



Forest Management and role of Environmental NGO's in Mizoram

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Forest management in Mizoram enters new chapter when the traditional institution of chieftainship was abolished through the Lushai Hills Acts, 1954 (*Acquisition of Chief Right*) which was followed by creation of The Mizoram Forest Act 1955. This transition in administrative system in forest management gradually brought along with it a new section of individuals with an objective to protect and preserve environment and forest in the region. Such organizations work in line with the state forest department on issue base; although they sometimes oppose the government programs and projects if need arise.

There are several Environmental NGO's and agencies in the state. This paper will study the administrative structure of forest in Mizoram and the role and functions of NGO's in the present day forest management.

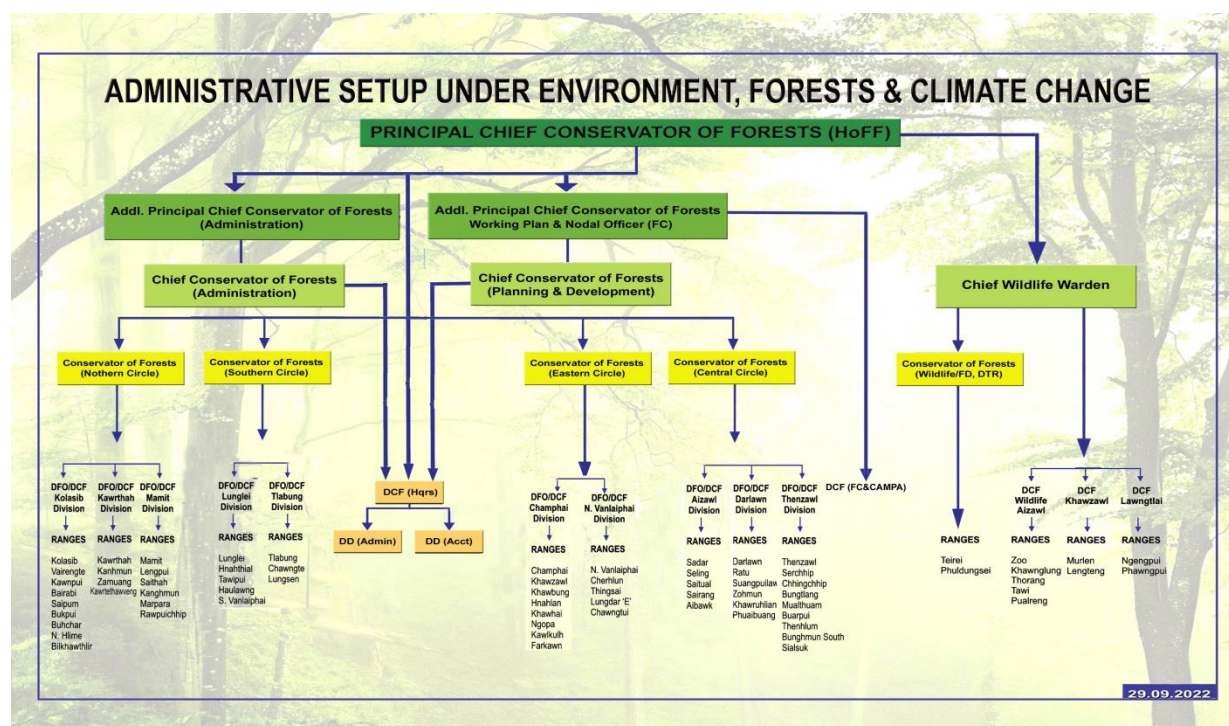
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Mizoram is located 23.1645° N latitude and 92.9376° E longitude with a total area of 21,087 sq. kms. It has an overall population of 10,91,014 (2011 census) with a literacy rate of 91.58% (2011 census). At present it has 11 districts and 3 autonomous districts, 23 sub-divisions, 26 administrative blocks, 40 number of assembly constituencies. The state animal is Serow, state bird is Hume's Pheasant, state flower is Red Vanda, and state tree is Iron wood. Mizoram which in the past was under the traditional authority; the chief '*lal*' has the overall power in forest management, utilization and disposal. After being colonized under a new political system, the administrative system faced an overall new structure. The initial official order in the hill was The Lushai Hills Acts, 1954 (*Acquisition of Chief Right*) that became effective in 1955. This abolition of traditional chieftainship system opens up door for the coming of legal *Acts* and *Rights* in the state administrative system.

