

The Role of NGO in Disaster Management- A Case Study of Young Mizo Association, Mizoram

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Abstract

The NGOs' contribution to Disaster Management and their significant roles have been observed and experienced globally. Meanwhile, there are substantial variations in the strategies adopted and implemented due to the diversity in socio-economic conditions, cultural practices, and indigenous knowledge of a society. A study was carried out to identify the roles rendered by the Young Mizo Association during different phases of Disaster Management, i.e., pre-, during- and post-disaster. Data were collected from Primary and Secondary sources, and interviews were conducted among leaders of the Association. The Young Mizo Association (YMA) is the largest Non- Governmental Organization in Mizoram, established in 1935. YMA has been the hand and foot of the Mizo people ever since its establishment. YMA, a Non- Governmental Organization, is constituted for the Mizos and the state of Mizoram. It acts as a model discipline keeper and stands as a pillar that society cannot do without at times of adversity. Administered by the 'Central YMA' at the Centre, a separate Committee- 'Central YMA Disaster Management sub-committee' was set up to deal with an event of a catastrophe in the state. Collaboration with the Government and other agencies often organized disaster mitigation and preventive measures like awareness campaigns, training, mock drills, etc. CYMA Disaster Response Team was constituted under the Central YMA Executive Committee, where the team members were selectively trained by experts in which emphasis was laid upon 'Search and Rescue Training.' The team has provided a handful of equipment, mainly acquired from a donation made by the Government and private sector. Hard times such as the

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pandemic have also proved the immense importance of the organization. Members of YMA volunteer in the Local/ Village Task Force, risking their safety day and night and feeding those without food due to the absence of daily income, providing medical and personal needs to those kept in isolation.

Keywords: Mizo, Young Mizo Association (YMA), Disaster Management

1. Introduction

Management strategies for disasters vary across the globe. The recurrence time interval of a catastrophe, the potentiality of risk, its magnitude, or the degree of vulnerability of the population dictates the diverse approach toward disaster risk reduction. Therefore, the roles of various stakeholders in disaster management also differ subsequently. The voluntary humanitarian services rendered by Non- governmental organizations (NGOs) in hard- times emerge as one of the most significant measures of disaster management. The inclusion of community-based disaster management portrayed its immense importance in achieving a comprehensive approach. The NGOs, primarily decentralized organizations boundless by strict regulations and their state of proximity to the local community, could cost-efficiently implement timely actions in an emergency (Behera, 2002). The quality of activities out of voluntarism is appreciably welcoming, especially during hard- times. The NGO rendering such quality and continued being the first responder to disaster became an integral part of the concept of Disaster management.

In the situation of a drastic increase in disaster cases and their impacts globally, it has become possible for the government to operate and drive the needs management process with the contributions of NGOs (Park & Yoon, 2022). The linkages NGOs could build with the government with the varied multi- specialty they possess, encompassing every individual aid and relived for the public sector. The chief role of NGOs towards disaster risk reduction is to perform timely actions effectively and efficiently in pre, during, and post-disaster phases. Focuses were laid on minimizing the impact and enhancing quick recovery by aiding the government and other agencies with the same visions. The services and assistances rendered by different NGOs vary according to the stipulated focus, mission, and targets (Coppola, 2021). Community-based disaster management has emerged as the primary objective of NGOs supported and supplemented by various

international organizations in building resilient communities. However, those external agencies usually have a time and financial bond in their project for a specific region. It is, therefore, a pre-requisite for the NGOs to involve the participation of local people in decision-making and strategies adopted for their development and risk reduction. (Kafle & Murshed, 2006).

A natural disaster event's impending or actual occurrence has neither favouritism nor preference. No place can be declared risk-free; instead, every area is prone to one or multiple types of disaster. Consequently, no man's states or positions inevitably determine one's safety in a disaster and like situations. Therefore, profound disaster management strategies reaching every level of society are the need of the hour.

