Chapter 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

The main aim of the present study is to explore the contributions of NGOs in bringing about transformation and social change in the Liangmai Naga society at Tamei sub-division in Tamenglong district of Manipur. Another aim of this study is to understand the role and the impact of NGOs in the society in which they have been working for the past several years. It also attempts to examine the profiles and practices of NGOs in uplifting the socio-economic condition of the local community.

The study focuses on the role of NGOs in improving the status of Liangmai women, environment degradation and literacy. The study also tries to examine people’s participation at the grass-roots level. Moreover, it appraises the problems and difficulties of the NGOs in monitoring and evaluating the rural development programmes and documenting of voluntary efforts in the district.

Basically, I wanted to study how effective the NGOs have been at Tamei sub-division which is a backward area. I’m not interested in knowing the stated objectives of the NGOs and evaluating whether the objectives were met in their programmes. The major focus of this study was to examine whether the NGOs have made a difference not just in delivering goods to beneficiaries but in raising their hopes and aspirations and in infusing the Liangmai Naga society with some optimism. Therefore, I choose participant observation combined with questionnaires and employ interviews.
As a participant observer, I interacted with different groups of people and also visited their respective offices as well as saw some of the project areas for getting information directly. Besides, I was involved in informal interactions with the respondents. Further, periodic visits, observations and group discussions have supplemented these techniques. Some of the surrounding villages in Tamei subdivision were also visited to study the programmes undertaken by the NGOs.

Beneficiaries of the NGOs were contacted and interviewed regarding their attitudes towards organizations. And, group discussions were held at Tamei bazaar with the Chief Functionary of the NGOs, employees and the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries participated and responded enthusiastically to my queries. However, some people especially the beneficiaries who did not have faith in the financial accountability of the NGOs preferred to keep away from my study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study, situating NGOs in the context of the harsh and poor socio-economic condition of the people at Tamei sub-division in Manipur, attempts to analyze their activities in the public sphere. This research provides an analysis of the extent to which NGOs have been involved in various developmental issues particularly in this district. The study would focus on the activities that NGOs undertake with respect to development. It examines their various programmes in facilitating and empowering the local community with the following objectives:

- To trace the historical background of NGOs.
- To analyze the profiles of five NGOs at Tamei sub-division in Manipur and to examine their various social welfare programmes.
- To investigate the role of NGOs in enhancing the standard of living of the local community.
To study the relationships between NGOs and beneficiaries, donor agencies and Government, their policies on rural development, improving the status of women, environment degradation, literacy, etc.

To explore the nature of people's participation as it increases acceptability and utilization of services.

SCOPE OF STUDY:

The Tamei Head Quarter that is selected for fieldwork is situated at a distance of 119 kms from the Capital (Imphal) of Manipur. Only those who are the employees and beneficiaries of the five selected NGOs are covered in the study. In the beginning, I have collected data using pre-structured questionnaires: one for beneficiaries and another for employees of the NGOs and finally for the founder members.

This study has used information gathered from official records, personal interaction with officials and field observation of the works undertaken in Tamei subdivision. The employees of the NGOs and beneficiaries were approached with an interview schedule for an in-depth study. Members of the NGOs and beneficiaries were interviewed separately in order to know the impact of various projects being implemented. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used for collection and analyzing the data. Informal interaction with the Chief Functionaries, employees and beneficiaries of the NGOs helped in collecting general information and opportunities provided by the NGOs in Tamei sub-division. Surveys of the beneficiaries in specific were also conducted.

UNIT OF STUDY:

For the purpose of this research work, NGOs are the units of the study. More than 5,000 NGOs are registered in Manipur under Societies Registration Act of 1860.
and some of them have acquired certificates of the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act (FCRA) of 1976 under Home Affairs Ministry. And, a few others have received the Income Tax Exemption Act certificates from the government.

At present, around eight registered NGOs have been working at Tamei sub-division. But, only five NGOs were selected in this area for the study. The rationale behind selecting five NGOs for the purpose of this study is that, out of the total number of registered and unregistered NGOs existing in the area, these five organizations are found to fall under different types of NGOs with varying aims, goals and visions.