In commencement of such act; the Mizoram District Council followed by statehood enacted several laws for forest management. Therefore certain acts like; The Lushai Hills District (Jhumming) Regulation 1954, The Mizo District (Forest) Act 1955, Wildlife Protection Act 1972, The Mizoram (Prevention and Control of Fire in the Village Ram) Rules 2001, The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act 1953 have been enacted. The Mizoram Forest Act 1955 lays down a set of rules for the management of forest in Mizoram. Rules regarding to payment of fees and royalties for utilization of forest and its products, rules for creation of town forest reserve,

power to constitute village forest reserves which are further divided into three classes viz. village safety reserve, village supply reserve and protected forest reserve. Power to constitute Government reserved forest; its survey, claims and objectives, tribunal, penalties for trespassers or damage are laid down in the act. Jhumming in government forest is granted only in the un-classed government forest. The appointment of forest officers and power to make rules for the state governor is laid down in this act. Following this act the state forest department established an administrative structure which is shown in Template 1.

Template 1. Administrative setup under EF&CC, Mizoram



Source: Source: EF&CC, Government of Mizoram

Distribution of Forest for administrative purpose

Mizoram has Reserved Forest area of 9846.96 sq. kms which comprise of 46.69% of total geographical area. Table 1. shows distribution of Reserved Forest in Mizoram and Table 2. shows Reserved Forest in autonomous District council in Mizoram. From these two tables we can observe that the state government declares forest reserve with an objective to protect, promote and conserve forest and wildlife. Within these areas several government programs and projects are implemented such as; State Programmes: Green Mizoram Programme launched in 1999, Fire Prevention Programme, Centrally Sponsored Schemes: Green India Mission (GIM), Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme (FFPMs), Project Tiger, Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat (IDWH), National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystem (NPCA), Intensification of Forest Management (IFM) Scheme, National Afforestation Programme (NAP), State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) that creates JFM in the state, under this there are 344 Village Forest Development Committees (VFDC's) and 132 Eco-Development Committee (EDC's).

Table 1. Abstract of Reserved Forest in Mizoram

Sl. No.	Name of Forest	Area in sq. kms.
1.	Innerline Reserve Forest (ILRF)	570.00
2.	Riverine Reserve Forest (RRF)	1832.50
3.	Roadside Reserve Forest	97.20
4.	Other Reserve Forest	1873.65
5.	Compensatory Afforestation declared as RF	125.86
6.	Protected Areas	1952.75
7.	Non Notified Forest/ Tree cover	833.00
	Total	7284.96

Source: EF&CC, Government of Mizoram

Table 2. Reserve Forest in Autonomou District Councils of Mizoram

Sl. No.	Name of Autonomous District Council	Reserved Forest	Area in sq. kms.
1.	Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC)	Safety Reserve	78
		Protected Reserve	70
		Station Reserve	44
		Supply Reserve	145
		Roadside Reserve	27
		Revenue Reserve	612
		Total	976
2.	Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC)	Safety Reserve	102
		Supply Reserve	115
		Total	217
3.	Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC)	Safety Reserve	465
		Supply Reserve	904
		Total	1369
	Total RF in ADC's		2562

Source: EF&CC, Government of Mizoram

Table 3. Riverine Reserved Forest (RRF) in Mizoram

Sl No	Name of Riverine Reserve Forest	Area (sq. kms.)
1.	Tlawng (<i>Dhaleswari</i>)	369.8
2.	Tut (<i>Gutur</i>)	182.8
3.	Teirei (<i>Pakwa</i>)	125
4.	Langkaih (<i>Lonqai</i>)	62
5.	Chemlui (<i>outside ILRF</i>)	29
6.	Serlui (<i>outside ILRF</i>)	75
7.	Tuivai	168
8.	Tuivawl	190
9.	Tuirini	64.8
10.	Tuirial (<i>outside ILRF</i>)	217.8
11.	Tuiruang (<i>outside ILRF</i>)	0
12.	Khawthlangtuipui (<i>Karnaphuly</i>)	140.7
13.	Tuichawng	54
14.	Kau	35.6
15.	De	45.2
16.	Phairuang	72.8
	Total	1832.50

