CHAPTER V

The Village Council System and their relationship with other Grassroots Organizations in the Village

5.1: Introduction

The local-government which exists in the form of the Village Council system in Mizoram as sanctioned by the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 does not work by itself. It has been working hand in hand with other non-governmental organizations since its inceptions. These non-governmental organizations play an important role in the administration of the villages and in uplifting the social-economic conditions of the masses, rendering their services to the poor and the needy in the villages. They have got their branches in all the villages within the state of Mizoram and their services were spread in every part of the state. Moreover the leader of these organizations were elected for a fixed period which provide a training ground for young politicians in the field of democracy similar to that of the Village Council providing greater scope for the people to participate in achieving the socio-economic goals.

The most important grassroots organizations other than the Village Council, which are popularly known as NGOs that play an important role in the working of the local administration in Mizoram may be discussed as below:

5.2: The Young Mizo Association (YMA)

The Young Mizo Association was started as ‘Young Lushai Association’ on June 15, 1935.¹ Its important objectives were to encourage the

¹ Constitution of Young Mizo Association, 2006 Revision. p.1
bachelors to utilize their leisure hours in a better manner, promoting the health and welfare of the people and it should be organized in such a manner which would promote Christianity. The association would organize sports and entertainments. All the people who were committed to lead a Christian life were admitted to be a member of Young Lushai Association with a payment of 8 annas (50 paise). The Young Lushai Association from the beginning of its formation plays an important role in bringing about social development in the Mizo society. All the activities which were taken up by the association were conducted in such a manner as to promote the social activities of the people at the grassroots level. The first General Conference of the YLA was held on 23rd to 24th October 1941 at Aizawl. The theme of the conference was ‘Kan tihtur’ which means ‘Our duty’ and speeches on various topic such as- our duty to ourselves, our duty to our family, our duty to our motherland, our duty to our nation etc. were delivered by various persons. This shows that the association became an important training ground for the young Lushai nation in doing social services for the common good of the people and modernization of the society.

During the 1940’s there was a great political awakening among the people in the Lushai Hills which felt the need for the change of Lushai into Mizo on the ground that it covers more tribes than that of the Lushai and this is more appropriate term for the people living in the then Lushai Hills. Therefore, on the 7th October 1947 the Young Lushai Association was changed into Young Mizo Association by the Central YMA Committee. It is a non-political voluntary organisation having its own Constitution with a maxim that ‘YMA helps the needy’. The Constitution of YMA clearly stated its aims and objectives which are: - i) Useful occupation of leisure time, ii) All round development of the Mizoram and iii) Promotion of good Christian life. It also held that each YMA member should aim to be self disciplined and righteous, good manager of the family, just and truthful, tolerant, polite, chivalrous and useful, socially active, respectful of religion, preservation of culture and lastly abstain from liquor and

---

3 Ibid., p.18
4 Ibid., p.33
drugs. It was registered on 14th May, 1977 with the Mizoram Government as per Society Registration Act 1860 (Act XXI of 1860) under Sr. No. 4 of 1977.  

The Annual Report 2005-2006 has recorded that the Young Mizo Association has got 747 branches, 49 Group, 1 Sub-Headquarter and about 3.5 lakhs members. The branches were not confined only within the state of Mizoram but are spread in the neighbouring states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland which are inhabited by Mizos. It has got it’s headquarter at Aizawl and a sub-headquarter at Lunglei. The Central YMA has got 8 Office Bearers who were elected for a term of two years; it has got 46 Central Executive Committee members. The Central YMA has got various sub-committee which are assigned different works, they are- Culturer Committee, Disaster Management Committee, Finance Committee, Health & Medical Education Committee, Kumpuan Committee, Land, Building & Youth Centre Committee, Legal Committee, Literature Committee, Press Committee, Project Committee, Recreation Committee, Resource Committee, Science & Environment Committee, Sports Committee and Training & Youth Affairs Committee. These various sub-committees reveal the various activities of the Young Mizo Association which plays an important role in the Mizo society after the extinction of Bachelors’ dormitory.

