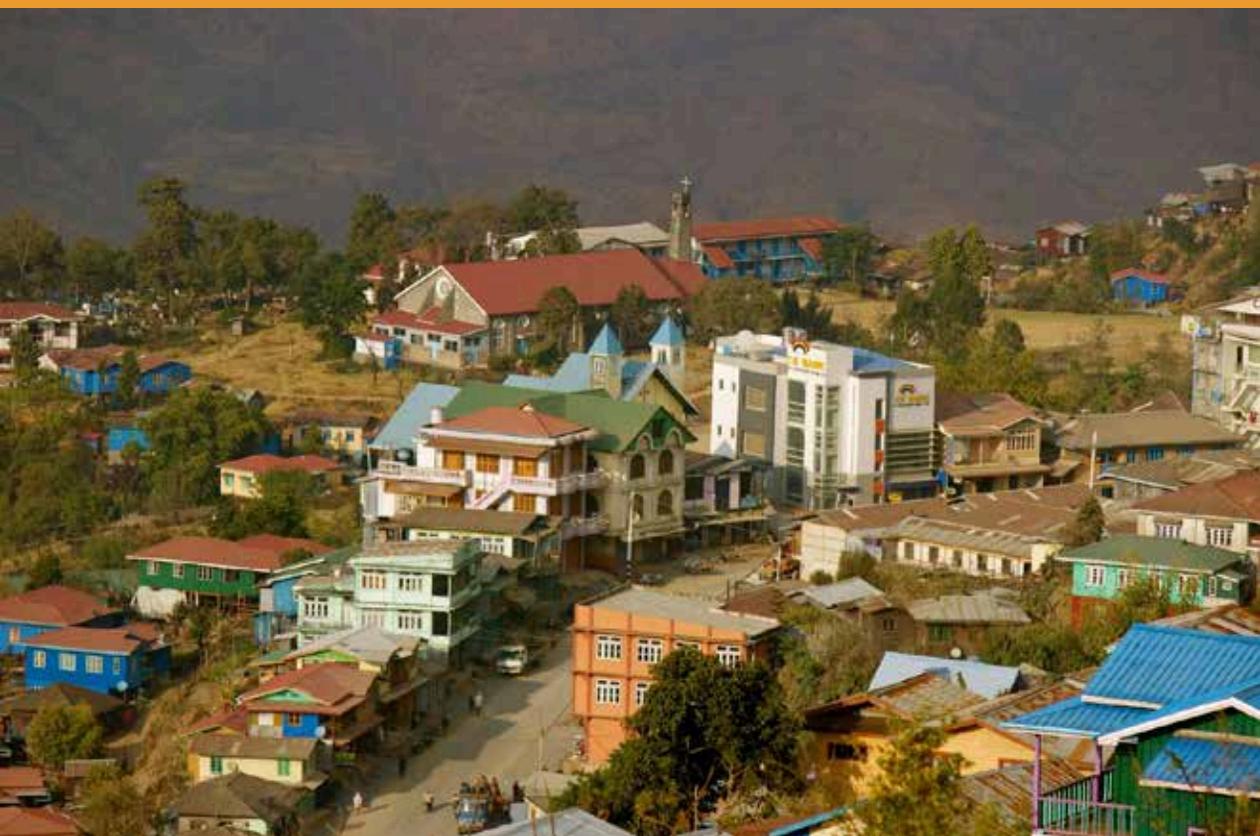


# Assessing Faith-based Organizations in Development

Case Study of Hakha Baptist Church,  
Chin State, Myanmar

*Thawng Tha Lian*



Consortium of Development Studies  
in Southeast Asia (CDSSEA)



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The Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia has drawn on primary postgraduate research undertaken for theses from the master's programs of Chiang Mai University's Master of Arts in Social Science (Development Studies) (MASS); Chulalongkorn University's Master of Arts in International Development Studies (MAIDS); and the Asian Institute of Technology's Master of Science in Gender and Development Studies (MGDS). With a diversity of academic approaches (gender studies, political science, social sciences), the individual works of this collection have in common a focus on the increasing interconnection and regionalization of the five mainland Southeast Asian countries (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam), and examine these exchanges and encounters within the context of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

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A Case Study of Hakha Baptist Church,  
Chin State, Myanmar

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# Assessing Faith-based Organizations in Development: A Case Study of Hakha Baptist Church, Chin State, Myanmar

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## Series Foreword

The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) at Chiang Mai University has extended its publication program to include Master's dissertations from The Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia (CDSSEA). The CDSSEA series covers mainland Southeast Asia: Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, and regionalization, development encounters and exchanges within the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

The CDSSEA program brings together resources and expertise from three of Thailand's leading institutions offering Master's degrees in development studies: Chiang Mai University's Master of Arts in Social Science (Development Studies) (MASS); Chulalongkorn University's Master of Arts in International Development Studies (MAIDS); and the Asian Institute of Technology's Master of Science in Gender and Development Studies (MGDS). Although the Consortium's program focuses on the relationship between development studies and social sciences, each of the programs has a different emphasis. The Chiang Mai degree focuses on social sciences and anthropological perspectives, with research interests in environmental and resource management, food security and local livelihoods, labour migration and trans-border issues, ethnicity and development, health, tourism, and agrarian transitions. Chulalongkorn's program concentrates on the political dimension of development, including democratization, human rights, conflict resolution, international and civil society development organizations, community development and globalization. The Asian Institute of Technology focuses on the relationships between gender and development—including women's rights, civil society, and gender dimensions of urbanization and industrialization.

The CDSSEA program has a practical dimension, building leadership capacity in mainland Southeast Asia's regional development, bringing together postgraduate students, encouraging debate, and promoting the rethinking of development alternatives in such areas as social equality, justice and participation, environmental and economic sustainability, and community development. In this regard, a major objective is to develop the knowledge and skills of development practitioners and to enhance the quality and effectiveness of policy-making and its implementation in the region.

The publications in this series—selected from the CDSSEA Master's program—are designed to express this diverse range of interests in development studies and regionalization, and to emphasize the relationships between empirical and theoretical research, policy-making and practice.

*Victor T. King*, Senior Editorial Adviser,  
Consortium of Development Studies in Southeast Asia series



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# Abbreviations

CBO	Community Base Organization
CE	Christian Education
CHRO	Chin Human Rights Organization
CNA	Chin National Army
CNF	Chin National Front
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSSD	Christian Social Service for Development
HBC	Hakha Baptist Church
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
LCC	Lukhu Children Center
MMK	Myanmar Kyat (1,000,000 MMK = USD 740, GBP 570)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Corporation and Development
SNS	Saipen Nursery School
UNDP	United Nations Development Program



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*Thawng Tha Lian*



## Chapter 1

# Introduction

### Background

Chin State is one of the seven states of the Union of Myanmar. It has a total area of 13,907 sq. miles (22,376 sq. km.) with a population of 478,801 according to the Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014. The majority of the population is Christian. Chin state is situated in the northwest of Myanmar, with the Indian state of Manipur in the north and the Indian state of Mizoram and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh in the west. The capital of Chin State is Hakha. Chin State is mountainous with few transport links. According to the Integrated Household Living Conditions survey conducted by UNDP in 2009 – 2010, Chin State is among the poorest of the 14 states and divisions in Myanmar, with the highest incidence of poverty at 73%, and the highest rate of food poverty (UNDP 2011).

The Chins were once known as headhunters and slave raiders. The exact date the Chin settled into what is now the Union of Myanmar is unknown and the history of the Chin can be traced only since 1600 AD. The majority came from the north, presumably from Mongolia, and lived along a river which later came to be known as the Chindwin River. The Chin scholar, Vumson (as cited in Sakhong, 2003) argues that “when the Burman/Bamar descended to the plains of central Burma, during the 9th century AD, the Chin people were already in the Chindwin Valley” (Sakhong 2003). The Chins have different clans and communities. They call themselves various names such as Asho, Cho,

Khumi, Kuki, Laimi, Mizo (Lushai), Thado and Zomi (Kuki). But they all belong to the Tibeto-Burman and Mongoloid races (Sakhong 2003).

Before the British colonial invasion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Chin lived as an independent nation. The Chin scholar, Chin Khua Khai, argued (as quoted in Phunom Post) that even after it came under colonial rule in 1895, the Chin State remained relatively autonomous from British control until 1935, when the Burmese independence movement began under the leadership of General Aung San, and the Chin decided to join with him and other ethnic representatives in order to build the federal union.

Myanmar people have been emigrating to different countries since the 1988 nationwide protest movement. The Chins mostly used to flee to India, the world's largest democratic country at the time, in order to seek legal protection. Prior to the uprising Chin often used to cross illegally into Mizoram State in India, for trading. Widespread poverty was another of the main causes of emigration. After the 1988 uprising emigrants looked for safety in other countries, such as Malaysia and Thailand (Thang 2011).

The Chin National Front (CNF) was founded on 20 March 1988 as a Chin nationalist party. Its armed wing, the Chin National Army (CNA) was at war with the Myanmar government from then until 2012, when the CNF signed a ceasefire agreement with the government which, at the time of writing, is still in effect. The CNF advocates for the rights, freedoms, and self-determination of the Chin people, the restoration of democracy, and the establishment of a federal Union of Myanmar. It believes in overthrowing the military regime and establishing freedom, justice, and equality.

The conflict between the CNA and the Myanmar government had profound effects on the Chin people, thousands of whom were displaced as they migrated to neighboring countries to find somewhere safe to live. The conflict interrupted economic growth, as well as people's basic human rights such as freedom of religion and the right to education. For example, the government's Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training Schools (known locally as Na Ta La schools, from the Burmese acronym for the Border Areas Program) function as a separate education system, free for the Burman or Buddhists in Chin state, but out of bounds for Chin Christian students who have to use the mainstream state education system, where families have to pay annual fees, buy school materials, and provide supplementary

income for teachers. This constitutes a significant economic barrier to accessing education for the Chin (CHRO 2010). International organizations that could have bolstered civil society were banned by the government. The weakened civil society was an important factor in Chin State's becoming the poorest state in the country. As a consequence of weak and poorly funded government institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs) have assumed responsibility for social welfare services and social protection of vulnerable groups. These CSOs are mainly connected to the churches, the majority of which are Baptist. The CSOs and the churches are in most cases responsible for running orphanages and their educational institutions, as well as charity schemes for vulnerable and poor families.

