



Mizoram Planning Board: Composition, Functions and Challenges

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Abstract

The first Administrative Reforms Commission appointed by the Government of India reported that the state level planning is limited mainly by the absence of adequate planning machinery in the states. Therefore, it has recommended three levels of planning organisations in the State Government such as state level planning department, the State Level Planning Board or Commission, and organisation for regional and district planning. The Planning Department in the States is normally function as the coordinating department for all the plan related work. It takes the executive functions and takes responsibilities for day to day affairs of the state government. Mostly, the duties of State Planning Boards lie in the areas of assessment of the level of development and available resources, formulation of broad objectives of annual plans, identification of factors retarding economic development and indicating measures to remove them. However, in actual practice it has very little power to be an effective machinery to improve the state level planning for development. Therefore, it is essential to understand the underlying circumstances and conditions that hindrances the performance of planning machinery in the states.

Keywords: *Planning, Administration, Development, Regional, Organisations, Machinery, Executives.*

Introduction

In a federation, close coordination between the central and state governments in the sphere of development policy and administration is essential for balanced and rapid socio-economic development. In 1972, the Planning Commission has recommended to the states that their Planning Departments should be made more competent by setting up of six units namely; Perspective Planning Unit, Monitoring, Plan Formulation and Evaluation Unit, Project Appraisal Unit, Regional District Planning Unit, Plan Coordination Unit, Manpower and Employment Unit. The Indian Constitution itself has specified the distribution of subjects

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between the centre and the states. It makes the states responsible for agriculture and allied sectors, irrigation, flood control, village, district and state roads, road transport and tourism, village and small industries, education and public health, social welfare, etc. In respect of power, large and medium industries, etc., the states have predominant responsibilities; though the Central Government has also plays an important part in respect of these. The Centre's responsibility lies in the following areas: industries, railways, national highways, major ports, shipping, civil aviation and communication as well as overall fiscal and monetary policies and the principal financial institutions. In the sectors in which it does not plan directly, the Central Government has still the responsibility for incorporating the separate plans of states to national plans. Therefore, it provides the premises and broad framework of plan policies for individual states (Somasekhara, 1984, p.33).

The First Administrative Reforms Commission was appointed in 1965 by the Government of India to reorganize and reassess the entire administrative structure of the country. In this process, it has appointed a Study Team for to examine the machinery and process of planning. The team has submitted its reports in 1967. The conclusion drawn by this Study Team is that, the state level planning is limited chiefly by the absence of adequate planning machinery at the state and lower levels. A major setback of state level planning is that 'States' own budgets or surpluses for the plan are determined by the recommendations of the Finance Commission which is appointed immediately before the start of the new plan to suggest the manner in which Central resources should devolve between states to take care of their committed liabilities on account of the non-plan and plan activities going on at the time. However, with the abolished of Planning Commission on 1st January 2015, the relevance of plan and non-plan expenditure is lost instead the Central Government introduces capital and revenue expenditure from 2017 onwards.

State Level Organisation for Planning

The Governor who is appointed by the President of India is the executive head of the Government at the State level. Under the Governor, the executive powers are exercise by the council of ministers through the civil servants. The interrelationship between the council of ministers, the ministers, the head of the departments and the legislative wing are analogous to those at the national level. There is however a constitutional provision for the takeover of the government of the States by the President under certain exigencies, during which period the assembly and the council of ministers are suspended or dissolved.

One of the fundamental administrative machinery of the State government is the state secretariat. It is the staff agency which is headed by a secretary generally belongs to the Indian Administrative Service, except in the case of certain technical department like that of judiciary. There is a Chief Secretary who exercises general control over all the department of the secretariat. The Chief Secretary is the chief of the civil services as well as the chief administrative head of the state. It is also functioning as the cabinet secretary. The main functions of the State secretariat are related to assists the Minister in policy making and on discharging their legislative responsibility, coordination of policies and programmes, supervision and control over their execution, review of result, budgeting and control of

expenditure, correspondence and contact with the Government of India and other states Governments and efficient running of the administration. There is a separate directorate for every important department of the state. Each directorate has a Head of Department mostly technical person and it has a number of assistants. Each of these hierarchical chains of organisation has played very important role in the State level planning in their own sphere of authority (Karthikeyan, Balasubramani & Vijayalaxmi, 2005, p. 188-189).

In India, as per the recommendation given by the Administrative Reforms Commission, the state level planning machinery can be broadly divided into three groups such as the state level planning department, the State Level Planning Board or Commission, and organisation for regional and district planning. However, the present study deals briefly on Planning Departments and the main focus of this paper was given to the Planning Boards.

