



Rethinking Governance for Development in Mizoram

Lalhruaitluangi Sailo*

Abstract

Development is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, it covers all aspects literally under the sun. What one may term as development may not be agreed by the other contract as development. Thus, the notion of development is highly debatable. However, in terms of socio-economic development, the main focus is particularly for the welfare and well-being of the people. Hence, here development goes side by side with the idea of good governance. The main endeavour of this paper is to highlight the status of governance performance and its dynamic relationship with development in Mizoram so far. To illustrate the study, the paper seeks to identify the problems and hindrances which often result in poor governance performance and weak development perhaps. The performance is quite unsatisfactory in comparison with that of other states in India despite being celebrating a full-fledged state of more than 30 years. And, the paper throws attention by challenging the governance system in Mizoram. Emphasis of the study is to focus and re-think the notion of governance in a new perspective. Within the broad perspective, the concept of the study seek to examine the implications of governance for development which might further enhance governance system and ultimately brings out better development outcome.

Keywords: *Development, Governance, Socio-economic Dimension, Church role, Mizoram.*

Introduction

Amartya Sen in his “Development as Freedom” argued that development require the removal of major sources of unfreedom. In this respect, he relates unfreedom to as poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overacting of repressive state.ⁱ He further emphasized freedom is both the primary end and principal means of development. Sharing Sen’s perspective, it is true that development is the ends of all things. All mankind primary purpose of life is to attain development in various aspects of life. So in order to attain that development, be it income, family, relationship, status, social, economic, political field freedom holds the key to accomplish development. Thereby, mankind requires freedom in all forms of life to attain development. For instance, freedom is the factor which enables human beings to realize their potential, build self-confidence and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment. It literally means a process which allows people from fear of want and exploitation.ⁱⁱ Hence, development shapes the well-being of people and freedom is the

* Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, Aizawl.

process which ultimately enables human beings to realize their potential and building the opportunity for more varied and better life. So here comes a big question mark as to why developments has not yet reach to certain sects of people in the society or why there exist inequality. The underlying phenomenon in this regard may be held accountable to the governments. Since, the government is somehow responsible for the execution of governance and development policies to large extent. In short, government is prior to development of the country or a region. Therefore, the government is regarded as the major determiner of good governance and development. Meanwhile on the other hand, civil societies too played an important role in determining good governance. However, the essence of the article only emphasized on the part where the government is held responsible.

Some argued that development is much more than mere increase in the income and earning capacities of the people. It does not necessarily relate to an economic phenomenon, rather a multi-dimensional term concerning various aspects such as education, human development, access to resources, improvement in transport and communication, gender sensation as well as in the disciplines of biology and other natural resources and philosophy is included. It involves the entire economic, political and social systems. Take for an example like those who do not have economic assets are viewed as inferior from materialistic point of view. On the contrary, based on alternative value system, spiritual or cultural assets hold much higher value as having significant wealth. Hence, it is in this regard that Post Modernists such as Hickey and Mohan defined development as a discourse (a set of ideas) that actually shapes and frames reality and power relations.ⁱⁱⁱ According to this approach (post-modernist) culturally perceived poverty may not be real material poverty. For instance, people depending on subsistence economies which serve basic needs may not identify themselves as poor. Based on this argument it can be understood that the idea of development lies on one's perception and not only on objective sense. A farmer who lived in a hut may be able to feed his family everyday meals and provide them with basic needs without interfering others. Some may refer him as a poor man while according to the post-modernist view it is not based on the objective view that matters but putting aside the objective view and seeing form other perspectives which play a greater values in his life. Hence, the approaches and discipline can mean variously according to ones priority. However, at the end, the main objective of development is to reach its highest potential.

Thus, development is and will be a growing phenomenon and a dimensional process. It is interesting to note that the concept of development takes place in various forms and in various shapes and trends. Hence, it is in this regard that the Brandt Commission report stated that development never will be, and never can be defined to universal satisfaction. After all for any type of development to take place, it requires continuous and systematic measures. Development cannot take place immediately, like within a span of over-night, it may take weeks, months or years depending on the specific targets. It involves a gradual and evolutionary process.

Governance and Development

Throwing shed from the previous argument, there arise a notion as to why development takes a heavy toll, specifically in terms of country's or region development. Various policies have been implemented and initiated for various development purposes but somehow these policies failed to achieved a desirable outcome and hence ineffective. Thus, here comes a part where governance play an important role to the concerning issues. No significant development can take place if there is no efficient and effective governance. Governance ensures the well-being, growth and freedom for the people as well as the natural

environment. Overall, of a country or a region depends entirely on effective governance. If government takes proper initiatives to both social and economic sector, the development of a country will be ensured.^{iv} Hence, governance and development are interdependent, they have an inner relationship. In today's world governance has occupied the main attention in the global affairs down to the local communities. It has increasingly become one of the major instruments for the successful growth performance and development in the world. Governance assumes the criteria which enable for development. Elements of good governance are characterized as; Participation, Accountability, Inclusiveness, Efficiency, Transparency, Rule of Law.

