Chapter 7

The Problem of Organising Beneficiaries and the Role of Voluntary Organisations

(i) The Problem of Organising Beneficiaries
(ii) Role of Voluntary Organisations in Rural Development
(iii) Voluntary Organisations in the Area Under Study
CHAPTER 7

THE PROBLEM OF ORGANISING BENEFICIARIES AND THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

This chapter consists of three parts. Part I dwells on the problem of organising the beneficiaries and suggests measures to accomplish the task. Part II deals with the role of voluntary organisations in rural development. Part III provides a description of voluntary organisations in the area under study.

(I) THE PROBLEM OF ORGANISING BENEFICIARIES

If the poverty alleviation programmes in the country have failed to deliver the goods, it is mainly because the target group, i.e., the rural poor, have not been organised for a role in formulation and implementation of these programmes.

Organisation of the rural poor, particularly in beneficiary-oriented anti-poverty programmes, is essential for their successful implementation. These programmes will not deliver the desired results if these are implemented only through bureaucratic institutions. “The organisation of beneficiaries is... intended to increase beneficiaries' awareness and strengthen their bargaining position so as to help them to get the maximum benefits from such programmes”.

It is necessary to examine the reasons which are responsible for the unorganised character of the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries are not simply poor; they are the poorest of the poor. They live in the far away places in the villages, as well as in the hills. A large majority of them are scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward castes of the society. They are socially deprived groups. “They have limited risk-taking capacity. They lack self confidence. They have
low level of self consciousness. They are unable to articulate their own interests. Their aspiration levels are low and they are content with only a small improvement in their living conditions. Their economic inequality gets further reinforced by social inequality. The technology available to them is primitive. There is a lack of support at the bureaucratic and political levels for redressal of their grievances. There is a lot of cheating by the officials, non-officials as well as the high income group people due to their poverty and ignorance. For all these reasons beneficiaries remain indifferent to the development programmes.

**Situation in the Area Under Study**

The researcher, during her field visits had numerous opportunities of interacting with the IRDP beneficiaries. She found that there was a big communication gap between the IRDP functionaries and the beneficiaries.

It is important to mention here one of her observations that, in Mizoram, there is no deprivation due to high caste or low caste. There is no exploitation arising on account of caste differentiations. The Mizo socio-cultural system is not caste-based. Caste conflicts do not exist there like those in the plains. All the beneficiaries belong to a single social/legal group: the scheduled tribe. There is, a high degree of social cohesion in the Mizo society; egalitarian sentiment is strong. Social afflictions like the practice of bonded-labour, child marriage, begging, gender-bias do not exist in the Mizo society. Literacy-rate is high; Mizoram in fact scores very high on the literacy-map of the country. Still then, the beneficiaries are indifferent and scattered. There are areas after areas where the beneficiaries do not know much about the programme, and whom they may approach for the resolution of their problems. A limited number of the beneficiaries become the “intermediaries” and the rest depend on them. At the village level, virtually the only functionary available is the VLW.
But his visits to the village are of a routine nature. Besides, he is not regular. There is, practically no mechanism for the dissemination of information through mass media like radio, TV, or through the distribution of pamphlets. We have in other parts of the country, the TV system (Training and Visit) which has created a considerable awareness among the beneficiaries in some states like Kerala, Haryana, and Punjab regarding new agricultural practices. This method of dissemination of information will be useful also in Mizoram.

**Measures to Improve Organisation of Beneficiaries**

The following measures, it is felt, will contribute to a better organisation and awareness of the beneficiaries.

(i) **Participation**

Organisation of beneficiaries is a problem of communication and awareness. So the first step in this regard should be to encourage the beneficiary participation. Beneficiaries have to be actively involved not only in the programme implementation but also in the formulation of the programmes, so that the programme-content may take into account their hopes and aspirations.

(ii) **Education**

There should be educational programmes to enhance the capacity of beneficiaries. Through this process, they will learn participatory skills, skills for problem identification and problem solving. The education programmes should be agriculture-based, animal husbandry-based, small scale industry-based and forestry-based. These can be brought to the beneficiaries
through the mass media. Educational methods should include group discussions and meetings. Quantitative expansion of such educational programmes at the village level will bring a radical change in the consciousness of the beneficiaries and inspire them to organise.

