Progress of Mizo women is affected by a variety of religious, political, economical, social and educational factors. As a result Mizo women in Mizoram have thus not been able to take full advantage of the available opportunities, facilities for development or progress. Some of the major factors which have retarded the progress of Mizo women are as follows:

First, there is reluctance and general indifference to the education of Mizo women on the part of parents.

Second, there is the tendency to keep Mizo women in economic subjection as long as possible.

Third, early marriage and social barriers against Mizo women pursuing education after marriage which compel them to be subjection the rest of their lives.

Fourth, prevalence of child labour among girls belonging to weaker sections and the hard domestic chores which some of the unmarried women, even in the middle class families, are required to perform.

Fifth, the traditional notion about the role of female that the sole occupation of women is to bear children, look after their husband and
children, and thus be confined to the house and be restricted to domestic work.

Sixth, there is discrimination effected by employers against women labour both in organised and unorganised sectors in matters of recruitment, training and promotions and wages.

Seventh, poverty and ignorance on the part of the parents in the way of education of girls.

Eighth, the contribution of women to labour productivity is ignored because the tasks women perform like post-harvest, food processing, fetching water, childcare and cooking are not recognised as work and thus excluded from the official labour statistics. Village studies indicate that women's work is of much greater importance than what is officially recognised as work, and that women often work longer hours than men and that women's relative contribution to family income is the largest among the poor.

Ninth, social factors like marriage, betrothal, parental apathy to girls' education play a major part, as do economic gains for the family, household work, taking care of cattle, etc. In all, the slow progress in enrollment, and high rate of dropouts and failures in education of girls ultimately effect the overall progress of women's education.

Finally, women and girls are likely to enter school in the first place, and most likely to drop out because of social and economic pressures.
The government did not take any direct responsibility for the spread of education among the girls. The development of girls' education was, therefore, very slow.

There are still many people who are of the view that there is no need of educating the girls because ultimately they are to be married and have to go with their husbands to do domestic work thereafter. It is also contended that educated women become free and characterless. Considering the girls as the property of their would-be husbands, they consider it extravagant to educate them. It is, therefore, quite obvious that unless this attitude of the people is changed, sufficient expansion of women is not possible.

The enrollment and retention of girls in the schools present special problems. Many reasons have been found for non-attendance of girls. From a very early age, girls begin to look after the younger brothers and sisters and household work to relieve their parents to go out as labourers or to work in the farms. Some girls of the age group 6-14 also work on some vocations. In all such cases the time of the formal schooling facilities does not suit them.

The indifference of the government, public apathy, poverty, dearth of women teacher, absence of a suitable curriculum for the girls are some of the factors responsible for the slow progress of education among the girls. Social resistance arising out of fears and misconceptions that education might alienate girls from traditions and social values and lead to mal-adjustments conflicts and non-confirmation. Many girls and their parents find that the school curricula do not conform adequately to their needs and interests.
SECTION B: RECOMMENDATION FOR WOMEN'S PROGRESS

We have so far surveyed the entire field of progress of Mizo women. What are our main conclusions?

First, special motivational programme should be undertaken by the government to bring girls to schools. Incentives in the form of midday meals, free supply of textbooks and reading materials, scholarships and awards should be provided for enrolling girls in schools and preventing them from dropping out.

Second, for girls who cannot attend school on a full-time basis, a system of part-time education and multiple entry system should be flexible to suit the convenience of girls of the locality.

Third, for girls who dropped out from schools, pre-vocational programmes in sewing, knitting, cooking, minor repairs, motherhood, and child care, etc. should be organised in rural areas and slums of urban areas. This will make them self-sufficient in home management and will help them achieve economic independence.

Fourth, a study of social, economical, political, and religious adjustment among women and its affects on academic achievement should be undertaken.

Discrimination against women, denying or limiting as it does their equality or rights with men, is fundamentally unjust and constitutes an
offence against human dignity. The elimination of discrimination against women is recommended or to promote equality between men and women.

Full participation of women in economic and social development.

Government should be asked to report on women's progress and to look at the gap between law and practice concerning discrimination against women.

To define a society in which women participate in a real and full sense in economic, social and political life and to devise strategies whereby such societies could develop.

To ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort, especially by emphasizing women's role in economic, social and cultural development.

To recognize the importance of women's increasing contributions to the development of friendly relations and co-operations among states and to the strengthening of world peace.

To increase literacy and civic education of women.

Co-educational technical and vocational training extended to women and men in the industrial and agricultural sectors.

Equal access to education at every level, compulsory primary education for all and action taken to prevent school dropouts.
Increased employment opportunities for women, reduction of unemployment and increased efforts to eliminate discrimination in the terms and conditions of employment.

Greater participation of women in policy making positions.

