

**A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF MAO  
NAGA FARMERS IN SENAPATI DISTRICT OF MANIPUR**

**ABSTRACT**

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## **Introduction**

India, whose economy is dominated by agriculture, has 68.84 % of its total population living in rural areas according to 2011 census. Rural sector on the one hand is endowed with rich local resources which are self-sufficient and its agricultural products serve as the backbone of the country. On the other hand, the rural sector of the country is characterised by low income levels, poor quality of life, inadequate productive skills, malnutrition, lower life expectancy, illiteracy, unemployment, etc. Therefore, most of them suffer abject poverty which in turn is a barrier to agricultural development and socio-economic progress in general of the country. Although, in the post-economic reform period, India has grown economically faster, her performance in the reduction of poverty and socio-economic disparity in the rural areas has remained dismal. Such situation reflects that there is a need of scholarly work and more attention of social scientists and policy makers to focus on policy analysis on concrete measures for the socio-economic growth and benefit of such disadvantaged societies in the country.

The picture of agricultural sector remains grim as majority of the farmers constitute the bottom rung of the poverty ladder. According to the Eleventh Five Year Plan, half of those engaged in agriculture are still illiterate; 80% of farmers are small and marginal. The fate of their economy is inseparably linked with the development of agricultural sector. Since majority of them have a small operational holding of land, most of them live below or near the subsistence level. For them, stagnation has become traditional. Growth of the population has increased extensively where the growth in agricultural production has remained stagnant. Therefore, generally farmers are not in a position to earn enough for their living by depending on agricultural products alone. This presents formidable obstacles to development and socio-economic progress of the farming community in the country.

The poor farmers engaged in agriculture are not only constrained in terms of assets and resources, they come across various types of livelihood and other socio-economic challenges: when they face a depressed agricultural scenario; migrate with an expectation for a better livelihood are displaced from their habitation in the wake of any so-called development projects or become more vulnerable as a result of natural disasters; or are deprived of newer opportunities in the globalised society due to lack of education and skills. More frequently normal health problems also occur due to low levels of nutrition and lack of access to health services. Their lives are also wrought with occupational hazards especially those exposed to excessive usage of fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides and mechanization. Illiterate or less educated they are hardly aware of the hazardous effects of coming in direct contact with such toxic substances in the absence of protective equipment or the vulnerability of using powered machines.

More than 2/3 of the total population in the North-East lives in rural areas. Senapati District of Manipur, which is the universe of the proposed study area, has 88.6% of the people engaged as cultivators whereas agriculture provides subsistence to 90% of the total population of Mao people. The pressure of population on the limited cultivable land has remained very high. The methods and implements used in agriculture are of primitive types. Thus, subsistence seems to be their motto. Studies have shown that fertilizer consumption in NER as a whole is also relatively very low in comparison to national average. This is mostly due to defective fertilizer distribution system, lack of supply, inadequate transport, storage and credit facilities, raising cost of fertilizers and the occurrence of primitive techniques of production. Moreover, it is said that green revolution is found to be unsuitable in the hill areas. All in all; farmers are seen at the lowest level of development

In such development process, it is needed to develop unique approach rather than uniform approach as each society, region and tribe varies. It may also be noted that any development plan must begin by concentrating on the socio-economic condition which is the key indicator for the growth and development of any backward society. For an agrarian society like the Mao Naga tribe, with 90% of the total population sustaining on agriculture, any kind of development for them is inseparably linked with the development of farmers and agricultural sector, and no strategy that neglects these sectors can be

successful. Agriculture for the farmers of the Mao Naga tribe is not only the main source of livelihood, but it is a tradition and a way of life that moulds their socio-economic status. Therefore, it is also necessary to identify and analyze factors affecting agriculture and other problems so as to explore possibilities for improvement.

The importance to examine the role of government for Mao farmers is that true development needs to reach even such lowermost rungs of the society concerned. It is just not enough that the government takes up programmes for the development and welfare of those residing in hills and remote areas but also the responsiveness and participation by the deserved beneficiaries to achieve the intended target, which is the basic idea and models behind the programmes. Implementation of government programmes can be said to be successful only when its effects are seen in all sections of population. Also the growth of technology should result in its accessibility to wider population thereby growth in the economy and its distribution effects are seen in all sections of population including the small and marginal farmers. This necessarily includes even in tribal societies found in remote parts of the country as in the case of the Mao Naga farmers. In the light of the above considerations, the present study also intended to examine the support system received by Mao farmers from the government.

