Chapter 3

MANIPUR: FIELD SETTING

Manipur is bounded by Nagaland in the North, Mizoram in the South, Upper Myanmar in the East and Cachar District of Assam in the West. Manipur was an independent kingdom from a very early period (Singh 1963:34). The central figure of the state was the Raja. He personally took no direct part in the administration of the state, except on formal occasions, when he presided at Durbars, or meetings of the high officers. All were made to serve his interests (Hodson 1908:59).

Panchani (1987) informs us that during the reign of King Budhachandra Singh, the Second World War broke out. Japan joined the Axis powers and declared war against Britain and America. Japanese forces quickly gained control of Pearl Harbour and then took over the Phillipine islands, Indonesia, Indo-China, Thailand, Malaya, Singapore and Burma. He states that their next target became India through Manipur. The capital city namely ‘Imphal’ was the target and the town experienced bombing by Japanese planes in May 1942. The entire valley was in a grip of terror.

The Azad Hind Fauj aided by the Japanese entered Manipur with an aim to attack the armoury of the allied forces by blocking the Imphal-Dimapur road. A small town called Moirang was made the headquarters. Interestingly, the Indian tricolour was hoisted for the first time on Indian soil at Moirang in 1942 by none other than India’s freedom fighter Subhas Chandra Bose. A considerable area of Manipur remained under the control of Azad Hind Fauj for a period of six months. On 15th August 1947, India became an independent nation. Subsequently, a government was formed with M. K. Priyobrata Singh, younger brother of the Maharaja of Manipur, as Chief Minister.
King Buddhachandra began a process of modernising the state system by enacting the Manipur Constitution Act in 1947 which established a new form of government with the King as the Executive Head and an elected legislature. After Manipur became part of the Indian Union, India dissolved the Manipur State's Constitution Assembly in October, 1949 and made it into a Part C state. Manipur was made a Union territory in 1956.

Thus, Manipur became a Union Territory from 1956 and attained Statehood on 21st January 1972. Approximately nine tenths of the areas of Manipur is hilly whereas about seven hundred miles comprise the fertile Central Valley. Since ancient times, the Central Valley of Manipur had been the abode of the Meiteis (Manipuris) but the surrounding hilly areas are inhabited by the Nagas and other Tribes. Manipur covers an area of 22,327 sq.kms with Imphal as it’s Capital (Census Directorate, Imphal). The geographical situation of the state extends from 93°03’ to 94°47’ East longitudes and 23°50’ North to 25°41’ North latitudes (Gori 1984:1).

Jawaharlal Nehru described Manipur as the 'Jewel of India'. Manipur is not only the gateway to the North-Eastern Region but also a fascinating destination for the discerning tourist. Legend says that the discovery of Manipur is the result of the delight of the Gods took in dancing. It is this remarkable bid that gives Manipur a unique identity of her own. The state language “Manipuri” was recognized as a National language under Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 1992 (Manipur-A Jewel of India in http://www.e-pao.net).
Map of Manipur showing its capital Imphal and the hill districts.
The State comprises nine Districts viz, Ukhrul, Chandel, Senapati, Churachanpur, Bishnupur, Tamenglong, Thoubal, Imphal East and Imphal West. Out of nine Districts, five are in the hilly area and four in the valley. The State is administratively divided into thirty (30) sub-divisions and thirty one (31) community development or tribal development (CD/TD) blocks. The hills and the valley are covered under two categories of local self-administration: Panchayati Raj in the valley and the Autonomous District Council System under the provisions of the Indian Constitution in the hills. Each village has the traditional tribal system of village authority, with a governing body presided over by a Village Chief assisted by a few members (Dept. of Social Welfare, Govt. of Manipur 1996). Most of the Nagas often elect their Village Chiefs wherein women have been prohibited from being represented. However, there are exceptional cases where the Chief inherits his position.

Table 1.1

Distribution of population and literacy rate in Manipur: 2001 Census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,388,634</td>
<td>50.55%</td>
<td>49.45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Rate of Manipur:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.87 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.2

**Literacy Rate in Tamenglong District:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Males</strong></td>
<td>50.16</td>
<td>58.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>39.68</td>
<td>49.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Census of India 2001 reveals that the total population of Manipur is 2,388,634 out of which 50.55% are males whereas 49.45% are females. The literacy rate for the total population is 68.87% with males accounting for 77.87% and females 59.70%. In the context of Tamenglong district in which the present study is conducted, the Census of India 1991 indicated that the literacy rate of the total population was 50.16% with males accounting to 59.92% and females 39.68% only. However, the literacy rate of the total population in Tamenglong district has increased to 58.46% in which males account to 67.04% and females 49.11% according to the Census of India 2001.

