

Kalpana Das

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN MIZORAM



A MITTAL PUBLICATION

Development of rural areas and population has been one of the most crucial policy issues in India since Independence. India has opted for multiple approaches to rural development keeping in view the multivariate needs of the people living here. However over a period of the last 50 years of rural development experience it has been noted by a number of scholars that such a model of rural development has been almost a failure. The rural poor have not experienced any significant change in their living conditions.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), a major self-employment generating programme, was launched in 1980, to provide income generating assets and self-employment opportunities to rural families who live below the poverty-line (BPL). But the perusal of this programme reveals that this programme could not deliver adequate results and had hardly any impact on rural poverty.

It is in this context that the present book, *Rural Development in Mizoram: A Study of IRDP*, acquires much significance.

Besides examining the IRDP and highlighting the state-sponsored rural development programmes, this book identifies the motivational factors of grassroots bureaucracy and deals with beneficiary participation and the NGOs' participation in the achievement of the rural development goals. The discussion of the five case studies in the book unfolds the reality. The book not only discusses the problem of successful implementation of IRDP in the state, but has also suggested ways and means to fill the gap.

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As the author has spent considerable time in Mizoram, her experiences have been quite useful in her research for this study.

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RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
IN
MIZORAM

—A Study of IRDP

KALPANA DAS

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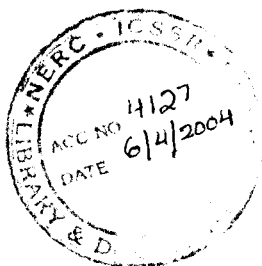
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INTRODUCTION

(I) STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) commands a position of an unparalleled significance in the poverty alleviation programmes which the country has operated in the post-independence period. Programmes, addressed *specifically* to the problem of rural poverty, made their appearance on the country's anti-poverty agenda only with the commencement of the Fourth Five-Year Plan. Until then poverty was perceived as a consequence of lack of growth and, therefore, India's planning effort was largely directed at increasing the rate of growth. The consideration of equity accounted for the planner's recourse to rural poverty alleviation programmes during the decade of the 1970s; IRDP marked the culmination of concern for equity and distributive justice which was beginning to generally characterise the government's approach to poverty alleviation during this period.

IRDP was introduced on an all-India basis in 1980, with "growth with social justice" as its avowed objective, and it would be considered to have justified its existence to the extent that it made a headway in the direction of its professed goal.

Widely divergent opinions have, however, been expressed as to the impact of the IRDP. There are wide variations in the reported estimates of the beneficiaries who have crossed the poverty-line. One source puts it at 3 % of those assisted under

the IRDP (N. Rath, *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 9, 1985) while the PEO's (Programme Evaluation Organisation) *Evaluation Report on IRDP* (for the year 1985) puts the figure at 50%. A third source—based on the revised poverty line of Rs. 6,400.00— reports that not a single beneficiary in the states of Haryana, J&K, Manipur and Orissa had crossed the poverty-line. (GOI, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Rural Development, *Concurrent Evaluation of IRDP* (for October-December, 1985) New Delhi, March 1986, pp. 66-68).

That apart, problems arising from the involvement of middlemen, violations of the guidelines in regard to identification of beneficiaries and in other regards, lack of trained staff, unhelpful bureaucratic attitudes, deficiency of infrastructural facilities, and leakages at various stages of the implementation process have been reported in a number of studies on IRDP.

In this context, it is important that the programme bureaucracy is able to rise above its customary zeal for *target accomplishment* and instead turns its attention to those dimensions and details of execution (operational plans, implementation strategies, programme monitoring and follow-up) on which, in the final analysis, will depend the realisation of the *ultimate programme objective* (e.g. extent of income generation, upward movement of the level of expenditure, long term viability of schemes selected by beneficiaries). Unless the suggested reorientation is introduced, the programme will continue to operate, and the number of beneficiaries will continue to swell, without this quantitative expansion making any dent on the plight of the beneficiaries.