Disaster Management (DM), as mentioned in DM Act 2005, obliges a cross-sectoral public-private collaboration. It can draw sensible disaster management procedures from the outcome of interchange ideas and experience between government and NGOs. It is also crucial for both parties to frequently train as many abled persons encompassing every corner of society. NGOs' flexibility and everyday actions can adversely create a wrongful act, intensifying the impact of a disaster on both victims and novice volunteers (Zubir et al., 2011). The NGO must synergize the government program and initiatives toward disaster management (NDMA, 2010). GO- NGO could build disaster resilience by incorporating community-based Disaster Management awareness and training in government developmental programs.

2. Young Mizo Association

The Young Mizo Association, renowned by its acronym YMA is the largest Non-Governmental Organization in the state of Mizoram in India. YMA is registered under the Societies Registration Act (XII of 1860), founded on 15th June 1935. It is a voluntary, non-profit-making, and secular organization administered and functions without any indulgence of politics. Administered by the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) at the centre, the headquarters is located in the capital city- Aizawl. There are 8 sub-headquarters, mainly in district headquarters, 50 groups, and 811 branches (CYMA Statistic 2022). As per their convenience, the YMA branch usually segments its branch into different sections to strengthen it (Fig. 1).

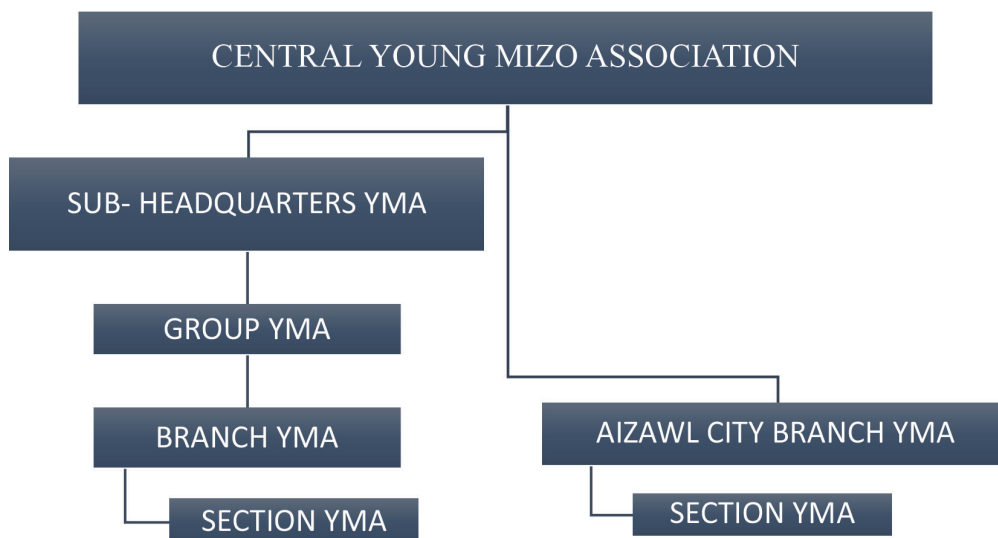


Figure 1 : Organizational Structure of Young Mizo Association

An individual with a Mizo identity, attaining the age of 14 years, is eligible to become a member of the Young Mizo Association. Sometimes, it becomes a matter of course or formality for the Mizos to enrol in the association. Owing to that, it holds many members within and outside Mizoram, which subsequently consolidate the strength of YMA. The members enrolled numbered over 4.4 lakh in 2022, wherein the male comprises 2.6 lakh members while the female member accounts for more than 1.8 lakh.