(iii) **Opportunities for an Uninhibited Interaction**

Rural beneficiaries suffer from alienation and isolation. They fear the officials, police, and outsiders. This is all the more so in the case of Mizoram, where the tribals have a strong fear in disclosing anything about themselves to the outsiders. They bear a negative outlook and attitude towards an outsider. This has to be removed from their minds by encouraging their involvement in development programmes. Programme bureaucracy, voluntary organisations and grassroots functionaries have to appreciate the problems, constraints, needs and capabilities of the beneficiaries. Programme bureaucracy has to change its autocratic style of working to win the cooperation of the beneficiaries. They have to recognise the psychological needs of beneficiaries in terms of freedom, participation and motivation.

(iv) **Formation of Formal Groups**

In the absence of strong collective action by the beneficiaries, nothing much can be achieved. Depending on the local conditions, beneficiaries can be helped to form different formal organisations for different activities, for example, the farmers' groups, carpenters' groups, etc., by which they can combat the negligence of the administrative and political institutions.
(v) **Creation of Voluntary Organisations**

Organisation of beneficiaries has to be done at the village level. We can not achieve this unless we have the village-level pressure groups to mobilise the beneficiaries. This work can be given to the voluntary organisations; they will evolve strategies to integrate skills, attitudes and schemes. Creation of voluntary organisations will encourage a free flow of information as well as, by fostering involvement of the local communities, engender in them a greater sense of commitment to the programme.

(vi) **Effective Democratic Grassroots Institutions**

The grassroot democratic institutions, the village panchayats/village councils are an important agent for effective implementation of rural development programmes. At a broad, philosophical level the importance of a sturdy local self-government flows from the following:

1. It provides a sense of participation in the people of the localities.
2. It provides a structure for the articulation of the local social, economic and political demands.
3. It helps to avoid opposition of the local leaders to the beneficiary-oriented programmes.
4. It contributes to political stability at a macro level.

Ultimately, it is only through a sturdy local government setup that the poorest of the poor can be brought to the centre-stage of the governance process.
(vii) **Committed Grassroots Bureaucracy**

The organisation of beneficiaries is vitally dependent upon the quality of the programme bureaucracy engaged in the implementation of IRDP, particularly at the block level. Critical questions in this regard are:

- What is their attitude towards the beneficiaries?
- Do they resolve conflicts, generally, in favour of the weakest sections, or do they side with the forces of status-quo?
- To what degree are they committed to the cause of the poor?
- Do they adapt appropriately in the light of the feedback?

The local bureaucracy has to be properly tuned to the needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries; and technically trained to respond to the requirements of the programme.

(viii) **Role of Local Informal Leaders**

Local informal leaders within the localities can organise the beneficiaries. They can provide an honest communication between the target group and the programme bureaucracy. Strong local leaders will considerably influence the decision making and participation process.

(ix) **The Role of Cooperatives**

The cooperatives provide an integrated mechanism for organising the rural poor. To realise the full potential of the cooperatives, the following conditions should be fulfilled.

(a) There should be an earmarked representation of the beneficiaries in the governing bodies of cooperatives.
(b) It should be ensured that the cooperative are accessible to the beneficiaries.
(c) There should not be politicisation of the cooperatives. It should be developed purely as an economic institution for helping the rural poor.

Organising the rural beneficiaries and gaining their active participation is not an easy task. It is all the more difficult in the case of Mizoram, where an acute lack of infrastructural facilities is a severe handicap. Geographic and climatic factors tend to aggravate the situation further. The redeeming feature of the situation in Mizoram, however, is its strong voluntary sector. But, as we shall see later in this chapter, the voluntary organisations in the state are slanted more towards the ecclesiastical than strictly social-economic domain.

(II) ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

No government, however efficient, can undertake the gigantic task of rural development without mobilisation of human and material resources at local level. In fact, it has been generally accepted that the government cannot do this task alone. Voluntary organisations are peculiarly suited to perform the role of social mobilisation for implementation of anti-poverty programmes.

The term “voluntary” is used mainly to denote the work done by those volunteers who are not paid for. In the context of welfare activities, voluntary means those without spur or compulsion of economic motives. In other words, it is a self-propelled action, without claim for compensation. Voluntary organisation is a legal corporate body organized by a group of persons spontaneously and is governed by its own charter without external control or compulsion, for social welfare. We define it as a non-political, non-profit, non-religious community organisation governed by its own rules and regulations without external control and initiated for community
Voluntary organisations believe in humanitarian philosophy of social and human support to individuals and groups who are in distress, without expecting anything from them in return.

