

Subject:

Political Science**LYCEUM INDIA**

Title:

**Public Policy Making at The Grassroots Level in Mizoram
With Special Focus on The Working of Village Councils**Journal of **Social Sciences**

Author(s):

Dr.Lallawmzuala Khiangte**Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, ICFAI University, Mizoram.**

Abstract:

In India the Constitution establishes three levels of government they are: the Central Government at the apex, the State governments at the middle and grassroots level governments at the village level. Public Policy making process in the country takes place at these three levels of governments. The Constitution Seventy Third Amendment Act 1993 gives constitutional status to Local Self-Government in India under the name Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), It also empowers the PRI to implement planning and development works at the grassroots level in India. However, PRI was not applied to the State of Mizoram as it was exempted for compulsory application. Therefore, in Mizoram the Village Councils System has been instituted as grassroots level government in the state. The Village Council system in Mizoram has been established by the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act 1953 amended from time to time. As Grassroots level government, the Village Council exercises certain kinds of public policy making powers. It also has the power to implement various development works entrusted by the State government from time to time. This paper aims to analyse public policy making process at the grassroots level in general and different works performed by Village Councils in Mizoram excluding Sixth Schedule area.

Keywords:

Public policy, Constitution, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Village Councils, Sixth Schedule.

Introduction

In India the Constitution establishes three levels of government they are: the Central Government at the apex, the State governments at the middle and grassroots level governments at the village level. Public Policy making process in the country takes place at these three levels of governments. The Constitution Seventy Third Amendment Act 1993 gives constitutional status to Local Self-Government in India under the name Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), It also empowers the PRI to implement planning and development works at the grassroots level in India. However, PRI was not applied to the State of Mizoram as it was exempted for compulsory applicationⁱ. Therefore, in Mizoram the Village Councils System has been instituted as grassroots level government in the state. The Village Council system in Mizoram has been established by the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act 1953 amended from time to time. As Grassroots level government, the Village Council exercises certain kinds of public policy making powers. It also has the power to implement various development works entrusted by the State government from time to timeⁱⁱ. In Mizoram all the government schemes and programmes concerning to village development has been carried on by the Village Council in every village. It is the duty of every Village Council to formulate development schemes to be implemented in their respective villages. It is also the responsibility of the Village Council to supervise development works received from the State Government through various agencies/departmentsⁱⁱⁱ.

Public Policy Making Process at The Grassroots Level in Mizoram:

As a public policy maker at the grassroots level democratic framework, Village Councils are also responsible for taking up development works on its own initiatives or on request by the government. Every Village Council are also entrusted the role of making village annual development plan under the name 'Gram

Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)' under the guidance of Block Development Officers(BDOs), Government of Mizoram^{iv}. It is a plan that outlines the development needs of a community and the steps to address to them. The GPDP includes development issues concerning the village, basic infrastructure like water supplies, electricity, roads, sanitation etc, social issues like education, health and public safety concerns, resources development and convergence of schemes to address the community needs^v.

Gram Panchayat Planning Facilitation Team (GPPFT), a team composed of all the prominent citizens, all office bearers of Civil Societies and educated persons in the village along with the Village Employment Council has made an Annual Action Plan for three (3) years and submitted to the BDO, who is the Programme Officer of the Scheme for approval. The GPPFT was created under the Gram Panchayat Development Programme (GPDP) initiated by Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of India for implementation of development works in every village of India^{vi}.

The Village Councils are an agent of local development plan for their respective jurisdiction. In these connections, every Village Council is endowed with the power to convene 'Gram Sabha (Village Assembly)'^{vii}. Gram Sabha is the highest decision-making body for making annual village economic development plan in every Village Council in Mizoram. It approves the annual plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development in their respective village concern before such plans and programs are taken up for implementation. It is also the responsibility of every Gram Sabha to identify and select a person as beneficiaries under the Government poverty alleviation programs like SEDP, NLUP, PMAY etc and other programs relating to socio-economic development of rural people in Mizoram^{viii}.

The Village Councils are also entrusted with the power to enforce 'Hnatlang (Common service for the common good of the villagers which the residents of the village are to render) for the common good and welfare of the people whenever occasion so demands^{ix}. In every village of Mizoram, the Village Councils also makes village laws (khawtlang dan) which includes prohibition of taking bath and washing in public water tank (Tuikhur), Prohibition of selling narcotic drugs and alcohol in the village, preservation of public assets like community halls, public play grounds, recreation centers etc, imposition of fines relating to certain petty crimes and disloyalty of animals letting out prohibition orders etc. The Village Councils normally enforces such village laws in co-operation with local NGOs like YMA, MUP and MHIP^x.