Source: Annual Administrative Report, 2017-18, EF&CC

Table 4. Protected Areas in Mizoram

Sl No.	Name of Protected Areas	Area in sq kms.	District	Notification No. & Date
1.	Dampa Tiger Reserve	500	Mamit	No. B. 11011/14/90-FST of 07.12.1994
2.	Murlen National Park	100	Champhai	No. B. 12012/5/91-FST of 24.01.2003
3.	Phawngpui National Park	50	Lawngtlai	No.B.12011/5/91-FST of 22.07.1997
4.	Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary	110	Lawngtlai	No.B. 12012/4/91-FST of 22.07.1997
5.	Khawnglung Wildlife Sanctuary	35.75	Lunglei	No.B.12012/10/96-FST of 12.10.2000
6.	Lengteng Wildlife Sanctuary	60	Champhai	No.B.12012/15/94-FST of 31.05.2002
7.	Tawi Wildlife Sanctuary	35	Aizawl	No.B.12012/1/91-FST of

				16.11.2001
8.	Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary	50	Lunglei	No.B.12012/17/2001-FST of 23.04.2002
9.	Pualreng Wildlife Sanctuary	50	Kolasib	No.B.12012/19/01-FST of 29.07.2004
10.	Tokalo Wildlife Sanctuary	250	Siaha	No.MADC68/E&F/2006-2007/63 of 01.10.2007
	Total	1240.75		5.88% of the geographical area of the State

Source: EF&CC, Govt. of Mizoram

Table 3 and Table 4 shows Riverine Reserved Forest (RRF) and Protected Areas in Mizoram. These RRF and protected areas forms the base for forest conservation and protection in the area. However, these areas face deterioration and encroachment from several corner in terms of physical and policy matters, which made them prone to exploitation. The state government put up efforts to control and impose penalties for trespassing. But to put the task of protection and conservation exclusively to the government is a heavy task, it demands number of workers which the government is not always able to render. Therefore, the need arise for creation of environmental NGO's and agencies, most of these organizations are established not long ago.

Environmental NGO's- their objectives and functions

At present there are several NGO's that work in line with the government for conservation and protection of environment, forest and wildlife in the state.

(i) Young Mizo Association (YMA)

The central YMA which is the apex body of YMA in Mizoram, it plays crucial role in protection and conservation, giving awareness campaign and practically executing tasks when needs arise. Each year central YMA declares its yearly slogan which is executed by all the YMA branches at present there are 805 YMA branches within and outside Mizoram. The yearly motto in 1992 and 1993 was 'Conservation of Forest and Wildlife'. Since these years the Central YMA conducted awareness campaign on conservation and protection of forest and wildlife, campaign against forest fires and hunting was done annually at the YMA general conference. During these two years many acceded to the campaign by surrendering their guns and catapult.

YMA also conducts competition on wildlife protection, protection of river within each branch or group area and slogan writing in order to conserve forest and wildlife as well as to give awareness to the younger generations on the importance of forest and wildlife conservation. Such competitions carry prize money for the winners.

(ii) Association for Environmental Preservation (ASEP)

Established on 5th June 2005, it is a voluntary organisation registered under the societies registration act. It has around 300 members in approximate. It takes several steps to environmental protection and preservation by organizing awareness campaigns through media, newspapers, public meetings, nature trips, seminars, environmental rally, poster campaigns etc and also send out letters to hunters requesting them to stop conducting hunting activities (ENVIS). It is also a member of State level committee on; sub-committee on Green Mizoram, s/c on fire prevention, State compensatory afforestation fund management and planning authority (CAMPA) executive board, state board for wildlife and animal welfare board.

(iii) Centre for Environment Protection (CEP)

Established in 1998 under the society registration act, it is a voluntary organisation, research and consultancy agency capable of undertaking environmental impact assessment, environmental auditing, environmental monitoring, rural development and biodiversity assessment with a principle that ‘*a strong economy and a healthy environment can co-exist*’. The organisation has conducted several research based projects and publications having clients and sponsoring agents like the state government, central government, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), NABARD etc. It has membership in Protection of plant varieties and Farmers rights authority GOI, State level Eco-club steering committee, State level committee on Green Mizoram Programme, s/c on Green Mizoram programme, s/c on Fire prevention, member on CAMPA, Rural programme advisory committee, Scientific advisory committee on KVK Central Agricultural University, Mizoram. It plays an active role towards conservation and protection relating to policy and order of the government.