The Mao tribe has been particularly chosen for the study because Mao being the aboriginal tribe of the Nagas where the Nagas are believed to have originated, settled and migrated, this basic and distinctive aspect of Mao make them different from the rest of other Nagas and their roles considered crucial and studying about them will have a significant bearing not only to the Mao tribe, but also to the Nagas as a whole. Therefore, though the study has been done looking at a new insight of the changing situation by considering the unique features of Mao tribe, the study need not be confined only to the Mao Naga farmers but can be used as the generalised study of all hilly tribal farmers of North-East India because all the hilly tribal farmers share most of the recent history and their socio-economic conditions remain more or less the same. Incidentally, the researcher herself comes from a Mao Naga family.

Moreover, it can be seen from the survey of literature that general studies on the socio-economic conditions of the farmers in India including North-East and Manipur have been done. There are also studies done on the socio-economic conditions of the

farmers of some individual tribe or community. But one does not come across any study on the socio-economic conditions of the Mao Naga farmers in particular. Many scholarly works on the Mao Naga tribe available are those of its origin, history, culture, religion, and ethnography, etc. which does not go much beyond to study the socio-economic conditions of the Mao Naga farmers. There is, therefore, a gap in the previous studies and the present study is an attempt to fill those gaps to some extent. It is also believed that the findings on the role of government can bring about certain level of awareness amongst the common masses of their entitled benefits and will be helpful for the planners and policy makers to wisely devise and adopt appropriate strategies by considering the ground realities and other socio-cultural factors.

## **Methodology**

Senapati, one of the nine Districts of Manipur was the universe of the study. Out of the six Sub-Divisions in Senapati District, the study was conducted in Tadubi Sub-Division. 15 villages i.e 50 per cent of the Mao villages in Tadubi Sub-Division were selected with a total number of 300 respondents where 20 respondents each from all the selected 15 villages who depend on agriculture as its prime means for support and subsistence were randomly selected as respondents. Therefore, a multi-stage stratified random sampling was adopted for the study. To have an equal representation of small, medium and big villages, five villages which have a household of less than 300, five villages which have a household between 300-600, and five villages which have a household of above 600 were randomly selected for the study. The first phase of data collection was conducted in May 2011. In the first phase of data collection, data with regard to the number of Mao villages and other basic requirements like their number of households, population, etc. were collected from Sub-Division Office, Tadubi. Other data on history and other general features had also been collected. Based on such data, sampling of the present study had been framed. The second phase of data collection was undertaken in August 2011. In the second phase, data on all the government programmes that had been implemented in Senapati District of Manipur since 2007 onwards were collected. This was done by visiting government offices and collecting publications on such programmes. After which a comprehensive list of all such government programmes was used to frame the third

objective of the study. After preparing the interview schedule, pilot study was undertaken in three villages (Punanamei, Mao Karong and Robve Solephe) during October – November 2011 with the purpose to test the authenticity and deficiencies of the research tools and methods; to familiarise with the research environment; to estimate the level of response and duration of the study; to find suitable time for contacting the respondents; and find out the problems likely to be faced for the study. Based on the feedback obtained, the preliminary interview schedule was appropriately modified and finalised. Field visit during pilot study also provided an opportunity to establish rapport with the concerned persons including government officials. The third phase of data collection commenced from June 2012 to September 2012. In the third phase of data collection, extensive fieldwork was undertaken by interviewing 300 respondents comprising of 15 villages. Other data collected were: socio-economic status of the Mao people in context of their traditional life, types of cultivation, traditional practices of agriculture, gennas and taboos, etc. associated with agriculture. The fourth phase of data collection was conducted in 2013 during January, September and October to collect some additional information.

Processing of data collection was done manually and mechanically which includes editing, coding and then later fed into the computer for analysis through a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Tabulation was done and figures/charts were prepared according to the requirement. It relied on both qualitative and quantitative analysis of data. In addition to the data collected through interview schedule, other field notes and personal observations had been used in the analysis of data. To study the first objective, quantitative analysis was made by using Socio-Economic Status (SES) Scale developed Uday Pareek (1964). An interview schedule comprising of all the information about a farmer household on different nine categories was prepared. Nine categories were Occupation, Education and Social participation of head of the household, Category of farmers, Land, Housing, Farm power, Material possessions and Family type. Each category has a sub-title score as code numbers. After the information was obtained, tabulation was prepared with code numbers to show all the sub-title score of the respondents, after which the total score of all the sub-titles score of the respondents, were calculated and interpreted indicating their overall socio-economic status.