The plan of each state in India is drawn up within the framework of the goals, investment magnitudes and physical achievement targets of the national plan. But it has also reflected the development potential of the state and needs and aspirations of its people. Until the latter half of the 1960s, the concept of national Planning reigned supreme in India. Although the Constitution envisages equal and joint responsibilities of the Centre and States for “economic and social planning”, the part played by the Centre in the Planning Process has been more prominent during the first four Five-Year Plans. In view of the federal structure of the country, State Governments has an important role to play both in planning and implementation. In 1962, the Planning Commission suggested that the States to appoint Planning Boards. Following this recommendation of the Planning Commission, most of the States constituted some type of Planning Board or a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Planning or a State Advisory Board or a State Development Board. Generally, the composition of the Planning Board was similar in every State. It was made up of a Chairman, a Vice or Deputy Chairman, a Member Secretary and members. Without exception, in all the States the Chief Minister was the Chairman of the Planning Board. If a State being under President’s Rule, the Governor acted as Chairman of the Planning Board. Thus, political leadership was a common feature of the Planning Board. The Vice or Deputy Chairman was mostly a retired Indian Administrative Service (I.A.S.). In a few States, they were non-officials and the number of members varied widely from State to State. In most cases, the part time members generally out-number the full-time members.

In all the States, the respective Governments specified the functions of the Planning Boards. Mostly, the duties of State Planning Boards lay in the areas of assessment of the level of development and available resources, formulation of broad objectives of annual and five year plans, identification of factors retarding economic development and indicating measures to remove them, identification of regional imbalances, identification of plan priorities, perspective planning, project formulation district and area planning, monitoring and evaluation, and making suggestions for the improvement of planning procedures and the State’s economic development. In nearly every State, the Planning Boards were connected directly or indirectly with the formulation of plans and in some States, the Boards were responsible for considering alternative strategies of growth.

Sectoral Planning Agencies or Planning Department

Planning and Development Department was created by the Government of India in June 1944 under a separate member of the Viceroy's Executive Council for organizing and coordinating the Planning works in the country led to the creation of Planning & Development Department in the State.

With the growing multiplicity of Governmental functions and increasing size of the developmental plans, it is essential that resources were utilized in the most productive manner, whether in economic or social terms. A review of the economic development in the last two decades revealed grave growth distortions and sectoral as well as area imbalance. Planning has been the part-time activity of a Government Department. The absence of an adequately equipped Apex Planning Body in the State had led to the deterioration of developmental strategy into a mere aggregation of developmental thinking in which projects and programmes were prepared by concerned Departments, and the Planning Department had occupied itself with the pruning of their proposals to fit into the overall size of the State Plan. Most of the States in India had full-fledged Planning Department in the secretariat of their respective States Government. The Planning Department in the States is normally functioning as the coordinating department for all the plan related work (Somasekharan, 1984, p.182). In many States, before the establishment of regular Planning Department, the Finance Department normally discharges the responsibility of the Planning Department.

Therefore, throughout the country where Planning Department has been established, their functions are executive in character. Its numerous duties have included annual plan formulations and five-year plan formulations, reviews of the economy. It takes a responsibility for the day to day affairs of the state government related to planning, guidance of the Technical Departments in plan formulation, allocations of outlay investment expenditure, collection, consolidation and scrutiny of plan proposals, plan co-ordination. It also holds a discussions and meetings with the Cabinet and Legislature, maintenance of liaison with the Planning Commission, sanctioning of schemes, preparation of progress reports and evaluation, and monitoring of plan programmes.

Mizoram State Planning Organisation

The Planning Organisation in Mizoram encompasses the following entities: Planning & Programme Implementation Department, State Planning Board, and District Planning Machinery.

Planning and Programme Implementation Department

The Planning & Programme Implementation Department is the nodal Department for all development activities in the state, function as a liaison body between Planning Commission and the State Government. Planning & Programme Implementation (P&PI) Department consist of two branches under the overall administrative control of Secretary or Commissioner Planning and assisted by Additional Secretary cum Principal Adviser. The two branches were Establishment & Accounts Branch and Research & Developmental Planning

Branch. The main functions of the Planning Department can be divided based on the two branches such as:

a) Establishment & Accounts Branch: This branch deals with all Administrative, establishment, accounts and service matters relating to Research & Developmental Planning Branch, Directorate of Economics & Statistics Directorate of Science & Technology, State Planning Board and District Planning Machinery. It also acts as nodal department for MP/MLA Local Area Development Fund etc.

b) Research & Developmental Planning Branch: It deals with all matters relating to formulation & approval of Annual Plan, schemes, programmes and its implementations. It also act as Nodal Department for Ministry of DoNER and North Eastern Council and Collection, analysis and submission of monthly expenditure, QPR on Plan Schemes, Monitoring, Evaluation and site visit of projects under State Plan, Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources and North Eastern Council, the allocation and reallocation of Plan Fund under Annual Plan to different sectors.

