

# Core Government of Mizoram's Flagship Development Programmes: A Critical Analysis of NLUP, SEDP and Hand Holding Policy.

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## Abstract

This paper critically examines three flagship development interventions of the Government of Mizoram—the New Land Use Policy (NLUP), the Socio-Economic Development Programme (SEDP), and the Handholding Policy (Bana Kaih)—as strategic responses to persistent development constraints in a landlocked hill state characterised by shifting cultivation (jhum), livelihood insecurity, and limited non-farm opportunities. Drawing on academic literature, policy documents, and empirical evidence, the paper analyses programme design, implementation mechanisms, beneficiary coverage, outcomes, and constraints. The findings indicate that while the programmes share common objectives of poverty reduction and livelihood diversification, their effectiveness is constrained by issues of beneficiary selection, institutional coordination, monitoring, and market access. The paper argues that integrated implementation, strengthened technical support, and improved market linkages are essential for enhancing the long-term sustainability of these flagship initiatives.

**Keywords:** Mizoram; NLUP; SEDP; Bana Kaih; livelihood diversification; shifting cultivation

## Introduction

Mizoram in the far north east of India offers unique developmental challenges because of its difficult hill environment, limited cultivable land, profound reliance on Jhum cultivation and isolation. The state, where 80% of the population is involved in agriculture on jhum (swidden cultivation) basis, has been traditionally plagued by challenges related to food insecurity, ecological degradation and lack of sustainable means of livelihood. The Mizoram government has tackled these challenges through a set of flagship development initiatives aimed at diversifying and making the rural economy more productive, livelihood improvement and sustainability.

The focus of this study is to analyse three prestigious flagship programmes of GoM i.e. New Land Use Policy (NLUP), Socio Economic Development Programme (SEDP) and Hand Holding Policy (Bana Kaih). Both interventions are important policy initiatives to break the structural bottlenecks to development in the state. The NLUP, originally introduced in 1984 and re-launched in 2009, is intended to wean farmers off shifting cultivation by promoting permanent agriculture and diverse livelihood options. The SEDP, started in 2022, offers cash assistance to 60,000 beneficiaries who are engaged in economic activities across the state. These initiatives are reinforced by the Hand Holding Policy in order to provide continuous guidance and support for efficient and effective programme delivery.

The purposes of this paper are: (1) to examine the design, goals and modalities of implementation in each flagship programme; (2) to evaluate their outcomes and impacts on participants and rural development; (3) to undertake a comparison examining overlaps, differences and relative efficiency; (4) to examine challenges/measures faced during programme implementation; and (5) offer informed suggestions for policy improvement. The article uses academic literature, government policy papers, empirical studies as well as open source on the web to present an extensive review of Mizoram's flagship development programmes.

### **Background and Development Concerns in Mizoram.**

Mizoram, with a geographical area of 21,087 square kilometres, is characterized by rugged mountainous terrain with ridges and rivers running predominantly in a north-south direction. The state borders Bangladesh and Myanmar internationally, and the Indian states of Manipur, Assam, and Tripura domestically. Mizoram transitioned from a district of Assam to a Union Territory in 1972 and achieved full statehood on February 20, 1987. The state's climate is pleasant with moderate temperatures and abundant rainfall, enabling the cultivation of diverse vegetables and crops, though suitable land for wet rice cultivation remains scarce.

Population of Mizoram is slowly increasing leading to a larger pressure on land resources and traditional agricultural systems. Mizo culture and society has been traditionally highly influenced in putting the age-old jhum cultivation to as an identity of Mizo people. But population growth has dramatically shortened the jhum cycle, meaning that land is more often fallow and productivity has declined while environmental concerns have increased. The proportion of the geographical area in shifting cultivation ranges from 18% to 28%, disturbing the forest and landscape, according to researchers [1], [2].

Jhum cultivation has a low yield of Rabi and vegetable crops, because of which there is dependency on other states for basic food grains. This vicious cycle of poverty and dependency has forced the state government to implement policy measures for sustainable agriculture and diversification of livelihood. Developmental environment in the state of Mizoram is nonetheless challenging with multiple forms of food insecurity, poor infrastructure, geographically isolated nature and the need to reconcile conservation and economic development [3], [4].