(II) SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

The study of administration of IRDP assumes relevance in the above context. The *Third Concurrent Evaluation of IRDP*, for the period January - March 1989, covering various states, reveals certain trends in respect of Mizoram which are unshared by the rest of the country. For instance, in Mizoram, only 39% of the assets were reported to be intact (61% perished or were defective) as against the national average of 72% (p.104). Also, to take a second example, in Mizoram, in 11% cases a significant

difference (of more than Rs. 1000) was reported between the officially recorded cost of asset and that which was actually paid by the beneficiary. The corresponding national average stands at 5% (p. 53). To take yet another example, only 46% of the beneficiaries in Mizoram regarded the financial assistance (subsidy plus loan) as being sufficient as against the national average of 82% (p. 62).

These instances help to put the Mizoram situation in context. Mizoram is a geographically isolated state with a hilly terrain, in view of which the cost of living over there is significantly higher than in the plains. It is a sparsely populated state, and this renders provision of infrastructural facilities specially difficult. Some of the villages in the interior remain inaccessible for a large part of the year; this would create difficulties in the way of proper monitoring and follow-up of the programme. Moreover, Mizoram is a primary-producing state with virtually no medium-scale industry (let alone the large-scale); as a result, there is only a limited scope for activities under the ISB sector and the programme must remain largely confined to primary sector schemes. Peculiarities of the tribal way of life (the local population is entirely tribal) and the predominance of *jhum* (shifting) cultivation are the other added features which tend to accentuate differences in the overall operational framework of the IRDP in Mizoram.

For these reasons, a micro level study of the administration of IRDP, with a focus on Mizoram, has its own relevance. What lends a further edge to research of the present kind is the fact that, at the present juncture, there exist no independent studies to corroborate or contradict the evidence which the government-initiated researches have produced on the functioning of IRDP in Mizoram.

(III) FOCUS OF RESEARCH

The foregoing underscores the complex ramifications of IRDP and, in doing this, it underlines the need for a range of research foci.

- (1) First, the functioning of official structures, formally promulgated manuals, instructions and directives needs to be understood in the context of the interventions

emanating from other quarters. These may be voluntary organisation, which would, in supplementing the governmental effort, exercise a wholesome influence on programme implementation. There may, however, also arise unwarranted interventions from, for instance, the presence of 'intermediaries', which the government would seek to eliminate, or at any rate minimise. These under-currents and cross-currents permeate and pervade the entire range of operations connected with the implementation of IRDP. Their presence must be acknowledged, and their role scrutinised.

- (2) Secondly, there exist centrally prepared guidelines for the administration of IRDP. There is abundant evidence to show, however, that the guidelines suffer varying degrees of distortion at the various stages of the implementation process. Such distortions may not always arise from a deliberate or willful disregard of guidelines by the programme bureaucracy. These may instead have their source in numerous other factors and situations arising in the field. These operational difficulties, as the programme bureaucracy will view them, need to be understood and analyzed.
- (3) Thirdly, if it is important to understand the grassroots bureaucracy's perceptions, it is equally so to project those of the beneficiaries. In the statement of objectives of the present research, in the ensuing section, we will further dilate on this dimension.
- (4) While the paramountcy of beneficiary participation in ensuring the programme success is universally acknowledged, the existing literature on the subject throws scant light on what might be done to maximise such participation.

Some studies, for instance, in examining the implementation of IRDP, have tended to concentrate on such aspects as procedures for the identification of beneficiaries, selections of schemes, and administration of the loan and subsidy components of financial assistance to beneficiaries. Others have, likewise, examined the nature and extent of available infrastructural support and

adequacy of monitoring mechanism. Yet others have explored aspects concerning creation of assets, number of families crossing the poverty-line, and patterns of utilisation of financial assistance provided under the IRDP. Preparation of perspective and annual plans and estimates of beneficiaries wrongly identified have, similarly, figured in some other studies of the implementation process.