Increased provision for health education, sanitation, nutrition, family education, family planning and other welfare services.

Provision for parity in the exercise of civil, social and political rights such as those pertaining to marriage and commerce.

Recognition of the economic value of women's work in the home, in domestic food production and marketing, and in voluntary activities not traditionally remunerated.

Direction of formal, nonformal and life-long education towards the reevaluation of the man and women, in order to ensure their full realization as an individual in the family and in society.

Promotion of women's organisations as an interim measure within workers' organisations and educational economic and professional institutions.

Development of modern rural technology, cottage industry, pre-school, day-care centres; time and energy-saving devices so as to help reduce the heavy work load of women, particularly those living in rural sectors and
for the urban poor and thus facilitate the full participation of women in community and national affairs.

Rural women should be encouraged to send their girls to study in schools and colleges, women's literacy should include in its scheme a programme for imparting legal education and education to teach the fundamental rights of women. It will be education above all that will change the fallen status of women. Through education women will learn, not only about others, but also something about themselves.

Peace efforts of women as individuals and groups should be recognized and encouraged since peace is a prerequisite to development.

To increase the number of women in elective and appointive offices.

A major obstacle in improving the status of women lies in public attitudes and values regarding women's roles in society. Governmental and nongovernmental organisations should encourage research to determine the image of women.

Independent women's organisations at all levels should study ways in which the mass media (including news and advertising) treat women's status and issues.

Women should be trained in the use of various media forms in order that they might present to, as wide as possible, the public their own perceptions of their needs, ideas and aspirations.
Government should take account of and recognize the important role of women's organisations, encourage and assist them and provide financial and other assistance to enable nongovernmental organisations to become involved in the programme of action.

Government and agencies should promote establishment of women's grass-roots organisations as an integral part of the overall development efforts. Such organisations serve as forums for women to develop self-reliance and enable women to obtain real access to resources and power and to shoulder greater socio-economic and political responsibilities.

Employment training programmes should be created and legislation relating to women's working conditions should be implemented.

Information programmes should be created to make women, especially poor and rural women, aware of employment, education and training opportunities.

Equal opportunity programme should be developed to assure women's access to all levels of decision-making and management, and to promote access of women and girls to non-traditional skilled trades.

Women's access to recreation and culture should be increased, as their double work load prevents them from having enough free time.

It should be ensured that women and men are able to harmonize their occupational activities with family life, by providing childcare facilities
and amenities of adolescents, reducing the length of the working day and introducing flexible work hours.

Mental health should be included, as well as programmes for curbing the abuse of alcohol and drugs in overall health programmes for women.

Policies and programmes should be developed and aimed at elimination of all forms of violence against women and children, and the protection of women of all ages against physical and mental abuse resulting from domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation and any other form of abuse.

Improve the living conditions of rural women by providing basic human needs (clear water, sanitation, nutrition, health, shelter and food) and give access to convenient, low-cost formal and nonformal education for potential employment skills and in leadership and decision-making.

Ensure that unemployed women have access to secure employment through formal and nonformal training and retraining, and guarantee of social security benefits, adequate accommodation, and medical services on the basis of individual need.

Ensure women who are solely responsible for their families receive an income sufficient to support themselves and their families in dignity and independence.

Radio should include contributions and participation of women in the areas of major political, economic and social issues.
To establish locale and a daily programme of workshops and events focused on women and development and related subjects were provided through the Exchange. Topics ranged from income-generation to organizing skills, resulting in small group discussions which afforded women the opportunity for frank discussion and open debate of initiatives which women have acquired in the process of development.

A series of seminars and round-table discussions of women's issues are sponsored by women's organizations.

The need to promote full and equal opportunities and treatment in employment for women has to be highlighted while ensuring equal remuneration for equal work for all women in agricultural and non-agricultural jobs. Measures should be taken to ensure that economic returns from women's work accrue directly to them. Women's paid employment should be facilitated by increasing the involvement of males in domestic and childcare responsibilities.

Flexible, formal or informal training programmes should be designed for women in non-traditional areas to widen their employment opportunities and to enable them to generate income through production of goods and services. Women's access to technical training programmes should be increased, with care taken to ensure that women are introduced to training in new technologies on the same footing with men.

Women not only need education which makes them literate, but also education which equips them to carry out their multiple roles as citizens, housewives, contributors to the family income and builders of the new society.
Education has been identified as one of the aspects of women's development. To promote the education of women many special programmes and schemes should be introduced. Adult education of women should be emphasised. Under social education the importance of income-generating education, civic rights, recreation and leisure, etc, with leadership training and social consciousness should be emphasised.

Functional Adult Education for Women programme is a part of the nation's adult education programme and in specific developmental projects has to be given special importance. It includes health and nutrition, group education to mothers, teaching of reading and writing, etc.