Voluntary organisations are considered to have certain advantages over the government bureaucratic machinery, which are mentioned hereunder:

(i) They have greater freedom to adapt themselves to changing needs and ideas.
(ii) They have greater autonomy in functioning.
(iii) They have a clearly defined programme of action to meet the local needs with available resources.
(iv) They have better rapport with people and get better response from them for their programmes.
(v) They have usually a dedicated and committed band of workers.
(vi) They have ability to mobilize resources locally or from outside.
(vii) They have a greater sense of responsibility and accountability.
(viii) The administrative structure of the voluntary organisations is relatively uncomplicated.
(ix) They have a better system of evaluation of performance than the bureaucratic government machinery.
(x) They have greater human touch and maintain closer personal contact.
(xi) They are not guided by a target-fulfilling approach like bureaucratic institutions; rather they work to make the poor self-reliant.

The Seventh-Plan document has prescribed the criteria for identifying VOs for enlisting help in relation to the rural development programmes which are as follows:

(i) It must be registered under the Societies of Registration Act, 1860 or equivalent state laws;
(ii) It must be based in a rural area;
(iii) It must have worked for at least 3 years before it becomes eligible for government assistance;
(iv) It must have professional and managerial expertise to carry out relevant programmes of development;
(v) It must believe in non-violent and legal methods;
(vi) The office bearers of voluntary organisation should not hold any office elected or otherwise of any political party;
(vii) It should be secular;
(viii) It must not work for profit;
(ix) It should work towards comprehensive rural development with focus on anti-poverty programmes in the rural areas.

Our discussion on voluntary agencies will be incomplete without a mention of PADIB (People Action for Development India), Whose main objectives are as follows:  
(i) To provide financial assistance to VOs to implement rural development projects;
(ii) To build local leadership and cadres of trained workers;
(iii) To organise training for VOs, rural workers and beneficiaries;
(v) To provide managerial support, technical guidance and information to voluntary organisations;
(v) To organise national and regional seminars and workshops to discuss issues relating to project formulation, project management;
(vi) To serve as a data bank for information related to voluntary organisations;
(vii) To promote voluntary action to supplement Government efforts in fulfilling the rural development programmes.
Some financial assistance is also given to voluntary organisations through CARART (Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural technology). It is also devoted to the promotion of voluntary effort in the rural sector.

**Rule**

Voluntary organisations have a wide ranging role to perform in the process of rural development. Some aspects of their role are discussed below.

1. **Promoting People's Participation**

   People's participation is the corner-stone of all developmental activities. "By participation we mean direct involvement of the people and not indirect involvement through their representatives. This is because given the existing socio-economic, political structure of the society in most of the developing countries, the so called "representatives" of the people are most likely to represent the rich rather than the interest of the poor majority". Voluntary organisations, because they are rooted in the local soil, have a great potential for activating grassroots activism and promoting peoples participation.

2. **Technological Upgradation**

   Voluntary organisations can bring about a transformation of the rural societies by mobilising popular support in favour of improved practices and encouraging general upgradation of technologies in the spheres of agriculture, animal husbandry and general livestock development.
3. **Promotion of Village Industries**

Voluntary organisations can further foster change through the development of village industries by recourse to the following means:
- Promotion of traditional handloom
- Promotion of forest based industries
- Supply of raw materials
- Vocational training

4. **Development of Education**

Voluntary organisations can further assist the process of rural transformation through vital interventions in the domain of education. The main foci of their activities could be the following:
- Education for weaker sections
- Education for the handicapped
- Adult education
- Health education
- Education on family welfare
- Education on protection of environment
- Education for women
- Education on eradication of social evils (drinking, smoking, divorce etc.)
5. **VOs and Integrated Rural Development Programme**

In regard to IRDP, specifically, the range of functions which the VOs may perform could be as under:

- Upgradation of the skills of the rural poor
- Providing relevant information regarding the procedural and substantive aspects of the programme
- Promoting group action
- Providing an appropriate forum to facilitate exchange of ideas
- Identification of the beneficiaries
- Applying for loans and subsidies on behalf of the beneficiaries
- Fighting the vested interests
- Organising the programme beneficiaries
- Building of awareness of the beneficiaries
- Programme monitoring
- Providing a forum for ventilation of beneficiary grievances
- Motivating the beneficiaries
- Leadership building
- Increasing bargaining power through group action.