These are, without doubt, crucial aspects. Their exploration contributes to an understanding of the dynamics of the execution of the programme. The factors from which arises the proverbial gap between the promise and the performance, and between the plan and the achievement become evident from such analyses. These, moreover, by accounting for the lack of correspondence between the goal and the achievement, have generated insights for securing necessary improvements in the implementation of the programme. This feedback will perhaps even induce changes at the policy-making level. As such, a study of the implementation process has an intrinsic importance; and it will form an important focus of the present research.

- (5) However, in the view of this researcher, any examination of the IRDP's implementation process which would omit a consideration of the aspect of beneficiary participation is too narrowly focused and, in being so, excludes from its purview a dimension which is potentially crucial for the programme's success.

For this reason, apart from focusing on the implementation process *per se* the present research proposes to scrutinise the question of beneficiary participation in the programme. In examining this, the focus of research will be on the pre-requisites for augmenting beneficiary participation.

In an *a priori* listing of such pre-requisites the following would appear to contend for inclusion :

- (a) the level of awareness of beneficiaries;
- (b) the quality of beneficiary-administration interface;
- (c) the problem of organising beneficiaries; and

- (d) the nature of beneficiary-voluntary organisation interface.

(IV) OBJECTIVES

- (1) To study the IRDP's administrative set-up at the state, district and block levels.
- (2) To analyse the process of implementation of IRDP with reference to :
 - (a) procedures for (i) identification of beneficiaries, (ii) selection and allotment of income-generating activities, (iii) administering subsidy and loan components of financial assistance, and (iv) pre-disbursement counselling and post-disbursement follow-up;
 - (b) availability of infrastructure; and
 - (c) proportion of beneficiaries crossing the poverty-line.
- (3) To explore the dimension of beneficiary participation in the programme with particular focus on how to enhance the level of participation.
- (4) To obtain perceptions of beneficiaries on specific aspects of the programme which account for leakages in the system and influence the accomplishment of the ultimate programme objectives-aspects such as procedure for the identification of beneficiaries, adequacy of financial assistance, quality of assets, monitoring and follow-up, and so on.
- (5) To obtain perceptions of grassroots bureaucracy on their work environment which inhibit accomplishment of programme objectives.

(V) RESEARCH QUESTIONS

"Indian are good at making plans but poor at implementing them" is a well-known adage. The principal interest of the present research lies in being able to identify the nature of obstacles which stand in the way of securing a proper implementation of the IRDP and in suggesting ways to overcome these difficulties. In this regard, certain broad questions, to which the present investigation seeks an answer, are noted in this section.

The overall scope of this enquiry is indicated by the

following mega question: What factors stand in the way of securing a proper implementation of the IRDP?

Three specific research questions are noted below :

- (1) Is the existing administrative structure for implementing IRDP in consonance with its overall aims? More specifically, are the district and block level administrative set-ups adequately geared to perform the role of developing operational plans, disbursement, monitoring and follow-up? Likewise, how adequately is the State Level Coordination Committee able to discharge its supervisory and overseeing roles?

Does the existing administrative machinery stand in need of a restructuring to enable various organs to perform their stipulated duties more effectively?

If so, what may be the direction of such reform?

- (2) The next set of questions arises with regard to the grassroots bureaucracy.

Is this bureaucracy motivated, and technically trained, to discharge its duties?

With regard to the training of bureaucracy, the questions specifically are: Is their knowledge of procedures adequate? Are they adequately skilled? Are their attitudes in harmony with the requirements of the tasks they handle?

Regarding the bureaucracy's motivation, the specific research question may be stated as under: Why is the programme bureaucracy not sufficiently motivated? How can their motivation be improved? What factors motivate?

- (3) The third set of questions pertains to the beneficiaries of the programme. What is the state of beneficiary participation? What can be done to improve the quality of beneficiary participation?