The Administrative Branch in the planning department is manned by Officers drawn from Mizoram Civil Service (MCS) or Mizoram Ministerial Service (MMS) cadre and other Secretarial staff, whereas the Research & Developmental Planning Branch is manned by Officers from the MPE&SS (Mizoram Planning, Economics & Statistical Service) and other ministerial supporting staff of the Mizoram state Government.

State Planning Board

Historically, the Mizoram State Planning Board has been constituted after Mizoram attained Union Territory status by Lieutenant Governor of Mizoram during the Fifth Five Year Plans period (1974-1979). On May, 1978, the Second Mizoram U. T. election has been held and the Government was form under the Chief Minister Brig. Thenphunga Sailo. Immediately the State Planning Board was also reconstituted by Lieutenant Governor of Mizoram and the Chief Minister was appointed as the Planning Board Chairman (Bureau of Economic and Statistic Mizoram, 1981). The Planning Board functions were purely advisory in nature and they held a number of meetings for the formulation and monitoring of economic planning and implementation in Mizoram. The Lieutenant Governor of Mizoram has reconstituted the Mizoram State Planning Board on 30th July, 1984. The then Chief Minister, Lal Thanhawla was appointed as the Chairman. On 14th May, 1987, under the Chairmanship of Laldenga, the State Planning Board has been reconstituted by the Governor of Mizoram. This is the first Planning Board which was constituted after Mizoram became the 23rd State of the Republic of India. From then onwards, the Planning Board was reconstituted several times mostly after Legislative Assembly Election. Presently, the Mizoram State Planning Board was reconstituted by the Mizoram Governor on 8th August, 2019 and the member of the Board were 1) Chairman: Zoramthanga (Chief Minister), 2) Vice Chairman: H. Rammawia, 3) Members: Chief Secretary Government of Mizoram and Finance Secretary, 4) Member Secretary: Secretary, Planning and Implementation Department, 5) Non-official Members: Liansuama, N. Zokunga and Lalthansanga (DIPR Mizoram, 2019).

Main Functions and Powers of the Mizoram State Planning Board

The State Planning Board was essentially an advisory body. All the functions of the Board were carried out collectively by its member. There was no division of responsibility among them. In a broad perspective, the functions of the State Planning Boards were to assess the resources of the State to formulate broad objectives; formulate long-term, medium term and annual plans and evolve strategies for backward areas; formulate projects and evaluate them; review plan progress and suggest such changes in policies and programmes as might be necessary. But in actual practice, it functions mainly as an advisory body. The powers and functions of Mizoram State Planning Board were normally influence by the priority given by the Government in power. Therefore, it is continuously revise right from the inception. However, it can be described that the Mizoram State Planning Board was governed by the terms and conditions discharge the functions and exercise the powers as given below, namely:

- i) Assist and guide the Government or its agencies in the formulation of plan projects, including family- oriented projects, annual plans, District Plans and also perspective plan for longer period.
- ii) Examine, modify if necessary, and approve sectoral allocation and reallocation of plan funds in the State. The Chairman of the State Planning Board approval is essential for the allocation and reallocation of plan funds in the state.
- iii) Inspect, monitoring and evaluate execution of plan projects and utilization of plan funds, including Central and Centrally Sponsored Schemes, subjects to guidelines issued by the Central Government from time to time.
- iv) Ensure proper co-ordination among state government departments and agencies with respect to plan preparation and implementation.
- v) Examine and approved the Annual Plan incorporation item wise sectoral allocations within each Departments, and give administrative approval for the execution of plan schemes.
- vi) Engage with predetermined amount of fees, other terms and conditions and with prior approval of the Chief Minister (Chairman of the Planning Board), the services of experts or agencies for the study of economic development problems in Mizoram, and for the preparation of documents and plan projects for specified period of time and with definite programme of work.
- vii) To call for any documents from the Government Departments relating to Plan formulation and implementation except secret documents and matters relating to security of the State.
- viii) Make an assessment of the materials, capital and human resources of Mizoram State including technical personnel, and investigate the possibilities of augmenting such of these resources as are found to be deficient in relation to the State's requirement.
- ix) Formulate a Plan for the most effective and balanced utilization of State's resources.
- x) On a determination of priorities, define the stages in which the Plan should be carried out and propose the allocation of resources for the due completion of each stage.