Act following the three aims and objectives, i.e., i) Effective utilization of leisure, ii) Developing the way progress for the Mizos, and iii) Admiration of Christian ethics, it becomes the hand and foot for the Mizo society (Vanlallawma, C., 1998). Since its inception, YMA has engaged in humanitarian actions, assisting the poor and alleviating those in need from difficult circumstances (Singh, 2017). They often act as a watchdog for society by conserving and enhancing the cultural and traditional practices of the Mizo tribe. It is an NGO that society heavily relies on, especially in times of woes and other adversity, like a disaster (Malsawmliana, 2019). The convention of YMA in times of grave occurrence among the Mizo society is a unique yet significant feature of the association. To aid and accommodate the dead relatives, the YMA made all arrangements.

From digging the grave to burying the dead body, it followed up by gathering, aiming to console the dead relatives. The sound practices rendered by YMA to flatten the curve of the society emerged from the quality of altruism, which is named- 'Tlawmngaihna' in the local language; that is claimed to be an instinct among every inner core of the Mizos.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted to understand the services extended by the Young Mizo Association towards Disaster Management in Mizoram.

The present study adopted a qualitative Descriptive Research design to carry out the research. Data are collected from both Primary and secondary data. Studies are based on analysis of activities record files of YMA. Interviews conducted and observations also form the central part of the study. Data were analysed using the thematic inductive analysis technique. The measures and activities of YMA for Disaster Management are categorized into three themes- Pre, during, and Post Disaster phase. The complexities in nature of activities are broadly classified into 5 segments. The yearly program organized from 2006-2020 was evaluated and merged every three consecutive years into one group which was then interpreted using the Frequency polygon.

4. Administrative mechanism of Young Mizo Association- Towards Disaster Management

Because of building a holistic approach for the advancement of Mizo society and the state of Mizoram, the Young Mizo Association has forward enormous initiatives. In accordance with society, the Central Young Mizo Association needs to establish Sub-Committees to facilitate and implement different developmental aspects. The CYMA Disaster Management Sub-Committee is formed to deal with matters relating to disasters and the management thereof. Meanwhile, a committee to precisely manage the relief measures- 'CYMA Relief Committee' was formed in 2017 by the Executive Committee of CYMA. Forging ahead, the CYMA Disaster Management Sub- Committee constantly strives to build community-based disaster management, synergizing the local community through its groups and branches of YMA across the state (Fig. 2). With the consent of Central YMA, the CYMA Disaster Management Sub- Committee formulate CYMA Disaster Response Force in 15th January 2016. The force with strength

of appointed 20 male members from different branch came into function from 1st October 2016. To enhance co-operation and to link every corner, the YMA Groups and Branch were advice and consent to formulate Disaster Management Sub- Committee in each respective coverage area.

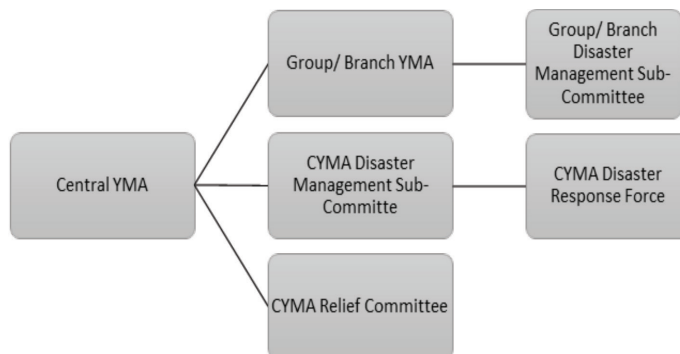


Figure 2 : Disaster Management Mechanism of Central Young Mizo Association

5. Role of YMA in Pre- Disaster Phase

The incorporation of local people in Disaster risk reduction strategies facilitates the