In the light of these general concerns (for enhancing beneficiary participation) other research questions are as follows :

- (a) What is the state of beneficiary awareness and what measures may be adopted to increase the level of beneficiary awareness?

- (b) What is the quality of beneficiary-administration interface? Through what measures it may be improved?
- (c) What lies at the root of the problem of organising beneficiaries? What measures may be adopted to improve it?
- (d) What has been the role of voluntary organisations in facilitating the government's rural development effort? What is the state of the voluntary organisation beneficiary interface?

(VI) REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A brief review of literature on IRDP has been attempted, in this section, under the following heads:

- Selection of Beneficiaries under IRDP.
- Extent of Benefit derived from IRDP.
- The Programme Bureaucracy and IRDP.
- Block Level Planning and IRDP.
- Process of Implementation of IRDP.

Selection of Beneficiaries

D.S. Dhillon, in his book *Integrated Rural Development*¹ (1991), finds that the majority of beneficiaries were selected by the officials. Binoy N. Verma and Birendra P. Singh, in their book *IRDP: The Vision-Reality Gap*² (1991), have reported numerous irregularities in respect of the identification of beneficiaries. Vinod Kumar Lawania, in his book *Rural Development in India*³ (1992), finds that about 18 per cent of beneficiaries were not correctly identified.

Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India-conducted *Concurrent Evaluation of IRDP*⁴ (1998) reported that 60 per cent of the beneficiaries were selected in the meetings of Gram Sabhas, 37 per cent by officials, and the remaining by others. The study further reported that the number of ineligible families which got assistance under the programme was as high as 9 per cent.

Extent of Benefit Derived

Ch. Balaramulu, in his report titled *Evaluation of IRDP in*

Nalgonda District of Andhra Pradesh – Case Study of Public Policy⁵ (1998), informs that IRDP had not brought much improvement in the income levels of the target group; further that the programme did not enable the poor to cross the poverty-line.

Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India conducted *Concurrent Evaluation of IRDP*⁶ (1986) reported that 52 per cent of the beneficiaries had crossed the poverty line of Rs. 3,500. Programme Evaluation Organisation (of Planning Commission)⁷ reported (in 1985) that about 88 per cent of selected households under IRDP had increased their incomes.

The Programme Bureaucracy and IRDP

S.R. Maheshwari, in his book *Rural Development in India*⁸ (1985), opines that politicisation of the rural bureaucracy is one of the serious problems affecting rural development administration in India. S.K. Sharma and S.L. Malhotra, in their book *Integrated Rural Development : Approach, Strategy and Perspectives*⁹ (1977), have highlighted the significance of the commitment of the programme bureaucracy for the success of IRDP. Israr-ul-Haq, in his article titled *Training in IRDP*¹⁰ (1996), has given emphasis on special training for the programme bureaucracy, which, the author maintains, is an essential pre-requisite for the success of IRDP. P.R. Dubhashi, in his book *Rural Development Administration in India*¹¹ (1970), has underscored the importance of the follow-up of training for programme bureaucracy. The author emphasises that it is important to ascertain whether the trainee makes use of the training imparted to him in the day-to-day discharge of the work entrusted to him.

Block Level Planning and IRDP

Surendra Singh, in his book *Rural Development and Planning*¹² (1988), has underlined the importance of the block level planning for the success of IRDP. Girish K. Mishra, Jatin De and J.S. Sodhi, in their book *Block Level Planning*¹³ (1987), likewise have highlighted the importance of the grassroots level planning for the success of IRDP. Jaideep Singh and R.K. Tiwari, in their article *Managing Poverty Alleviation : Some Suggestions for the Success of IRDP*¹⁴ (1988), have given emphasis on the need

for a comprehensive approach to block plan for the success of IRDP.