In order to provide education to illiterate women, special nonformal education programmes should be introduced for those who could not complete their schooling earlier.

Health is defined as the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not only absence of disease or infirmity. Keeping this in mind, and realizing that the improvement of the health status of women requires action at all levels and within the family the following recommendations are laid down:

a) Improvement in the health status of girls and women as a necessary aspect of overall socio-economic development.

b) Improvement in health care for women throughout their life cycles.

c) Increased participation of women, not only as beneficiaries in the promotion of health, but also in the formation and implementation of
policy decisions regarding health at community and national levels.

d) Studies into the causes of diseases, the establishment of clinical and epidemiological research programmes, and the organization of services to deal with national problems.

e) To give high priority to meeting the health needs of women within primary health-care, especially in rural areas.

f) To formulate official policies to involve women in planning and carrying out health programmes at all levels.

g) To ensure accessibility for all women to maternal health-care (including care during pregnancy and childbirth, and postnatal care), nutrition and family planning.

h) To protect the health of women and their families from contamination, spoilage and adulteration of foods.

i) To develop programmes at all levels to improve hygiene, sanitation and access to clean drinking water supply.

j) To develop policies to endure safe working environment, both in the home and in the work place.

k) To promote extensive health education programmes including special efforts to encourage positive traditional practices like breastfeeding, etc.
1) To formulate specific programmes for the prevention of maternal and infant mortality.

m) To direct special attention to the needs of elderly women.

n) To establish programmes giving full medical attention to adolescent women.

o) To promote research into the extent and causes of domestic violence, with a view to eliminating it.

p) To formulate a plan of action for the protection of women against abuse of alcohol, tobacco and drugs:

- A separate course of study for girls should be prescribed.
- Increase the number of schools for girls.
- Facilities for the training of women-teachers should be improved.
- The curriculum for girls should be consistent with their requirements.
- The number of women-teachers and inspectresses should be increased.

Women's education should receive frank and cordial support from the government and that grant-in-aid should be given to private girls' schools.

When approximately half of our population are women and girls, the need to go about the business of woman and girl education with determination
and effectiveness is a prerequisite for expansion at secondary level. But one thing is certain that only when all our girls - rural and urban - are able to avail of secondary education will they be in a position to take their rightful place as self-reliant members of society, and only then will our dream be translated into reality.

It was stressed that all the resources allotted for the expansion of female education should be put to effective use and should not be diverted to any other scheme. The Union Ministry is of the view that the special programme for women's education which includes the items recommended by the National Council for women's education such as quarters for teachers, hostels for girls in the secondary schools and liberal stipends should be given particular attention.

In the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India, we think that there is no special justification to deal with women's education separately. Every type of education open to men should also be opened to women. Provisions in our constitution are clear in this respect. It has been clearly stated that while special arrangements may be made for women and children, there shall not be any discrimination against any citizen on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Education should be made free for all girls up to high school. Separate schools for girls may be opened or separate sections may be started in selected schools all over Mizoram. In co-educational institutions special attention should be given to the provision of adequate toilet, rest and recreation facilities separately for girls.
Separate hostel facilities should be provided for girls and vocational counselling should be arranged for girls to help them making a wise vocational choice.

Correspondence courses, part-time and self-study programme may also be introduced for dropout girls at this stage.

Earlier, women in Mizoram used to be engaged in unskilled and semi-skilled occupation. There were no holidays for women. She had to get up at dawn to bring water and cook morning meal. At the same time she had to pound paddy to dehusk rice. To separate the chaff from dehusked grain needs practice and skill.

The men would not help in this arduous task and found it more paying not to learn the art at all. When morning meals are over she had to prepare lunch packets and follow the men to help in the jhum. After working the whole day she must carry back firewood or foods for the domestic animals of which she was in sole charge or she may also be required to carry wet clothes of the men to be dried over charcoal fire in the evening. After she had fed the family she had to sit on her spinning wheel till late in the evening for she was responsible to cloth all her family members. She considered weaving clothes as a holiday from the more strenuous work.

The young men would come to woo her and she must keep herself alert to the needs of her suitors. The only real holiday she had and in which she thoroughly enjoyed herself was the day when all women of the village gathered over a boiling pot of indigo leaves to dye their yarns. When all her labours are ended on this earth it is very uncertain if the gates of paradise would be opened to her.
There was the harvest paddy to collect from the fields and to store in the bins of circular bamboo-plaited frames, constructed at some convenient place between the fields and the homes on the hill-tops. This paddy storing was a heavy task, as soh load had to be carried from the field to the storing-bin on the women's back. From these storing bins the women carried up through the year load after load to meet the need of the family's daily consumption. The loaded baskets are steadies on the backs and held up by a plaited bandeau pressing against the foreheads of the women.

