frequent review meetings for better improvement in not only executing the development programmes but in enhancing the structure of their organization.

> NGOs need to avoid those elements which are likely to promote their organization as a profit-making body rather than a genuine voluntary sector.
NGOs intervention programmes need to be viable and sustainable not only for their own but for the local beneficiaries.

It is essential for the administrative workers, field workers and the heads of NGOs to cooperate and mutually work together as a solid team for creating greater impact in the society in which they have been working. Disunity among the workers of NGOs will affect their organization in a negative way. It is obvious that the beneficiaries will cease to repose their faith in the organization if conflict of interest among the staff is manifested. They have to avoid friction and division.

The employees of the NGOs need to learn managerial skills in various aspects so that the organization can survive for longer period and grow effectively.

CRITICISMS:

In our chaotic and disturbing world wherein uncertainty prevails everywhere, the NGOs cannot be romanticized as one of the most effective organizations in alleviating poverty and bringing about development in the society. It is futile to assume that NGOs alone can do amazing tasks in development. It is not possible for NGOs to sustain themselves as agents of social change and carry out various activities without the support of other actors such as local community, government and donor agencies. Unless the NGOs develop a strong collaboration with these actors and also with each other, they will not be able to score a landmark point in the field of development. They need to realize that overcoming their suspicion, fear and mistrust of each other is a pivotal attribute in the joint struggle against poverty and underdevelopment.
S.C. Dube (1988:114) affirms that development today poses a challenge and presents an opportunity. He asserts that an urgent reflection and action are needed for our survival. Modernization is not possible on the basis of its original paradigm that implicitly legitimizes inequality and injustice. John M. Riley (2002:190) asserts that

"Critical collaboration holds great promise. It is not a quick-fix to the shortcomings of current approaches to rural development and efforts to make collaboration a wide-ranging part of the policy process will take a great deal of effort. However, if sincere efforts are made to create a truly responsive approach, critical collaboration may become more than yet another fleeting trend and, instead, contribute to real improvement in the lives of the rural poor of the third world."

Although most of the beneficiaries perceived the NGOs intervention to be more effective as compared to the government, it is found that half of the beneficiaries have no idea about the various welfare schemes of the government. Perhaps, their ignorance about government welfare policies can be attributed to their illiteracy and lack of exposure to the outside world.

There are specific reasons for the beneficiaries to develop a feeling of alienation from the NGOs. NGOs do not create conducive space for the beneficiaries to feel as if they are a part of them, which in turn hampers the developmental programmes to a certain extent. NGOs fail to send across a message to the beneficiaries that they are truly a part of them.

There is an intense competition among the NGOs to win favour from the donors. Besides, there is no consistent and long term income-generation programmes by these NGOs. Somehow, NGOs fail to realize that involvement of
the beneficiaries in the decision making process is essential in the implementation of programmes. Few representatives of the beneficiaries need to be included in the decision making process of NGOs.

Undoubtedly, NGOs lack skills, knowledge and trained professionals to manage their development programmes in a more successful manner. It is observed that the local communities are widely divided on the basis of political parties and ideologies. In this area, the prominent political parties are the congress and BJP. To a certain extent, the NGOs seem to be inclined towards certain political parties but it is not manifested to the donor agencies. Sometimes, the beneficiaries in certain localities who belong to certain political parties would decline to avail the development welfare schemes of the NGO, if the other beneficiaries were from a rival political party.

CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY TO SOCIOLOGY:

The present study is a humble contribution to the sociological literature of NGOs with a special reference to development. This research study shows the relationship of NGOs with the government, beneficiaries and the local community. NGOs are seen to be generating employment opportunities particularly the youth in the contemporary society. Thus, it can be argued that the growth of NGOs caters to a demand of jobs apart from facilitating development welfare programmes for the marginalized groups.

The study could employ main concepts from the sociology of development as the centre of attention because concepts like credibility, accountability and capacity building are beneficial in understanding the working mechanism of NGOs. The concept of networking, sustainability, flexibility and freedom in NGOs is a critical question of sociology which should be probed for further investigation.