**NGOs in Manipur:**

There was a limited impact of the Government of Manipur in taking up rural development activities since its inception of statehood in 1972. Development was neglected to a certain extent by the government because of insurgency. Hence, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) emerged in the 1980s to fill the gaps created by the negligence of the government. Moreover, NGOs such as Naga Women Union and Meira Paibis mediated between the government and the insurgents and came to occupy an important position. Today, NGOs have mushroomed in every nook and corner of Manipur although several developmental projects of the NGOs are observed to be overlapping, contradictory and inconsistent.
It is estimated that more than 5,000 registered NGOs are functioning in Manipur. A total number of 81 NGOs are receiving assistance from the Department of Social Welfare, Government of India. Of these, 41 NGOs deal with children and women, 19 with drug abuse and 21 with the aged and the handicapped. Manipur has a well-organized State level NGOs Forum (Apex body of all the NGOs in the State) at Imphal (Capital) and their network is slowly expanding to all the districts and blocks (Department of Social Welfare, Government of Manipur 1996).

NGOs in Manipur have been playing a significant role in social development. They are perceived to facilitate the path of the people in accomplishing their voyage of development. NGOs have had various roles such as advocacy, lobbying, awareness campaign, mobilization, motivation, capacity building, training, protest and empowerment to bring about changes in the society. It is a fact that most of the registered NGOs in Manipur have been involved in the area of health-care, social forestry, environmental issues, education, animal husbandry, women’s empowerment and income generation. They are found in both the formal and informal sectors.

The State government has been neglecting the Zeliangrong Naga area for a long time. Just as any other remote hilly districts of the North East India, Tamenglong district also faces problems of inaccessibility, lack of communication and transportation facilities that makes the development issue very crucial. Lack of basic civic amenities, low literacy rate and lack of healthcare are glaring attributes of backwardness of this area. Economic backwardness, insurgency, poor living conditions, non-availability of safe drinking water and spread of various diseases have steeped the Zeliangrong Naga society in poverty and despair.

Understandably, for the immensity of difficulties existing, the amount of social welfare schemes being rendered by the NGOs and State government is deficient. Taking these factors into consideration, the present study was conducted
to study interventionist role of the NGOs in development. While examining the activities of NGOs in Tamei sub-division, the public discourse on benefiting from the development programmes has become the most important issue among the community.

In the context of Tamei sub-division of Tamenglong district in Manipur where I conducted fieldwork for this study, the development of the community is seen to be an important aspect of social life. This is however not a recent development and the practice is to be noted even through traditional institutions. In recent times, the ‘morung’ has disappeared but the mentality of service continues to be exploited by NGOs and the church. The church has reinforced the trend by equipping the people with skills to work with modern organizations. The ‘morung’ or the dormitory system, prevalent in the pre-Christian era for instance contributed to the building of community not through the rendering of folk tales and songs that valorized service to one another but also by organizing the traditional practices. It was a part and parcel of their culture to promote community development.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Looking at the grassroots strategies and approaches, Ravi Venkata, Reddy Narayana and Venkataramana (2004) opine that development has been a paramount concern of both the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations for many decades. A series of approaches and strategies have been developed and used to promote development and to ensure the well being of the people over the past few decades. These efforts have made different amount of dent on the development of people in the society. Furthermore, the people are unable to absorb the optimum benefits out of the development strategies and programmes owing to the various factors. These factors include: lack of awareness, attitude, affordability, accessibility and participation.
Further, three of them argue that there is a shift in the development strategy as it has come to involve capacity building of the people in terms of competence to challenge existing inequality, power relations and to get control over the vital resources, decision-making and participation to harvest the fruits of development. In general, empowerment includes enhancement of capacity building for achieving required level of awareness, autonomy, participation for initiating and sustaining development.

Sangeeta Kamat (2002) emphasizes that since 70 percent of India’s population are in rural areas, the failures of development were felt deeply by the peasantry and the landless. The miracle technologies that were supposed to increase basic food production required high cost inputs that were out of reach for small farmers. In addition, water and energy resources were specifically directed towards industrial production, making rural people’s access to drinking water, let alone irrigation, difficult.

ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE TAMEI SUB-DIVISION IN TAMENGLONG DISTRICT:

The area has been in turmoil from the mid 1992 till 2002 due to ethnic conflict between the two communities viz., the Kukis and Nagas. There are several factors responsible for this conflict. The Kuki insurgent groups have been demanding a Kuki Homeland to be carved out of Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and parts of Myanmar. Yonuo (1982) states that the Kukis were very brave people who combine nomadic existence with settled culture. They are spread as far as the Chittagong and its hill tracts. He opines that Kukis became weakly scattered partly because of their nomadic and aggressive settlement at a place atleast one or two years and thereafter moving to another suitable place in the hills as well as in the plains under a chieftain of the ruling clan and partly because of the emergence of more powerful related communities such as the Lushais and Suktes (Kamhows) that
challenge the Kukis on the issue of land and other matters that may even appear as trifling.

Basically, the origin of Kukis is traced in Northern Myanmar. They were recruited by the Manipuri King in his army because of their reputation as valiant fighters. Subsequently, the Manipuri King asked them to settle along the border with Myanmar. They settled down alongside Naga villages and tilled the land owned by Nagas with the latter's concurrence. It is said that the Kukis soon started claiming these lands as their own and this was not acceptable to the Nagas who cited the earlier tradition of Kukis handing the land back to the Naga villages before they migrated (http://www.hvk.org/articles/0497/0098.html).

The ethnic conflict began in early May 1992 in Moreh town located on the border between India and Myanmar formerly known as Burma. Moreh is in Chandel district of Manipur. As mentioned above, some of the Kuki people living in the villages of the region had apparently refused to pay "Tax" to the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) on the ground that they did not subscribe to Naga nationalism. NSCN has been collecting this "house tax" from every household in the Naga areas since its inception. Nagas have been paying the taxes and the Kukis living in Naga areas were also compelled to pay these "taxes" till then. However, it seems that some of the Kuki villagers of Moreh region had decided to stop paying this "tax" to NSCN.

This decision made it clear that a section of the Kukis were prepared not to pay tax to the NSCN. There were reports that the Kuki National Army (KNA) and the Kuki Federal Council (KFC) were campaigning against this 'tax.' Some of the Kukis also complained that NSCN was forcing the Kukis to pay more than what was charged from the Nagas. They also claimed that the NSCN was threatening to evict those Kukis who were refused.
On June 3, 1992, Onkholet Haokip a Kuki was killed in a shoot-out between the KNA and the NSCN near Moreh town. The KNA said he was an innocent villager while NSCN claimed he was a KNA volunteer. After the incident, many Nagas living in and around Moreh town were reported to have been abducted and tortured by the KNA. Some were killed in the process. Many Naga villages were alleged to have been served with quit notices by the KNA. The Naga villagers claimed that money was being extorted from them and the Superintendent of Police, P.S. Chandel visited Moreh town on June 9, 1992 to assess the situation. A delegation of Ministers of Manipur led by the Former Deputy Chief Minister Mr. Rishang Keishing visited Moreh on June 14, 1992 and appealed to all the communities to maintain peace. It was reported that prominent Kuki leaders of Moreh did not attend the meeting Mr. Keishing addressed. The State Government as a precautionary measure posted contingents of Manipur rifles in Naga villages of Moreh for protection against the threat of attacks by Kuki militants. But violence continued to mount.

On June 18, 1992 representatives of students’ organizations of all communities and tribes of Manipur met and decided to send a goodwill mission to Moreh. The delegation of students met the tribal Ministers in Imphal and visited Moreh for three days between June 20 and 22, 1992. They held public meetings for bringing about peace. Unfortunately, violence continued unabated and on July 13, 1992, mass exodus of Naga civilians started from Moreh area (http://www.hvk.org).

Despite several memoranda and petitions submitted to the State government by both the Kuki villagers and Naga villagers, seeking protection, no step was taken to stop the ethnic violence at the initial stage. On the other hand, some of the senior leaders of Manipur government took a partisan position and issued statements, which inflamed passions on both sides. The news of the Chief Minister and finance Minister giving financial and material help to a section of Kuki militants further vitiated the already surcharged atmosphere.
Another incident that sharpened the conflict was the rumor that the Indian Army and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) were using the Kuki militants in their counter-insurgency against the NSCN. The heightened tension led to clashes that spread to Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Senapati and Charachanpur districts. Militants of KNA, KFC and other Kuki organizations in these districts became active. Nagas attacked several Kuki villages in Tamenglong, Senapati and Ukhrul districts. The Naga-Kuki clashes spread to the neighbouring state of Nagaland, especially in the Peren sub-division.