Process of Implementation of IRDP

Sukhdev Singh, in his book *IRDP and District Development : Role and Implementation of DRDA Scheme*¹⁵ (1994), has discussed the role of DRDA as the main implementing agency of IRDP. P.R. Dubhashi, in his book *Essays on Rural Development*¹⁶ (1996), has given importance to people-centred and participatory management for the successful implementation of IRDP. M.L. Mehta, in his article *Perspective in Integrated Rural Development*¹⁷ (1985), has said that there is a need for proper documentation of the families assisted under IRDP. The author also emphasises the need for proper monitoring of the beneficiaries' assets.

The foregoing review of literature performs a two-fold function vis-a-vis the present research. First, it underscores the relevance of the objectives which this research seeks to achieve. The administrative set-up and the implementation process, on which this research consciously focuses, emerge as the key issues in the IRDP domain in terms of the literature reviewed here. If performance in these sectors improves, the prospects of the achievement of the ultimate programme objectives (e.g. skill building) will be further fostered. To this extent, the brief review of literature carried out in the preceding paragraphs performs a validation role, i.e. it validates the choice of objectives this researcher has chosen to adopt for the present research effort.

The "review" in fact validates, also, the research questions which we have sought to raise and which need to be squarely addressed. For instance, the question of the technical skill and the level of motivation of the grassroots bureaucracy, or that of the quality of beneficiary participation and the role of the voluntary organisations in that domain.

These dimensions have remained inadequately explored in the existing studies on IRDP. But they constitute critical inputs in the implementation of the IRDP. In specifically addressing these areas, the present research will contribute to the bridging up of an important gap in knowledge on the subject.

(VII) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is a micro level research on the administration of Integrated Rural Development Programme. The locale of the research was the Aizawl District of Mizoram, in the extreme north-eastern corner of the country, which, since February, 1987, has been elevated to the status of a state of the Indian Union. The study has drawn its materials both from primary as well as secondary sources. In the ensuing paragraphs we elaborate on the sources of our information.

Secondary Sources

- (1) As to the secondary sources, the researcher comprehensively surveyed the existing literature on rural development, in general, and IRDP, in particular. This exercise brought the researcher ready access to valuable academic commentaries on the subject in the form of books, journal articles, and special issues of periodicals devoted to the subject of rural development and IRDP. The present work draws heavily on these sources for materials on conceptual and theoretical dimensions of rural development.
- (2) Apart from the secondary sources identified above (books, articles, special issues of journals and reports and other publications of the Governments of India and the Government of Mizoram), the researcher has drawn secondary data from: (1) the minute of the State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC), (2) DRDA records, and (3) records available in the offices of the concerned B.D.Os.
- (3) The researcher has also utilised relevant materials from research studies undertaken by independent institutions and those by the CES (Concurrent Evaluation Studies), devoted to impact evaluation of IRDP, to examine the extent of empirical support, in these sources, for conclusions pressed by her own investigations.

Primary Sources

- (1) Observation, survey method, case histories and informal interviews form the main tools of the collections of primary data for the present study.

- (2) Of the twelve rural development blocks in Aizawl District, the researcher selected three for the purpose of the beneficiary survey. From out of the three rural development blocks, one village each was selected. Villages: (1) *Sihphir South*, (2) *Seling* and (3) *Sateek* were selected from Tlangnuam, Thingsulthliah and Aibawk blocks respectively.
- (3) A convenience - sampling method was used for selection of the blocks and villages. Convenience sampling method was used in view of the constraints of topography of the state. Mizoram has a hilly terrain; villages are sparsely populated. Rural settlements are, moreover, scattered, and distantly located from each other. Besides, these settlements have serious accessibility constraints; those in the interior are particularly inaccessible during particular parts of the year. A convenience sample appeared to be a more practical way of overcoming the difficulties connected with collection of primary data from the field ; since the researcher's own familiarity with Mizo language was highly insufficient, an interpreter had to be employed. This suggested the desirability of concentrating visits to the field over short stretches of time.
For all these reasons, the researcher took recourse to a convenience sample. Care was however taken, to the extent possible to see that the blocks/ villages included in the sample were representative of the situation in the state.
- (4) The same method was used, also, for the purpose of beneficiary survey. 45 beneficiary households were surveyed from the three sample villages, i.e., 15 households from each village.
- (5) A previously prepared schedule was used to elicit information from the respondents i.e., the beneficiaries.
- (6) The data obtained from schedules was supplemented through four case histories. A stratified sampling design was used for the purpose of selecting individuals for the case-history exercise.
- (7) Obtaining views of the members of the SLCC, DRDA, BDOs and other administrative and technical functionaries involved in the implementation of the IRDP