### **Historical Development and Policy Objectives**

The New Land Use Policy (NLUP) is the Government of Mizoram's flagship state programme to tackle the problem of shifting cultivation and to promote sustainable agriculture. The policy had earlier been started on pilot basis in 1984-85, by releasing INR 3,000 per beneficiary. The logic was that if the government supplied food assistance to hardworking farmers, they could be free to work the farms full-time. However, lack of support and narrow focus resulted in that the initial program did not have its accomplishing effects.

Acknowledging these shortcomings, the Govt of Mizoram re-launched NLUP in 2009, with greater financial outlay on more exhaustive strategies. The main objective of the policy is to stop cultivation or slash and burn farming practice by introducing other sustainable land-based activities for the farmers in the state. Policy envisages that all available Good Lands will be utilized for WRC, terrace cultivation will be adopted on the irrigable land and various sorts of sustainable trades/activities i.e. land based and other than land by the beneficiaries for their livelihood activities.

NLUP is unique compared to the previous Aibawk Jhum control scheme in as far as it does not adopt a mono scheme model but a cluster of schemes. In the composite model, collateral trades or services in addition to core activities would provide subsidiary opportunities operating for extra income to beneficiary households. This strategy acknowledges the reality that successful transition from slash and burn requires at least 5 years of ongoing assistance. The policy is intended at making the beneficiary families self-dependent as per traditional values of Mizo people [6].

### **Mechanism of Implementation and Selection of Recipients**

Though the institutional framework is highly structured in respect of implementation of NLUP. A Board for NLUP was framed to monitor policy, select beneficiaries, release funds and oversee monitoring. The scheme provides financial support to the beneficiaries for their livelihood activities viz. wet rice cultivation, horticulture, animal rearing, fishery, sericulture and other sustainable trades.

Programme implementation and impact are being evaluated using a household survey approach. Another study covering 16 villages in eight districts sampled 815 households and surveyed crops under permanent agriculture, estimating area, production, productivity and economic valuation. The study found out that the crops like paddy, fruits and vegetables cultivated under permanent agriculture have good scopes in sustainable agriculture [7].

The process of beneficiary selection starts with identification of jhum-practicing households ready to adopt permanent agriculture and other sustainable income generating activities. An in-kind and time contingent incentive supported by investment, input and transition support is given. Combining different activities enables the beneficiaries of composite scheme reduce risk and increase income stability.

### **Outcomes and Impact Assessment**

There are mixed views on the results and efficiency of NLUP from empirical studies. An independent survey of the Consultative Committee for New Land Use Policy (CCN) in 2015 suggested that NLUP had reduced number of families involved in jhum cultivation [8]. This indicates some progress in fulfilling the policy's main goal of resettling farmers from shifting cultivation.

But academic studies have questioned the policy and whether it was in animal's best interests. The only example of an analysis using actual data on NLUP finds that the centralized policy has replaced shifting cultivation but had little welfare implication upon indigenous peoples. The study described the policy implementation was involved in and discussed issues related to policy delivery and its impact on beneficiaries [9]. Another review identified that NLUP evaluation targeted at jhum reduction with scant coverage of livelihood implication and poor implementation analysis [10].

Studies on convergence in resolving jhum and settled cultivation issues under the MGNREGA programme in Mizoram indicated that though NLUP encouraged permanent agriculture, there are continuing challenges for ensuring sustainable livelihoods of all stakeholders. The study concluded that continued facilitation, relevant technology, market access and strengthening of the institutions were important for sustainability [11].

The impact of this policy on sustainable development has also been recognized while scholars call for the integrated framing of policies, consolidated assessment, and quantifiable results in order to fully evaluate impacts [12]. Research indicates prospects of significant for the future of NLUP on crops grown on NLUP supported permanent agriculture have potentials for moderate term sustainability if constraints of implementation are properly addressed [13].

## THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SEDP:

### 4.1 Programme Objectives and Rationale

The Socio-Economic Development Programme (SEDP) is a newer flagship programme of the Government of Mizoram which took off on 3 August 2022 under Chief Minister Zoramthanga. The programme was conceived as a family based programme to enhance the livelihood of 60,000 beneficiaries in the state. The main aim of the program is to provide direct cash flow injection in ongoing economic activities or make it possible for the recipients to 'start a fresh' economically.