National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) had denied its involvement in this ethnic clash particularly in the incident at Zoupi village in Tamei sub-division in which many innocent Kukis were gunned down by the Nagas in retaliation of attacks against Naga villages in the Irang area like Makui and Tapon villages near I.T.Road. The Naga justified their attacks on Kuki villages as defensive action against the killings of Naga civilians and attacks by Kukis. Retaliation and counter retaliation from both the communities took place during this period.

Some of the worst hit villages wherein hundreds of people perished and took a mass exodus include Joupi, Dullen, Bolkot, Zampi and Taloulong besides others. Several villages were looted and plundered by local miscreants. Almost everything came to a standstill during this period as schools were closed, offices were shut down, Health Centres became almost defunct and essential goods as well as foodgrains were sold at high prices till the stocks lasted.

The poor were the worst affected because they could not afford the high prices. Whenever public transport broke down, women and children are the worst sufferers. In many villages, local communities had built makeshift houses for accommodating the internally displaced people. Men of all ages stood on vigil day and night, guarding their villages with weapons whereas women and children were accommodated at safe places in groups.
Kukis claimed that more than forty thousand (40,000) of them were
displaced, primarily between 1992 and 1996. The displaced people took temporary
shelters in other towns and villages where the Kukis dominated. On the other hand,
Naga sources claimed that the Naga and Kuki conflict has displaced as many as
ninety thousand (90,000) Nagas in Manipur and another five thousand (5,000) in
Nagaland of whom only some 20,000 to 25,000 remained displaced in 1998
(www.db.idpproject.org).

All economic activity of the local community is related to land and
agriculture as the people depend on it as a means of livelihood. Here, it is important
to note that in order to meet the challenges of food security in the midst of such
intense conflict, the productivity of the paddy crops had to be increased. But, the
people were not able to use simple technologies like seed treatment and the jhum
practices were stopped due to fear psychosis that the enemies would attack them in
the fields and forested areas. Hence, thousands of people lived in hunger and fear.

There was absolutely no relief or aid from national and international
agencies to the affected people. Media did not highlight as much as it should have
the untold stories of human sufferings and pain that this conflict produced. Just a
few reputed magazines and dailies like India Today, Frontline and The Times of
India carried a couple of articles on this issue and that too only for a short while.
The overall development activities under the government schemes as well as the
NGOs were totally disrupted. In fact, the activities of a few NGOs such as Tamei
Mahila Mandal (which I shall discuss in detail later) gradually declined as a result
of this conflict.

The tension between the two ethnic communities has subsided considerably
after the government officially declared the end of the conflict in 2002. Efforts are
still going on to mend the psychological wounds of those affected and to build a
lasting, harmonious and peaceful relationships that will bring permanent solutions
to the core problem of land disputes. The people are fully aware that the repercussions will be devastating if conflict erupts again.

It is observed that the Kuki tribe has started re-settling in the Tamei area with the support from the State, NGOs and Human Rights activists. Both the ethnic groups have learnt the futility of engaging in violent conflict and the local leaders are making efforts not to let such incidents recur. The Churches, the NGOs and the Human Rights activists have been playing a very critical role in the dialogue and negotiation for achieving a lasting peace. In this situation of conflict, NGOs have been actively intervening in re-building the society.

**ISSUES OF HEALTH CARE IN THE DISTRICT:**

- Following the ethnic conflict in the late 1990s, the area was hit by a series of outbreaks of epidemics such as cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. The local Tamei Primary Health Center (PHC) with limited nurses, doctors and medicines could not cater to the needs of the suffering patients in a satisfactory manner. The doctors are out of station most of the time of the year. Such a situation sharpens the social divisions and reinforces prejudices that the local community had cultivated in response to earlier large-scale catastrophe of ethnic conflict.

The prevailing condition prompted some NGOs to provide relief programmes to those in need. The NGOs gradually introduced development concepts like community participation, powerlessness, justice, income generation, programmes, removal of illiteracy, healthcare, expansion of employment opportunities and sustainable development. The development discourse has been contested.

One of the most critical health problems of Manipur and Tamenglong district in particular is HIV/AIDS. There is no doubt that both the State and NGOs have been trying to eradicate this dreadful disease. To tackle the prevalence of this virus, the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) has been networking with
the Manipur State AIDS Control Society (MACS). And, MACS is collaborating with hundreds of local NGOs to curb the spread of this disease in the State.