was an important dimension of the present research. For this, the researcher used a check list of questions which was previously prepared. In all, 15 functionaries were selected.

(VIII) SETTING OF THE STUDY

In this section we have made an attempt to present a brief profile of the State of Mizoram, of the Aizawl District, and of the sample blocks and villages.

Profile of the State

At the advent of independence, Mizoram was a district of Assam. It attained the status of a union territory on 21st January 1972. Consequent upon the passing of the Constitution (53rd) Amendment Bill and the State of Mizoram Bill (1986), on 7th August 1986, statehood was granted to Mizoram on 20th February 1987.

Sandwiched between Myanmar in the east and south and Bangladesh in the west, Mizoram occupies a place of great strategic importance in the north-eastern corner of the country. Mizoram has a geographical area of 21,087 sq. kms. The length of the State from north to south is about 277 kms and the width from east to west is about 121 kms. Mizoram has 404 kms international border with Myanmar (Burma) and 306 kms with Bangladesh. Mizoram has 123 kms interstate border with Assam, 66 kms with Tripura and 95 kms with Manipur. Mizoram has a population of 6,89,756 [as in 1995] (vide the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Mizoram). The State is inhabited by ten main tribes, including the Lusei, the Ralte, the Hmar, the Paite, the Pawith, the Lakher, the Chakma, the Riang and others. Agriculture is the main occupation of Mizos.

For administrative purpose, Mizoram is divided into three districts* ; Aizawl, Lunglei and Chhimtui. The State has nine sub-divisions and twenty rural development blocks.

Profile of Aizawl District

Aizawl district is the largest among the three districts of the

*There has since been an administrative reorganisation of the state, as a result of which the number of administrative districts in Mizoram has risen to eight.

State with an area of 12,581 square kilometers. Total population of the district is 4,78,456. Aizawl district has four sub-divisions, namely, Aizawl (sadar), Kolasib, Champhai and Mamit, twelve rural development blocks, and 376 villages.

Block Profile

As has been stated previously, the three villages selected for the present study fell respectively under Tlangnuam, Thingsulthliah and Aibawk blocks of Aizawl district. A brief profile of each block is given below.

Tlangnuam Block – It is the one of the biggest rural development blocks of Aizawl district. The block covers the inside and neighbouring villages of Aizawl town. Total number of families in this block is 25,850; total population of the block is 1,46,692; and total number of families living below the poverty line is 5,015. The block office is located at Chandmary, in Aizawl town. Village *Sihphir South* was selected from this block for the present study.

Thingsulthliah Block – Under this block, total number of families is 4,568; total population of the block is 26,106 ; and total number of families living below the poverty line is 1,629. This block is situated at a distance of 43 kms from Aizawl town. The block office is located at Thingsulthliah. Village *Seling* was selected from this block for present study.

Aibawk Block – Under this block total number of families is 2,426; total population of the block is 14,631; and families living below the poverty-line is 1,575. This block is situated 49 kms away from Aizawl town. Village *Sateek* was selected from this block for the present study.

As has been previously stated, for the present study, the researcher took the help of an interpreter in view of her lack of familiarity with Mizo language. In addition to a beneficiary households survey, informal discussions with the members of the village councils, block development officers, and church elders were held to capture various nuances of the reality on the ground in fuller terms.

Village Profile

A brief profile of each village is given below.