(iv) Save Environment Association (SENA)

Established in 1997 and registered under societies registration act with motto ‘*Live and Let Live*’. It has membership to the State level Green Mizoram Committee, State level s/c on Green Mizoram Committee, State Level Fire Prevention Committee, State level s/c on Fire Prevention. It conducted several activities like monitoring and evaluating plantation under Forest Development Agency, Mizoram, observance of international and state important Environmental days, awareness campaign under various themes like fire prevention, plantation, preservation of environment, conservation of wildlife, against air and water pollution. It also conducts talks and discussions on All India Radio, DDK, local TV channel, local newspapers, pamphlets, booklets, posters and banners.

(v) Bio Diversity and Nature Conservation Network (BIOCON)

It was established and registered in 2010. They have conducted several projects for protection and preservation of the environment. From Sc & Tech dept they received Nest box project through which they have produced more than 300 nests, they have discussions with village councils of several villages on issues relating to conservation, they conducted nature expedition, field demonstration and observe environmental day of importance, they conducted awareness campaign to the younger generations and youth services of the church, higher secondary schools etc.

(vi) Green Mizoram Network (GMN)

It was established in 2009 and registered in 2010 with theme '*Peace with our Environment*'. It conducted several talks and campaign on importance of maintaining green Mizoram through radio and DDK Aizawl programme, they observed Green Mizoram day by taking part in the government programmes through performance of Mizoram singers who are also members of the organisation. They conducted green concert on World Environment day 2010, concert was conducted for fire prevention campaign, charity concert for massive landslide victims on 2013, several plantation programme was organised and charity was given to several orphanage home and to the needy.

(vii) National Green Corps (NGC) Mizoram

It is a centrally sponsored scheme eco-club launched in 2002, Mizoram Pollution Control Board is the state nodal agency. At the state level is the State Steering Committee with Principal Secretary of EF&CC as its chairman, at district level District Implementation & Monitoring Committee (DIMC) is constituted. It comprise 30-50 schools from all the districts with total eco-clubs of 1890 at present (ENVIS Centre, Mizoram).

From the above list of NGO's we can observe that the structure of each organizations are closely related with a similar objectives and aims such as; to preserve and protect forest and wildlife, to give awareness to the youths and younger generations on the importance of conservation and protection, to promote and advocate for sustainable development, to push for proper waste management and disposal practice, to conserve rare and endemic species, to organize seminar and workshop on conservation and protection. The government also supports these NGO's by granting fund and projects in several cases where they can work hand in hand.

However, there are also cases when these NGO's work in oppose the government. For instance, the on-going case in National Green Tribunal under the name Centre for Environment Protection (CEP) vs Union of India and ors. bearing case number WA/274/2022 regarding construction of Tuirial Hydro Electric Project and annulment of Riverine Reserve Forest (RRF) in the area. This clearly shows the vital role of NGO's in supporting as well as guiding the government in management of forest and wildlife within the state. They provide manual and physical help when needs arise, and also guide the government in relation to policy matters.

Discourse on concepts and challenges

Coming to the theoretical postulations in relation Social Ecology and Environmental Sociology, the *Social Constructionist* perspective by John Hannigan is found to be in parallel with the the study. The theory brings forth on how environmental issues and problems are socially constructed. "It is said to be more congruent with existing canon of sociological theorising than are other approaches" (Hannigan, 1995, p.32). "Any fresh attempt to conceptualise environment related matters needs to confront the nature-society divide. It is unwise to bracket out the natural from sociological analysis, as it is to deny that nature and environment are socially constructed" (ibid, p.152). "Social constructionists insist that the tasks for environmental sociologists are not to document the environment problems but to demonstrate that they are the products of a dynamic social process of definition,

negotiation and legitimation. Social constructionism does not deny the considerable powers of nature, rather it asserts that the magnitude and manner of this impact is open to human construction” (ibid, p. 31). The Social Constructionist framework seems to be most appropriate to understand the problem at hand. The present study is conducted keeping in mind on how the social, economic, cultural process affects the definition and utilisation of forests in Mizoram.

So, looking at forest, wildlife and environment of a particular state we can state that the society gets what it construct. Humans tend to shape their forest and environment which in re-turn the environment shapes back the society. So it is very crucial to have certain NGO’s which actively took part in policy making towards forest and environment related subject. These NGO’s have closer relationship with the people, and this can be made effective in conveying awareness and operate conservation activities in more successful manner. This is crucial because it is the people, the forest settlers who actually live with their forest and wildlife. So to maintain harmony with nature and to give plausible statement against the government order when need arise, it important to have an active environmental NGO’s and agencies in the state.

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