The Young Mizo Association plays an important role not only in modernization of the traditional Mizo society but also takes an important part in executing the Government policies and programmes at the grassroots level. It is due to the achievement made by the YMA that the Mizo society has undergone significant changes though political growth and consciousness had touched them only few years before India got her independence. The traditional Mizo Society which has been characterized by all forms of superstitious belief had been transformed into a peace loving society within a few decades. When Mizoram has got its own government in 1972, the State Social Education Officer had requested YMA to make survey on the illiterate adults and provide them

---

6 The 61st YMA General Conference Annual Report
educational facilities. This is how the YMA help in promoting education to the illiterate masses.

It may be worth mentioning that when UNO declared 1981 as a ‘Year of handicaped’ it had taken several steps in order to help the handicaped and when UNO declared 1985 as a ‘year of Youths’ the YMA celebrates it with grandeur in the presence of the state Chief Minister and Chief Secretary on 12th January 1985. In 1992-93 the association was awarded the greatest award for environment protection known as “Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar (IGPP)”, it was achieved in pursuance of the ‘Year of Protection of Wild-life’ declared by YMA in 1992-1993. In this way YMA had adopted certain years in order to quicken or achieve its aim and objectives- the year 1983 and 1991 were declared as a ‘Year of Sanitation’, 1984 as a ‘Year for the Protection of Public Property’, 1994-1995 as a ‘Year for the Reformation of Social Life, 1995-1997 as a ‘year of literacy’, 1998-2002 and 2004 as a ‘Year of protecting Mizo culture and nationality’, 2003 as a ‘year of self-sufficiency’ and 2005-2007 as a ‘Year of fighting against drug-abuse and intoxicants’. In pursuance of these declarations the Young Mizo Association had organized competitions on drama, essay writing, poetry, slogans, song composition etc. It also organized social work and public gathering where papers were presented by various resource persons, and certain research and surveys were also carried out to make the declarations great success.

From the above discussions we can realise the fact that YMA plays a very important role in uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the people in Mizoram as it spread all over the state with all the youths registering themselves to be a member. We cannot expect to have a good village administration in the villages of Mizoram without the existence of this important organisation. The members of YMA are the hands and limbs for the Village Council who could not run the village administration by themselves with their poor financial resources and few members. It is a fact that the strength of village administration to great extents lies in the hands of the Young Mizo Association.

---

7 C.Vanlallawma, Ibid., p.89
in the villages, as such, a cordial relationship between the two should always be maintained for the sustenance of grassroots administration in Mizoram.

The Young Mizo Association, since its formation carries out the important activity of disposing away dead bodies in the villages of Mizoram. From time immemorial it was the custom of the Mizo to bury their dead bodies which were traditionally performed by the relatives of the deceased persons but with the modernization of the Mizo society the system became unfavourable because the Mizo were no more isolated from other tribes and people of the plains. YMA being the largest voluntary organization having the largest number of members, voluntary social-works are often organized in the name of YMA when the need for it arises in the villages or the society.

In many cases, the government entrusts the YMA for developmental work. It being a non-political organization the strength and unity of the people lie within it. In the month of January 2009, however, the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of Central YMA in its meeting decided in its financial rules for not allowing the acceptance of developmental works from the government unless the permission is awarded by the CEC of Central YMA. This is expected to put a check on some contractors of the YMA branches who were taking advantage of the responsibilities given to them by the government agencies.

YMA, though, a voluntary organization often takes law into its own hand and punished the people who act against the wishes of its members, incur corporal punishment, fines and other forms of penalty. In the remotest areas of the state where there are no government servants to protect the villagers, it takes the responsibility of protecting the villagers from various dangers and unlawful restraint. In case, of natural calamities and unforeseen disaster, it is the Young Mizo Association, which remains the hope of the people.