The explanation of the different socio-economic classes is given below.

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Scores on the Scale</b>
A	Upper Class	Above 43
B	Upper-middle Class	33-42
C	Middle Class	24-32
D	Lower-middle Class	13-23
E	Lower Class	Below 13

In addition to the SES Scale, few additional questions related to socio-economic parameters formed an important part of interview schedule which were analyzed with the use of SPSS. Along with quantitative analysis, efforts had also been made to qualitatively analyze the socio-economic life of Mao Naga farmers in greater details in the context of their traditional life which exists till today. This was done mainly by discussing and interviewing with the senior citizens/village headmen in the villages. For the second objective, quantitative part of the study was analyzed from the results obtained through SPSS and the qualitative data were analyzed from the information obtained through informal group discussion and repeated consultation with the farmers of different groups in the villages. For the third objective, results obtained from the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) had been set out and analyzed. And finally, concluding analysis has been done from social work perspective.

## **Results and Discussion**

To classify the socio-economic class of the respondents, socio-economic status scale for rural areas primarily developed by Uday Pareek (1964) has been adopted with subject to preliminary test and slight modification as per the need of the study.

### ***1. Socio-Economic Conditions of Mao Naga Farmers Using SES Scale***

89% of the respondents live in a nuclear family and only 11% live in a joint family. 49 % of the households' heads are illiterate; 16% studied upto primary level; 31.7% read upto high school; and only 3.3% studied upto graduation. There is no household head with Post Graduate among the Mao farmers. The effective literacy rate amongst the Mao farmers is 75% with a male literacy rate of 85.6% and female literacy rate of 66%. The

rate of children's enrolment in school is good as almost everyone is in school. It is also noticed that in recent years there has been a significant rise in the rate of literacy especially female literacy and the pace of education is seen gradually increasing. Majority of them i.e 69.3% are farmers. 27.3% work as wage labourers most of the time as agriculture alone is not sufficient to maintain the family. Only 2% perform the work of artisan particularly bamboo baskets and mats making. 13.7% belong to the category of agricultural labourers, 79.3% belong to marginal farmers and 7% belong to the small farmers. 13.7% of the respondents do not own any individual agricultural land. 42% of the respondents are marginal land holders of upto 1 acre of land; 36.3% own land of between 1 to 2 acres; only 8% own land of 2-3 acres and no respondent owns a land of above 3 acres. In terms of material possession, all the respondents possess atleast one or more items of traditional household necessities and agricultural implements for production of food. 79% of the households possess atleast one important item of modern household necessities such as mobile telephone/ LPG/ etc. And more than 80% of the respondents do not possess any luxurious items. Only 1.3% of the respondents live in a pukka house. 96.4% own and live in their own kutchas. 17.7% of the households' head are members in either social or political or voluntary organization. 79.7% are neither member of any organisation nor holding any office.

Measuring the socio-economic conditions of Mao Naga farmers from the SES, it is found that all the Mao farmers belong to three categories viz: Middle Class; Lower-middle Class; and Lower Class. 5 % belong to middle class. 95% are below middle class i.e 77% belong to lower middle class and 18% belong to pathetically lower class.

#### **Explanation of the different class categories of Mao farmers**

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Scores on the Scale</i>	<i>No. of households</i>
A	Upper Class	Above 43	Nil
B	Upper-middle Class	33-42	Nil
C	Middle Class	24-32	15(5%)
D	Lower-middle Class	13-23	231(77%)
E	Lower Class	Below 13	54(18%)
Total			300(100%)



Similar to the findings of this class classification of the Mao farmers, Aier (2006) classified Naga society into the Lower Class, The Middle Class and the Upper Class. Though Aier did not adopt any models of ranking to classify the classes of society, the Lower Class type of people classified by Aier have been found to be similar with the findings using SES. Thus, we get a general idea that farmers not only among the Mao but in the whole Naga society mostly occupy the lowest rung of the society unlike farmers in other parts of India like Punjab, Haryana etc. who are well to do.