SEDP was launched in challenging budget circumstances. Even though Mizoram has lost more than INR 3,000 crore in grants-in-aid and other financial devolutions due to COVID-19 outbreak, the state government has allocated more than INR 300 crore for carrying out implementation of different flagship programmes during the fiscal year 2022-23. This reflects the priority of government in addressing development even under resource limitation [14].

The basis for SEDP is the understanding that many families in Mizoram need monetary assistance to enable them to either improve current livelihoods or diversify into other economic opportunities. While NLUP, which is targeted toward seeking to eliminate the practice of shifting cultivation and promoting sustainable agriculture through cultivation in permanent holdings, SEDP has been framed as a holistic approach for economic development and covers over seventy livelihood options/channels from different sectors.

### 4.2 Implementation Mechanism and Coverage.

SEDP has been structured to involve different line departments of the Government of Mizoram for implementation purposes. Programme implementation is the responsibility of nine departments: Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Fisheries, Sericulture, Land Resources, Soil and Water Conservation (S&WC), Commerce & Industries (C&I), Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation U.D.&P.A. and Tourism. This cross-sectoral framework provides a range of livelihood opportunities for beneficiaries according to individual skill, interest, and local resources.

Under this scheme, financial support of INR 50,000/ per beneficiary is provided to all across 40 assembly constituencies by choosing 1500 beneficiaries from each constituency. This guarantees equal geographical distribution and representation of politics in the beneficiary selection. The financial help is given in phases, first cash instalment of INR 25,000 directly into the beneficiary account [15].

The cheques amounting to around INR 153 crore were handed over by Chief Minister Zoramthanga at the launch function to transfer to the beneficiaries through nine implementing departments. The project is decentralized, wherein the line departments are responsible for reaching out to the beneficiaries, selection of activities, distribution of funds and monitoring within their sector.

### 4.3 Revenue Flows and Support by Beneficiary livelihoods.

This SEDP includes over 70 livelihood options to allow beneficiaries to choose the activities that fit most with their capabilities, resources and potential market. These are agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, sericulture, small-scale industries like tourism, and other allied economic activities. The diversity of options acknowledges the diversity in local economy and requirement of location specific models for livelihoods.

He added that the implementation of SEDP would have to be gradually implemented depending upon the financial resources of the state given that it is suffering from severe economic stress due to losses owing to the COVID-19 outbreak. This practical approach reconciles developmental ambitions and fiscal constraints, however it may influence how rapidly or largely programmes will roll out [16].

Although there are as yet no available comprehensive impact assessment data with regard to SEDP, it is an important accompaniment to NLUP. While NLUP has a focus on agricultural development or jhum cultivation replacement, SEDP aims at providing multi-sectoral socio-economic support. The collective effect of these programmes is a broader development policy that embraces various livelihoods needs of Mizoram's rural inhabitants.

**5. Hand Holding Policy (Bana Kaih) Continuing the Holistic Support System**

**5.1 Objectives of Policy And Conceptual Framework**

It is envisaged that the policy would provide long-term guidance, technical assistance and mentoring for beneficiaries under the flagship programmes especially NLUP and SEDP. The phrase "Bana Kaih" means literally, holding of hand, indicating help or assistance without being left out .

The theory behind Bana Kaih is based on the recognition that many beneficiaries, but especially those moving from customary means of livelihood to new economic activities need sustained technical support, skills development, connections to markets and help in resolving problems. The policy plans to fill the hiatus between financial support and effective livelihoods outcomes through facilitating enablement during the implementation.

**5.2 Implementation mechanisms and Engagement of beneficiaries**

The implementation of the Hand Holding Policy involves multiple stakeholders including government departments, technical experts, extension workers, and community organisations.

In December 2024, Mizoram Chief Minister declared that 517 beneficiaries had been identified under the Hand Holding Approach in for the State’s flagship programme signifying operational implementation of policy [17].

The implementation strategy of the policy will revolve around a number of components namely; (1) technical support and training for individuals according to their interests in livelihood opportunities chosen; (2) on going monitoring and troubleshooting to solve emerging problems/challenges; (3) facilitating marketing linkages/value chain integration, extension services through experts; (4) peer support/ learning networks among beneficiaries.

Though there is little comprehensive recording of how the Hand Holding Policy exactly produced what outcomes, it is a significant innovation in Mizoram's brand of development. By acknowledging the importance of continued support to program success, Bana Kaih is filling a critical void in many rural development programs that simply provide financial assistance without ongoing support.