- xi) Indicate the factors which are tending to retard economic development, and determine the conditions which, in view of the current social and political situation, should be established for the successful execution of Plan.
- xii) Determined the nature of the machinery which will be necessary for securing the successful implementation of each stage of the Plan in all its aspects.
- xiii) Apprise from time to time the progress achieved in the execution of each stage of the Plan and recommend the adjustment of policy and measures that such appraisal may show to be necessary.
- xiv) To take up any other functions as may be assigned to it by the government from time to time.
- xv) To explore the feasibility of PPP Projects and avenues for private investments in the State.
- xvi) Frame a suitable policy for manpower planning and further advice the Government for addressing the problems of educated youths.

In short, the main functions of the Mizoram State Planning Board can be describe as watching of the plan progress, reviewing and evaluating progress, implementing and monitoring plan projects and making suggestion for bringing about improvements in the planning machinery in order to facilitate an efficient formulation and implementation of plans.

Performance of Mizoram State Planning Board

When Mizoram had attained Union Territory status in 1972, immediately Mizoram State Planning Board has been created under the assistance of Secretariat Administration Department (SAD). But in 1986, the Planning and Implementation Department was moved out from Secretariat Administration Department and the State Planning Board was under the assistance of Planning Secretariat. From the fifth-five-year plan itself, the Mizoram State Planning Board has been involving in the planning of Mizoram. When Brig. T. Sailo became the Chief Minister of Mizoram U. T., a number of efforts have been made to improve the organizations of the Board and the Board has been actively involved in the plan formulation through by giving advice to the Planning Department. The Planning Board has organized meeting frequently for to advise the Government in the formulation of Five-Year Plans and Annual plans. Through a quarterly meeting organized by the State Planning Board, the monitoring towards the Head of the Department on their progress in plan implementation has been done. In 1987, Mizoram became the 23rd State of the Republic of India. Immediately, a new government was formed and Laldenga became the Chief Minister and the Chairman of Planning Board. Ultimately, the functions of State Planning Board were also increase and made more contributions in the formulations of planning. They accompany the State representatives at the time of the finalization of the plans with the Union Planning Commission. But, from 1990's the functions of Mizoram State Planning Board have been basically advisory in nature. Apart from the active involvement of evaluation of planning by the monitoring team from the members of Planning Board during 1995 to 1997, it has little to do with the actual formulation of annual plans and five-year plans and the evaluation of plan implementation. In the present scenario, the State Planning Board still played an active role in

the co-ordination among the various planning organizations in the State and it perform an advisory role for the draft annual plans and five-year plans which was done by the Planning and Implementation Department.

Mizoram State Planning Board is mainly an advisory body and the Planning and Programme Implementation Department functions as an executive body for actual plan formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and appraisals. The Member Secretary of Mizoram State Planning Board is mainly the Secretary for Planning and Programme Implementation Department. So, the Member Secretary is the main link between the two planning bodies. Presently, the Principal Advisor of the State Planning Board is also holding the post of Principal Secretary for Planning and Programme Implementation Department. The main functions of Principal Advisor are to guide and advice the Planning Department and the State Planning Board. He was also in charge of district and block level planning. Apart from these, the Mizoram State Planning Board does not have independent secretariat at their disposal. Instead, the Planning and Programme Implementation Department in the secretariat of the state Government provides necessary assistance. The Establishment and Accounts Branch in the Planning and Programme Implementation Department deals with all the administrative, establishment, accounts and service matters relating to the Mizoram State Planning Board.

Issues and Problems of State Planning Board

In general, as per the recommendation given by the Administrative Reform Commission, the State Planning Board was expected to have three broad divisions, namely, agriculture and allied subject, industry, power and transport, and social services with one member in charge of each division. But the Mizoram State Planning Board does not have a division and it is a small organ for planning whose main role is advisory in nature. They were not directly empowered to formulate plan; this has narrowed the role played by the Board in the actual formulation of plans. In the meantime, the level of expertise manning the secretariat assistance of Planning Board was low in the Planning Department; as a result, it could not carry out the duties and responsibilities assigned to it. There is also a negligent attitude of organizing meetings from the key functionaries of the Board. This has created a less intervention and contributions in the formulations of annual and five-year plans. One of the major problems of Mizoram State Planning Board is that, an inadequacy of staffing system. Most of the staff in the Board was working in a contract basis and only a few persons were drawn from Mizoram Secretariat Service (MSS), this has created lack of trained and skilled manpower to assists the key functionaries of the Board and the officials. The policy towards research and analytical studies relating to the duties and responsibilities assigned to the Planning Board was neglected. This has also created an inability to provide necessary advice in the formulations of planning, implementations and appraisals. The planning expertise at present available in the Planning Board is also inadequate and there is no well defining relationship among all the planning agencies this had created a duplication of worked. Since, a meeting was rarely organized the Planning Board was unable to avoid this duplication of work. Apart from all these, the Planning Board also did not have a proper maintenance of records of their activities and it is essential to have a greater interaction

between the Planning and Implementation Department and the Planning Board since the Establishment Branch in the planning department had maintained the accounts of Mizoram State Planning Board.