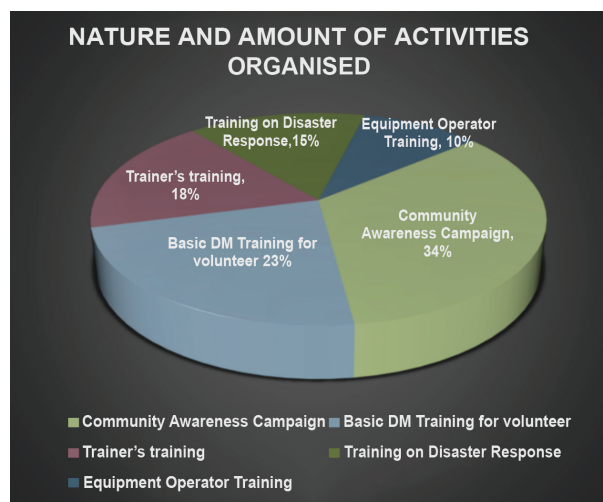


Figure 3 : Nature and Amount of Activities Organised by YMA

process of policymaking and implementation (Azad et al. 2020). Mainstreaming the community-based Disaster awareness, the CYMA, through the encouragement of the CYMA DM Sub- committee strives to build a disaster-resilient community by adopting pro- active mitigation strategies.

5.1 Disaster Management Training

Basic DM Training for volunteers was frequently conducted mainly for members representing each branch YMA (Fig. 4). The group/ branch representative trainees of 'YMA Trainer's Training' was expected and projected to further propagate the gained knowledge and expertise to the community in their respective localities. The devoted 'CYMA Disaster Response Force' was persistently strengthened and reinforced to respond promptly to an emergency through 'Training on Disaster Response' and 'Equipment Operator Training' (Fig. 5). Instructors and trainers were meant from the 'National Disaster Response Force' (NDRF), 'State Disaster Response Force' (SDRF), professionals from government agencies and academic institutions, medical practitioners, and experts from the association simultaneously.



Figure 4 : Disaster Management Training Branch YMA Members



Figure 5 : Training of CYMA Disaster Response Force

5.2 Community Disaster Awareness Campaign

Imparting and extending disaster awareness to the local community emerged as the priority of the CYMA approach to disaster management (Fig 3). They mainly organised community awareness campaigns in the different local branches through a collaboration of several outside agencies (Fig. 6). The 'State Disaster Management Authority' (SDMA), Mizoram, and 'Department of Disaster Management and Rehabilitation' (DM&R), Govt. of Mizoram were the persistent partners from which resources person are mostly arranged. However, the group or branch YMA has also organised campaigns in their respective localities. Trainees from the activities mentioned above played a significant role in this aspect.



Figure 6 : Community-Based Disaster Awareness Programme

5.3 Mock Drills

YMA members supplement the Government initiatives by primarily engaging themselves in multi-hazard mock drills (Fig. 7). As per the request and invitation; CYMA has dispatched the 'CYMA DM Response Force' to exercise the crucial role of a prompt response. Mock drills are one of the most vital exercises by the CYMA to identify the room for improvement and examine the strength and effectiveness of the force. As more players could be attained through YMA, the members of a particular incident area are usually the leading player, thereby enormously contributing to the success of the drills.



Figure 7 : Mock Drill in Aizawl

5.4 Information dissemination

Acknowledge the vulnerability of Mizoram to several types of disaster, and the CYMA circulates a notice to their branch when a potential threat is felt in critical times. The leaders of branch YMA are requested to enquire about the community's safety and direct the CYMA if any assistance is sought. One of their kind services is during impending flood situations; members volunteer all day and night, keeping an eye on the level and velocity of rising water to execute timely actions, alert warnings, and proclaim evacuation for vulnerable community segments.

6. Role of YMA During Disaster Event

Stretching across the state, the presence of YMA in every corner results in being a first responder in an emergency. The role of NGOs during a disaster is to have a quick response and save as many lives as possible (Mondal et al., 2015). The immediate search and rescue operation heavily relies on the hands of YMA, especially in remote areas where outsourced assistants hardly set foot. Per the CYMA's advice and request, some branch YMA set up a special committee on DM and disaster response force in their respective localities. 'CYMA Disaster Response Force' is mandated to deal with disasters and perform quick responses. They were also made available in situations where a local

The significance of YMA has been experienced mainly in hard- times like the COVID pandemic. Many Mizo youths volunteer through YMA performing humanitarian actions to benefit less privileged sections of the community (Harikrishnan & Sailo, 2020). During the lockdown, the daily wagers in Mizoram were severely affected, where starvations are at an alarming rate. YMA has extended its services during the lockdown, feeding those without food and supplies for medical and personal needs to those in isolation.