Comparison among the Three Programs.

**Table 1: Summary Comparison of NLUP, SEDP and Hand Holding Policy.**

Parameters	NLUP (New Land Use Policy)	SEDP (Socio-Economic Development Programme)	Hand Holding Policy (Bana Kaih)
		Year of Launch	First introduced in 1984; Re-launched in 2009-2010 as comprehensive statewide programme

Parameters	NLUP (New Land Use Policy)	SEDP (Socio-Economic Development Programme)	Hand Holding Policy (Bana Kaih)
Primary Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End shifting cultivation (jhum)</li> <li>• Promote sustainable permanent agriculture</li> <li>• Ensure self-sufficiency in food production</li> <li>• Diversify rural livelihoods</li> <li>• Regenerate forest cover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uplift livelihood of beneficiaries</li> <li>• Supplement or initiate economic activities</li> <li>• Provide direct financial support for income generation</li> <li>• Address poverty and unemployment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide sustained support and guidance to beneficiaries</li> <li>• Ensure successful implementation of livelihood programmes</li> <li>• Introduce Minimum Support Price (MSP) for key crops</li> <li>• Strengthen agricultural marketing</li> </ul>
Target Beneficiaries	Families practicing shifting cultivation (jhum farmers); Approximately 50% of rural households in Mizoram engaged in agriculture	60,000 beneficiaries across 40 constituencies in Mizoram	517 beneficiaries initially selected (as of December 2024); Focus on farmers of key crops
Financial Assistance per Beneficiary	Composite scheme with multiple trades/activities; Assistance provided over 3-5 years for permanent agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, etc. (Specific amounts vary by activity)	INR 50,000 per beneficiary as direct financial support	Financial support through MSP mechanism for four key crops: ginger, turmeric, broomstick, and bird's eye chili
Total Budget/Allocation	Significant state budget allocation (exact figures vary by implementation phase)	Over INR 300 crore allocated for flagship programmes in FY 2022-23 (including SEDP)	Part of overall flagship programme budget
Implementation Mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State-led, centrally coordinated</li> <li>• Implemented through multiple departments (Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries)</li> <li>• Composite scheme model (multiple activities per family)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct cash transfer to beneficiaries</li> <li>• Constituency-based distribution</li> <li>• Beneficiaries select their own economic activities</li> <li>• One-time financial support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum Support Price (MSP) framework</li> <li>• Government procurement at guaranteed prices</li> <li>• Continuous mentoring and guidance</li> <li>• Market linkage support</li> </ul>

		<b>SEDP (Socio-Economic Development Programme)</b>	<b>Hand Holding Policy (Bana Kaih)</b>
<b>Parameters</b>	<b>NLUP (New Land Use Policy)</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asset-based support with technical assistance</li> </ul>		
<b>Key Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replacement of mono-scheme with composite scheme</li> <li>Wet Rice Cultivation (WRC) promotion</li> <li>Terrace cultivation introduction</li> <li>Land-based and non-land-based activities</li> <li>Three-year implementation cycle</li> <li>Reforestation component</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universal coverage across constituencies</li> <li>Flexibility in activity selection</li> <li>Direct benefit transfer</li> <li>No restriction on trade/activity type</li> <li>Immediate financial injection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSP for ginger, turmeric, broomstick, bird's eye chili</li> <li>Hand-holding approach with continuous support</li> <li>Focus on four strategic crops</li> <li>Market assurance mechanism</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of Support</b>	3-5 years depending on activity type; Long-term sustainability focus	One-time financial assistance of INR 50,000	Ongoing support with MSP mechanism; Continuous guidance and mentoring
<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultative Committee (CCN) surveys</li> <li>Department-wise monitoring</li> <li>Village council coordination</li> <li>Academic studies and impact assessments</li> </ul>	State-level monitoring through implementing departments	Government monitoring through procurement and MSP implementation
<b>Coverage Area</b>	Statewide across all districts; Focus on jhum-practicing areas	All 40 assembly constituencies in Mizoram	Statewide; Focus on areas producing the four key crops
<b>Major Outcomes/Achievements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in families engaged in jhum cultivation</li> <li>Increased area under permanent agriculture</li> <li>Diversification of livelihoods</li> <li>Rising incomes from livestock and alternative activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60,000 beneficiaries received financial support</li> <li>Launch completed in August 2022</li> <li>Livelihood diversification initiated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>517 beneficiaries selected by December 2024</li> <li>MSP framework established for four crops</li> <li>Market assurance provided to farmers</li> </ul>