## **Problem Statement**

When we study the political, cultural, educational, religious, and social development of the Chin people and Chin State, we find that the Church is intimately intertwined throughout. It is often stated that Christianity spread significantly to different parts of the world as a tool of Western imperialism, and that the West used Christianity, not to address any religious need but as a political tool to promote their political ideologies and enforce their power. This was the "3M strategy": first, they sent the merchants (M1), then the missionaries (M2), and finally the military (M3) to take control. This hypothesis continues to exert a powerful influence on the political views of many Myanmar politicians, especially the military leaders, and is also very prevalent among ordinary Myanmar people (Aung 2015). Whether the hypothesis is historically verifiable or not is an open question, but I argue that, unlike in other colonial states, the rise of Christianity and the purpose of bringing the Christian mission into Chin State were based purely on religious and humanitarian concerns. For these reasons, combined with the fact that the traditional religion had been deeply rooted in Chin society for centuries, the Chin people easily accepted the missionary presence and agenda. Since then, foreign Christian missions in Chin state have focused on religion and the social well-being of the people, and on the implementation of development projects.

Myanmar is a multi-cultural society and is composed of eight major indigenous (Tai-yin-tha) populations, namely Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kaya, Mon, Rakhine, Shan, and Burmese (UN Human Rights Council 2015). In terms of

religious categories, Buddhism is the largest practiced religion and the second is Christianity. 85% of Myanmar's population is Buddhist and around 10% is Christian. The remaining 5% belong to other religions like Islam, Hinduism, and traditional religions (Aung 2015). Many scholars, academics, and researchers believe that 90% of the population of Chin State is Christian - the highest percentage of practitioners of Christianity in the ethnic states of Myanmar.

Following the military coup in 1962, the military barred the way to international development agencies, especially in ethnic states like Chin State. The 1988 uprising and the conflict between the government and the Chin led to a massive exodus of Chin to neighboring countries. The conflict interrupted economic growth and livelihoods, and led to further deterioration of people's rights. Civil society organizations are oppressed in Chin State, which as noted is the poorest state with the highest rate of food poverty. Chin State was marginalized by central government with a desperately low government development budget. In such an environment, the church's involvement in promoting and developing the community was invaluable, not just for select communities, but for the Chin State at large. Christianity's penetration into Chin society over a hundred years allowed unprecedented access and trust. When we look back at the historical development of Chin State, the role of the churches in community development, and in particular in improving and promoting rights to education, is clear.

In this study I focus on issues related to the church and its development work rather than on non-religion based development agencies and government intervention. The purpose of this research is to explore the role of the church, as a faith-based organization, in the development of the Chin State's education system. I examine the specific roles of church institutions in providing assistance for community development, especially the church's role in promoting rights to education. Throughout the study, I use the rights-based approach for education in examining the roles of Church institutions. A rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards. Under a human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law, which helps to promote sustainability and people's empowerment. A rights-based approach also explains how developing an

understanding of human rights issues is necessary to oppose marginalization, conflict, injustice, and poverty (OHCHR 2006). The Chin State and Chin people were marginalized by and excluded from central government for decades; there was no rights-based approach from the government. Starting from the rights-based approach, I use the 4As framework for this research. The 4As framework, as explained in chapter 2 below, measures the extent to which the right to education is met by assessing how “Available, Accessible, Acceptable and Adaptable” it is (Tomaševski 2001).

## Research Questions

The main question is identified as follows:

- How far do the church’s activities enhance a rights-based approach to development in Chin State?

Sub-questions are:

- How does the church facilitate rights to education? How has the church collaborated in facilitating the availability of, accessibility to, acceptability and adaptability of the rights to education?
- What role does the Hakha Baptist Church (HBC) Youth Department play in promoting a rights-based approach to development? How far do such activities help improve availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability to the rights to education?

## Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of the church institutions’ work in development issues in Hakha. Secondary objectives are:

- To identify the roles of church institutions in promoting a rights-based approach to the right to education.
- To examine the involvement of the HBC Youth Department in supporting a rights-based approach to education.
- To explore how major development changes occur in the Hakha community in terms of the right to education.

## Research Methodology

For this study, the qualitative method is applied to ethnographic research design, and case studies are utilized. Since my study adopts a case study approach and uses qualitative methods to construct knowledge about the role of church institutions in community development, I use Key Informants - in-depth interviews with influential community leaders, relevant government department officials for example from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, church pastors, representatives of faith-based NGOs and other concerned groups. I also use discussions with focus groups from the local community. The primary sources of data collected from the field are supported by an assessment of secondary sources such as NGO statistics, church institutional records and official documents.

### *Criteria for case study selection*

I chose the town of Hakha for this research because it is the capital city of Chin State and the place where the largest population of Chin can be found. Since Hakha is the State capital, many different departments and ministries of the government are located there. These include, but are not limited to, the Ministries of Religious Affairs, Home Affairs, and the Department for Rural Area Development. These departments and ministries are essential to this research as they provide necessary information, data, and reliable sources. In addition, there are activities focused on community development by civil society organizations connected to church institutions. Some locally based NGOs can also be found in Hakha, including faith-based organizations. The church is also responsible for implementing various projects, many of which are based in Hakha. Youth participation in Hakha is particularly important for community development initiatives, including programs specifically geared towards improving standard practices of, and promoting access to, education.

I chose the Hakha Baptist Church (HBC) for this research because it is one of the oldest and largest churches in Chin State, historically respected and valued by the Chin as it was built by the missionaries. Because of the church's influence and history, it runs several development projects and is well known for its initiatives in promoting young people's involvement in community development work and in educational projects. The church ministers' participation in community development-related issues is highly valued and

successful. The key sources of information from this church range from high ranking officials to key figures from the church's institutional level programs. HBC is the most representative of all forms of community development work taken on by churches in Chin State. Several departments have been formed within the church - eg the Women Department, Christian Education Department, Deacons Department, Youth Department, etc. All of these departments have specific roles, activities and levels of participation for development work. I chose the Youth Department for this study because it is the most powerful and active department for community development work, especially in regard to educational matters. Moreover, according to its culture and practice, the young people and their activities are at the heart of the church and its goals. The young people are the backbone of the church.

Research Question	Data Needed	Information Sources	Tools and Methods of Data Collection
Q1 How far do the church's activities enhance a rights-based approach to development in Chin State?	Official documents and minutes from Church institutions Documents from previous and current church projects related to development in all aspects including educational development	Youth from the Church's Youth Department Interviews with community elders, concerned officials	In-depth interview with key informants Focus Group Discussion

<p>Q1.1 How does the Church facilitate the right to education? What types of collaboration has the church participated in to facilitate the availability of, accessibility to, acceptability and adaptability of the rights to education?</p>	<p>Education system in previous times (curricula, teaching styles, etc) Opportunity of the children/youth to access education The roles of Youth Department in supporting the rights to education</p>	<p>Church institutions' records Interviews with pastors, local government officers and youth groups</p>	<p>Secondary data from official records of church institutions In-depth interviews with key informants</p>
<p>Q1.2 What role does the Youth Department play in promoting a rights-based approach to development? How far do such activities help improve availability of, accessibility to, acceptability and adaptability of rights to education?</p>	<p>Documents of past (2010) conditions in Hakha (photos, records from churches/NGOs/government) Current church-based projects Education change/improvement</p>	<p>Pastors Youth Department of Church Officials from different church institutions Faith-based NGOs in Hakha local people, church members</p>	<p>Focus Group Discussion Key Informant interviews with local Hakha Development Committee &amp; town elders Secondary documents from the concerned church Institutions</p>

**Table 1.1: Methodology Matrix and Interview Strategy**

***Key Informant Interviews (In-depth Interviews)***

Community elders, church pastors, faith-based NGOs in Hakha, and Ministry of Religious Affairs officials were selected for interview. They were

the most experienced and knowledgeable sources, and their information for this study was invaluable.

Agencies	Numbers
Ministry of Religious Affairs	1
Hakha City Development Committee	2
Private sector	2
Faith-based NGOs in Hakha	2
Focus Group Discussion (youths and teachers)	15
Community Elders (Church deacons)	2
Church pastors	2
HBC Youth Department	10

**Table 1.2: Numbers of expected respondents**

### *Focus Group Discussions*

I set up two focus groups with 15 people in total. Youth from the church and teachers who work for church-based schools were included. Regarding the criteria for these two groups' selection, I recognized that the youths and teachers were the informants who could offer the most realistic perspectives on the church institutions' role in promoting the right to education. Their attitudes and perspectives could most accurately be obtained from group discussion where I could see the "chaining" from their interactions.

However, for local faith-based NGOs, pastors and other relevant officials, individual interviews were the preferred method. One of the biggest concerns was that the pastors' role in community development work focused on education under the supervision of the church. Thus, I determined that they should not be in group interviews with other informants due to concerns about "social class bias". I also recognized the potential for self-censorship from fear of group bias.

### *Secondary Documents from Concerned Offices*

The documents that I collected for the study included newspapers in the Chin language, church minutes and documents, papers from previous studies in Hakha, as well as old and recent official documentation from relevant institutions.

### ***Interview Data Analysis***

All interviews and responses to questionnaires are recorded on audio recorder or file. All interviews conducted in Chin language are translated into English, transcribed and entered into the software system for qualitative data analysis. Data are coded according to the categories identified in the above methodology matrix box and analyzed to answer the research questions.

### **Scope of the study**

The scope of this research is Hakha town, Chin State, Myanmar. The physical research area is the community of Hakha town at the Hakha Baptist Church. The research attempted to understand the history of development work led by church institutions in Hakha. The scope of this research covers all of the various forms of development assistance from different Baptist church organizations, especially focusing on educational issues promoted and developed by Church institutions. The progress and effectiveness of these efforts are measured through interviews with community elders, deacons, pastors, young people, locally based NGOs, official documents from church institutions, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as well as other responsible persons from the area.

Time: This research focused on the period between 2010 and 2015 when the newly adopted democratic government was led by President Thein Sein. In other words, from when democratization started after a long period of military dictatorship. With the advent of democracy came the emergence of civil society roles.

### **Limitations of Research**

In principle, there were no notable obstacles in conducting this research, but there were difficulties in obtaining and engaging with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Prior to the research, I was a bit concerned that I would experience difficulty in carrying out in- depth interviews and gaining access to their data and records; however, if these circumstances had arisen, I was prepared to interview retired officers from the Ministry. Government servants might have been intimidated and afraid to speak frankly about the work and conditions of religious institutions in Hakha, due to the sometimes tense atmosphere between the dominant Christian and minority Buddhists in areas

directly controlled by the military government. Asking questions that could elicit critical responses could affect their security and job stability. However, in the new environment of peace building and democratization, I was able to engage in meaningful and insightful conversations with the interviewees by carefully preparing for and monitoring the progress of our discussions. If further crucial information was needed, I utilized newspapers, documents and other means.

## **Knowledge Gap**

This particular research on church and development work in Hakha and Chin State seems to be the first ever conducted academically and systematically so far as my knowledge goes. As of 2012, there was no document available to describe the church's development work. From 2012 there was some general research on these issues by some individual researchers, but they are not reliable academic sources. There is thus a significant knowledge gap on the church and its development work. I hope this study will fill the gap, and help local people and the relevant state officials to increase their awareness of how important church institutions are for the development of Chin State, especially in promoting rights to education. I hope it will also encourage further research.