## ***2. Other Related Parameters to Assess the Socio-Economic Conditions of Mao Farmers***

In Manipur (rural) BPL families are identified to those who have the monthly income of all sources of the families' income of below Rs. 2,890.55/- (Planning Commission, Government of India, Report November 2009). Considering the income of the Mao farmers according to this definition, it is found that 42% of Mao farmers belong to BPL. 87.3% have toilet facility and 12.7% are without toilet facility. Firewood is commonly and highly used as cooking fuel by Mao farmers (78.3%). 6.7% do not have electricity facility at home. 13.3% have electricity with regular supply of power and 80% have electricity with only 25-30% of power supply. Every village enjoys the availability of spring water which is naturally discharged underground water.

## ***3. Factors Affecting the Socio-Economic Conditions of Mao Naga Farmers***

Physical factors as well as human factors have been identified to be affecting the socio-economic conditions of Mao farmers. Major factors are:

### **(i) Natural Setting of Agriculture**

Geographically, the area of residents and agricultural fields of the Mao are generally located on the top of the mountains or on the hill-slopes of the mountains. Their survival through rugged natural setting is distinctive. It makes their labour more exhaustive. Due to difficult mountainous region, fairly a large part of cultivation is done manually only as draught animals or power tiller cannot be brought to the agricultural fields that are located in a steep and far off places.

**(ii) Hardships of Mao farmers**

The extent of their agricultural lifestyle is tedious. Agricultural plots are scattered and far off. One way distance on walk between the house and the field itself takes around an hour or in some cases around 3 hours. Some farmers cultivate in “Kashii” nearby Maram (another land inhabited by Maram Naga tribe) which is 50-55 kms far away from the village in distance and climatically different from the village.

**(iii) Fragmented Land Holding**

Ownership/ holdings of land in Mao are scarce and fragmented that a household owning a land of upto 1 acre of land or producing a barn of paddy (equivalent to 50 tins or 600 Kg of paddy) have three or more different plots scattered over a distance of about 1 to 20 kms from the villages and between the fields. A household owning land of upto 3 acres of land have as much scattered plots of 15. Farming is more labourious when the agricultural plots are fragmented and it rules out big farming practices. Community ownership of land helps the poor farmers to have food security and supplement income from the crops. There have been instances of where communal ownership of land tends to disappear and become permanent when the household occupy or cultivate the land for a very long period.

**(iv) Cultivation Practices**

In olden days Mao, people used to practice forest cultivation of millets and oats for substitution of rice. Till today, jhum cultivation of crops is still in practice. Besides, other types of cultivation practices are dry terraced rice cultivation; wet terraced rice cultivation and permanent garden cultivation. All these cultivation practices of the Mao farmers are by and large primitive and dependent on rain only. Therefore, though maximum year round input is put into the production of crops, harvest remains poor which affect the economic growth of the farmers. Yet, such practices have been the source of livelihood for Mao farmers.

**(v) Agricultural Pattern and Farm Techniques**

Poor agricultural pattern and farm techniques affect the production of the farmers. More than 90% of the cultivation is rain-fed. Therefore, farmers are without sufficient production of crops whenever there is scanty rainfall. 24.7% of the respondents use only labour force for agriculture. 97.3% of the respondents still use mostly planting

materials of traditional varieties by carrying over year after year. There is only one respondent who practice single cropping system for the sole purpose of commercialization. This is done by replacing the old seeds/planting material every year. 46.3% of the respondents have not used any kind of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides or weed killers which results in low production of crops. With no other means of survival, 93.4% of the respondents produce paddy knowing that harvesting is done once only in a year with a year round input which is highly insufficient. And due to the lack of external support and risks factors, majority of the farmers end up producing less profitable crops. Professional rearing of animals for commercial purpose has not been developed.

**(vi) Marketing, Storage and Processing of Farmers' Produce**

Proper marketing channel, storage and processing facilities which can boost the income of the farmers remain out of reach for farmers. 90.3% of the crop sellers sell their crops through middlemen without really knowing the market price. 98.7% sell immediately after harvest with no means of prolonging the freshness. It is also due to lack of storage or processing facilities, 71% of the respondents who sell their crops have to buy the same crops during off season at a much higher rate as all the crops produced by Mao farmers are seasonal.