Concluding Observations

The State Planning Boards were set up as expert advisory bodies capable of dealing with technical aspects of planning. But, broadly speaking, the composition of the State Planning Boards was similar in every State in the sense that it was made up of a Chairman, a Vice or Deputy Chairman, a Member Secretary and members. Political leadership was a common feature of the State Planning Board since without exception, Chief Minister was the Chairman of the Board and the Vice Chairman was Planning Minister or the Finance Minister. Mizoram State Planning Board has also sometimes an excessive content of politicians in the member of the Planning Board. This has leads to the political influence in the planning rather than the real needs of the people. It is, therefore, necessary that they should be kept as strictly non-political bodies. Planning is also a continuous activity; and it implies continuous responsibility. Therefore, it is necessary that the members of the Planning Board should be full-time, non-official and experts in planning.

It is the fact that persons having formal training in planning are not included in the members of Mizoram State Planning Board. So, the need for appointing greater expertise in planning must be stress by the State Planning Board. In the meantime, the level of expertise manning the secretariat assistance of Planning Board was low in the Planning Department; as a result, Mizoram State Planning Board could not carry out the duties and responsibilities assigned to it. So, it is essential to have a person expert in planning should be appointed for the secretariat assistance for the Planning Board. A regular training programme with updated technology should be organized for the better performance of the Staff and Officials of the Planning Board and the effectiveness of training programme should be closely evaluate.

The system of assigning portfolio of the members should be introduced in the Mizoram State Planning Board. Thus, it will enable the Board advice as an expert character so that it will pursue more rational policies and make possible larger degree of participation of non-governmental individuals and agencies. It is also essential that both the directing and policy making staff should be an economist with having experience in the State planning.

The problem of lack of organized staffing pattern was keenly felt in the Mizoram State Planning Board. This has serious consequence on the efficiency of the Planning Board in the areas of keeping the records and assisting the officials in their executions of their responsibility. Mizoram State Planning Boards do not have proper records of their formulations and establishment. Their old file has been lost while shifting their office. This clearly highlights the lack of awareness and intensive care of the records of the Mizoram State Planning Board which was attributed to the lack of organized staffing pattern. A more organized staffing pattern should be created for to improve the maintenance of records and data base for planning.

Mizoram State Planning Board should be given powers to perform the nature of functions assigned to them. It should be given a power to direct and specifically involve in the plan formulation, monitoring and evaluation for the effectiveness of the Board. Apart from this, clear cut divisions of responsibility between different planning agencies should be made by the State Government. This will improve the management of planning and a better contribution of State Planning Board in the matters of plan formulations. The State Planning Board should also organize frequent meetings to discuss mutual problems in the planning and its implementations, to avoid the duplication of works and review the planning techniques and its progress.

The Board must also have full-fledged well-equipped secretariats to carry out their responsibilities. Presently, it is under the secretariat assistance of planning. So, greater interaction and more peaceful coordination between Planning and Implementation Department and Planning Board are essential for the effectiveness of State Planning Board. The Establishment and Accounts Branch in the planning department were greater in need of additional staff for maintaining the records and assisting the administration of the Mizoram State Planning Board. There is also in need of staff at the Adviser level for to assist the Planning Board in the areas of perspective planning, model building and input-output studies. A regular monitoring and evaluation divisions/team should be established by the State Planning Board for an effective and optimum utilization of the resources in the planning for development.

While discussing the Mizoram State Planning Board, its organizations, functions and structure, it has been found that as on today very little powers were given to the Board and it did not have a regular meeting to provide a timely checks and monitoring of the plan formulations in the State. But, despite the limited powers given by the State Government, the Mizoram State Planning Board has always been striving to efficiently taken up the task referred to them. The successful working of the Planning Boards depends upon the hard work and dedication of the Officials, Non-officials and the staff of the Board. The study reveals that there are many areas where an improvement needs to be affected. So far as the effective planning machinery was concern, the State has not implemented fully the idea of Administrative Reform Commission in the State Planning Board. A reform in this field would provide more rational policies and a larger degree of participation in the planning for development.

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