		SEDP (Socio-Economic Development Programme)	Hand Holding Policy (Bana Kaih)
Parameters	• Some success in WRC expansion		
Key Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power struggles between state bureaucracy and village councils</li> <li>• Trust deficit among jhum farmers</li> <li>• Cultural resistance to permanent agriculture</li> <li>• Land rights and tenure issues</li> <li>• Mixed success of earlier (1984) version</li> <li>• Implementation gaps</li> <li>• Sustainability concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund utilization monitoring</li> <li>• Ensuring productive use of financial assistance</li> <li>• Limited guidance on activity selection</li> <li>• One-time support may be insufficient</li> <li>• Lack of follow-up mechanism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited initial coverage (517 beneficiaries)</li> <li>• Need for expanded MSP coverage</li> <li>• Market infrastructure requirements</li> <li>• Price determination challenges</li> <li>• Storage and procurement logistics</li> </ul>
Sustainability Approach	Long-term focus with multi-year support and permanent land-based activities	Short-term financial injection; Sustainability depends on beneficiary initiative	Medium to long-term through MSP and continuous support mechanism
Institutional Framework	Multiple departments; State NLUP Board; District and village-level committees	State government departments; Constituency-based implementation	Agriculture and allied departments; Marketing boards; Procurement agencies
Unique Selling Points	Comprehensive livelihood transformation from jhum to permanent agriculture	Direct cash transfer with maximum flexibility	Guaranteed price mechanism with hand-holding support

Directives :| NLUP ((New Land Use Policy) SEDP (Socio-Economic Development Programme) Hand Holding Policy (Bana Kaih) |

### 6.1 Commonalities in Goals and Strategy

The three programmes such as NLUP, SEDP and Hand Holding Policy have much in common when it comes to developmental objectives and philosophy. All three projects aim to reduce poverty, improve local living conditions and support more sustainable development in the rural areas of Mizoram. They signify the state government’s commitment towards holistic development and belief that conventional methods of rural development have not helped.

All three programs are more beneficiary oriented, directly supporting families and individuals rather than focusing only on establishing systems or intervening institutionally. They understand that cash support

can make a difference, allowing poor families to invest in productive activities and move beyond subsistence. Equally the programs share a focus on diversification, be it of agricultural activity (NLUP), economic offer (SEDP) or support mechanisms (Hand Holding Policy).

Besides, all the three programmes are carried out through coordinated efforts of multiple departments, which includes line departments of the state government. This indicates the acceptance that rural development cannot be planned in sectors but has to be integrated. The programs, are also characterized by similar issues around selection of beneficiaries and use of funds, monitoring, sustaining benefits which may reflect convergent issues in implementation within the developmental context of Mizoram.

## 6.2 Differences in Design and Implementation

Despite these commonalities, the three programs vary substantially in their program architecture, target populations and delivery mechanisms. NLUP is particularly designed for agricultural transformation and elimination of jhum, providing jhumming families assistance so they can switch to permanent agriculture and associated activities. The programme is considerably older, in operation since 2009 (and its predecessor from 1984), and has been through several phases of improvement.

On the other hand, SEDP focuses more on the nuance of socio-economic development (not strictly restricted to agriculture). It falls on a larger population in all 40 assembly constituencies by giving a uniform financial support of Rs.50,000 per beneficiary for different type of economic activities." The program's initiation in 2022 implies it is early in the implementation process, with little data on outcomes. The design of SEDP captures lessons from NLUP and other rural development programmes by being less prescriptive, with greater scope for livelihood options and broader sectoral coverage.

At its core is the fact that this is not just another cash transfer program but a support and guidance programme. Whereas NLUP and SEDP target resource transfer, Bana Kaih is about building capacity, provision of technical support and sustained involvement. This complementary role can be interpreted to argue that hand holding policy is necessary in that financial assistance leads to livelihood wins.

The programs also vary in their resource allocation policies. NLUP offers assistance which varies according to the composite scheme selected by beneficiaries, while as SEDP has a standard assistance of 50 thousand rupees per beneficiary. The Hand Holding Policy is resource intensive in terms of technical assistance, training and monitoring, as opposed to actual monies being channelled to beneficiaries.