Sihphir South

Sihphir South falls under Tlangnuam block. It was carved out of Sihphir in 1984, when a separate village council was constituted for it. The village situated on national highway No. 54, is located at a distance of 15 kilometers from Aizawl town. The village has 350 households and a population of 2,000. Main occupation of the villagers is agriculture. In this village, squash and seasonal vegetables are cultivated. There is no branch of Mizoram Rural Bank in the village; it is located at Sihphir, at a distance of three kilometers from the village. Voluntary organisations like Young Mizo Association (YMA), and Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) have their branches in the village. There are two cooperative societies in Sihphir, which also cover Sihphir South.

Seling

Seling falls under Thingsulthliah block. As per the village council President's information, the village came into existence in 1974. The village, situated on National Highway No. 54, is located at a distance of 46 kilometers from Aizawl town. The village has 330 households and a population of 1,782. Main occupation of the villagers is agriculture. In this village, banana plantations and seasonal vegetables are cultivated. There is a branch of Mizoram Rural Bank in the village. Voluntary organisations like Young Mizo Association (YMA), and Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) have their branches in the village. There is one cooperative society, which is five kilometers away from the village.

Sateek

Sateek falls under Aibawk block. The village, is located at a distance of 54 kilometers from Aizawl town. The village has 152 households and a population of 817. Main occupation of the villagers is agriculture. In this village, orange and seasonal vegetables are cultivated. There is no branch of Mizoram Rural Bank in this village; the branch is located at Aibawk, at a distance of seven kilometers from the village. Voluntary organisations like Young Mizo Association (YMA) and Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) have their branches in the village. Sateek is relatively more

underdeveloped as compared to the other two villages in terms of the available infrastructural facilities (markets, approach roads, etc.). Road connecting Sateek with Aizawl is poorly maintained. There is no cooperative society in this village.

General Features of the Sample Villages

The three villages share certain common characteristics. These include dependence on agriculture; poor economic status of the households; practice of using fire wood as the kitchen fuel; recourse to jhum to supplement family income; keeping cattle, poultry and pigs; and migration from neighbouring villages. The villages also display common constraints, like scarcity of water, irregular power supply, lack of irrigation facilities.

(IX) LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Some general limitations of the study may be noted here.

- (1) IRDP in Mizoram has remained an unresearched area, an untrodden territory. There do not exist any independent accounts of investigations on the subject. The experience of IRDP in Mizoram has, therefore, remained largely undocumented. The result has been the non-availability of studies on which one may rely for the corroboration of one's own findings.
- (2) The field work was mainly carried out in the three villages of the Aizawl District. Besides, the number of respondents was small (45 beneficiaries), although statistically significant. In view of this, the present investigation may be more appropriately regarded as a case study which may not claim to generate conclusions of a general applicability.
- (3) More specifically, the inferences drawn from the present study may not be applicable to the other states of the country, as Mizoram has vast socio-cultural and economic differences in relation to them. Besides, the State has a unique geographical personality and climatic profile. This makes comparisons further difficult.

(X) ORGANISATION OF MATERIALS

The research materials have been organised in the following manner.

Chapter Two deals with the concept of rural development and explores the country's pre and post-independence rural development strategies.

Chapter Three surveys the existing rural development programmes in Mizoram. The survey covers both the state-initiated as well as centrally sponsored programmes.

Chapter Four outlines the administrative and procedural dimensions of IRDP. It also presents a detailed account of the actual working of IRDP's administrative set-up in Mizoram.

Chapter Five examines the IRDP implementation process in Mizoram.

Chapter Six investigates the dimensions of beneficiary participation and beneficiary-administration interface.

Chapter Seven examines the problem of organising beneficiaries and the role of voluntary organisations in that regard.

Chapter Eight presents the perceptions of the grassroots bureaucracy regarding the obstacles which arise in the implementation process.

Chapter Nine States the findings of the study. It also makes suggestions for securing improvements in the working of IRDP.

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