

## **Influence of Policies on Rural Livelihoods in Nagaland with a Focus on Mokokchung and Zunheboto Districts**

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### **Abstract**

Nagaland is a land of many tribes situated in the easternmost part of India bordering Myanmar. Her people have been farmers since time immemorial, mostly engaged in the traditional practice of subsistent slash-and-burn cultivation or shifting cultivation known as jhumming. Jhumming was mass practiced till late 80s to early 90s. Even today, shifting cultivation dominates the major segment of the economy of the people. However, in many places of the state, certain communities have shown a “shifting away” from the practice of this occupation i.e. jhumming, as Government agencies and various NGOs have educated and made the people aware of the evil and adverse effects of jhumming from an environmental and ecological perspective. As a result, these people were forced to explore alternate livelihoods. Livelihood can be simply defined as the means by which people satisfy their needs and afford a comfortable living. Emphasis on sustainable livelihood forms an important component of poverty alleviation programmes, rural agricultural development and rural resource management. In Nagaland, forest policies of the State Government have greatly helped the rural populace to adopt forest based activities for their livelihood and enabled them to shift away from the harmful practice of jhumming. Besides these efforts, various other policies of rural development and poverty alleviation programs have helped the rural and underprivileged lot to adopt a livelihood alternative to jhumming. Consequently, all of the above mentioned activities result in the interaction of livelihood practices and economic activities among people of different areas, both rural and urban. Thus, these urban-rural and rural-rural interactions among towns and villages play a crucial part in the functioning of the economy of Nagaland.

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### **Background of the study and study area**

Nagaland has been a land of tribal farmers since time immemorial. It is situated between 26°0' and 27°15' North latitude, and 93°20' and 95°15' East longitude with a total area of 16,579 sq Km. Nagaland is the homeland of the tribal Naga people. The state is inhabited by 16 major tribes and is bounded by Myanmar in the East, Assam in the West, Arunachal Pradesh in the North and Manipur

in the South. Both before and after attainment of statehood, under Union of India on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1963 as the 16<sup>th</sup> state of Indian Union, the main occupation of its people has always remained confined to subsistence agriculture, where *jhum* cultivation has been practiced widespread, most notably till the late 80s and early 90s. Shifting cultivation still dominates the economy of the Naga

people, which is still continued in the form of the traditional slash-and-burn or jhumming practice. Jhumming is still the dominant form of cultivation in Nagaland. However, in many places of the state, people have started adopting other options/alternatives and have begun to shift away from the practice of this occupation i.e. Jhumming. This is generally done as the government agencies and various NGOs have educated and propagated the knowledge and awareness of the evil and adverse effects of *jhumming* from the environmental and ecological perspective. As such, various central and state sponsored schemes and programmes have provided the traditional farmers with alternative means of livelihood which in turn play a major role in the uplift of the lifestyle of the rural poor. This transition from Jhumming to alternative livelihoods is a very gradual process and is continuing till date.

#### **Objectives and data base of the study**

The main objectives of the study focus on the following:

1. To understand the implication of the government policies on economic activities of the rural populace.
2. To depict that the ecological rejuvenation is an advantage for livelihood of rural dwellers.
3. To highlight the government's efforts in alleviation of poverty through rural development programs.
4. To focus on the economic engagements adopted by rural people for their livelihood as alternatives to jhumming.

Data sources are both secondary and primary in nature. Secondary data has been obtained from several published articles and government bulletins and publications, while the primary data is mostly based on observations made while visiting the areas of study in Mokokchung and Zunheboto districts. However, the article, as a whole, is based mostly on secondary data.

#### **Concept of Livelihood**

The means by which people satisfy their needs and comfort is livelihood (Chambers and Gordon, 1992). The concept of sustainable livelihood is important in research of poverty alleviation, rural agricultural development and rural resource management (Thennakoon, S). Besides, the livelihood strategies are the summation of all activities of man that people do in the context of their living and are determined by the access to and combination of five forms of capital assets, viz., human capital, natural capital, financial capital, social capital and physical capital (Scooner 1998). Numerous policies and programs were introduced in Nagaland whereby most of the famous and main policies were implemented through the ***Department of Forests, Ecology, Environment and Wildlife, Government of Nagaland***. These policies aimed at the preservation, conservation and rejuvenation of ecological setting in the state and adoption of forest-based rural livelihood. Also the ***Rural Development Department*** of the State Government has supported rural livelihood by means of diversion of the rural populace from traditional jhumming through poverty alleviation programmes.