PILOT STUDY:

Before the fieldwork started, a little effort was spent on evolving questionnaires based on the objectives of this research. For the purpose of refining and polishing the questionnaires, a pilot study of five organizations was conducted following a review of literature on NGOs and development in general. Lists of questions were made for getting the information about the profiles of the organizations, employees and beneficiaries. And, necessary changes were made in the questionnaires after receiving the feedback from the pilot study.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION:

All the data and information collected were conducted over a period of one month in 2003, another one month in 2004 and finally three months in 2005. Collection of major items of information was in the five months over a period of three years. I had to travel extensively to visit the NGOs and collect data. Two of the NGOs have their branch offices at Imphal, the capital of Manipur but the main offices of all the selected NGOs were situated at the hilly town of Tamei.
Normally, it took around three to four hours a day while interviewing the heads of NGOs, employees and beneficiaries. Prior information about the purpose of this research work had been communicated to these NGOs. The confidential nature of conducting the research was also communicated to them in order to let them freely express their perceptions, experiences, disappointment and constraints in administrating the NGO sectors.

**SELECTION OF THE RESPONDENTS:**

The chief functionaries of the five NGOs were selected to collect the information regarding the profile of their organizations. Eventually, the employees of the NGOs were also interviewed to understand their perception on how their respective organizations have been working towards social development. Then, two hundred and fifty respondents (250) of the target groups or beneficiaries were finally selected from the huge lists of beneficiaries provided by these NGOs. The NGOs provided lists of beneficiaries with whom they have been working in the past years and allowed me to select them at random.

**SOURCES OF DATA:**

Data for the present study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data consists of various responses from the Chief Functionaries, employees and beneficiaries of the NGOs that were collected with the help of the structured questionnaire and interview schedule. Whereas, the secondary data was collected from the resource books on NGOs, documents, annual reports, project proposals and newsletters available in the offices of these organizations. Papers related to their visions, aims, objectives, policies, strategies, projects, facilities and achievements were also consulted.
SELECTION OF THE FIELD:

Taking into consideration the aims and objectives of the study, I selected five NGOs from Tamei sub-division of Tamenglong district in Manipur. They are the Oriental Rural Development Organization (ORDO), Liangmai Naga Baptist Association (LNBA), Social Educational Cultural and Economic Development Society (SECEDS), Tamei Mahila Mandal and Liangmai Naga Arts and Culture Association (LACA).

ORDO was established in 1983 as a secular NGO but got registered in 1984 under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. It had also registered under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA), Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi. And, it has obtained a certificate under section 12-A of Income Tax Act 1961 from the Income Tax Authorities to receive donations and gifts from concerned individuals or donors without paying any tax.

The vision of ORDO is to assist the poor through holistic development programmes and endorsed that economic development has to be initiated by the people, for the people and of the people. It facilitates the rural poor to emerge towards sustained development through overall increase in their knowledge and skills in the areas that directly affect their standard and quality of life.

A few religious local leaders formed LNBA in 1984 as a faith-based NGO. This organization is committed to the values and principles of Christian doctrine. Its vision is to bring about equality, freedom and fraternity. It is registered as a body in 1987 under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. It also has the certificate of Income Tax Act 1961 and the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India to receive financial aid from the foreign funding agencies.
SECEDS was established in 1997 by a few social activists with a main vision of reviving and promoting the culture of Liangmai Nagas. It also aims to work towards an emancipation of the poor with media advocacy. It strives to remove socio-economic backwardness of the people. This NGO does not have the certificate of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). But, it had registered under Societies Registration Act of 1860.

A few unemployed women particularly housewives established Tamei Mahila Mandal in 1972 as women's NGO. Its vision is to serve the poor Liangmai women and children. It tries to bring about certain reforms in the society through their various activities. They often seek the help of a few individuals, preferably local women to work as part-time employees. This organization was registered under Societies Registration Act of 1860 but it could not register itself under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).

LACA was established in 1990 as an NGO with committed local leaders who have a vision to preserve and promote the traditional culture and art of the Liangmai Nagas. They aim to propagate their ethnic culture even at the global level. Their ideology is oriented towards reformism and revivalism. Their philosophy is bending towards two schools of thought: firstly, adhering to tradition without any change and secondly, if modernity becomes mandatory, it should be based on the foundational values of tradition.