Besides the above voluntary works, the YMA has to perform many other important functions in running the village administration and has to send its representatives in various committees at the village level as appointed by the President of the Village Council. In all the villages a representative of YMA
is always an important Committee member of the Village Forest Defence Committee (VDFC), Selection Committee of BPL/AAY families, Village Level Clean Mizoram Committee, Village Level Fire Prevention Committee, Village Water and Sanitation Committee, Village Education Committee, Village Level Health Committee, Village Level Disaster Management Committee, Village Vigilance Committee and Reception Committee. All these important village level committees may not exist in all the village of the state and some of the villages may have got many other important village level committees where YMA always holds important positions. It may not be incorrect to say that the strength of the village lies in the hands of the Young Mizo Association. The Village Council may make certain laws regarding the administration of the village but the execution of the laws often lies in the hands of the YMA whose members would execute them voluntarily without expecting any reward.

Another important role play by the Young Mizo Association is that the President of the YMA in every village/branch is a member of the Block Development Committee. This shows that the Branch President of YMA represents the village in the Block Development Committees together with the president of the Village Council. The Block Development Committee discusses various matters which are related to Centre or State Government Schemes for the socio-economic development of the rural areas. The Integrated Rural Development Programmes includes: Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP)/Hariyali, Indira Awaj Yajona (IAY), Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yajona (PMGY), Swanjayanti Swarozgar (SGSY), Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yajona (SGRY), Jawahar Rojgar Yajona (JRY), Border Area Development Programme (BADP), MIP, BAFFACOS, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), etc. It may also be noted here that the beneficiaries of the schemes or the propose work under the schemes are often discuss at the village level before the meetings of the Block Development Committee are conducted, as such, the resolutions of the village level meetings are forwarded by the President of the Village Council to be further examine by the Block Development Committee.
From the above discussion it may be clear that the Young Mizo Association carries out various important functions in the administration of the villages. People often failed to recognize the importance of the Village Council; though constituted under valid law because the YMA plays so an active role, it at times tends to eclipse the importance of the Village Council. In villages where there were cordial relationship between the Village Council and the Young Mizo Association, social and economic development is expected to grow faster. But in villages where there is a strained relationship between the two, socio-economic development is slow.

5.3: The Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkham Pawl (MHIP)

Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkham Pawl with (MHIP) is also known as a Mizo Women Federation. It is a voluntary organization of Mizo Women established on 6th July, 1974 with a motto “Service to others” and the federation has no political affiliation. All Mizo Women, above the age of 14 residing in and outside Mizoram, willing to subscribe to its aim and objective can become a member of the federation with a payment of membership fee at local branch where she resides. The organization has been registered under Society of Registration Act, 1860 (Act XXI of 1986) on 6th June, 1977 bearing Registration No. 5 of 1977. The registration extends over the Headquarter, Sub-Headquarters, Block and the Branches.

The Mizo Women Federation has been established with a definite goal and its aim and objectives may be mention below:-

1. To inculcate a sense of responsibility and ability among women in nation building and developmental works.
2. To safeguard and uplift the status of women in the society and the family; to protect their right and honour.
3. To prepare women folk to attain self-sufficiency and to be able to impart knowledge in handicrafts, family hygiene and domestic utilities.

4. To take care of children for their healthy growth both mentally and physically through Pre-Primary Schools, Balwadi, Crèches etc.

5. To provide and run recreational canters for children and make them learn by doing.

6. To take part in the developmental activities wherever suitable.

7. To educate illiterate adult woman and help find means to pursue education and suitable job to those in distress.

8. To bring together people from all works of life, be it unequal social status, different religious community and opposing political parties, for the development of Mizoram unitedly.

9. To abstain from violence.

10. To assist the government in their endeavor to achieve in the developmental works and

11. To fight against all kinds violation and crime against women.9

The Preamble to the constitution of MHIP also stands to avow to self-respect and control, to honour truth and abide by, to be polite selfless, hardworking and be helpful, to contribute for the welfare of the society, to show respect to religious practices, to keep oneself aloof from alcoholic and drug abuses, to strive for self-sufficiency, to remain aware of sex menace, and lastly, caring and serving with sympathy, the handicapped and disabled persons.10