#### **Policies and Programs through Forestry:-**

There are a number of Acts regarding the preservation and conservation of forests and ecology in the state. Some of them are Nagaland Forest Act, 1968 which is still operational within the whole state since 1st April, 1968; also Nagaland Jhumland Act, 1970 which is also applicable to the whole state since April 12, 1974. This Act has broadened the meaning of forest in the state. According to this act, forest refers to any land within the state excluding the lands which have been covered by terrace cultivation, both permanent and semi-permanent, or any housed/inhabited dwelling area. Thus, the act has brought *jhum* farmlands under the ambit of Forest Department

as forested area. Besides, in consonance with the objective of National Forest Policy, 1988, the state has designed a policy as follows:

1. Convert *jhum*land areas into economically and ecologically sustainable woodlands.
2. Regulate harvesting of forest resources on principles of sustainability.
3. Protect and conserve fauna and flora, including endangered species.
4. Protect, conserve, and manage Bio-diversity in and outside reserved forests and sanctuaries based on sound scientific principles for in-situ conservation.
5. Raise and develop commercially important species.
6. Bamboo policy with valuable and active input from the department.

As far as the management of the forests is concerned, there is one unique feature in Nagaland. This unique feature is none other than land ownership. Most of the land, including forests, in Nagaland are ancestral land and are owned by private individuals or clans from tribal villages. These landowning clans or landowners have every right to their ancestral lands based on tribal customary laws. These customary laws are in the hands of the tribal Village Councils of various villages across Nagaland. **In short, majority of the forests in Nagaland are private in nature, owned by clans and villages.** However, the Forest Department of the State Government owns certain areas that are classified as Reserved Forests, Protected Forests, Wildlife Sanctuaries, National Parks, Nurseries and Botanical Gardens. Also, wood harvesting in private plantations is regulated according to “Nagaland Tree Felling Regulation Rules, 2002”. According to these rules, felling/selling of timber by villagers from private plantations is facilitated under the supervision of the state forest department through Transit Permit. This also covers

felling of trees from non-forest areas such as tree plantations in non-forest areas; ban on export of round logs below 4 feet in girth; ban on issue of Free Permits on timber in order to plug leakage of Government revenue.

On being encouraged to plant trees in the *jhum* land, State Government also followed the National Afforestation Programme( NAP) with the objectives as:

1. Effective utilization of *jhum*land.
2. Ensure supply of fuel wood and small timber.
3. Checking of land erosion through soil conservation measures.
4. Maintenance of ecological integrity of the region.
5. Generation of income and employment.
6. Development of common property resources.
7. Conservation and promotion of non-timber forest produces.
8. Improve quality of life for the forest dependent community.
9. Capacity building.
10. Use of improved technologies.

Also, in conformity with the National Forest Policy, State Government through Government notification vide no. FOR-153/80 (Vol- III) started Joint Forest Management(JFM) with the following objectives:

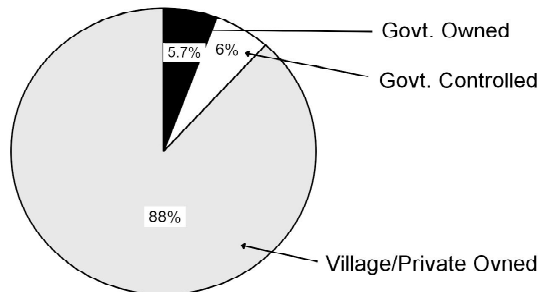
1. To elicit active participation of villagers in **a)** creation **b)** management and **c)** protection of plantation.
2. To achieve ecological needs consonant with sustainable productive forests.
3. To create a rural-based economy for the people.