## **Ethical Issues**

Even though this research does not touch on many sensitive issues, in accordance with the human rights declaration I obtained informed consent and have protected rights to privacy in order to maximize positive outcomes and minimize unnecessary risk. Some ethical considerations have to be taken into account when conducting the research such as respect for the interviewees, and ensuring reasonable, non-exploitative, and carefully-considered procedures.



## Chapter 2

# Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

### Understanding Civil Society

#### *Civil Society in General*

The term “civil society” has become a broadly used and vaguely understood phenomenon, which is best summarized as “a big idea on everyone’s lips” (Edwards 2004). No commonly agreed definition exists beyond the idea of civil society being a wide-range of terms that generally encapsulates an area of voluntary, collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. To clarify the concept, we have to look at its historical and philosophical roots in order to determine how it was understood in different contexts. According to Keane (1988, as quoted by Christoph Spurk), until the end of the 18th century, the term civil society was used by major European philosophers such as Aristotle, Rousseau or Kant as synonymous with the state or political society (Spurk 2008). “Civil society in this conception expresses the growth of civilization to the point where society has become “civilized.”” (Kumar 1993). Starting in the second half of the 18th century, a major shift in the conceptualization was introduced; a different concept was slowly formed and expanded that distinguished civil society from the state, endowed with its own forms and principles. From this time onwards (Keane 1988, as quoted by Spurk),

civil society was seen as a concept oriented towards the state but also acting as a limit to its powers and sometimes even counteracting them.

Different scholars have different perspectives on how to define what 'Civil Society' really means. The concept has evolved over time. This includes the change from equating civil society with the state itself to opposing it, as well as from a purely economic understanding of civil society to a non-economic, political understanding. Nevertheless there is now some common ground in terms of the understanding of the structure and the positioning of civil society within society at large. Civil society is seen as a sector on its own. It consists of a large variety of mainly voluntary organizations and associations with different objectives, interests and ideologies. Thus, civil society is formally and legally independent of the state/political society, but is oriented towards and interacts closely with the state, the political and the economic sectors (Spurk 2008).

### *Civil Society in Myanmar*

Civil society has been far less discussed in Asia. In part, this might be due to the long-standing presence of authoritarian regimes in the region, as well as to an understanding that Asian values are unique, thus making the Western concept of civil society not applicable to the Asian case (Alagappa 2004). Civil societies in Asia are highly diverse in composition, resource endowment, and goals. Although a rise of civil society organizations in Asia was noticeable in the 1980s, a closer look at the history of civil society organizations across Asia shows that in many Asian countries communal networks existed even in pre-colonial times (Alagappa 2004). During the colonial regime, civil society organized mostly along the lines of ethnicity and religion – hence the philanthropic engagement by Buddhist groups in Myanmar, Christian groups in the Philippines, and Muslim groups in Indonesia and Malaysia (Guan 2004).

At the same time, civil society structures in Myanmar traditionally existed at the local level within religious groups, emerging from Buddhist and Christian-led social welfare activities and focusing on poverty, health, and the daily needs of communities. Particularly in areas of weak central government control and armed conflict, civil society often filled the state's service-delivery role. There are three types of civil society organizations in Myanmar: community-based organizations, and local and international non-government organizations

(NGOs). The community-based organizations are informal or voluntary associations formed at the village level to perform social and religious functions, including health, education, and social services. Many of them are religious-based and provide support for funerals and family or community emergencies. They do not normally have paid staff, and members are typically beneficiaries. Local NGOs typically originate from cities, townships, or population centers and maintain connections with communities. These groups are not usually registered with the government, often have paid and skilled staff, and are increasingly connected to regional and national NGO networks, and/or with international NGOs. In ethnic areas, many local NGOs have links to ethnic armed groups. Several large NGOs are registered with government ministries and at times work with the government and development agencies to implement projects in diverse sectors, including health care, rural development, education, and agriculture.

### *Civil Society in Chin State*

In Chin State, as a consequence of weak and poorly funded government institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs) have assumed a great deal of responsibility for social welfare services and social protection of vulnerable groups. These organizations are mainly connected to the churches, mainly the Baptist Church, but also some to the Roman Catholic Church and a number of minor churches. The CSOs are in most cases responsible for running orphanages and homes for elderly people, as well as charity schemes for vulnerable and poor families. CSOs are also assuming responsibility for support schemes to pay medical expenses, transport to hospitals, organizing of blood donors, and school transport and scholarships for secondary school students. Implementation of social welfare initiatives at village level is almost exclusively the responsibility of CSOs, the result of a combination of insufficient government resources, mistrust towards government initiatives and a strong church-based civil society. This environment is strongest in Chin State, where the Baptist Church is predominant. The Baptist Church is an example of a strong and well-organized civil society structure with an elaborate hierarchical framework and many ramifications and activities. Churches assume responsibility for a wide range of social services, including social security schemes, orphanages, caring for the elderly, education and health services, cultural celebrations and community development activities.

### *Faith-based Organizations as part of Civil Society*

This research accepts and uses the concept of civil society, seeing the role of faith-based organizations as part of civil society, development organization and civil society organization. In seeking to define the concept, the majority of authors perceive civil society as being composed of groups or organizations working in the interest of the citizens, outside the governmental sphere and without any interest in for-profit sectors. Furthermore, civil society can also be embodied by organizations and institutions, including labor unions, non-profit organizations, churches, and other service agencies that provide a significant service to society (World Economic Forum 2013).

In a contemporary context, civil society is composed of voluntary organizations such as cultural associations, social movements, philanthropic groups, trade unions, NGOs, etc. Most authors believe that civil society is an important actor for democratization and as a counterweight to state power as a means of achieving greater democracy. This concept is very relevant in the transition to democracy of countries like Myanmar. Myanmar was for a long time under a military regime where civil society was oppressed. However when the country opened in 2010 under the Thein Sein government, civil society organizations were among the key players promoting democratization. For example, the current nationwide ceasefire process was brokered by the Church specifically for ethnic states like Chin, Kachin, and Karen. Church leaders of Chin, Kachin and Karen groups went into their respective stronghold areas and met and talked with the leaders. They explained the difficult situation back home because of the war and asked them to solve the problem through a dialogue with the government. Being Christian, the armed leaders respected the church leaders and took their request seriously. After meeting with the armed leaders, church leaders then approached the government and asked them to hold talks with the indigenous armed groups in order to find a solution to the country's political conflict. In this way the church leaders were eventually able to persuade both sides to hold talks and find common solutions (Aung 2015). The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed by half the ethnic armed groups including the Chin on 15 October 2015. We can say that, because of this, the National League for Democracy (NLD) was able to form a new democratic government after winning the election in November 2015.

Civil society organizations promoting equality and justice provide a mechanism for grass-root organizations to solve social and economic challenges. This perspective emerges from seeing the socio-economic roles of NGOs manifest as political when poverty, largely considered a political condition, is being addressed by NGO initiatives (Naruemon 1997, as quoted by Saw Aye Min). There are hardly any organizations or service agencies providing significant services to Chin State – the country’s poorest – other than church organizations. The churches are the grass-roots organizations that work to promote and provide for the needs of the people and the development of Chin State. They are the main actors of civil society providing significant services to the people.

## **Context of Faith-based Organization**

### *Colonization and Church*

I do not propose to cover all the different aspects and accounts by different scholars regarding colonization and missionary work in Myanmar and elsewhere, but I would like to cover briefly two points of view on the arrival of Christianity in Myanmar during the colonial period, and its influence throughout country. “Christianity and colonialism are often closely associated because Catholicism and Protestantism were the religions of the European colonial powers and acted in many ways as religious arms of those powers” The first Christian communities in Myanmar arrived during the 16th century. They were Europeans who crossed the border with European traders in search of a better life, and settled in various places. The Roman Catholic Franciscan mission, the pioneer Christian mission, emerged in Myanmar in 1554. In the following years, it is believed that over 2000 people were converted to Christianity by other Catholic missionaries sent to Myanmar by Pope Clement XI in 1720 (En 2009). One historical interpretation of profound significance related to Myanmar’s later history is the so-called 3M hypothesis, described in chapter 1, which continues to exert a powerful influence on the political views of many people. A debatable hypothesis, and whether it is historically verifiable or not is questionable (Aung 2015). But I do assert that the colonizers used missionaries as one of their tools to colonize the country—3M strategy stage 2.

### *The arrival of Christianity in Chin State*

The history of the arrival of Christianity in Chin State has been described by many academicians and theologians. So I will not go into this in depth but would rather focus on the progress of colonization in relation to the missionary presence. As discussed in the above passage, the Western colonizers and their missionaries came into Chin State. According to one Chin historian “When Britain conquered Chinram (Chinland) and promulgated the Chin Hills Regulation in 1896, the British officer Captain Dury invited the Carsons to come to their newly occupied colony and work among the ‘Hill Chins’ in Chin state”. The Rev. Carson and the American Baptist Missionary Union viewed this as a golden opportunity to evangelize the whole Chin race, and planned a new mission station at Hakha...which became the base of the new British administration (Sakhong 2003).

### *The concept of Church and Development in Society*

There is debate regarding this concept among scholars. The worlds of faith and development might seem, at first glance, to be natural allies in the effort to combat poverty, fight for social justice, and improve the daily lives of the world’s poor and marginalized people. The connections between these two worlds have, however, been fragile and intermittent at best, critical and confrontational at worst (Marsh 2003). On the other hand, another scholar claims that since the first missionary endeavors of the colonial era, religious-based ethics have, for better or worse, always played a role in development (Chester 2002). Local Churches are not just close to grassroots, they are the grassroots. They are not only of the poor, they are the poor (Chester 2002). According to a World Bank study, church institutions are more valued and trusted than governmental agencies in poor communities (Narayan 2000). I would like to support this concept because it is true in the case of the Chin. In the context of Chin society, religion and development are inseparable because religions have always played a central role in their society, culture, politics, and even in economic development. Chin Christian theology emphasized the teaching of Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ.” (Ephesians.4:15). Chin Christian churches emphasized multi-development projects involved in the all-round development of the state (all things grow up) and in building up their homeland. By the middle of the 20th century, the Chin Christian churches played several developmental roles, particularly in social

and cultural development, education, health, literature, agriculture, and community development. In this study I would like to focus on specific roles and project activities in educational development.