As a part of public policy implementation process, the Village Council also enforces all orders from the state government relating to general public as a whole like collection of land taxes, Zoram Chhiah, property taxes and animal taxes within their respective jurisdiction. It also administers relieve and rehabilitation to the people during disasters and other calamities like landslides, fire, floods etc^{xi}. The Village Councils also helps the government in public distribution system like checking of weight measurement uses in the fair price shops, checking of fairly distribution of ration (rice and k.oil), arrangement of domestic gas distribution system and selection of beneficiaries of National Food Security Mission (NFSM) among the villagers^{xii}. It also establishes different local level committees like village health and sanitation committee (VHSC), Village Level Disaster and Rehabilitation Committee, Village Education Committee etc. to implement various government programs in their respective villages. The VCs also assists the state government in all preventive measures on the outbreak of an epidemic or infectious diseases like AFS, COVID-19, MALARIA etc^{xiii}. The VCs in different villages of Mizoram has helped the Government for prevention and stoppage of Covid-19 pandemic during 2020 2021. They are the main agent of the State Government to implement and adoption of all guide lines for stopping spreading of Covid-19 and distribution of Covid Vaccine to the rural people.

Beside these, the Village Councils also administer justice in their respective jurisdiction as a part of making and implementation of public policy in the village. As per Rule 6 sub-rule (1) and (2) of The Lushai Hills District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953 every Village Council sits as Village Court in Mizoram. They also try suits and cases involving petty theft, pilfering, simple assault and hurt, affront and affray of whatever kind, drunken or disorderly brawling public nuisance, and simple cases of wrongful restraint. But it could try cases falling under the purview of tribal laws and customs and offences of petty nature. It can also impose fines not more than Rs 100/. But in Civil cases there is no fix limit of amount which the court can impose fines to wrong doers. As of now the VC Court can impose a fine up to Rs 500 or more depending on the nature of cases^{xiv}. But it cannot send any wrong doer to jail and it cannot give dealt penalty under any cases.

As per Section 8 and 8A of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act 1953 as amended in 2014, the Village Councils implemented various development works. The most common among them were; -Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantees Scheme, Jaal Jeevan mission, Swachh Bharat, Fifteen Finance Commission, Mizoram Finance Commission, MAY(G), BADP, SEDP etc.

Conclusion

In India public policy making process is exercised by the Central Government at the apex, the State Governments at the middle, and the Village Councils at the grassroots level. In this regard, Village Councils play an important role for the success of different government socio-development schemes of rural areas. Without their co-operation and help no policies and programs will be successful. The VCs are the main channel for the Government to implement different government programs and policies concerning rural development and poverty alleviations. As a grassroots level government the VCs play an indelible part in public policy making process in India in general and in Mizoram in particular.

1. Article 243(M) of the Constitution of India extracted from <https://www.indiagov.in> accessed on 24th January, 2025.
2. Section 8A (1) of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act 1953 as amended in 2014.
3. Ibid.
4. <https://www.lad.mizoram.gov.in>
5. Gram Panchayat Development Plan extracted from <https://www.gdpd.nic.in> accessed on 24th January, 2025.
6. <https://www.panchayat.gov.in>
7. Section 11A of Subsections (1) of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act 1953 as amended in 2014.
8. Section 11A of Subsections (i) and (ii) of the same act.
9. Section 8 (2) of the same act.
10. Field works conducted in selected villages of Champhai, Serchhip and Kolasib District by the author.
11. Section 10 and Section 8(8) of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953 as amended in 2014.
12. The author interview with VCPs of N.Khawbung, Champhai Vengsang, Buhchangphai and Kolasib Hmarveng Village Councils in 2021.
13. Section 8(10) of the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act 1953 as amended in 2014.
14. The author interview with Pu Lalchawimawia, Joint Director, LAD at his office chamber on 23rd February, 2021.

Citation in APA Style:

Dr.Lallawmzuala Khiantge. (2025). Public Policy Making at The Grassroots Level in Mizoram With Special Focus on The Working of Village Councils. Lyceum India Journal of Social Sciences, 1(6), 36–38.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15077549>