Governance and Development in Mizoram: Background

Mizoram was formerly District of the undivided Assam. By an Act of Parliament called the Lushai Hills District 1954, the name of the Lushai Hills District was changed to Mizo District from 29th April, 1954.^v Subsequently, the district became a Union Territory consequent upon the North-Eastern Areas Re-organisation Act of 1971. On 7th August 1986, Mizoram is conferred a Statehood consequent upon the passing of the Constitution Amendment Bill and the State of Mizoram Bill (1986). Mizoram become the 23rd State of the Indian Union in February 1987.

Mizoram is often described as underdeveloped or backward state. Mizoram economy is generally marked by low per capita income, low capital formulation, inadequate infrastructure facilities, geographical isolation, communication bottleneck, inadequate exploitation of natural resources like mineral resources, hydro power potential, forests, lack of industrial base and investment opportunities. Though economy of the state is still lagging behind, one can observe the affluence of natural resources, the unexplored natural gas, power potentials, rich bamboo plantation, which can be utilized for the socio-economic development. The state has celebrated more than 30 years of statehood, yet it has hardly succeeded in generating sufficient supply of power and electricity. Every government implemented new schemes, nevertheless the success rate seems to be inadequate.

Socio-economic problems of the people are increasing and unemployment is rising every year. The credibility of the public institutions is declining, whereas the needs and aspirations of the people have been largely increased. Meanwhile, there is a large gap of disparities between the rich and the poor and wide range of regional imbalances between rural and urban areas is discernible. Besides, the benefits of economic growth have not yet reached large number of poor and rural populations. The political power has been largely exercised by the rich, industrial and commercial classes only for their benefits. Thus, social equity and justice does not seem to prevail in the system. Moreover, corruption is deep rooted in the exercise of power in the society. There is hardly transparency in the system. Therefore, some efforts need to be focused on the political and administrative functioning of the state. To uphold the democratic values of the system, efficient, effective and accountable governance are the pre-requisites for sustainable development in the state.

Mizoram has experienced different stages of governing transition since Pre Colonial, Colonial, Post-Colonial/Post Independence and Statehood Era. Each transition has brought a significant remark in the history of Mizoram. Mizoram has been for ages living in relative isolation in their own culture. Meanwhile, the upheaval of insurgency and famine consequences has shattered the region. The state has experienced dark stages in all sorts of life. It is often described as underdeveloped or backward state. Since attaining the status of statehood, restructuring and rebuilding of the state has been undertaken by various

governments in the state. The state government(s) has been initiating policy formulation and implementation, as regards with various aspects and issues in administration. However, till today it is widely felt that the pace of policy formulation and administration along with its implementation has yet present a depressing picture.

In reality there is a large gap of disparities between the rich and the poor and wide range of regional imbalances between the rural and urban areas. The governance system in Mizoram is overwhelmingly poor due to unhealthy practices of politics which further lead to the institutional deterioration and declining of moral values among the people in general. Despite being a full- fledged state of more than 30 years, the state is still in a far cry situation of self- sufficiency in all its basic necessities. The situation has become so alarming now that there is a serious need to remodel the concept and institutions of governance in the state in order to experience the nature of development.

Challenges and Implications

By recapitulating the question of “what makes policies work to produce life-improving development outcome” to achieve the main development purpose is the main argument in this regard. Over the past decades various policies have been implemented over and over again so far by the state government(s), however, development seems to be still depressing. Ultimately, confronting the challenges faced by the state, poor service delivery, slow growth, corruption, poor transportation, insufficient power supply and resources restrains calls for improving governance to meet today’s development challenges. The policies which were supposed to serve the welfare of the people are totally neglected in the process of implementation. Hence, the developers and politicians need to focus a great deal of attention on learning what policies and interventions are needed to generate better outcome. Besides, freedom of opportunity and equality in terms of jobs and access to certain facilities must be prioritized. High level of unemployment, inequality in job recruitment hampers the growth of development which shows poor governance system.

Mizoram being one of the smallest and peaceful states in India which is also the third (3rd) highest literacy rate in the country has high potential in creating good governance so as to meet future development. It has equipped itself with the capabilities and resources to experience growth on its own. With a population of hardly two lakhs, there is possibility in re-establishing and furnishing the entire system if utilize properly. However, the situation is now at stake where corruption took a heavy toll plus there is a wide gap between rural and urban disparities. In this affair, it is high time for the state to wake up and start compete with other states by examining its potential and identifying its resources in which the state is rich or abundance in specific goods. In this way imports will decrease while export will eventually improve which will gradually results in sustainable and self-sufficiency to great extent.