### *Golden Rule of Faith-based Development*

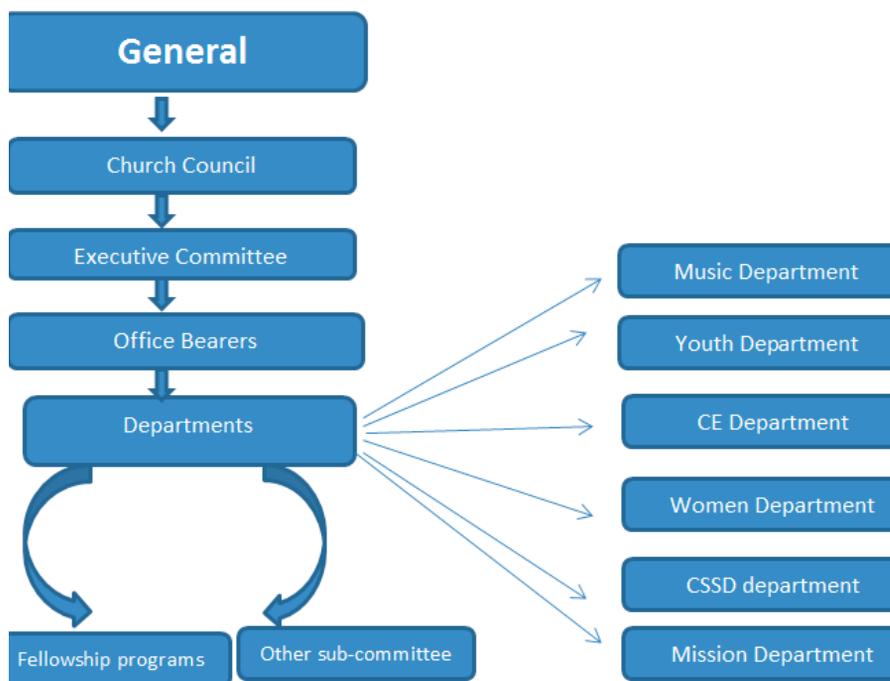
Official Development Aid and other international funds/donors have generally been critical of religions while others consider religion an important factor in community development. The president of the World Bank, the Archbishop of Canterbury and a small group of senior leaders from nine major world faiths met in 1998 to discuss the role of faith-based organizations (FBOs). This meeting provided the foundation for the World Faiths Development Dialog (WFDD), a non-profit organization working at the intersection of religion and global development. At the heart of WFDD's vision is an effort to bring voices and experience from poor communities more forcefully into development thinking at all levels, by facilitating a more active participation by faith communities in the strategic reflection processes on which development programs are based (WFDD 2009). This leads to an expanding concentration on FBOs and their position in development practice. The theory of religion and of development work is intertwined, according to Lunn (2009). He argued "several authors have identified the 'Golden Rule' – the common message found in every religion to 'do to others what you would have done to you' – as an alternative moral framework for development. As the Bible says: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets" Mathew 7:12.

### **The General Structure of the Baptist Church in Myanmar and Chin State**

The Myanmar Baptist Convention is the biggest church structure in Myanmar, and the Chin Baptist Convention is the biggest church structure in Chin State. Each of these associations is formed from township level and they are the supreme authority for all associated and local churches. For instance, Hakha Baptist Association is the head of all the Baptist churches in Hakha town-ship. In the context of Baptist church structure, local church authority is recognized and highly respected. For example, the upper power holders (like the Chin Baptist convention) cannot interfere without consent in a local church's

decision on any single issue. The local churches have to link to state level (associations) then the association will link again to national level (the convention). The national level links to the World Baptist Alliance. Deacons play an administrative role while pastors engage in the gospel ministry. This is how the system works, based on the context of Hakha, Chin State.

The structure of HBC is as shown in the diagram below.



**Figure 2.1: Structure of Hakha Baptist Church.**

The departments are intertwined and multi-functional; they work and cooperate with each other, each with its own priority tasks. For instance, the Music Department has main responsibility for the development of music through producing a handbook of Christian hymns and Church choir songs, and organizing music training and tuition. The Youth Department takes responsibility mainly for the development of HBC voluntary activities. This includes support for educational development through Sunday schools, nursery schools and by providing volunteer teachers for orphanages and children’s homes. It also supports

environmental and mitigation projects, social services and cultural development. Christian Education Department works primarily in education developments supported by the church, including the Saipen Nursery School (SNS) and Lukhu Children Center (LCC). Women Department takes part predominantly in women's participation in cultural development, economic development, and church social welfare programs. Christian Social Service Department (CSSD) has the main responsibility for SNS and LCC. Mission Department is involved with the expansion of Christian missionary work to people of other faiths. However, each department works and cooperates with others as needed.

The figure below shows an example of the relationship between CSSD department and SNS and LCC. Other departments like CE, Women and Youth Departments help and cooperate while the CSSD department is the main department responsible.

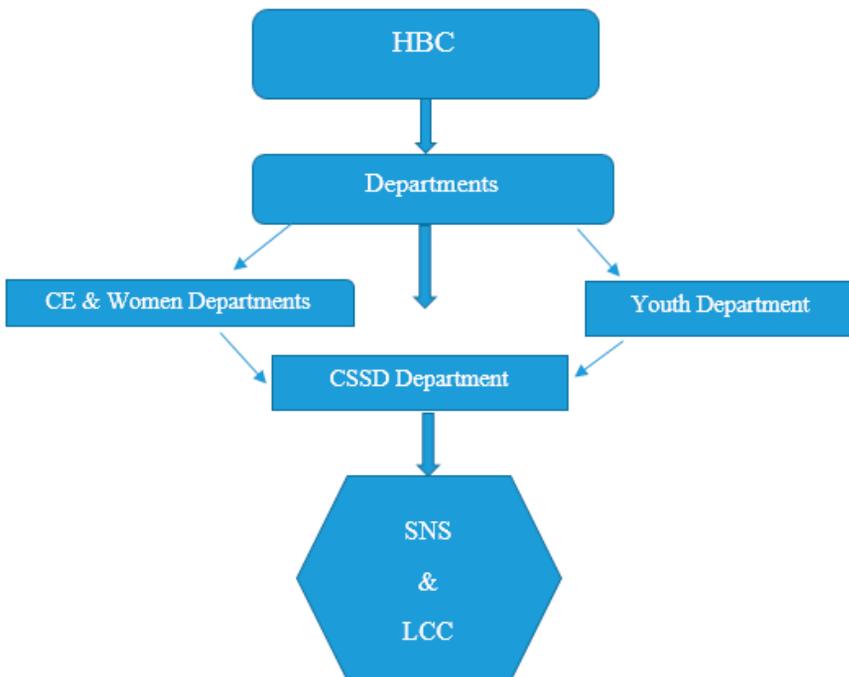


Figure 2.2: Relationship between Christian Social Service for Development Department and Saipen Nursery School (SNS) and Lukhu Children Center (LCC)

### ***Church and its role to Educational Affairs***

“The Church by its nature is both a teaching institution as well as preaching one. The role of the Church in education is both long and noble. It has given honorable service and trained some of the world’s finest religious and secular leaders. It has pioneered in areas where no one else would go. Underprivileged sections of society, such as the untouchables and women, received the seeds of their emancipation through the effort of the Church who dared to educate them” (Somasekhar 2011).

Religion-based education, in the shape of Buddhist monastery education, existed in Myanmar long before the introduction of Christian missionary education in the early twentieth century. However, being Buddhist, it did not meet the educational needs of other religions such as the Christians - and hence the majority of the Chin (Ling 2011). Most Chin were illiterate and uneducated when the American missionary Rev. Carson and his colleagues settled in Chin State and founded its first formal education system in 1899. Before then the concept ‘school education’ was quite alien to the Chin. The development and formation of educational thinking and practice emerged as a new challenge to the Chin, who had enjoyed no formal education system in their society for many centuries in the pre-Christian era. As Somasekhar said, the church is not only a place for spiritual revival, but is also where people can be educated.

### **Education system in Myanmar**

Article 13 & 16 of the Myanmar National Education Law (Sept 2014) provides as follows:

13. Pre-school education will be implemented from age 3 to age 5.

16. (a) Basic Education is divided into the following three levels, aiming to have 12 years of education after the completion of kindergarten:

i. Primary Education (Grade 1 to 4)

ii. Middle school Education (Grade 5 to 9)

iii. High school Education (Grade 10 to 11)

(b) Kindergarten will be regarded as the base level of Primary Education.

### ***Definitions of Formal and Non-formal Education***

The definitions used in this study are derived from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and are used generally by researchers and academicians, human rights and development practitioners.

“Formal education” means a program which is organized and guided by a formal curriculum; leads to a formally recognized credential such as a completion certificate or a degree, and is often guided and recognized by government at some level. Teachers and trainers are well trained professionals.

“Non-formal education” means a program which is organized, albeit loosely structured, and which may or may not be guided by a formal curriculum. This kind of education may be led by a skilled teacher or by a trainer with high capability. Non-formal education can be highly enriching and can build an individual’s skills and capacities even though it may not result in a formal degree or diploma.

### **Church and Social change**

Religion has been seen as insensitive for being exported in highly insensitive ways to cultures around the world. It has also been seen as irrelevant to development, perceived as an autonomous technical discipline about which religion has nothing valuable to say. Moreover, religion is seen as primarily proselytizing and seeking to convert (James 2009). Here I would like to emphasize that Christianity was the fundamental spark that led the way to a better life for the Chin. Religion is not only proselytizing but also brings about social change; it developed Chin culture. As mentioned, the Chin accepted the missionaries first, then their beliefs. Becoming Christian brought about gradual change. As soon as the Christian church schools were formed, they gradually developed the Chin in many ways; their philosophy and social life were totally changed within a decade. In this way, the Chin slowly came to realize the significance of education in human development and social life.

## **The Role of the Church in Political Advocacy**

It is clear that the Church and its institutions play a major role in political advocacy to government in many countries in the world. However, there are two opposing groups within the Baptist Church. The first group believes that the church ought to be involved in the social affairs of the people and that, if need be, the church's resources should be utilized to achieve its social objectives. They argue that the doctrine of the separation of church and state does not affect the use of church funds. The second group on the other hand wants to conform to a strict separation of church and state, arguing that since the state exists to execute all matters pertaining to the daily needs of the people, it is unnecessary for the church to be concerned with socio-political affairs (Aung 2015). The first group's view can be supported by some examples. As explained in paragraph 2.1.4 above, it was church and church institutions that brokered the current cease-fire in Myanmar. In Sri Lanka, after 19 years of civil war, the government has begun the process of rebuilding the country. Religious leaders, who played a significant role in keeping the spirit and hope of peace alive during the war, have made important contributions to the process. In the Mindanao region of the Philippines, where persistent conflict now spans three decades, faith leaders are playing a central role in negotiating peace and rebuilding and developing the region equitably and sustainably (Marsh 2003).

## **Right to Development**

This right was proclaimed in the Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted in 1986 by the United Nations General Assembly.