And the areas to be covered were included as:

1. Non-Government land that can be put into use for forestry.

2. Non-Government virgin forests.
3. Any other land of the state, which may be managed under JFM.

Thus, after implementation of the above quoted policies, acts and regulations of the State Government, the present status of the forests in Nagaland sums up as: Out of the state's total geographical area of 16,579 sq Km, forests occupy an area of 8629.30Sq Kms



**Fig. Showing the ownership of forest in Nagaland**

OWNERSHIP	FOREST AREA
<b>Government owned Forest</b>	<b>491.44</b>
Reserved Forest	62.26
Purchased Forest	192.47
Protected Forest	34.69
Wild life Sanctuaries	202.02
<b>Government controlled (Private owned) Forest</b>	<b>516.79</b>
Protected Forest	516.79
<b>Village/Private owned</b>	<b>7621.07</b>
Virgin Forest	4778.27
Degraded Forest	2842.80
<b>TOTAL FORESTED AREA</b>	<b>8629.30</b>

**Table . Showing the ownership of forest in Nagaland (Sq Km).**

Source:- Annual Report, Department of Forest, Ecology, Environment and Wildlife: Nagaland: Kohima – 2012.

In the implementation of these programs, while drawing away the villagers from the practice of *Jhumming*, the initial burden is shouldered by Government as almost all the former *jhum* farmers are employed as daily wage earners in the process of afforestation programs, in which state Government has spent about Rs 4019 lakhs under plan expenditure and Rs 4047.16 lakhs under non-plan expenditure during 2011-12 against Rs 124.24 lakhs under plan and Rs 303.79 lakhs under non-plan during 1992-93. This indicates progress in the implementation of the programs in progress (Annual Report, 2012). As such, it is observed that in some villages in Mokokchung district, majority of households having at least one or two *bighas* (1 bigha= 1340 sq.mtrs) of land under tree plantation engage in agro-forest activities as means of forest based livelihood. Also in Zunheboto district, it is found that people are engaging in forest based livelihood activities such as agro-forest vegetables, fuel wood, building materials such as *bally-posts*, timber and logging. At present, in many parts of the state, forests have grown into mature stages with full grown trees, due to which villagers can engage in wood based economy for their livelihood.

### **Policies and programs through Rural Development.**

Apart from this, policies and schemes are introduced through Rural Development Department which also facilitates the rural populace for their livelihood. Some of the important programs are Integrated Rural Development Program/Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana that was introduced in 1978-79 and universalized from 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1980 of which



**Plate: Disposal and sale of organic agro-forest products and vegetables at roadside market shed in Mokokchung District.**



**Plate: Jhumlands converted to forested land through tree plantation in Akhoya village in Mokokchung District.**



**Plate: Forest products for forest based activity and livelihood in Zunheboto District.**

on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999, the IRDP and allied programs were merged into a single program known as Swamajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) in which Nagaland Government spent Rs 631.18 lakhs during 2009-10. As for wage employment programs, The National Rural Employment Program (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Program (RLEGP) were started during 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> plans, both of which were later, in April 1989, merged under Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) and later again bifurcated into Indira Awaas Yajana (IAY) in the year 1996 where State Government spent about Rs 3139.32 lakhs during 2009-10 for Rural Housing. Another Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) was launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1993 meant for drought prone, desert, tribal and hill areas to provide employment in the form of manual work in the lean agricultural season. This program became Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in 2006-07 where an amount of Rs 49945.76 lakhs was spent in the state during 2009-10. Besides, under Grant in Aid (GIA) and Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF), the state Government spent Rs 25.26 and Rs 5886.44 lakhs respectively during 2009-

10 (Statistical Handbook, 2010). So based on these programs, the rural poor are getting alternative ways and means of livelihood after abandoning the practice of shifting cultivation.

In Mokokchung district, rural development policies are being disbursed by DRDA under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). For the year 2009-10 Rs 74.34 lakhs was sanctioned under which total expenditure was Rs 64.96 lakhs in which 72 individuals were assisted. Also, under Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) total of Rs 298.57 lakhs was allocated, out of which Rs 267.86 lakhs was released. Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), 28927 job cards were issued and 100% employment was provided out of which 26034 had completed 100 days work. Under Grant – In – Aid (GIA), Mokokchung district received Rs 8,52,961 for approach road; 18,32,623 for soiling and metalling of road; Rs 9,40,245 for cash crops; Rs 41,292 for social forestry; Rs 27,05,104 for footsteps; Rs 6,86,807 for culvert/drainage; Rs 15,49,641 for play ground; Rs 4,41,425 for water tank; Rs 1,25,699 for rural housing; Rs 6,22,216 for marketing and resting shed; Rs 6,91,037 for purchase of vehicles; Rs 6,45,440 for piggery; Rs 2,59,749 for fishery and Rs 1,62,050 for weaving and handicraft etc. Thus, total funds credited to VDBs (Village Development Boards) amounted to a sum of Rs 2,61,91,000, in Mokokchung district alone. (Statistical Handbook of Nagaland, 2010).