## 6.3 Effectiveness and Impact Assessment

Evaluating the relative impacts of the three initiatives themselves is difficult as they all have slightly different intentions and implementation dates, evaluation data are not equivalent. Having had a longer implementation period, NLUP has been more widely reviewed. Research has shown that the programme has had some success in reducing the incidence of shifting cultivation and promoting settled or permanent agriculture. According to a survey in 2015, the NLUP had effectively minimized families practicing jhum [18]. Studies have also reaffirmed that NLUP-assisted permanent agriculture grown crops have considerably promising future prospects for sustainable agriculture [19].

But detractors have been questioning the welfare dimensions and implementation difficulties of NLUP. For example, research indicates that although the programme has led to a change in practice from shifting cultivation, its effect on beneficiary welfare outcomes is limited by factors such as insufficient period of support, market issues and institutional challenges [20]. The extent to which the policy succeeds in realising a full-scale transformation of livelihoods remains a topic of vigorous debate.

For SEDP, lessons on wider impacts assessments are premature as it only started in 2022. The design of the programme includes learning from NLUP and other rural development programmes and therefore it

may be more effective in principle. The broad based sectors coverage and uniform assistance might lead to relatively better implementation and monitoring as compared to NLUP's rather complex composite scheme. Yet its success will hinge on the selection of beneficiaries, choice of activities, provision of technical support and continued monitoring—all areas where there is evidence of difficulties in other rural development programmes [21], [22].

Effectiveness of the Hand Holding Policy cannot be judged in isolation, given its mediated impact through assisting to NLUP and SEDP beneficiaries. The scheme fills a vital gap in rural development programmes and that its provision of continued technical assistance and guidance. But the progress will be influenced by the quality of technical expertise, adequate extension services and responsiveness to beneficiary needs. Proper monitoring and evaluation is necessary here.

A comparative analysis indicates that the three programmes are most effective in combination, where NLUP and SEDP provide access to financial resources for livelihood activities and the Hand Holding Policy ensures that beneficiaries benefit from technical assistance required to thrive. Since the programmes are complementary, there is reason to believe that their combined effect could be greater than simply adding both together – though this remains an empirical question and would need to be verified using rigorous impact assessment.

## 7. Challenges and Limitations

### 7.1 Implementation Challenges

The operationalisation of Mizoram's flagship programmes encounters a number of major challenges due to which they merit constrained effectiveness/impact. A first problem is the difficulty in identifying beneficiaries when there are many eligible families and resources are scarce. Fair selection among geographical, social and economic groups along with transparency in all processes, without political interference while preventing fraud is yet a challenge [23].

Fund disbursement and fund management also add some of the implementation challenges. With regard to financial resources, programmes offer direct economic support; but the extent of how well allocated funds translate into productive outcomes depends directly on effective monitoring forms. There are reports of delays in release of funds, their underutilization and diversion to non-productive uses in studies so far on rural development programmes in India [24], [25].

**Institutional Coordination** :The coordination between the various implementing ministries is institutionally challenging. Both NLUP and SEDP cover nine or more line departments, all with their own systems of administration, sets of priorities and capacities. Strong institutional coordination mechanisms are needed to harmonize information sharing and coordinated roll-out across the departments, which is potentially absent in practice [26].

Technical back-stopping and extension are important for programme success but also problematic. Beneficiaries often lack the practical and technical know-how to engage in new livelihoods, especially when they are moving from customary practices to either modern agriculture or non-farm. The overall quality and accessibility of extension services, training programs and technical advice are variable between districts/sectors with significant impacts on program results [27].

### 7.2 Institutional and Resource Constraints

The effectiveness of programme execution and monitoring is hampered by institutional capacity shortages. Administrative capability at district/block level may not have sufficient manpower, technical skills and resources to effectively deliver multi-dimensional development initiatives. This is especially

difficult in the very remote and hard-to-reach places of Mizoram where administrative visibility is low [28].

The scope and long term sustainability of programmes are influenced by resource based (financial and physical) limitations. The amount that can be supported is, however, constrained by fiscal conditions in Mizoram even though material resources are allocated for flagship programmes. Resource paucity has further increased following the INR 3,000 crore loss to the state due to COVID and there may be phased roll out with restricted coat wise weightage [29].