“The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.” (Article 1.1, Declaration on the Right to Development)

## ***Sustainable Development***

Sustainable development is defined in the Bruntland Report as “development that meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Butlin

1989). In recent years, many scholars maintain that the wider participation of all kinds of organizations, institutions and groups is essential to the meaningful implementation of the principles and objectives of sustainable development. This requires groups, organizations and individuals to participate in environmental impact assessments and to understand about and partake in decision-making regarding proposals which can affect the communities in which they work and live (Agenda 21 1992). Amongst others, religious institutions and church-based groups are greatly concerned with development issues and with the concept of wider participation in sustainable development planning (Votrin 2005). Similarly in Chin State, a number of church institutions, with their congregations, have been involved, and have expressed their concern about, climate change and damage to the environment, emphasizing the need for human beings to exercise care for all creation based on a life of sharing and sacrifice. They encourage awareness by preaching from the pulpit and working with grassroots communities. According to a World Bank study, church institutions are more valued and trusted than governmental agencies in poor communities (Narayan 2000).

### *Rights-based Approach to Development*

Definitions of what a rights-based approach means can be different in different contexts, depending on the nature of the work of the agency concerned. “Rights-based” may be regarded as a conceptual framework to be applied, much as a checklist, or as something that must permeate how development is done much more deeply. With regard to definitional contrasts, differences between a ‘rights-based approach to development’ and a ‘human rights-based approach to development’ are common, and dissimilarities remain uncertain and unpredictable (Nyamu-Musembi 2004). Particular organizations have adopted particular definitions, which can also depend on how agencies interpret ‘rights’ in relation to other prevailing development terms. For instance, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) describes a “rights-based-approach” as being inseparably linked to the international human rights framework, while the World Bank describes it as a specific and narrow reference to economic, social and cultural rights. A rights-based approach to community development puts human rights at the heart of its procedures and applications. A rights-based approach, based on an understanding of human rights for all, needs to deal with issues of marginalization, conflict, injustice and poverty. It

moves away from satisfying people's needs by giving charity, towards strengthening the capacity of communities and individuals to understand their rights and thus empowering them to help themselves (OHCHR 2006).

A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards. Mere charity is not enough from a human rights perspective. Under a human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law. This helps to promote the sustainability of development work, empowering people themselves - especially the most marginalized - to participate in policy formulation and hold accountable those who have a duty to act (OHCHR 2006).

#### *4As Framework*

The 4As framework originates from the Right to Education Project first put forward in 2000 by Katarina Tomaševski (Tomaševski 2001). It was launched a second time in 2008 and a third time in 2013 with the support of many international organizations such as the Global Campaign for Education, Amnesty International, Action Aids, Save the Children and Human Rights Watch. The Project put forward the 4As Framework as a way to measure the extent to which the right to education is met by assessing how “*Available, Accessible, Acceptable and Adaptable*” the education is. This method is widely accepted by researchers, academics, human rights and development practitioners as the best way of measuring fulfillment. The first A, “*Availability*”, examines whether education is generally available for all different groups/persons. The second A, “*Acceptability*”, puts the emphasis on the quality of education, urging governments to ensure that education is not only available and accessible but is of good quality too. The third A, “*Accessibility*”, focuses on the various obstacles to accessing education. For example, in the case of the Chin, people face discrimination and marginalization from government. *Acceptability* evaluates the various aspects of the content of education. The fourth A, “*Adaptability*”, examines whether the education is adapted to the needs of various categories of people.

Although the 4As framework developed from work related to education, the template and the content can be adapted to fit a particular researcher's other objectives. I will use the modified framework set out in figure 4 below to place the 4As framework within the context of this study.

## Conceptual Framework

Overall, the fundamental concepts of this research are rights to education, based on the 4As Framework (*Accessibility, Adaptability, Availability and Acceptability*), and the barriers and the opportunities in different models of primary education for church-based schooling in Hakha.

This study uses the 4As framework to measure the extent to which children are able to access basic education in the church-based system. Tomaševski's Right to Education Project uses the following framework to define the 4As:

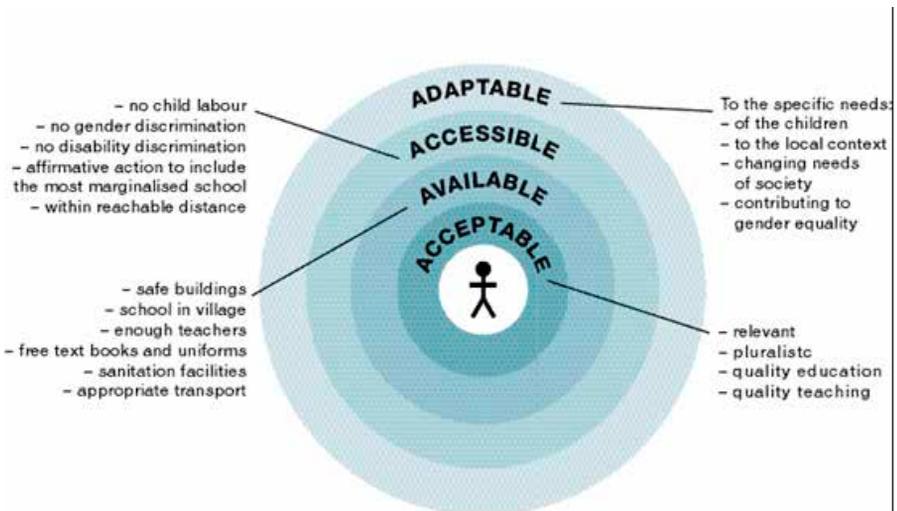


Figure 2.3: 4As Framework

Source: <https://educationaroundtheworld.wordpress.com/>

The above framework is a template which can be used globally to evaluate the right to education in any context. However, as explained, this study needs

to modify the framework to accommodate the Chin State’s local context, in order to make it more effective. Hence the modified 4As framework below:

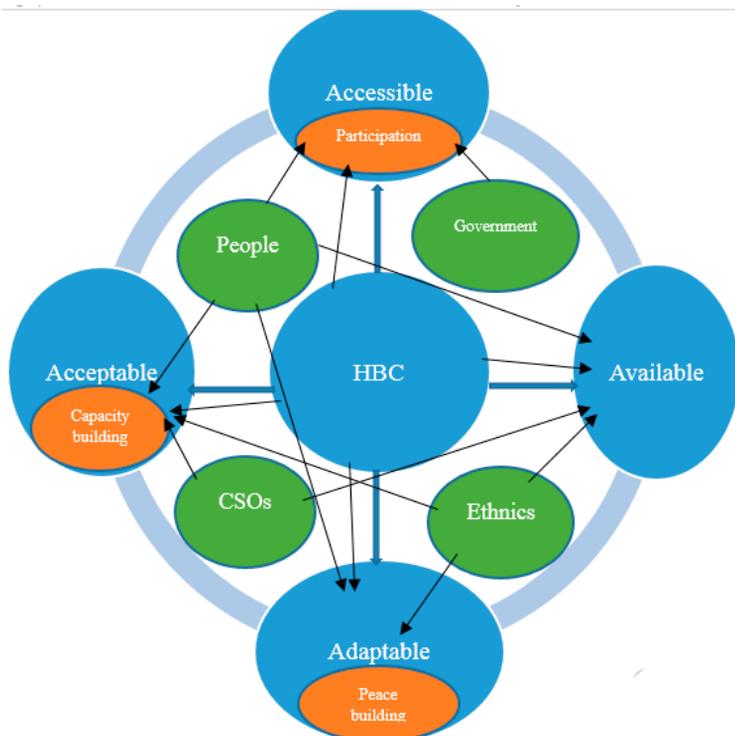


Figure 2.4: Developed and modified diagram from 4As frameworks

This concept can evaluate church work related to educational development in Hakha. This 4As framework is the most relevant and appropriate for this research. Accessibility, Adaptability, Availability and Acceptability will be evaluated and measured to show, for example, whether or not the church can adapt to the new government after the election in 2015, whether there is Availability to all groups without any discrimination, the degree of Accessibility by the public/people to the church, Availability to other religions, etc.

## Chapter 3

# HBC Activities Promoting the Right to Education

### Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings at the Hakha Baptist Church (HBC). As mentioned in chapter 1, HBC is the second oldest and the biggest church in Chin state. As such it has several development projects and is prominent for the work it has been doing in terms of young people's involvement in community development work, and its educational projects. The main purpose of this chapter is to explore the research question, "how does the Church facilitate access to the rights to education? What types of collaboration has the church engaged in to facilitate the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability to the rights to education?"

HBC has two formal education programs and seven non-formal ones. These programs have separate budgets from the Church. According to Christian belief and practice, a Christian must pay ten percent of his income as a tithe to the Church of which he is a member. Church budgets are funded mainly from members' tithes. HBC is involved in promoting rights to education in two ways: formal education and non-formal education. However, this chapter focuses on the two formal programs, at Saipen Nursery School (SNS) and Lukhu Children Center (LCC).

To begin with, this chapter will describe findings on nursery schools in general - government nursery schools, private nursery schools and SNS. The analysis of findings on SNS will be discussed within the 4As framework. The findings on LCC and their analysis within the 4As frameworks will be presented and discussed in the second part of the chapter.

The relationship between the right to development and the right to education is established by the international conventions on human rights as one of the essential components which should be open to all as part of human development. This chapter proceeds on the basis that the right to education is one of the essential components of a human rights-based approach to development.

### *Nursery Schools in Hakha (in general)*

Nursery schools in Hakha can be divided into three types. They are church-based, government owned and privately owned. There was only one government nursery school available for the whole of Hakha town, located on the edge of the town with accommodation for only about 200 children per academic year. As most of the local people have difficulty in getting to this school, elders and leaders from local communities run their own nursery school programs in their communities and blocks.

Private nursery schools became common only from 2014. According to the interviews, school fees for private nursery schools are higher than those for church-based and government nursery schools. Private schools provide a transport service for the children. Church-based nursery schools, including Saipen Nursery school, collect nominal fees which are used to provide lunches for all the children. Church-based schools are affordable for poor parents who cannot pay the large fees demanded by the private ones.

### *Government Nursery School in Hakha*

There is still only one government nursery school available for the whole town. According to the first official report from Hakha population control office, the population of Hakha was 44,086 in 2005. One nursery school was clearly insufficient. Several interviewees reported the difficulties and barriers to their children's nursery education in terms of transport. Parents have to take and pick up their children, going on foot even though the school may be far

from where they live. Several interviewees reported that discrimination by social class was very high. The children are enrolled based on their social class. For example, the child of a high ranked government official will be prioritized in the registration process.