**(III) VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN THE AREA UNDER STUDY**

"Voluntary organisations play a very important role in Mizo society. The social life of a Mizo is moulded through such organisations". Of all the voluntary organisations, the Young Mizo Association (YMA) and the Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuikawn Pawl (MHIP) have played the
most significant role in the life of the Mizo people. The two occupy a position of considerable
importance in the State. Besides these, there are other voluntary organisations like Mizo Elders
Association (Mizo Upa Pawl), Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women
Christian Association (YWCA), and Christian Youth Fellowship (KTP) are functioning in the
Mizo society.

The Young Mizo Association (YMA)

The YMA is a non-political, social and cultural organisation. It was established in June
1915. It is the biggest voluntary organisation of the State.11 Traditionally, the YMA has been
committed to the task of providing social service and to the preservation of the cultural heritage
of Mizos. In the more recent past, the YMA has diversified its activities to include the
preservation of wild life, afforestation projects and espousal of electoral reforms.

Philosophically, the YMA seeks to blend the following ideological strands in the gamut
of the activities it performs.

(i) Utilisation of the leisure time, i.e., organise the youth for social service during leisure
time;

(ii) exaltation of the good Christian life : this largely takes the shape of church-related
activities; and

(iii) a broad-based, inclusive development of Mizoram : this relates to the moral, social,
educational, and environmental development of the Mizo society.
The Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuikawn Pawl (MHIP)

The MHIP, whose English equivalent is "Mizoram Women's Association", is a non-political organisation devoted to the cause of women. The MHIP was established in June, 1977. Like the YMA, it has its branches all over the state. The MHIP organises seminars and meetings to deliberate on a diverse range of problems of women. Through its activities, the MHIP has over the years grown into a powerful pressure group to fight for the women's rights. In the more recent past, it has been involved in campaigns against drug abuse and alcoholism. It has also set up child-care centres and creches for orphans and other needy children.

Some of the important objectives of the MHIP are:

(i) To generate awareness of the importance and responsibility of women in the development of country.
(ii) To prepare women in various skills in areas of handicrafts, health, and maintenance of family, and to augment the economic status of women.
(iii) To help the needy and the orphans.
(iv) To preserve the dignity and honour of women.
(v) To develop an effective interface with government for the realisation of the MHIP's aims and ideals.

Over the years, the YMA and the MHIP have emerged as powerful rallying points for the Mizo youth and the Mizo women. Their concerns over time have, however, in the main, converged on the church, they have tended to look upon themselves as the rejuvenators of the Christian values. As a result, their involvement in rural-development-related activities has been at best of a very meagre order. It would, in fact, be no exaggeration to say that the two have more or less totally ignored their role in the rural development sector. This is vividly reflected
in Table 7.1, which exhibits the response of the beneficiaries to the researcher's question concerning the involvement of the two organisations in the implementation of IRDP.

**TABLE 7.1**

**SHOWING RESPONSE OF THE BENEFICIARIES REGARDING THE INVOLVEMENT OF YMA AND MHIP IN THE IRDP IMPLEMENTATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number Responding</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Beneficiary Schedule*

Table 7.1 presents the perceptions of the beneficiaries on the involvement of YMA and MHIP in the implementation of IRDP. As the table shows, 11% of respondents said that the involvement of the VOIs was adequate, 29% said, it was inadequate. The largest number of respondents (60%) had no views to offer; they fall in the "Don't Know" category. The broad message emanating from the response pattern is that the beneficiaries perceive the involvement of the VOIs as being unsatisfactory.

In fact, as was said above, the two voluntary organisations have a dominant religious, and socio-cultural thrust; they have not consciously attempted to perform a social-mobilisation role. Indeed, if they were to take on this role, they can, given the clout they command in the Mizo society, bring about a rapid socio-economic transformation of the rural masses; growth in general awareness, change in outlook and attitudes, an enhanced level of motivation, and so on.
For enhanced involvement of the voluntary organisations in IRDP implementation, the DRDAs and the State Government should take active steps. The DRDAs should earmark the villages for the working of the voluntary organisations. The State Government should foster the involvement of voluntary organisations for promoting IRDP schemes in the spheres of agriculture, animal husbandry, village industries, and so forth. There should be more training and technical assistance provided to the voluntary organisations for better performance. They should, in fact, exercise the role of a co-partner in fostering the State Government's rural development effort.
REFERENCES


8. Government of Mizoram, Directorate of Arts and Culture, Tribal Research Institute, Know Your Own Land (Mizoram), Aizawl, 1990, p.57.