A poor list of infrastructure, with poor roads, irrigation facilities, storage and market infrastructures limits LLIs efficacy. But even when successful, beneficiaries may lack market access and infrastructure necessary to take full economic advantage of agricultural or other products. The literature shows that infrastructural deficiencies constrain the development of rural societies all over Indian northeast [30].

Systems for monitoring and evaluating are frequently lacking to keep watch over the implementation of the programme, the beneficiaries' out-comes and impact. The monitoring is certainly periodic and differs greatly in quality and frequency, although it may not be legal. Absence of reliable data on beneficiary performance, fund disbursement and programme impact is limiting the ability to evaluate effectiveness and make evidence-based improvements.

### **7.3 Beneficiary-Level Challenges**

Recipients are confronted with various obstacles that compromise their capacity to effectively use programme assistance and attain viable livelihoods. Beneficiary risk aversion and limited history in entrepreneurship can serve as deterrents for new activities or technologies, especially if some of their traditional means of livelihood are known to them.

Many beneficiaries continue to face difficulty in accessing markets and value chains. Where production does succeed, low linkage to markets, fluctuating prices and exploitation by traders can undermine economic returns. Uncoordinated marketing systems and lack of value chain development narrow the sustainability of livelihood programmes [31].

And the agricultural and allied enterprises, which are undertaken under the schemes, face risks from climate variability and environmental perils. Mizoram's reliance on rain-fed agriculture, exposure to climate extremes and ecological degradation from traditional shifting cultivation also pose threats to settled agriculture and other income sources. Recipients are without sufficient risk-reducing instruments, including crop insurance or disaster assistance.

Social and cultural elements may also limit programme impact. The existing social roles, gender roles and class structure play out in how recipients engage with transfer programmes, decide on an activity and the returns to that activity. To guarantee that programmes are culturally competent and socially inclusive, it is essential to design carefully implemented strategies, which may not be a reality in practice.

## **8. Recommendations**

### **8.1 Policy Design and Planning**

From the discussion on Mizoram's flagship programmes and its documented problems, a few suggestions may be drawn for improving policy formulation and planning. First, programmes should be formulated following a comprehensive needs assessment and baseline data collection. The people profile, their livelihood constraints and opportunities vary from place to place in different pockets of Mizoram which needs a complete understanding before finalizing the intervention. Programme design needs to be an

informed response to data from household surveys and participatory mapping, and examination of economic context.

Second, programmes could adopt longer support horizons to take account of the fact that livelihood transformation requires continued support, beyond initial cash transfers. The understanding of NLUP that successful conversion from shifting cultivation requires more than five years should be extended to other programmes. Multiyear support with phased assistance, can also improve sustainability.

Third, programme design should give priority to the integration and complementarity of different interventions. Instead of pursuing NLUP, SEDP, and Hand Holding Policy as isolated schemes they will have to be planned in an integrated developmental frame with definite linkages/synergies. Beneficiaries should be able to receive multiple kinds of assistance in a coherent way.

Fourth, programmes need stronger market linkage and value chain development. Productivity grants can only succeed when supported with marketing, processing and value-addition support. Liability groups with market institutions, Private sectors and cooperatives can contribute to economic viability of livelihood activities.

## 8.2 Implementation and Monitoring

Programmes should be made more effective through a strengthening of implementation mechanisms. The process of beneficiary selection should be transparent, participatory and criteria for eligibility made clear through public disclosure of the procedures for identification and redressal of grievances. The involvement of the community in beneficiary selection can promote equity and minimize political interference.

Technical assistance and institutional development should be strengthened considerably. This calls for proper funding of extension services, training schools, demonstration farms, and technical expertise. The Hand Holding Policy needs to be adequately funded and put to proper use so that all the beneficiaries benefit from continuous technical hand holding. Collaborations with agricultural universities, research organizations, and NGOs may improve the quality of technical support.

The process of fund transfer mechanism should be facilitated so that the assistance reaches to the beneficiary in time. Programme efficiency can be compromised when there are delays in releasing funds to the programme and in beneficiaries' confidence. DBT to beneficiaries' bank accounts, like in the case of SEDP, must be followed across programmes with necessary safeguards.