### *Private Nursery Schools in Hakha*

Private nursery schools in Hakha became available only from the 2014 - 2015 academic years. Interviewees said that there could also be private nursery schools like home and tuition schools but that they are not official and do not run every year. The only private nursery school that can be found from 2014 is the Amazon Private School. This school is jointly managed by qualified individuals and enterprises. They started providing primary classes from around 2012, but they did not offer nursery classes until 2014. The school fees are challenging for many parents. The diagram below shows the total costs at Amazon Private School.

Annual Costs per pupil at Amazon Private School (2016) (in Myanmar Kyat (MMK))		Remarks
School fee	360,000	
Lunch	90,000	10,000 x 9 months
Uniform	15,000	
Transportation	90,000	10,000 x 9 months
Blanket, bed sheet, other uses	65,000	
Total	620,000	

**Table 3.1: Annual Costs for Amazon Private School**

### *d) Church-based Nursery Schools in Hakha*

Church-based nursery schools largely started around 2000. The HBC nursery school was inaugurated in 2001. In addition the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) ran a community-based center for children's education which later became a church-based nursery school.

### **Saipen Nursery School (SNS)**

As time went by town churches started running their own programs for nursery schools. The Saipen Nursery School was opened on 5 March 2001 by

HBC under its budget and administration. Their Christian Education (CE) department initiated, and used to be the main responsible department for, the SNS. But Christian Social Service for Development (CSSD) Department now has the main responsibility.

The school is named after the woman who was the second female Chin convert to Christianity, in other words to commemorate Saipen who accepted Jesus Christ as Lord from the work of a foreign missionary. HBC started the school with 150 children - the largest number of children the school has ever enrolled. Now there are around 90 children every year from different parts of Chin state including the community in Hakha. The children are divided into two groups: senior students who have already taken the course for one year but who are repeating it; and “freshers”. About 40 seniors are given certificates of completion annually. The school accepts all children regardless of denomination or church membership, social class, gender and ethnicity. There are Buddhist children and children from other religions attending the school. At the outset, the Assistant Director of HBC’s Christian Education department, Pastor Rollin Chan Lian, and three colleagues kicked off the program as volunteer teachers even though they were still working in the CE Department.

The main reason for running the school is the lack of resources provided by the state government and the insufficient financial allocation to nursery education from the central government. For decades the government neglected Hakha and its children in terms of education accessibility. The government nursery school was not big enough to cope with the child population, and was short of teachers. Families living far from the school - poor families who cannot afford to live in the city and who farm for daily survival - faced particular challenges.

We have to travel a very long way to enable our children to access education. We have to walk miles every day to get to the school because there is no transportation service for the children. Parents face many difficulties especially in the rainy season when the roads are slippery and sometimes due to landslides the children have to skip class. This is because there is no support mechanism from the State government. However, we are concerned about the future generation and the children’s education therefore we have to keep going and sending our kids however we can. We sometimes have to sacrifice our

farming work just for the sake of the children's education.  
(Interview with Dawt Cia, 13/05/2016. Field interview.)

The purpose of the SNS nursery school is to promote access to the right to education for children around Hakha, with support and management by the church and its members. The HBC understands that by reducing school fees all poor families can send their children to the school. Although HBC has not received sufficient support to achieve all that they hoped, available funds ensure that the children do not need to pay school fees, textbook fees, accommodation fees, etc.



Figure 3.1: Saipen Nursery School *Source: Thawng Tha Lian*

### *Location of SNS*

SNS is located at the heart of the HBC compound which is easily accessible from everywhere in the city. The roads that link to HBC are adequate. There are 60 children at SNS in the 2016 academic year: 37 boys and 23 girls, from different backgrounds in terms of ethnicity and social class. There is no discrimination based on disability.

### *Committees and Teachers (Structure)*

Since this school is under the management of HBC, the committee, staff and responsible persons are HBC church members such as deacons, leaders

from the Youth Department, pastors, and women from the Women Department. The teachers are hired by the committee according to certain criteria and qualifications. The document below (Fig. 6) from the church records lists the first committee members. Figure 7 lists the teachers from 2001 to 2015.



Figure 3.2: The first committee of Saipen Nursery School

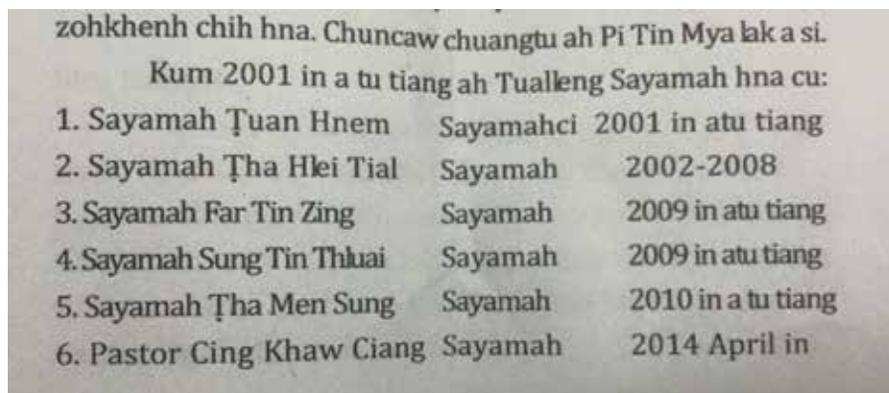


Figure 3.3: The teachers at Saipen nursery school from 2001 to 2015

*Classrooms and time-tables*

The academic year is 10 months from June to March. The school opens at 8 am when the children are welcomed at the school gates by the teachers.

Lessons run from 9 am until 3 pm, Monday to Friday. There are break-times for sleeping, eating, and playing. Before the students are allocated to their classes, they have to go through an assessment and, based on their performance, are then allotted to an appropriate class. The school admission officer also takes into account the child's age. The school has enough classrooms for this. There are other rooms for playing games, and an outdoor playground. The school is bounded by a wire fence for the safety of the children.

### *Curriculum*

The curricula and course syllabi of the school are mainly adopted from the government versions. However, Saipen Nursery School also has its own curricula guided and approved by the committee. They use both syllabi because the state schools do not allow teaching in ethnic languages. There are also curricula related to Christian education such as Bible reading and the Lord's Prayer. A couple of parents interviewed said "we have registered our child at Saipen Nursery School rather than a government nursery school with the anticipation of their growing with God's word and a spiritual heart since the church-based schools are teaching not only the government curriculum but also Bible related curricula. Moreover, we feel that the church-based school is safer and more reliable for our child". The parents thought that sending their children to a faith-based school would improve their manners and discipline because the teaching methods are completely different from what is applied in the state schools. Children are treated with love and care without discrimination, and peer support systems in the church-based schools are strong.

### *Getting to school*

Luxuries like cars and motorbikes were rarely used until recently in Chin state. Only high ranking government officials could use them. Walking was the usual way of getting about until very recently. But since about 2010 most people can use motorbikes for family and personal use. Since the government nursery school did not have any transport services for children, parents had to take their children to school. It did not matter how far away a child's house was, they had to go on foot to get there. It was a longstanding practice that parents were used to.

Nowadays, some people use motorbikes but most people still walk their children to and from school. The Saipen Nursery School does not have any

regular transport service for children. However, the school does help children who feel sick and need to go home, or those who are not picked up by their parents in the evening, or when there is an unexpected problem for getting home because of heavy rain, natural disasters, storms, etc.

## **Analysis of Saipen Nursery School using rights-based approach and the 4As Frameworks**

### *Accessibility*

The *Accessibility* component of the 4A framework comprises affordability, including access for marginalized people, adequate facilities, no language barrier, and having the school within reachable proximity of the children's homes. The research finds that there is no language barrier for the children and no discrimination regarding denomination, ethnicity or social class, and no discrimination against the disabled. I had interviews with two sets of parents who said that they chose a church-based nursery school for their children because it is nearer to their home; also they felt safer than with other types of school and with the expectation that their children will grow up with God's will. These were the interviewees' main reasons for preferring their children to attend a church-based nursery school. And of course parents do not have any problem about school fees since church-based schools charge only for lunches – all other services are free.

### *Availability*

*Availability* in the 4As frameworks module means safe buildings, free text books and uniforms, appropriate transport and sanitation facilities, and sufficient teachers. The SNS buildings are newly constructed with complete facilities such as toilets for children, bedrooms, living rooms, a kitchen, etc. The researcher observed that the buildings are safe for the children and protected from rain, and that compounds are clean and fenced in. The teachers meet teaching standards and numbers of teachers and staff are proportionate to the numbers of children. Text books are distributed free. The facilities are satisfactory and highly appreciated by the children. On the other hand, the church does not have any transport services for nursery children. Neither does the SNS distribute free uniforms; parents have to make the uniforms themselves.

Those might be the biggest barriers for parents and children in accordance with the meaning of *Availability* in the 4As frameworks.

Most of the churches in Hakha founded their own nursery schools so that the number of schools and the population of children is now in balance. Schools are set up in central places accessible from different areas. The churches do not establish nursery schools in their compounds but rather in buildings they can afford to buy or rent. SNS is an exception being built in the HBC grounds. Church-based schools are not officially registered by the government but the church and government have an understanding on this issue. An interviewee comments that church-based nursery schools depend on the government because the government can close them if they do not want them to run their programs. “Churches’ activities and inputs are quite small compared to government’s input actually. The church helps the government by promoting the right to education; and fills a gap. Availability is guaranteed for both parents and children.” (Sayamah Tha Tha, 12/05/2016, in-depth interview.)

### *Acceptability*

Acceptability in the 4As framework refers to the quality of education, relevance of curricula, and quality of teaching. The researcher observed that the curricula used at Saipen Nursery School are up-to-date. The committee reviews the curricula yearly so that the children can learn from updated courses. The researcher’s observation of teachers and curricula noted they are outstanding and of high quality. For the Saipen Nursery school, they use both the government curricula and their own courses designed by their committee. The latter courses are mostly related to Bible and ethical teaching. The teachers either come highly trained or the committee sends them to be trained for some programs. They are comparable with teachers at any type of nursery school in Hakha. There are sufficient facilities and school buildings for children and teachers. They have enough space for a fully equipped playground.

### *Adaptability*

The government school accepts certificates from church-based nursery schools for continuing to primary classes; students with certificates from church-based schools are free to continue with their education. All the children’s needs are fully facilitated by HBC. The Saipen Nursery School has a playground

with suitable equipment. The church programs for promoting the right to education comply with local requirements, including the effects of the political change and education reform - the church has adapted to these developments.

### **Lukhu Children Center (LCC)**

This orphanage was inaugurated on 1 October 1996, during the incumbency of the Rev. Dr. Jones Mang Hope, a senior pastor of HBC, and Pastor H. Sui Bor from the HBC Women Department. Practical implementation started from 1 August 1998. HBC was inspired to run the orphanage after seeing children without education, with no parents, and homeless children. The center focuses on the well-being of the orphaned children. The program comes under the leadership of the Women Department.