In Zunheboto district, DRDA released, under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana during 2009-2010, a total allocation of Rs 97.85 lakhs where 70 SHGs and 178 individuals were assisted. Under Indira Awaas Yojana, total allocation was Rs 242.98 lakhs of which Rs. 221.13 lakhs have been release. Under MGNREGS, altogether 29,978 households were provided employment of 29,978 job card holder and those that completed

100 days work were 22,472. Besides, during the same year under Grant-In-Aid (GIA), funds were: for approach road Rs 47,44,914; for soiling and metalling of road Rs 1,22,43; for cash crops Rs 4,04,116; for horticulture crops Rs 10,24,29; for social forestry Rs 10,94,274; for construction of building and halls Rs 10,84,567; for footsteps Rs 3,75,444; for culvert and drainage Rs 9,96,055; for Playground Rs 10,22,791; for water tank Rs 4,54,024; for rural housing Rs 95,653; retaining wall Rs 3,86,543; Latrine Rs 4,40,214; for marketing shed Rs 1,93,253; bee-keeping Rs 58,311; irrigation/canals Rs 7,29,319; purchase of vehicle Rs 78,260; floriculture Rs 28,365; rice mill Rs 33,759; piggery Rs 1,02,765; fishery Rs 28,272; dairy Rs 36,317; weaving and handicraft Rs 12,276; educational tour Rs 69,606 etc. (Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2010). As such it is being revealed that in all those activities, villagers are engaged for their livelihood through policies and programs of rural development.

### Findings and conclusion of the study

Through the present study, it is revealed that Nagas have been cultivators since time immemorial and they practice jhumming. Different policies/Acts have been adopted such as **Nagaland Forest Act 1968, Nagaland Jhumland Act 1970, Nagaland Forest Policy 1988, National Aforestation programme and National Forest Policy**, which has led to the conversion of Jhumland to forested land and finally rejuvenated the ecological balance-setting of the forests. Consequently, these policies have created forest based economies for the villagers and also drove them away from the practice of shifting cultivation, thus enabling them to set forest based economic activities as their means of livelihood. As a result, focusing specifically, it is found that in Mokokchung and Zunheboto districts, majority of households in the villages own at least one or two *bighas* of land



**Plate : Rural livelihood activities on which urban centers are dependent. (a. Stone Quarrying and b. Rural Handlooms) Under Mokokchung District.**

under tree plantations and do engage in agro-forest activities as forest based livelihood.

Besides, policies and programmes under rural development facilitates rural folks for different sets of livelihood. The programmes like SGSY, NREP, JRY, IAY, EAS, RLEGP, MGNREGS have enabled

villagers in Nagaland to engage in activities other than shifting cultivation. A significant amount of funds were spent under these programmes both in Mokokchung and Zunheboto districts too where villagers got employment as mason, carpenters, bee keeping, piggery, fishery, dairy, poultry farming, floriculture, weaving and handicraft, petty traders, transportation etc which can be termed as their ultimate livelihood means to alleviate poverty.

Thus, numerous programs and schemes have been introduced for rural livelihood, out of which programs, schemes and policies under Forest Department and Rural Development Department are more relevant and as such, in the case of Nagaland, the people have started shifting from the practice of Jhumming to other activities, resulting in the rural populace engaging in alternative livelihoods. The activities that make them employed through different rural development programs are masonry, carpentry, quarrying, woodcraft, handloom and handicraft etc. Besides, the other means of livelihood through ecological programs are forest based activities like wood cutting of fuel wood and local building materials such as bally post, bamboo etc, charcoal trade, logging, forest based wild vegetables and fruit vendors etc. Within the western tract of foothills of the state, other activities like mining, orchard farming, plantation of rubber, tea, agar, coffee etc are source and means of their livelihood. Thus, we come to the conclusion that the policies and programs that are flown into the rural folk greatly determine their livelihood, which in turn plays a major role in running the economy of the people and the state of Nagaland.

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