Supervisory and monitoring systems are in need of major reform. Programs should be designed with strong indicators to monitor progress in implementation and tracking outcomes with moderated interventions, as well as measures of developmental impact. Ad hoc advisory missions, the use of beneficiary feedback mechanisms and third-party evaluations can serve as sources for learning to feed adaptive management purposes. Use of 'big data' and digital technologies for the purposes of real-time surveillance and data collection.

## 8.3 Institutional Strengthening

Soft institutional capacity at the state, district and block level must be reinforced to facilitate efficient programme implementation. This factor includes staffing levels, staff training, provision of resources and systems and processes. Institutional development deserve to be invested as much as beneficiary finance. Formalisation and strengthening of inter-departmental co-ordination mechanisms should take place. Regular coordination meetings, joint planning exercises, integrated monitoring and shared information systems can strengthen cohesion among the nine or more line departments implementing flagship programmes. Specialized coordination is probably needed, such as to be provided in the form of a cell or secretariat.

Collaboration with non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, self-help groups, and private sector operators should be established to access extra resources and expertise as well as implementation capabilities. Support from civil society institutions Mechanisms such as beneficiary mobilization, technical assistance and monitoring may benefit from support to grantees.

Lastly, there should be investment driven infrastructure in favour of productive life and means. These can be irrigation, rural roads, warehousing and processing structures, market facilities and digital connectivity. And look at where to place infrastructure investment that coincides with those priorities of livelihood programmes for maximum synergy.

## Conclusion

The flagship development programmes of the Government of Mizoram—New Land Use Policy (NLUP), Socio Economic Development Programme (SEDP), Hand Holding Policy (Bana Kaih)—are major policy initiatives to address developmental concerns of the state. These programs demonstrate the nature of tries to improve on rural livelihoods, reduce dependence upon shifting cultivation and sustainable development in such a geographically and socio-economic difficult situation.

The review in this paper shows that these programs have similar aims to reduce poverty and improve life but different design, target populations and operation modality. NLUP adopts agriculture transformation and replace shifting cultivation, focusing on all round support to for permanent agriculture and allied activities. SEDP has a more general community development orientation resulting in funding assistance for various economic activities in many parts of the economy. These financial programs which the Hand Holding Policy offers are complemented by ongoing technical support and guidance to beneficiaries.

There is some evidence that these programs have had success in their stated goals. The other important achievement of NLUP is that the number of families practicing shifting cultivation has declined and adoption of permanent agriculture including conservation, crops potential for sustainability future was also high [32], [33]. It is too soon and we have too little information to fully evaluate the developmental effects of SEDP, but its recent implementation combined with a sufficiently wide array of sectors covered suggests at least some potential for significant impact. The Hand Holding Policy addresses a serious issue in rural development – the long term support that programmes need to succeed.

Yet, important barriers and limitations bind the effectiveness of programmes. Implementation challenges faced are about complexity of beneficiary selection, under use of funds, lack of coordination between departments and poor technical support. Resource and institutional limitations constrain the breadth of programmes. Beneficiary-Level Challenges include risk aversion, limited market access, climate variability, and social factors affect outcomes. These problems are not specific to Mizoram, but may rather be prevalent across India, when it comes to implementation of rural development programmes [34], [35].

The recommendations in this paper focus on evidence-based policy formulation, improved implementation mechanisms and strengthened monitoring, evaluation and strategic information system, and institutional capacity building. Special attention should be paid to integrating national three-tier programme in a comprehensive developmental framework, broad basing of supporting horizons, strengthening market linkages, quality improvement of technical support services and improve transparency and accountability.

Prospects The prospects of the flagship programmes of the Mizoram hinge on long term political support, financial outlay, institutional mechanism and adaptive management based on monitoring and evaluation..

Given further appropriate fine-tuning and effective implementation, these flagship programmes are set to bring about a sea-change in the lives of people, as well as accelerate overall sustainable development across Mizoram.

Like that of Mizoram, the trajectory of development elsewhere in NE has followed multi-dimensional as well as differential rural transformation processes. Although flagship programmes are designed to provide basic support, for further development more holistic challenges such as lack of infrastructure, limited access to markets, institutional capacity or environmental sustainability and social inclusion need to be tackled in combination. The attempts like NLUP, SEDP and Hand Holding Policy to address these issues have been comprehensive in scope but further fine tuning and strengthening of the policies would be required to realize their development potential.

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