The Office Bearers of MHIP consist of the President, Senior Vice President, Vice Presidents, General Secretary, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer and Finance Secretary who are elected for a term of two years by the General Assembly in the month of April. The nine Office Bearers shall appoint 34 committee members which along with them shall constitute ‘Headquarter Executive Committee’11. The Executive Committee if desires, shall appoint one patron and two Senior Advisers. At present, MHIP has

---

9 MHIP General Headquarters, Constitution of Mizo Women Federation, Chapter I (7) (Zorin Compugraphics, Aizawl, 2006)
10 Ibid., Chapter I (8)
11 Ibid., Chapter III (1)
got 730 Branches, 7 Sub-Headquarters, 16 Blocks and 20 Joint MHIP. All of them elect their own Office Bearers at each level for a fixed period.

In all the villages where MHIP has got its branch it has been the untiring supporter and major implementing agency of the Programme of the Central Social Welfare Board since its inception in 1976. Till recently the branches are implementing 143 units of Crèches programmes, and a good many other programmes under Condense Course of Education and other Vocational Training Programmes under the State and Central Government and more sanctions are on its way. It is also working in close co-operation with the other voluntary organizations, also plays an active role in co-operation with the state government and is a member of various committees in several department of the state government.

The MHIP as a voluntary organisation has endured untiring efforts in the local administration of the villages without expecting any reward from the people. It offers a helping hand to the Village Council wherever the need for it arises in the village. A representative of the organisation is always appointed as a member of various committees set-up by the Village Council at the local level and is always consulted by the government in various matters regarding the administration of the village. In the villages of the rural areas the President or one or two important Office Bearers of MHIP is a member of the Village Forest Defence Committee (VDFC), Selection Committee of BPL/AAY families, Village Level Clean Mizoram Committee, Village Level Fire Prevention Committee, Village Water and Sanitation Committee, Village Education Committee, Village Level Health Committee, Village Level Disaster Management Committee, MIP, NREGS, BAFFACOS, SSA Branch, etc. It may also be noted here that the number and name of the organisations set-up in all the villages of the state are not always the same and some organisations come and go depending upon the need of the society and the villagers. At the Block level the President of MHIP in all the villages are members of the Block Development

---

12 General Secretary Report of the 16th General Assembly held at Vanapa Hall on 24th & 25th April, 2007.
Committee which discusses all important matters related to the policies and programmes of the central and state governments.

However, it may be interesting to note that it is through MHIP that Women can participate in the working of grassroots democracy in Mizoram and we cannot deny the fact that the Village Councils always maintain close relationship with MHIP in the performance of their duties as representatives of the people at the local level. The Office Bearers being elected by its members for a fixed period provide political education to the females residing in the villages and it is through this important non-governmental organisation that women can send their representatives in the working of democracy at the grassroots level.

5.4: The Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP)

Mizoram Upa Pawl (Senior Citizens Association of Mizoram) was founded as a non-governmental organization in 1957. At the beginning of its formation it was known as ‘Upa Lengkhawm Pawl’ by few pensioners of government servants. But later on, in 1961 the name of the association was transformed into “Zoram Upa Pawl’ adopting its own Constitution, specifying the aims and objectives as well as various others necessary provisions pertaining to the organization and its structure. It was registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 in 1977 bearing a Registration Number SR-7 of 1977.13 It was affiliated to the Federation of Associations of Senior Citizens (FASC) of India. In 1992, the name ‘Zoram Upa Pawl’ was transformed into ‘Mizoram Upa Pawl’ with an abbreviation ‘MUP’. The MUP has got its Headquarter at Aizawl, the state capital of Mizoram which has been staffed by the General Secretary, the office Superintendent, two Office Assistance and a IV Grade. The General Secretary Report of April 2006- March 2007 had reveals that MUP has got 6 Sub-Headquarters, 70 Area, 512 Units, and 50,500 Members and among them 10 Units are in Tripura and 1 Unit is at

---

13 Article III of the Constitution of the Mizoram Senior Citizens Association,
Shillong. It may also be noted that those Units outside the state of Mizoram are called ‘Mizo Upa Pawl’ having the same abbreviation.