**(vii) Labour and Working Condition**

Labour and working condition affect the socio-economic conditions of farmers as labour is inseparably linked with agriculture. Irrespective of the size of family, 63.7% of the respondents have only 2 members who are fully engaged in agriculture that is usually the mother and the father of the family. Mao farmers work for 20-26 days in a month. 60% work for around 8 hours and 40% work for around 6 hours in a day. During paddy plantation season, they work for atleast 13 hours in a day. To help themselves while helping others 86.6% get engaged in a reciprocal social system of helping each other called *ava* while 3% practice co-operative cultivation. Other working system includes inter-village labour exchange and *Chokhroh Kasa*. Mao farmers constantly work for subsistence. Social practices involved in cultivation are very eventful for farmers which also enliven their working spirit. It is also a source of

great help especially for widows or small family members who cannot carry out the difficult task without the help of group.

**(viii) Natural Factor**

Natural factors affect the production of the farmers which have an impact on socio-economic conditions of the farmers. As more than 90% of the agriculture is rain-fed, paddy fields are sometimes left to remain fallow whenever the monsoon comes late or rainfall is deficit as monsoon is the only lifeline of agriculture. Insufficient rainfall leading to a deficit of soil moisture also reduces yields and quality of other crops or leads to crops failure. 42.9% of paddy cultivators have reported to have kept part of their paddy fields fallowed during (2008-2012) largely due to insufficient water. Mao area as a whole has a susceptibility to landslides. Because of landslides and mudslides, few reportedly could not cultivate their paddy fields.

**(ix) Cultural Factors**

Cultural genna taboos and festivals which were very deeply rooted in Mao culture is still found to be having importance to the farmers. Announcement of genna taboos help the farmers understand the commencing of agricultural season. From celebration of festivals, farmers also get to know the timing operation of agriculture. Festival like *Chijjini* is celebrated to maintain good health for successful paddy seedlings transplantation. And from *Saleni* festival, all the farmers get enthusiastic spirit to complete plantation in time as it is a taboo to harvest paddy that is sown after *Saleni*. Therefore, festivals continue to remain the most awaited social moments for farmers and are celebrated with full vigor. However, there are cultural practice and belief that hamper the economic conditions of farmers. The practice of *opra* during the death of a person was costly. And due to the belief and practice of the Mao people that a corpse must be buried with all the personal possessions can be taken as an indication as to why the traditional ornaments of the Mao could not be preserved. Till today, the same practice is followed and by fulfilling such belief, a lot of output is gone. Whatever a person might have earned in a life time is also wasted in that manner.

**(x) Other Social Factor**

Education has been identified as an important factor affecting the progress and development of individual as well as Mao society. A very good number of Mao

educated people are well settled in the cities with prosperous job normally out of their parents' occupation in farming. With education came the value of knowing and preserving their own identity, culture, history and so on. The impact of literacy on the Mao farmers can be seen in the light of their participation in social life and other economic activities. But chi square test does not indicate statistical significance of the educational level of the head of the household with the family income, production of cash crops, usage of chemical fertilizers and wasteful expenditure of the family.

Due to lack of promotion and improvement in traditional items, today, the need to procure surpasses their capacity to produce. Kitchen items, clothes, musical instruments, sports materials have all being replaced with imported items which have to be procured in addition to the need to defray the cost of education, medical, mobile phone, etc. which add up additional economic burden.

Mao farmers are not spared from the civil disturbances such as Kuki-Naga war. The ban and blockade in the state affect the public service delivery systems of the poor and other normal life of the farmers because anything that is exported from Mao is the sole product of the farmers.

#### **(xi) Government Policy**

A large part to the solution highlighted above lies in the appropriate formulation of government policy. But there is disconnection between the government policies and actual needs of the farmers. Government resources for the farmers have been very limited. Even if they are available, due to improper implementation, they fall short of expectations. Hence, farmers have almost been left alone to improve their socio-economic conditions which have not been possible without sufficient external support.

#### ***4. Role of Government Programmes in Improving the Socio-Economic Conditions of Mao Naga Farmers***

An attempt is being made to study the role of government programmes in improving the socio-economic conditions of Mao Naga farmers. This has been done by finding out all the government programmes that have been implemented in Senapati District of Manipur during 2007-2012. Efforts have also been taken to examine the effectiveness and the

extent of benefits received by the targeted group while identifying unforeseen problems. The benefits received by the respondents from different departments are:

**(i) Department of Agriculture**

Centrally sponsored schemes as well as state sponsored schemes have been implemented in Senapati district during the reported period. From this department, only one respondent (0.3%) had received seeds of more than 2 kgs and 6% received just a single handful of vegetables seeds (1-3) times during the reported period. The rest 93.7% did not receive anything from the department.