The number of people with HIV/AIDS has been increasing tremendously. A few cases of HIV/AIDS are reported even from Tamenglong district in which this study has been conducted. One of the NGOs called Oriental Rural Development Organization (ORDO) in Tamei sub-division of Tamenglong district was provided funds by MACS in 2005 to implement Rapid Intervention And Care Project (RIAC), which is a long-term project on HIV/AIDS particularly among the injecting drug users (IDUs).

However, it is too early to predict that this project is successful in curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS in the area. The table below reveals that out of 415 samples taken by Manipur State AIDS Control Society (MACS) in Tamenglong district in 2005, 46 people are tested HIV positive, which amounts to 0.29 % in the State. It is alarming to see the trend although the district has the lowest incidence in the State.

It is essential to point out that more than 70 percent of the HIV positives are due to sharing of needles and syringes by Injecting Drug Users (IDUs). The State has approximately 8 per cent of all HIV cases reported in India. The first HIV positive case in Manipur was reported in February 1990 from blood samples collected in October 1989 among a group Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) who were in central Jail.

Singh opines that the changing HIV/AIDS scenario in Manipur is as follows:

- The infection has spread from the high-risk group (IDUs) to the general population.
- The infection has spread to the sexual partners of the IDUs & their children.
- Waves of HIV epidemic are spreading across women & children.
Infection has spread from urban to the rural population.
Increased infection among young people.
Manipur is one of the six high prevalent States in India.

Despite efforts made by various NGOs working in the field of HIV/AIDS, most of the local community has not been able to free itself from the unwarranted stigma and discrimination towards those affected by the virus. Many affected people are of the younger generation. Thus, it is a fact that the State is heading towards a dangerous future.

Table 1.3
District-wise distribution of HIV Positive Cases (Sero-surveillance):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number of Samples Screened</th>
<th>Number of HIV Positives</th>
<th>Sero-positivity rate (%)</th>
<th>District Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imphal</td>
<td>47859</td>
<td>9882</td>
<td>20.65</td>
<td>62.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>7387</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>18.95</td>
<td>8.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>4487</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>18.97</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>3383</td>
<td>1124</td>
<td>33.22</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>42.38</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>2587</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>24.89</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11.08</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>1793</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>34.97</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>69820</strong></td>
<td><strong>15383</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.03</strong></td>
<td><strong>97.71</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown (District)</strong></td>
<td><strong>9927</strong></td>
<td><strong>360</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.63</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.29</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>79747</strong></td>
<td><strong>15743</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.74</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: MANIPUR STATE AIDS CONTROL SOCIETY (MACS), Imphal, 2005).
Table 1.4: The tables below reveal the intense situation of HIV/AIDS in the state: Period: September 1986 to August 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Nos. of Blood Samples Screened</th>
<th>Total positive</th>
<th>Nos. of AIDS cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,28,76</td>
<td>20,744</td>
<td>3,512</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.5: Sentinel Surveillance Report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Risk group</th>
<th>Seropositivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July to September, 2004</td>
<td>IDUs</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pregnant women</td>
<td>1.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STD cases</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: (http://www.epao.net).

The internal problems of Manipur are the curfew and frequent blockages of National highways either by the Students' Unions or the insurgent groups to get several of their demands attended to by the successive State governments. As a result of bandhs, dharnas and protests by various groups including the NGOs, educational institutions, government offices and commercial markets would be closed on regular basis, which badly affects the lay persons and the poor.

In Manipur, it a common sight to see even the government employees who often carry out rallies demanding regular payment of their salaries. It is observed that the State government is unable to pay its employees because of lack of funds. Besides, transporters on the national highway are often issued threats not to ply on the roads without paying 'tax' to the insurgent groups. The consequences directly fall on the people as the prices of basic commodities shoot up. And, the overall development work of the government as well as of the NGOs gets disrupted.
The law and order situation in Manipur has always been murky. The Armed Forces (Special Power Act) of 1958 was imposed since 1980 in the State by the Central Government of India. Initially, this Act was implemented to tackle the problem of insurgency in the region. Ironically, it is observed that almost forty insurgent groups were formed in the past twenty-five years. Hence, it can be logically argued that this Act has instead of curbing insurgency, has encouraged it. The people of Manipur claimed that they do not want military rule as they feel insecure. However, both the State and the Central Government have not yet heeded to the cry of anguish.