HBC is responsible for finding sponsors and other financial resources to support children undertaking higher studies. This includes finding scholarships from fellow Chin, both those who live abroad and those within the country.

The school is named after the first Chin woman from Hakha township to be baptized. Lukhu was the first person converted to Christianity by the American missionary.

Before 2002, the center was called “Lukhu Orphanage”. In 2002 BHC changed the name to “Lukhu Children Center”. They founded the center with eight main purposes and objectives. I would like to pick out four of them:

- To prioritize children’s education. To take responsibility until an orphan passes his/her matriculation examination (University entry examination).
- To accept everyone without discrimination as regards religion or ethnicity.
- To motivate and cultivate children to be good leaders in the future.
- For those who cannot undertake higher education, to provide professional/technical training for their career, depending on their choice – e.g. tailoring, motor cycle maintenance, driving, etc. - so that they can make a living for themselves in the future.



Figure 3.4: Lukhu Children Center, Photo Credit – author

### *The children at Lukhu Children Center*

The children come from different parts of Chin State. Some are from the south (Mindat, Kanpalet and Palatwah townships) who speak a different dialect of Chin. But most are from the north (especially from Hakha, Than Tlang and Falam townships) who speak Lai dialect. They come with different backgrounds and different stories and social status. Some do not even know where their parents are. There are no restrictions as to age, gender, race, or religion.

The children are from 4 to 15 years old. Currently, HBC is supporting 32 children at Lukhu Children Center. 14 are undergoing primary school education, 8 middle school education, and 10 are in higher school education, all at government schools with the full support of the LCC. There have been 159 (76 females and 83 males) children in the care of the Lukhu Children Center from its inception in 1998 up to 2015. 19 children had successfully graduated from high school education by 2015 - 12 males and 7 females. Two children from Lukhu passed their higher school education with distinctions - Mr. Kyaw Naing in Economics and Mr. Hrang Lian Thang in English and Physics. As mentioned, children who cannot finish their higher school education or cannot go to school are trained to pursue a career and to become self-sufficient. “Through this program, 20 children have been able to look after themselves and create their own livelihood opportunities”, said one interviewee.

Fig. 9 below lists the persons who served as Secretary for Lukhu Children Center from the founder year 1998 to this year 2016.

Lakhu ngakchia Secretary a T̄uanmi hna:	
1. Sayamah Hnem lang	1998 - 1999
2. Pastor T̄ha Hlei lang	2000
3. Rev. Sang Hre	2001
4. Rev. Dr. Stephen Lian Hup Ling	2002 - 2004
5. Rev. Taan Mang	2005 - 2006
6. Pastor Duh lang	2006 - 2008
7. Pastor T̄ha Hlei lang	2009 - 2011
8. Pastor Duh lang	2012 - a tu tiang

Figure 3.5: Secretaries for Lukhu Children Center from 1998 to 2016

### *The Importance of Lukhu Children Center*

All the interviewees said that the center was helpful and meaningful for the children because they could find out what interests them as a career and arrange for them to be suitably trained so that they can stand on their own feet. Since this center is for orphaned and underprivileged children, they need support from the local people who donate clothes and food etc., or cash, especially in the case of Chin who live abroad.

“...this center really needs to be promoted and enlarged because children who do not otherwise have the chance to access education can do so with full support from this center. We provide education in accordance with their age and choice.”  
(LCC teacher Cung Nung, 02/06/2016.)

There are more than 20 former residents who have been living on their own and supporting themselves since leaving the Lukhu Children Center. The benefit is huge for some of the outgoing students. The center has nurtured underprivileged children to help rebuild their disrupted lives. I interviewed one person who grew up in the center and has since found employment:

“I would not have had the chance to live and make my life as it is now if there were no Lukhu Children Center. It lifted me

up through formal education, informal education, and Christian related education which gave me the strength to overcome when I felt sad. The center made me forget being an orphan; the teachers, committees, church members and donors are my parents now.” (Former child of LCC, 26/05/2016.)

## **Types of Collaboration by HBC for LCC**

The HBC has separate safe buildings for orphanage children, with full facilities within its compound. Under the budget and administration of HBC, the Lukhu Center provides food, financial support for children’s education, and health insurance. LCC can be assumed to meet the OECD definitions of both formal and non-formal education.

LCC has its own daily activities for children as well as extra-curricular educational development programs. HBC employs a guide teacher for the children, who takes responsibility for implementing LCC rules and regulations. Children are trained in livelihood skills such as tailoring, motor mechanics, handcrafts, etc. Children have extra-curricular Bible studies at night or during their free time or on Saturdays and Sundays. According to the meaning of non-formal education as defined by the OECD, this is non-formal education provided by HBC for LCC.

Children from LCC have to undertake their formal education in government schools in accordance with their ages and levels. LCC supports all the costs of school fees and other expenses - a kind of scholarship. This is how children from LCC access their formal education through the facilitation of LCC and with the collaboration of HBC.

## **Analysis: LCC and the rights-based approach of the 4As Frameworks**

### ***Accessibility***

The children supported by LCC are orphans and marginalized children. They had no chance to access education before they arrived at LCC. As already explained, LCC has supported more than 159 children from across Chin State

who were neglected and marginalized and without education. The center provides full facilities for the children by way of food, clothes, safe shelter, relevant health care, and livelihood skill training. The children's health is checked once a year by doctors hired by HBC. Food is cooked and provided by LCC staff. Clothes are donated by local people and distributed by LCC. LCC children have to go to government schools to access formal education; LCC supports them by financing their school fees and other costs. The LCC is accessible from their schools. There is no discrimination as to gender and disability at LCC since the center was founded with the purpose of helping any marginalized or orphaned child.

### *Acceptability*

In accordance with the meaning of *Acceptability* in the 4As framework, LCC has its own guide teachers for the children and relevant courses. Teachers are responsible for guiding children in terms of controlling discipline, and enforcing LCC's rules and regulations. The orphan children from Lukhu Children Center have extra-curricular programs after their government school classes. These extra learning programs, which take place at night and in the early morning so as not to interrupt their school studies, include ethics, bible study, and basic civic education. The guide teachers help the students if they have problems with their studies. Children are trained by their teacher in how to clean a toilet, how to cook, how to wash, how to keep their campus clean, how to get up early every day, etc. Children are taught according to their ages and their ability to absorb the curricula. The interviewees placed great emphasis on the livelihood skills training as crucial to their personal lives.

### *Availability*

The LCC center can host more than fifty children yearly. The buildings are newly constructed with all facilities such as toilets for children, bedrooms, living rooms, kitchen, etc. The researcher observed that the buildings are safe for children, safe from rain, and that compounds are clean and protected by wire fences. They have teachers with suitable skillsets and the numbers of teachers and staff are proportionate to the numbers of children. Text books are distributed free. The facilities are highly appreciated by the children.

### *Adaptability*

As mentioned in the above paragraphs, LCC aims for children to be able to live independently after they finish their schooling. For those who do not have an academic bent, Lukhu Children Center School shows an awareness of its children's future needs within the local context by the extra-curricular subjects they offer. In addition to the basic subjects, the Center provides instruction in various trades arming the children with practical skills that they can use to find jobs when they leave. The teaching assistant program also gives students options for paid work on completion of their studies. A number of Lukhu children already make a living for themselves both within the country and abroad. In short, children who graduate from church-based schools are more secure for their future lives since they are well trained in livelihood and vocational skills.

### **Conclusion**

The research finds that the government did not provide enough nursery school opportunities in Hakha so the church-based nursery schools were founded as a solution. Parents prefer to send their children to church-based schools rather than other types of nursery school. Children who graduate from church-based schools are better equipped than those who attended government schools: they are well trained in life skills and trades making their future more secure.

The government does not recognize church-based schools such as Saipen nursery school and Lukhu Children Center. The research found that this lack of recognition is the biggest barrier they face. Lack of transport services and free uniform distribution seemed to be the main barriers to availability but were not seen as major problems. Other activities and initiatives to promote the right to education, such as summer course programs, Special Sunday for Youth, and Christian Education Sunday are highly valued and meaningful for local people. These programs enhance children's life skills for their future security. The two main services provided by HBC to SNS and LCC to promote the right to education comply with the concepts of the 4As frameworks.

Data and information collected in the field provide a foundation for analysis of the concepts key to this study. These findings lead to the conclusion that HBC is involved in promoting the right to education in many forms, formal and informal. Saipen nursery school and Lukhu Children Center provide formal

education as defined by OECD. The church offers its programs free of charge with the purpose of promoting the right to education for those who are marginalized from their right to education. The church also supports training in life skills for those who do not have the chance to undergo formal education.

## Chapter 4

# Youth Department Activities Promoting the Right to Development

### Introduction

The HBC membership recognizes the importance of young people's participation in community development work and their activities to promote the right to increased access to education. There are a number of community development work programs under the charge of the Youth Department, including programs which promote the right to education for local people including the young people themselves. The Youth Department of HBC contributes to community development work in many other areas such as reforestation, infrastructure development, cultural development, political development and economic development.

This does not mean that there are no other activities for young people; but those are the important ones. The church has many programs for the youth as does the Youth Department, but this chapter focuses on activities related to community and educational development work, to answer the research sub-questions "what role does the Youth Department play in promoting a rights-based approach to development?" and "how far do such activities help improve availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability to the rights to education?" The right to development and the right to education are endorsed by the international convention on human rights as fundamental needs for

everyone. This chapter is based on the premise that the right to education is an essential component of the right to development.

## **The Youth Department of HBC**

The roles of the Youth Department are pre-eminent for Hakha Baptist Church. The Church assumes that young people are the backbone of the Church. According to the interviewees, young people have unique perspectives and talents to offer, and are active and keen to participate voluntarily for the good of the community. They are involved in many roles as volunteers. They have the passion and optimism that the church desperately needs. HBC formed the Youth Department with the young people's betterment in mind. The church has separate youth pastors who take leadership roles for the young people. The Youth Department also has a youth general secretary to provide assistance to the youth pastors, providing information and inviting other young people to events and activities they have planned. Other positions - accountant, sports leaders, financial leaders - have also been established in the Youth Department's system. The participation of Youth Department leaders is vital for community development work, especially for work related to education. The Church considers its young members as partners in community development work including church educational work. They take part actively in every program of the Church in different ways such as by volunteering.

## **Youth Department in promoting right to development**

As discussed in chapter 2, the rights-based approach to development can have different meanings in different contexts, depending on the work of the agencies concerned. This chapter defines it as the local people's right to community development works undertaken by the HBC Youth Department.