At this time of the year, the women liked to take advantage of the dry weather to prepare their cotton harvested in December or January by ginning, teasing, spinning and making skeins for easy use at some convenient occasion in the future. The really industrious women used this season for cutting firewood and its porterage to the house, and its stacking, for use at a later date during the rains, when its collection would be less profitable.

In actual practice, however, the division of labour, certainly under present day condition, was so much against the women, that they could rarely claim any leisure at all. Then there was the arduous hazard of childbirth which these great women faced cheerfully and courageously. In delivery oases in the village an ordinary Mizo woman would be assisted primarily by some elder, one who had some claim to experience in such matters, preferably one belonging to the family. The mother suffered to the fall with only nature's clemency upon which to rely. Except on the day of actual delivery, the mother looked after her newly born herself,
washed both herself and the baby. She did not willingly rest, even on account of her delivery, and went about her ordinary household duties the very day after her delivery, unless perchance she was in serious pain.

She had to marry a husband chosen by her parents and her market price depended on her beauty and industry. One other qualification she must cultivate is a capacity to smoke endlessly. She had a special pipe in which the smoke passes through water. The water becomes impregnated with nicotine which the old folk used like chewing tobacco. Failure to supply enough of this water to her parents-in-law may resulted in her divorce.

For the first few months she would be too shy to eat her full and had to snatch every opportunity to sneak back to her parents' home for leftovers.

If Christianity brought freedom to the men it did more to the women. Emancipation was surely but slowly taking place.

Prejudice against women took prominent part in public and religious affairs was strong. It was often said before, that,

a) "Women and crabs have no religion", which means women would simply join their husbands' religion whether they like it or not.

b) "The wisdom of a woman does not extend beyond the limit of the village water-source."

c) "Womean and fence can be changed", which means husbands can change their wives with another woman any time they like as easy as to change the fence.
But now women have their freedom of choice in religious matters and in choosing their husbands; and prejudice against women taking prominent part in the public life and religious affairs is dying out. Women are now taking more and more responsibilities in the church and in the public affairs. Though according to customary law no woman can inherit property but under certain exceptional circumstances a female, too, can inherit her husband's or father's property. A man who has not close male relatives to inherit his property can make a will for transferring his property to his wife or daughter. A person having more than one daughter has to transfer it to his youngest daughter, as an heiress.

Today women are entering into technical, clerical, medical, marketing, scientific occupations in large numbers. The rising cost of living along with new trends of modern living, resulting in the ever widening field of necessities of life, are compelling more and more women, both married and single, to seek employment. Earlier, women used to be engaged mostly in unskilled, semi-skilled occupation. However, now their presence is rapidly felt in services, industries, shops, offices, hospitals, laboratories and the white-collared and other occupations. Undergraduates as well as postgraduates with science subjects like medicine, engineering as well as commerce are increasing in numbers alarmingly as job seekers.

Irrespective of the difficulties involved, women are taking up jobs in construction, heavy mill work, machine transport, founders and are showing their creativity and inherent personal abilities. It is well known that women are blessed with certain innate abilities like colour sense, adaptability, flexibility, human sympathy, unorthodox approach to fashion and so on. These qualities enable them to qualify for the jobs of sales-
girls, interior decorators, fashion designers, advertising executives and
demonstrators. Then major members become nurses, midwives, health visitors,
etc. Many lady doctors can now be found in the government hospitals, and
dispensaries. They are also found in colleges, schools, charitable clinics
and nursing homes besides continuing private practice. Girls these days are
taking up courses to qualify as pharmacists, dispensers or compounders,
women play crucial roles in the production, storage and processing of food
in most societies.

Women in general play no role at all in the political field. In the
Assembly, women representation is very small compared to their population
strength. In higher levels of society, only these women take any interest
in or participate actively in politics. The other category of women who
may be considered to be involved in politics are those who merely form the
work force and assist others in politics. These women have no voice in
decision-making nor can they be considered to have any definite political
stand of their own. The women from backward areas and poorer sections of
the society are utilised in political activities only as workers or hired
for canvassing votes and demonstration.

There are, therefore, in the political field either for some economic
benefit or social gain. It certainly cannot be claimed that women from
whatever level of society they come, are in the mainstream of the political
scene. Of course, socially aware representatives of women in general do
take active part in organising and joining in protest marches, demonstrations,
etc. on issues of immediate concern like rape, discrimination, atrocities,
etc. But women have become more sensitive to issues concerning them and are becoming aware of their status and importance in society. More than this, there is an ever-growing awareness that a single woman has no voice whether she is a member of Assembly/Parliament or not. It is the collective strength of all women, women’s organisations, associations and voluntary social work organisations that will make a national and international impact. This and this alone can succeed in getting women their just rights and proper status in society.