It is essential to mention that, no individuals or institutions have ever conducted a research on the activities of these organizations although they have been operating since 1980s onwards. The State Government continues to neglect this area and people understood that there is a potential of the NGOs to genuinely thrust their
focus on improving the lives of people. Therefore, NGOs are observed to be more popular when compared to the other sectors. In spite of the government social welfare schemes being implemented, the NGOs have acquired reputation for implementing various development programmes in the area that uplifted a large number of the local community.

**SELECTION OF SAMPLE:**

The major focus of the study is the beneficiaries although the heads and employees of NGOs as well as members of the donor agencies were considered important. To understand the structural function of the NGOs, the details were collected from the heads and employees of the five selected organizations.

As mentioned earlier, sample of two hundred and fifty (250) beneficiaries were randomly collected from the lists given by the NGOs. Along with it, five (5) heads and thirty two (32) employees of the selected NGOs were considered as potential samples for this study. Hence, the total sample of the study is two hundred and eighty seven (287) respondents. And, the data collected from these respondents were analyzed in detail.

**DATA ANALYSIS:**

The data were processed manually wherein the background of families, marital status, age, educational qualification, gender and income level of the beneficiaries were considered independent variables which were reported in the form of percentages exclusively. The perceptions, views and attitudes of the beneficiaries are considered as dependent variables. The data collected were coded and furnished in the tabular form of the master sheet. Contingency analysis of the data had been used extensively to understand the relationship of the NGOs with beneficiaries, donor agencies and State.
FIELD WORK EXPERIENCES:

Traveling on the extremely rough and pot holed roads of the hills and staying at Tamei sub-division for weeks took quite a lot of time and energy. It was a tiresome experience. At times, sunrays cannot be visible absolutely in this small town, as it would rain for days on end continuously. During such times of torrential rains, the mists of clouds would envelop the entire hilly region. Moreover, frequent occurrence of landslides would add to the feeling of isolation and remoteness.

The heads and employees of the NGOs were often not available at the specific time because they go to the field sites, attend meetings or travel to other places for some purposes pertaining to their programmes. Initially, a few people raised eyebrows about my intention of studying the activities of NGOs. The respondents comply to co-operate in this endeavor after convincing them including the heads of NGOs about the importance of carrying out this research.

Many times, a prior communication would be sent to them so that they would make themselves available to meet and discuss. Unlike other NGOs, these five organizations gave their documents, annual reports accounts, project proposals and other records for further investigation. The heads and employees of the NGOs were not hesitant to reveal any information pertaining to their financial aspects also.

Probably, they reposed their trust on me as I happen to be an insider and one of the first woman researchers who belonged to the local community of Tamei. There are other three reasons for the NGOs to disclose freely about their budgets to me. First, they are convinced of the genuineness to carry out this study only for academic purpose and not to exploit or commercialize it.
The second reason may be attributed to the fact that, their funds were limited. The highest amount received by one of the NGOs from foreign donors for a single project is recorded to be around twenty lakhs of rupees only. As compared to huge amounts received by the bigger NGOs in other districts of the region, rupees twenty lakhs is not to be hidden inside the files as it is not a big deal.

Third, three of the NGOs lack professional personnel who can formulate and write a good project proposal to be sent to funding agencies. Besides, they do not have influential connections to pursue the cases if the proposal is delayed or gets rejected. They are poor in documentation and research work. Hence, some of them perceive that the work of researchers can help them in letting others understand their efforts in ameliorating poverty in the area. And, a few of them thought that researchers could procure funds from the donor agencies by negotiating on their behalf. Overall, the field experience was an enriching exercise that provided me an opportunity to re-connect with the local community and share their dreams, aspirations as well as hopes.

The next chapter will deal with Manipur as a field setting for this study. It will examine the prevalence of NGOs and also discuss the community development. And, Naga-Kuki ethnic conflict will also be highlighted in this chapter. Besides, it will briefly evaluate the issues of health-care. Moreover, the relationship between the state and NGOs will be examined. It will also describe about networking and politics of NGOs, people’s participation, strength and weaknesses of NGOs.