**(ii) Department of Horticulture & Soil Conservation**

From this department, only one respondent (i.e 0.3%) had received assistance for construction of high tech poly green house. 17.7% reported to have received 02 tree saplings for 01-03 time/s during 2007-2012 and 23.7% received a single handful of mixed vegetables seeds for 01-03 time/s.

**(iii) Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry**

From this department, 0.3% respondent received treatment for its livestock free of cost; 7% of the respondents received treatment by paying; 0.3% of the respondents received training to take care of its own livestock; 92.1% responded of not required the service; and 0.3% of the respondents reported to have been refused to attend to help by the department.

**(iv) Department of Sericulture**

From this department, 1.7% reported to have received employment by getting financial assistance for raising mulberry/eri food plant with supply of rearing appliance and construction of a silkworm rearing house.

**(v) Department of ST/SC**

The department implements economic development programme, infrastructure development programme and welfare programme like award of post-matric scholarship. Out of the 77 entitled members for post-matric scholarship, 91% had responded to have received scholarship and 9% had also applied and responded to likely receive. From this department, 0.6% of the respondents had also reported to have received financial assistance for medical treatment of about Rs. 10,000/- each.

**(vi) Social Welfare Department**

The District Social Welfare Office Senapati was set up in 1982. Different types of welfare programmes are implemented by this department.

(a) Under Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), 64 entitled members had been found to be eligible for the pension. Out of which 23.4% were covered under the pension and 76.6% were not covered under the pension.

(b) Under Manipur Old Age Pension (MOAP) scheme, 106 members were entitled to be covered. Out of which 17% were covered and 83% were not covered under the pension scheme.

(c) From the sample respondents, a total of 33 widows were eligible to get Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS). However, only 6.1% of the eligible widows were covered under the pension scheme and 93.9% were never covered under the pension.

(d) Indira Gandhi National Disabled Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) and other disability programmes had been implemented in order to benefit persons with disability. It is found that 21.4% of the entitled members were covered and 78.6% did not receive any assistance.

**(vii) District Rural Development Agency (DRDA)**

Different schemes/programmes have been implemented by DRDA. Benefits received by the respondents from this department are:

(a) From Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 25% responded of having received wages upto 10 days; 7.7% for 11-20 days; 25% for 21-30 days; 21.3% for 31-40 days; 12.7% for 41-50 days; and 0.3% for 51 days and above. The remaining 8% did not receive any benefit due to lack of interest to work or difficulty to work due to old age or health problems.

(b) Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) which was designed to provide shelter to house-less people living in rural areas has been availed by 3.7% of the respondents for either construction or repairing of the house.

**(viii) Department of Food and Civil Supplies**

Only 7 % of the respondents have ration cards and 93% did not have ration cards. 85% reported to have received 1-4 times of rice with 01 or 02 times distribution of kerosene

and sugar in a year; 13% responded to have received such items more than 9 times in a year and 2% responded that they had been denied of the items.

**(ix) Public Health Engineering Department (PHED)**

The main responsibility of this division is to set up basic and improved infrastructure to general public of the district. Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) is implemented under this department. 5% reported to have received one incomplete set of materials for toilet construction such as only 01 small/big plastic squatting plate while some received a small plastic squatting plate together with tin/plastic for roof/wall; 1.3% responded of having received 01 complete set of materials for toilet construction for individual household use such as a small plastic squatting plate and a pipe with tin for the roof and plastic for the wall; 1 % responded to have received 01 complete set of materials for toilet construction for the common neighborhood use; 0.3% received the same by paying; and 92.4% did not receive anything under TSC.

**(x) Department of Women and Child Development**

From the total sample of 300 respondents, 137 respondents had an entitled member/s to be covered under ICDS. And all the entitled beneficiaries i.e 98.6% except 1.4% respondents were covered under such benefits of ICDS. Remaining 1.4% respondents did not receive as most of the time they lived nearby the agricultural fields far off from the villages.

**(xi) Education Department**

All the children of 6-14 years under sample study except 5 children have been covered under free and compulsory education. 57 respondents have their children enrolled in government school and all of them responded that mid day meals of 2-3 days in a week and some sort of free books and uniforms had been provided to their children under SSA and MDM.