As mentioned earlier, the state is comprised of small population unlike other states and the geographical area is not vast too. For this matter, on the contrary, this creates an advantage for the state to manage easy and efficient governance in the process for development and not in a difficult manner. However, by understanding the underlying problems within the state, certain steps must be undertaken in a very precise and sincere way. If such measures are carefully taken in the process of governance, development will not be far from reach. Despite many failed attempts in executing and implementing policies, the state is still in a position to rebuild and re-shape the entire system. For this, rules and laws must be lay down wisely and carefully. At the same time, government alone should not take

up the process alone, rather various actors of formal and informal institutions and citizens must involve and participate in the entire process. This will further result in ensuring development in the near future.

Policies previously being introduced in the state might have had success stories for certain period. Nevertheless, policies which have touched and shake the entire social and economic growth have not been seen so far. In this regard, out of one's concern and perspective regarding on governance for development, throwing light in this purpose, by implying and considering a new logic in the system, it is basically argued that Mizoram being a Christian state, where the Church hold high respect in the society and also where people have put great faith in the rules and norms being preached by the Christian religion have played an important role in the society. Therefore, when governance in Mizoram show to have been in a state of poor performance and weak development, there arises a question as to why such policies failed. No doubt, the answer to that may simply be due to weak government and institutions and at the same time lack of cooperation and participation by the people. Out of the wed lock maybe it is time to change and take a new turn from another perspective. By rethinking governance from out of the box, a paradigm shift of governance to the Church institutions must be quite relevant and influential in this matter. According to Rev. Dr. Lalchungnunga, he emphasized that supposedly, Legislature and Execution shall fall in the power and responsibilities of the State government including all the funds and finances under their control and Administration however, carried out by the Church institutions.^{vi} If the rules and norms are entrusted to the Church, things would somehow take a new turn, and the working environment will be uplifted in a more organized and in a commitment manner.

Based on this argument, in fact, even when Mizoram was under insurgency period, it was the civil society organization, particularly the church that strived and struggled to bring normalcy and peace in the state and they even played a great role in initiating peace talks and negotiations between the Indian Government and the MNF insurgents.^{vii} On 21st June, 2006 the Mizoram People's Forum (MPF) which is a church sponsored organization comprises of a conglomeration of most of the major church domination and NGO's in the state was constituted with the objectives to maintain free and fair elections and to further enhance long lasting socio-political reform in ensuring good governance. The MPF played an active role particularly during the election time, activities after the announcement of elections, on polling day and in the post-poll period. Moreover, the MPF worked continuously even after the elections over to bring electoral reforms and good governance in the state.^{viii}

The state's society and culture is heavily inspired and attached to the church institutions and morale. The Christian laws and rules bonded the people to act according to the Christian teachings. At the same time for example, if one look closely into certain institutions owned by the Church, like schools, hospitals, colleges, old aged, social services and so on, corruption is likely to occur unlike government institutions. Moreover, the administration is effective and efficient and transparency is indeed the key factor where all the donations and offerings collected are being displayed and published in a form of Minute book by the Church. Moreover, the institutions being looked after by the Church performed decency working spirit with missionary zeal. In every formal and informal gathering people participation is put at the utmost priority. This system is somehow to be one of the best examples as a fundamental of good governance in today's affair. Hence, the Church (religion) plays an important role in shaping and regulating the functioning of the administrative system to a great extent.

However, this is just a matter of hypothetical input and logical explanation so as to create a new perspective and different outlook in this regard. Regardless, religion and politics go side by side in India irrespective of all the states. Hence, in the context of Mizoram, religion can also be incorporated in the political system too which will further enhance the governance structure and to development eventually. Therefore, a paradigm shift must be emphasized in the underlying phenomenon as an eye opener for the state.

Conclusion

Rightful implementation of different attributes of governance like accountability, impartiality, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law improve the quality of governance. It is the responsibility of the government to analyze its work thoroughly and to improve it whenever necessary for further action. Governance is not only about 'where to go' but also about 'who should be involved in deciding and in what capacity' must be consider. For worth its worth, the paper sheds light in a rhetorical statement in the matter of governance in the context for Mizoram. Ironically, the democratic principles like equality, justice, freedom, rights and so on are basically good in theory and in paper. However, in the practical sense, the democratic principles are somewhat difficult to uphold in certain situation by the government alone. Hence, the argument regarding an efficient and effective participation from other institutions particularly "the Church' in the context of Mizoram, would eventually enhance democratic values to a great extent for the existence of good governance and development to the state.

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