STATE AND NGOs RELATIONSHIP:

A healthy relationship between the Government of Manipur and the NGOs is conceivable when both the parties share common objectives. NGOs are effective if the State has a positive social agenda. When the commitment of the State to uplift the poor and needy is weak, NGOs often find discussions and collaboration frustrating. A genuine and dynamic partnership between NGOs and the State is conceivable if both the actors agree to work on a problem facing the region based on mutual respect and autonomy.

Sometimes, the State fears that NGOs erode their political power; on the other hand, NGOs mistrust the motive of the State. At the same time, it also increases the risk of corruption. At times, a number of NGOs act as the opposition party and raise their voices against the State whereas a handful of them prefer to keep a low profile by totally separating themselves from the State.

It is essential for both the actors to complement each another. A relationship built on constructive method could foster a better understanding between the various actors and bring more fruitful results. It has been observed that several prominent NGOs overcome opposition to them from the State and are attempting at
pursuing closer relationship with the State. A genuine collaboration emerges if both the parties perceive that their solutions to different problems are complementary contributions.

Whenever the NGOs initiate activities outside the overall plan of the State, their relationship turns unpleasant. Such relationships allow the State and NGOs to perceive each other as equal partners with a common interest to bring transformation in the society. The collaboration helps them to solve the problem and create an opportunity to participate equally in the development intervention programmes.

Sometimes, friction occurs between the State and NGOs as a result of lack of co-operation and collaboration. In such a time, the State can employ counterstroke against any NGOs that work in contravention to State policies and strategies. Without any concrete evidence the State can suspend the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA), Income Tax Act, etc of the NGOs and investigate the activities of the NGOs if it has been receiving funds from foreign donor agencies. Thus, the State can disrupt the activities of any NGOs receiving foreign funding.

In order to avoid a complex and hostile relationship between the State and NGOs, they need to maintain mutual trust, respect, networking and collaboration in almost every programme that they undertake. There is a close connection between the economic growth and effective delivery of services in eradication of poverty although the process is indeed a long one. Economic opportunities and privileges should be equally distributed across the society without bias so that the disparity between the rich and poor can be minimized. The State should identify some
reliable NGOs to play an interventionist role in social sector especially in education and healthcare.

As a policy, the State government of Manipur has decided to support and encourage the NGOs for community-based help programmes. The State imparts training opportunities to NGOs in priority areas without undermining NGOs autonomy and independence. To a certain extent, the nature of relationship between NGOs and the State are based on mutual co-operation in Manipur. NGOs are considered as critical partners with the State, but whenever the State is unable to fulfill their development and social welfare schemes, the NGOs often undertake development programmes. However, it is essential to recognize the flexible relations between the State and the NGOs depending upon the situations.

NETWORKING OF NGOs:

In the context of networking, Manipur NGOs Forum (Parent Body of all the NGOs) have been playing a supportive role by providing management and technical support to other smaller NGOs at the grass roots level. Since bigger NGOs cannot undertake the massive task of development for the entire State, they seek to develop innovations and then disseminate information widely to other smaller NGOs in various districts. It is generally assumed that the State government of Manipur alone cannot tackle the problems of poverty, insurgency, illiteracy, unemployment and provision of basic minimum needs to the people living below the poverty line. Hence, NGOs have received significant attention because they are perceived to be able to do something that the State government cannot or will not do.

Another important point is that, the question of foreign donors dominating the NGOs does not arise in Manipur because the State appreciates the funds flowing in from them to tackle development projects. The employees of the State
Government are deprived of their salaries for many months due to lack of funds. In such a scenario, the State encourages the NGOs to seek financial aid from foreign donors and provide official support in their endeavours.

Increasingly, the State allows the NGOs to regulate themselves. One important way of doing this is to develop a common ‘code of conduct’ for NGOs and by NGOs. If the ‘code of conduct’ is implemented by the government, NGO activists will show the leaders of the State that they are trained professionally. Moreover, they would seek recognition from the State as partners in solving the various problems such as unemployment, illiteracy, health-issue, insurgency and environmental degradation. A ‘code of conduct’ will make the NGOs to be more transparent and accountable to society. It is observed that NGOs play dual roles. They are friends as well as foes of the State. They also can mobilize people against the State.

POLITICS OF NGOs:

Development workers would find that petty politics in Manipur is an indispensable factor wherein different welfare schemes or programmes were at times sandwiched between the non-cooperation of the local leaders and the high handedness of the bureaucracy. NGOs have also shared their experiences where the local leaders would not stake their claims over a development project and remain indifferent towards the programme.