Figure 8 : Provision of Food During COVID Lockdown

6.1 Resources Available for Search and Rescue operation

CYMA has various resources for prompt and effective response to a disaster. The equipment's primary sources are donations made by government agents and through several generous assistances (Fig. 9 & 10; Table 1). The property of CYMA was made available to be utilized by every branch on request. CYMA Resource Sub-Committee and CYMA Property Sub-Committee were established to manage and register the property in and out movement. However, the equipment for Search and Rescue was administered mainly by the 'CYMA Disaster Management Sub-Committee' and 'CYMA DM Response Force.'



Figure 9 : Search and Rescue Equipment of YMA



Figure 10 : Morgue Van Donated by DM&R, Govt. of Mizoram

Table-1 : List of Equipment Issued to CYMA by Department of Disaster Management & Rehabilitation, Govt. of Mizoram

Sl.No	Name of equipment/ Product	Quantity
1	Morgue Van	1
2	Bolero Camper	1
3	Harness	4
4	Screw Carabineer	10
5	Oval Lock Carabineer	5
6	Descender	3
7	Jumar Pair	4
8	Mitten Pair	10
9	Tape Sling (150 cms)	6
10	Double pulley	4
11	Rescue Pulley	4
12	Tandem pulley	4
13	Paw	3
14	Safety Helmet	20
15	Imported Rope 10mm	100mt
16	Imported Rope 8mm (for sling)	50mt
17	Indian Rope (12mm)	200mt
18	Indian Rope (10mm)	100mt
19	Four fold Stretcher	1
20	Rain coat	30
21	Pelican Search Light (Model: 94 10L)	1
22	Ground sheet	5

6.1.1 The Notable Innovation- HRUAILUANG HLANG (STRETCHER)

The hilly terrain and steep slopes of Mizoram often retarded the execution of Disaster Response Force. It was a major continuous challenge for the 'CYMA Disaster Response Force' to save an injured person's life when rescue are operated in a steep slope (Lalhruaitluanga, personal communication, 10th October 2021).

Mr. Lalhruaitluanga, Central Executive Committee Member, in charge for 'CYMA DM Response Force' and former chairman of 'CYMA DM Sub- Committee,' painstakingly searched for a solution to numerous obstacles faced during 'Search and Rescue' operation. He has successfully innovated a stretcher specifically designed to meet the obstructions. The stretcher called 'Hruaitluang Hlang' was donated to CYMA, named after the innovator (Fig. 11).



Figure 11 : Interior and Exterior Structure of 'Hruaitluang Hlang'



Figure 12 : Delivery of Casualty Using 'Hruaitlang Hlang'

It is a metal-enclosed stretcher with bedding and a tied belt. Holes were stripped at the cover to maintain ease of respiration and engaged communication between the rescuer and the rescue. A first-aid box is also installed inside the stretcher.

On 27th August 2021, in response to the call for assistance from Chawlhmun local Branch YMA, a severe casualty from an accident on the narrow and rocky steep slope of Chawlhmun, Aizawl was effectively delivered and rescued with 'Hruaitluang Hlang' by CYMA Disaster Response Force (Fig. 12).

7. Role of YMA In Post- Disaster

It is a traditional and cultural practice for the Mizo people to aid and console the victims of any crisis, which validly matches the essence and entity of YMA activities after a disaster. The services rendered by YMA after the event of a disaster can be broadly categorized into Relief and Reconstruction.