**(xii) Autonomous District Council ADC ( North Autonomous District Council, Senapati)**

The sole reason for the establishment of separate administration for the hills since the British colonial period was to give autonomy to the tribals to administer for themselves. However, it is understood from the data gathered during the interview with ADC members that more than 90% of the financial control rests with the



government. Lack of financial autonomy has rendered it ineffective. ADC does not enjoy popular mandate too. Coupled with ambiguity in its function results in ADC not being able to function for the intent it was created. In view of this, their roles have been dysfunctional.

The study on the role of government programmes in the study area reveals a low level of awareness. Poor farmers have never been taken into consideration for formulation of any programme/scheme. That is why, there is a sever connection between the government policies and the genuine needs of the farmers. And because of the role of middlemen and other unforeseen situation in the implementation process, it is believed that only the left over that has not been usurped by the middlemen or unintended persons reach the entitled beneficiaries. Therefore, while the villagers have resigned to the fact that the state had utterly failed to judiciously implement the welfare scheme on the other hand, beneficiaries seemed to have reconciled to the meager benefits and entitlements they have so far received as it is indicative from the general opinion of the respondents that ‘something is better than nothing’. All in all, the existing government policies have not significantly improved the conditions of Mao Naga farmers.

### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

The findings of the present study indicate a significant role of social worker to bring about a certain level of development awareness amongst the common masses. The role of social workers is crucial to call for social action to bring about transparency and accountability that hamper the very foundation of egalitarian social structure. Social work practice is also crucial for inbuilt capacity for the officials concerns as the IAS probationers of Manipur also observed the same that “the officials lack imaginative and innovative ideas” (Ashokvardhan, 2004, p.140).

The findings of the present study indicates the relevance of forming self-help groups (SHGs), farmers’ club or association, co-operative societies, marketing boards, etc. By forming such groups, farmers can be helped in various ways. They can be helped to have a control over the price of their agricultural products. Such a platform can help the farmers to sell, purchase and capture the lucrative profits of the middle men. Upgradation of the agricultural products in the form of transportation, food processing

and value adding can be also taken as examples. To improve their socio-economic conditions, social workers can play an important role in channelization, educating the farmers on the need and scope for diversification in their occupation. Role of social worker is also crucial to be mediator and advocate bridging the gap between the external forces and the farmers who are too weak to confront the challenges. Social work practice with community which has been “particularly concerned with the needs of those who have been disadvantaged or oppressed, whether through poverty or through discrimination” (Mayo, 2002, p.162), can be adopted by social workers to help the farming community. The study also indicates the relevance of adopting the ideologies of social development to look into the obstacles the Mao farmers face, the support system they receive so as to improve their socio-economic conditions. Thus, the present study can be used as an important source material for social work education to adopt suitable social work methods and ideologies as model to address the development issues of the deprived section of the people who suffer from inequality and injustice in the society as in the case of Mao farmers.

## **Conclusion**

The early life of Mao Naga reveals a classless society. Much of their prosperity can be attributed to their rich and deeply rooted cultures of egalitarianism. In the process of transition, the society has been divided into “haves” and “have nots”. The components of the socio-economic status SES scale according to Uday Pareek (1964) exhibit a low social and economic standard of the Mao farmers. Factors behind the socio-economic backwardness of the Mao farmers have been identified to be closely related with their agricultural practices. The findings on the role of government on Mao farmers in reality indicates that in order to better serve the development needs, there is a need to identify specific problems, resources, skills and local need based of the people instead of government universal approach. Special programmes are required to be introduced exclusively for the farmers in the hills whose difficult terrain make the cultivation much tedious. Even within the hilly farmers, exceptional programmes are required to be formulated for the marginal farmers whose only source of livelihood is agriculture. The present study indicates that there is a need to initiate further research in the following

areas: (a) The role of NGOs, church, women's organizations, students' organizations, youth bodies and other active organizations are very efficient. There is a need to study such roles so that various stakeholders could coordinate in the developmental process. (b) The present study is confined only with the Mao Naga farmers. Agriculture, being the main source of livelihood for the people in the state especially in the rural areas, there is need for wider studies about the problems and prospects of other such tribal farmers residing even in remotest areas. This is considered important from the view point of effective policy measures. (c) There is regional imbalance between the valley and the hill areas of Manipur. Government reports also indicate that much preference is given to the development of the valley districts. Systematic research intervention is required on the strategies of government in the development process. There is a need to develop local based policy programmes. Government should take proper initiatives by incorporating local needs of the tribal farmers to ensure their proper development.

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