However, efforts of the NGOs get affected if petty politics persists for a long time within the local community. The critique is not a condemnation of NGOs per se but it should be interpreted as a wake up call for the development workers to articulate and struggle without any hesitation for complete eradication of poverty in the area. One of the central issues that had been addressed in this study is the
dynamics within an NGO by paying attention to the work ethic and accord
significance to the relationships with the local complexities in Manipur that affect
the values, norms and practices of NGOs.

Each NGO may have different ideology and get influenced by politics
although they are considered to be apolitical and value-driven. It is also important
to mention that some NGOs in Manipur are found to be politically oriented.
Therefore, it is essential to understand the agenda and politics of NGOs that
prevails into the everyday activities. To a large extent, NGOs at Tamei sub-division
of Tamenglong district did not challenge the State Government per se but
maintained a cordial relationship.

NGOs AND EMPOWERMENT:

The concept of empowerment refers to the ability to decide what is in one’s
own best interest. To empower the poor, it should be ensured that they possess an
effective voice in decision-making bodies that decide on their behalf. To a certain
extent, empowerment is also related to power. According to Max Weber, power is
the ability to get others to do things even against their will. In our every-day lives,
power is practiced in the socio-economic and political aspects between individuals
in an unequal distribution.

Power is also exercised in decision-making wherein others obedience is
mandatory. Often, control refers to decision-making power in three basic ways: to
make decisions, make others implement one’s decision and lastly, influence other’s
decision without direct intervention. Thus, empowerment is associated with power
and specifically with the change in the distribution of power relations between
individuals and groups. The process of empowerment involves generating an
organized mass movement that may threaten the existing power structures.
Although, empowerment gradually begins in an individual’s mind, it should occur collectively to gain a new consciousness. The process of empowerment also deals with welfare and developmental measures. The marginalized local community needs to be enabled to access various programmes initiated by the NGOs and the state. One of the attributes of empowerment is related to the capacity to influence the path of transformation towards social and economic justice.

Empowerment relates to the poor and needy who lived without any kind of power at their disposal. It is a process wherein the poor challenge the structure of power and seek to change their lives for the better. NGOs have been performing an important role in motivating and mobilizing the people on various issues. The poor can be empowered by different strategies of the NGOs such as promoting Self Help Groups (SHGs), increasing assets and providing infrastructures.

Empowerment for the poor means getting access to better health issues, human rights, basic necessities, economic resources and building capacity as well as confidence to take control over their lives within and outside the home. The process of empowerment is sustainability, personality growth and self-esteem. In short, empowerment is a consequence of people’s participation in the decision-making process. In other words, it is an effect of active participation involving control over a range of activities. According to Dicklitch (1998:11)

There are several levels at which an individual, community or society can be empowered. However, two key components of empowerment are the development of a sense of efficacy in the individual and a group’s ability to influence political and personnel decisions of government or powerful institutions. Certain indicators can be used to measure the degree to which individuals or communities are politically or economically empowered. Economic empowerment can be partially gauged by visible improvements in
the standard of living directly related to the activities of the NGO as well as attempts to educate and therefore empower individuals to help themselves economically and politically to achieve greater self-sufficiency. On the political level, whether an NGO or association has helped to empower an individual or community can be gauged by determining whether the constituency has more political voice in affecting their destiny through actions (direct or indirect) of the NGOs, and whether people have greater access to policy-makers and policy formulation and decision-making because of NGO activities.

The significance of women's empowerment in Manipur reveals that, it affects the social systems as a whole and strives to create a new world of gender equality. Empowerment of women relates to the process of bringing radical changes in the social structures and challenging the existing patriarchal hegemony. It also deals with power, self-reliance, choices and control over both material and non-material resources.

Some of the women oriented NGOs such as Naga Women Union (NWU) have been playing an important role in creating awareness on women's rights relating to domestic violence, rape and oppression against women. These organizations created platform to promote women's empowerment wherein women are encouraged to speak out, participate and involve themselves at various levels. And it is linked closely with the other NGOs as well as the Government in relation to women's issues. NGOs have also been facilitating women to take an active role. Several NGOs focus on networking and closer interaction between women in advocacy, research and awareness campaigns.