7.1 Relief

Immediate relief is a prime necessity for the affected community or individual in the aftermath of a disaster. It is essential to limit the relief provided according to their needs (Kumaran & Torris, 2011). It is always a desire of YMA to offer and arrange the needs of the victims. Sometimes, people entirely or partially lose their house out of fire, landslide, flood, etc. In such circumstances, YMA extended its actions by arranging temporary shelters, provisions of food and water, and supply requirements for those in need.

Relief in terms of money, mainly from society's donation, were collected by YMA. In case of a severe and comprehensive destructive disaster, the CYMA sought donations to relief funds through its branch across the state. 'Central YMA Disaster Relief Committee' was formed on 19th June 2019 to inquire about and examine the disaster's intensity. They are responsible for fixing, arranging, and division of the provision of the relief fund. Reports are submitted to CYMA if a case of bribery or corruption is felt. If CYMA, after thorough investigations found correct, the responsible group or branch will be dissolved and charged to reimburse the same amount.

7.2 Reconstruction

YMA often reconstructed damaged houses for homeless victims, preventing population displacement. These kinds of assistance and services are performed through voluntary communal labour by members of YMA.

8. Frequency of Activities Performance

The period of 2015- 2017 has been the most active year. The high frequency was because the 'Awareness Campaign for DM' was organized for Branches of 4 YMA Groups and all Branches of Aizawl City in 2015. In contrast, the COVID lockdown resulted in fewer activities during 2018-2020 (Fig. 13).

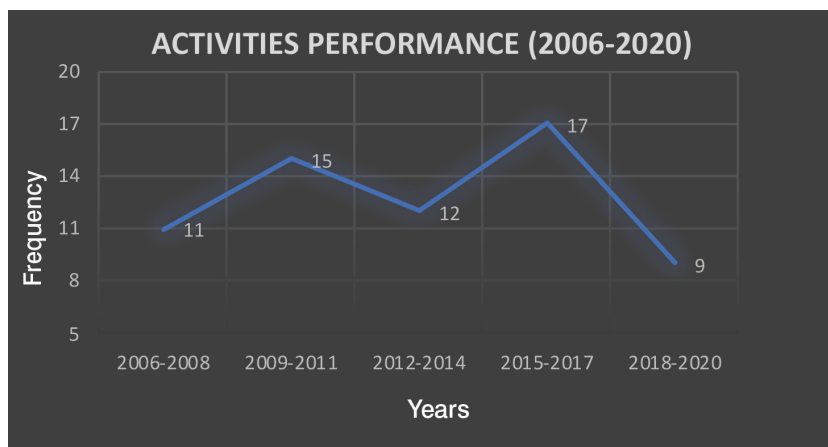


Figure 13 : Overview of DM Activities Performed by YMA

9. Conclusion

The NGO where many communities are engaged could be the best option and target to mainstream 'Community-based disaster risk reduction program' (Fitzpatrick & Molloy, 2014). This case study has highlighted the contributions and capacity of 'Young Mizo Association' toward Disaster Management.

YMA has the potential and capabilities to amplify its role in disaster management. With due respect to the so-far performance proceed, suggestions are made because of the progression and development of YMA. In today's busy world, organizing social gatherings for awareness campaigns is hardly attended by many. But, YMA is still fortunate enough to assemble its members through a regular practice of communal labour, gathering at times to console death's family, etc. Incorporating a brief disaster awareness session in between speeches in such an assembly would be effective. In addition to the current 'CYMA DM Response Force,' it would be enormously beneficial for the far-flung community if the same could be initiated at least in each sub-headquarters. Damage and impact records are crucial in vulnerability assessment; updating the data files and documents is also suggested.

However, the 'Young Mizo Association' towards Disaster Management is admirable. The members of YMA pouring the quality of altruism are found to be the driving factor of CYMA striving towards managing and reducing disaster risk in Mizoram. The multi-sectoral approach of YMA, complementing and supplementing the government policy through initiatives and implementation, is satisfying.

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