The Mizoram Upa Pawl is purely a voluntary organization with a motto “Be a blessing to many others” and it shall not involve in party politics. There shall not be any discrimination on communal or religious grounds. The aims and objectives of the association are the following:

(a) To make the senior Citizens to be able to meet their special biological, social and emotional needs so that they could continue to enjoy healthy and happy life.

(b) To advice and assist public leaders.

(c) As far as practicable to maintain and uphold the Mizo Customary laws, cultures, traditions and practices from ancient time and if necessary to help in amending or improving those which on careful examination are found no longer suit the present ways of life.

(d) To offer opinions and advice to the concerned authorities in matters concerning economic development of the state.

(e) To be very watchful of the political, social and economical life of the Mizos and to help guide the people from wrongful and undesirable trend towards more beneficial and honourable targets.

(f) To offer advice whenever the association feels it necessary to the state government for efficient management of any of its machineries.

(g) To be ready, when situation demands to work together with other voluntary organizations for a common good cause.  

In order to achieve its aims and objectives members of the MUP in every unit and area are actively engaged in finding out their fellow members in particular and the poor and the needy in general within their local limit and give them financial assistance from their own contribution and sometimes by physical works. To make themselves contented they always organize meeting in which recreational items such as solo, group singing, jokes, jokes,

---

14 MUP General Headquarters, Article IV Constitution to the Senior Citizens Association of Mizoram.
recitation, cultural items chanting of old Mizo songs, games, dancing etc. which everybody could enjoy. Sometimes lectures are also given on various subjects such as health Education, Sanitation, care of the aged and how to rear a successful family. The MUP has started awarding ‘Mizo Medal to those who posses extra-ordinary bravery, scholarship, and to those extra-ordinary social workers. It also starts MUP Charitable Trust in aid of those poor and destitute, who need kidney transplantation, suffering from cancer and other non-communicable disease etc. For this Charitable Trust each member of the Association contributes Rs.20/- every year and the amount of Charity Fund rose to Rs.10,00,000/- with the help of the Social Welfare Department during the year 2006-2007 which shows great successes.

In the political and economic fields the organization gives awareness to the general public of the need of having good and clean administration where the rule of law could reign and where economic self sufficiency is the main target. The MUP stands firmly against corruption and is committed to fight against all forms of corruption. It declared the year 2005 as a ‘Year of Fighting against Corruption’ which continues till today. The Association holds General Assembly every year in the month of March-April in which they discuss opinions and advice to be offered to the State Government on various spheres of development. The MUP always worked in good co-operation with other Non-Governmental Organizations such as- YMA and MHIP.

The MUP being the only important non-governmental organisation of senior citizens in Mizoram is always given an important position by the state government. It is a member of almost all state and district level committees formed by the state government. The President of MUP in every village is a member of the Block Development Committee which discusses important matters regarding the upliftment of the villagers through various schemes sponsored by the central and state government.

Like the other important non-governmental organisations the President of MUP is a member of all the village level committees organised by the Village Council in running the village administration. The President of MUP
may also appoint another person to represent the organization in various committees at the village level.

The MUP being an organisation which registers older persons who had retired from their daily works of life may not be expected to contribute much in the functioning of local administration. But their prompt advice is always sought by the members of the Village Council in the performance of their duties as village level administrator. The MUP, whose members had acquired great knowledge and experience, always play an important role in the working of grassroots democracy in Mizoram.

5.5: Conclusion

From the above discussion we can see that the three most important non-governmental organizations in the state play very important role in the working of grassroots democracy in Mizoram. Their representation in various committees at the grassroots level makes the village democracy more meaningful enhancing the spirit of democracy with various groups of people finding their place in the decision making process of the local self-government. In conclusion, we may say that the Village Council to function efficiently should have friendly relationship with the YMA, an important organization formed by youths embedded with great potential and strength; MHIP, an important organisation formed by female citizens constituting half of the population and MUP an important body of senior citizens armed with great knowledge and experience also work in tandem at the village for the effective functioning of democracy at the grassroots level.