NGOs AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION:

Increasingly, people's participation has become an enchanting motto for both the Government of Manipur and NGOs. It has evolved as a ready-made package with slogans especially for the NGOs to raise funds. On the other hand, the
government obtained political advantages in a situation wherein social welfare policies create strife and conflict on the part of their victims.

While analyzing the importance of participation, Majid Rahnema (1997) opines that the social activists started to advocate the end of ‘top-down’ strategies of action and propagated instead for the inclusion of participatory methods of interaction as an essential dimension of development. Sometimes politicians co-opt the term participation for their own ends as it gives a new lease of life to the discourse on development. Active participation is the point wherein even women are encouraged to take part in the decision-making process.

People should participate in the planning, preparation, decision-making and implementation process of development programmes. In other words, people’s participation implies participation in all the stages of the programmes starting from formulation to sharing the benefits of development, monitoring and evaluation. And, it is a moral imperative to encourage the participation of women in all aspects of development. Improving women’s participation on equal terms even in the labour force is essential to control the growth of population.

Moreover, mobilization of women is also necessary because collective effort has a significant impact in the society. Women’s participation would facilitate them to have debates on their current problems more effectively. Participatory approaches certainly help the poor to be the focus in the development activities and enhance women in particular to involve in the socio-economic, political, civil and cultural life. Women need to fully participate in the economic growth process and social development. The impact of women’s participation can be seen in improving the literacy rate, health and lifestyles.
Undoubtedly, people's participation is imperative in all stages of the planning cycle. Besides, sustainability of the project is based on the nature of maintenance and effort of the local community. The capacity building of individuals or community is absolutely necessary to strengthen them as they discharge or implement different programmes. In the planning stage, NGOs play crucial role as they focus on alternative development projects. Apparently, NGOs facilitate the people's participatory development wherein the local community gets benefit through planned development efforts.

If people's participation at Tamei sub-division in Manipur is not fully ensured then, the development project will not bear fruit. NGOs uphold alternative development strategy and often acknowledge the skills as well as resources of the local community. Hence, NGOs manifest an unambiguous commitment towards people's participation in the process of alleviating poverty. The manifestation of development must be accompanied by both vertical and horizontal growth that ensures benefits to the people. The following chapter will discuss about the Tamenglong district in Manipur.

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF NGOs:

The strength of NGOs is that it achieved results when the state has failed especially where local community participation and self-help schemes are needed. The economic crisis calls for creative approaches that only NGOs are likely to provide. On several occasions, NGOs are well aware of the local needs and demands. They are informal, less bureaucratic, speedy and close to the grass-root. They have the potential to reach rural poor where government programmes either are limited, non-existent or ineffective.
They have the advantages of flexibility in structure and operation. Moreover, they adopt innovative and experimental approaches encompassing institutional, structural and attitudinal changes. They are also known for their active role in emergencies and organizing relief activities. NGOs not only work to meet the basic needs of the economically backward groups of people at Tamei subdivision but also assist them to achieve self-reliance and help them to explore and articulate their developmental needs and priorities.

The basic problems faced by NGOs and their weaknesses include poor maintenance of proper records of their performances, implementing various programmes, dealing with the local community and government officials. Another problem is the fact that only a few of the NGOs have experienced and devoted social workers for effective implementation of developmental projects.

One of the main problems of the local NGOs in Manipur is the lack of financial aid. Although two of the NGOs at Tamei sub-division have been receiving funds from the donor agencies on a continuing basis, still a majority of them lack assured funds and face an acute problem of paucity of funds. Sometimes, the employees of the NGOs are given training but majority of the NGOs still have inadequate technical personnel and trained social workers to take up rural development activities effectively.

One of the negative aspects of NGOs includes slow promotion in the hierarchical ladder. Often, we find that well qualified individuals would not apply in the NGO sector because of low salary and less incentives. Hence, NGOs face the problem of recruitment as well as retention of trained, committed and qualified employees for different activities of development. A major problem that a large number of NGOs in Manipur encounter in their everyday life is the difficulty to
convince donor agencies for financial resources. It is due to the lack of technical skills for formulating and writing project proposals, implementation and corrective actions. Moreover, cordial relationships with the influential personalities are required to reach the doors of funding agencies.

The following chapter will describe the Tamenglong district in general and Tamei sub-division in particular. It will highlight the rainfall, climate, shifting cultivation, socio-economic conditions, cultural and religious backgrounds of the ethnic community. It will also deal with the prevailing social system and status of the Zeliangrong women. The restricted area permit, tourism potential in the district and isolation of the local people would be emphasized in this chapter.