### ***Community Mobilization on Reforestation***

The Youth Department's involvement in this program is highly appreciated by the local people especially after recent natural disasters. Heavy rain and severe landslides in Hakha in July 2015 caused great destruction. Many volunteer groups, including from HBC's Youth Department, started to restore and replant trees in the forested areas and parks in Hakha township. The young

people planted more than a thousand cherry tree seeds, among other kinds of tree. All the costs for buying seeds and other logistics such as lunches and transport were provided by the Youth Department.

### *Disaster Awareness*

This program came to fruition in the light of the extensive damage caused by the above-mentioned natural disasters. The young people's involvement in this program was very significant. They volunteered to give disaster awareness workshops, informal talks, and poster presentations. Local people were made aware of environmental issues by the volunteers. Groups of young people helped victims to find safe temporary homes, carrying the displaced victims' belongings, and supplying them with food.

### *Infrastructure Development*

The youth's role in infrastructure development is multi-faceted, but let us focus on the main activities related to the rights-based approach to development. Government school children in Hakha face problems from damage to the minor roads that link to their schools, especially during the rainy season which lasts from June to September. The problems are largely solved by youth volunteer groups, including young people from the HBC Youth Department, who repair the roads so that the children can go to school every day.

### *Cultural Development*

Economic growth is not everything. Strengthening culture's contribution to development is advocated by many scholars. HBC youth have contributed to the development of Chin culture. For example, in July 2015 they attended camps and were trained in the Chin cultural dance - a project led by HBC's Youth Department. They cultivate activities related to cultural development and exchange knowledge on Chin culture. They also have a public debate competition on Chin cultural issues to further develop Chin culture.

### *Political Development*

HBC's involvement in political development issues takes many forms, designed to strengthen young people's participation in the political arena. In October 2013 for example HBC hosted a seminar for Dr. Lian H. Sakhong, a

prominent Chin historian and politician. HBC invites other Chin politicians, activists, and human rights defenders who come and take part in worship at HBC to give talks to local people including the youth. More importantly, HBC has a seminar every year for the empowerment of its members, with topics chosen according to the economic, social and political conditions at the time.

### *Economic Development*

The special benefits of the church's program for the youth are vocational training, summer course programs, and training for life skills, to empower young people for their future careers. Activities include training for women on weaving and sewing traditional Chin clothes, and handicraft training.

### *Sports and health development*

Hakha Baptist Church holds a sports day every year in May. The purpose is to promote friendship among the youth through playing together and being united in Christ as brothers and sisters. The event lasts for two days. They play football, volleyball, table tennis, and other kinds of sports. It is not merely a day for sports and recreation though; they learn intangible lessons from each other related to ethical and social-related issues, and community spirit and team work are strengthened. And exercise is good for their health! As the youth pastor said at the interview, "this sports day gives our young people new strength for a new year of activities related to the church's programs. This is not merely sports day but a revival day for the youth".

## **Youth Department in promoting right to education**

### *Summer Courses*

Most of the churches in Hakha have a summer course program. It is one of the prominent programs of the church. HBC usually holds its summer program in April, during the long Myanmar New Year holiday when candidates are free to attend. Programs are open to children and young people, the aim being to provide and promote youth education. The program usually lasts for two weeks, with the church meeting all the costs such as food, transport, accommodation, etc., and providing all the teachers and trainers. One of the

main benefits cited by an interviewee is the training in life skills that will benefit the children's future.

Another important goal is to encourage children not to waste their free time. April is Buddhist New Year, which includes the great water festival. Children often take part in this water festival, and parents are afraid that their children would waste their time during the festivities. As an interviewee reports :

This summer program is purposely arranged in April in order to control children's participation in the "Water Festival" which is the Buddhist New Year. Young people just play with water and go around, which encourages them to drink alcohol, smoke, and use other drugs. (HBC deacon Nawl Hrang, 25/05/2016, in-depth interview.)

The courses have English as a second language. Chin (Lai dialect) literature and language and Chin cultural subjects are compulsory; other courses such as music and sports are elective. Sometimes the summer program is held outside the church grounds - they may go to famous places within or outside Chin State, for the young people's enjoyment.

This program is important for our children since the church purposely plans to promote the right to education especially in Chin language and literature (Lai dialect) which are not allowed at the government school. As the government schools do not allow learning our mother (Lai) literature and language, our children do not know how to read and write their mother language. So, this summer program is vitally significant for our children. (HBC senior pastor Rev. Pawl Tum Ceu, 07/06/2016, in-depth interview.)

### *Christian Education (Sunday school)*

Sunday school is a common Christian practice, and a great priority for the church. All the children enjoy it and attend every Sunday morning at church. This is free education. The children learn basic knowledge related to the Bible, history, ethics, and manners. They also get to know Chin literature and culture through learning songs, reading Bible verses, and other means. More

importantly, they have competitive activities with children from other churches, and fellowship programs with associated churches in Hakha. Parents believe that their children must attend Sunday school regularly. Likewise, children take part voluntarily.

According to an interviewee, Sunday school is crucial both for children's biblical knowledge and for studying Chin language and literature. Because the central government does not allow teaching of the Chin language in their schools, many children do not know how to read and write their mother tongue. Church leaders use Sunday school as an opportunity to teach the children their mother language through Chin songs, teaching in Chin, and having competitions. Sunday school is the main place where children learn about their mother language and its literature. More importantly, Sunday school makes children grow with Christ—the most important reason the parents value it.

### *Special Sunday for Christian Education (CE)*

CE Sunday is a crucial and valuable Sunday for both children and parents. On this Sunday many members of the congregation take on the important task of educating not only the children, but the adults as well. Children are separated into groups according to their ages. The CE program includes many competitive programs which are aimed at enhancing the children's knowledge and abilities. They usually begin preparations at least a month ahead. With the help of these activities, parents can see what talents and abilities their children possess.

### *Special Sunday for Students*

The church has a special Sunday for students twice a year, usually in the third week of February and the first week of May. During the service the senior pastor will say prayers for all the students. A preacher or special speaker will be invited to deliver a special talk. All the church members, and local people who are aware that the church is leading a special Sunday for students, help them by praying on these Sundays in the church. In the third week of February, they pray for those who are going to sit the national level matriculation examination or university entry examination. Students are requested to stand in order to be prayed for by the pastors. As universities and schools in Myanmar open in June, praying for students who are starting their school and university

takes place in the first week of May. When I asked a pastor regarding this issue, he replied:

It is the most beautiful and effective program we can do for students because praying is our strength as Christians. Moreover, by doing this special Sunday, students know how much the church and community encourage education, how much anticipation their parents have for their future, and this makes students study hard. Therefore, in other words, this is a kind of promotion and involvement in education by the Church. (Pastor Cung Lian Thawng, 05/05/2016.)

### **The Role of Youth as Volunteer Teachers at Church Programs**

As mentioned, the education and programs provided by the Sunday school are free for everybody. Teachers are volunteers from the church's youth. As soon as they finish their matriculation examination, they serve as volunteer teachers for Sunday school. For those who are attending University, they serve as volunteers during the holidays or semester breaks. Some might already work for a government office or other organization. The local people expect the Sunday school teachers to be volunteers from the church youth. And the youth also assume that it is their task and responsibility to be volunteer teachers for their church's Sunday school.

Currently, HBC has more than 25 Sunday school teachers and about 200 children in total. Children are divided into classes according to their ages. They have courses which can be finished in one year. The program is in the hands of the youth under the administration of the Christian Education Department of the church. The volunteer youths take the lead. The church is involved only in financial support and providing necessary facilities, and in some decisions regarding one-year programs and activity plans for the children. The youth are crucial for the Sunday school's successful implementation and sustainability.

There were no paid staff at Saipen Nursery School during its inception years, when the Church had no budget for hiring teachers. Young people from the Church volunteered to work as teachers or other staff. In the beginning,

youths and the Youth Department were the main actors running the program, with youths being assigned month by month as volunteer teachers. However, the church eventually introduced a budget for hiring teachers and staff, and now the youths help in other ways, for example by cleaning the campus, and arranging and setting out rooms as needed.

### *The roles of Youth in the Summer Course Program*

The program aims to enhance the youths' educational opportunities during the summer holidays. Another aim is to promote the right to education in subjects excluded from the government curricula, such as Chin literature. The youths are not just participants in the program; afterwards they have to pass on the knowledge they have acquired to their community, rural villages, and within the church. They study Chin literature during summer courses and then have to teach it back home. Likewise, with music.

## **Conclusion**

HBC has lifted up many children and students to reach greater heights in their education and future careers, especially for those who for lack of money would otherwise have no chance to be educated. HBC's Youth Department has improved the lives of marginalized children and young individuals by satisfying their rights to education, life skills, and vocational training. The churches have been helping according to the needs of the people and their culture. The Church meets the fundamental needs of education for Chin people according to the basic human right to development which is defined in the rights-based approach.

## Chapter 5

# Analysis and Conclusion

### Introduction

This chapter aims to answer the main research question “How far do the church’s activities enhance a rights-based approach to development in Chin State?” The right to education as part of the right to development is endorsed by the international convention on human rights. The right to development is an undeniable human right which everyone is entitled to enjoy for their educational, economic, social, cultural and political welfare. Education is one of the most significant mechanisms for human development:

Education is a human right with immense power to transform.  
On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy  
and sustainable human development. (Kofi A. Annan 1999).

The right to education is a fundamental human right that should be available to all, regardless of religion, ethnicity, and nationality. This has been universally recognized since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, and has since been endorsed in various international conventions and national constitutions. It includes not only access to education but also the obligation to eliminate discrimination. Nevertheless, the right to education is denied to countless people around the world, including the Chin in Myanmar, to the detriment of their development.

## **HBC activities and its rights-based approach to development**

The rights-based approach is an approach to development to achieve a positive transformation among stakeholders in development projects. It emphasizes the empowerment of those who do not have full rights; and the strengthening of the capacity of the institutions, such as the HBC, needed to enable these rights to be met.

This study selected three indicators from the many in the rights-based approach to development, namely capacity building, peace building and people participation. The three indicators are used to analyze and evaluate the rights-based approach to development in the case of the Chin, with a focus on the activities of HBC.

### ***HBC and Social Services***

HBC assumes responsibility for a wide range of social services – operating orphanages, supporting the elderly, community development activities concerned with people’s general social well-being, and charity arrangements for vulnerable and poor families. HBC also assumes responsibility for support schemes to pay for medical expenses and transport to hospitals, and scholarships for secondary school students; and to organize blood donors and school transport. They provide funds to employ additional teachers since the government does not provide enough teachers for many schools. In 2015 church members helped build temporary shelters for victims of landslides and torrential rain, and also provided them with rice, water, and financial support.

### ***HBC and Health***

Churches are also involved in providing health services. One of their outstanding successes is the establishment of the Agape Clinic, managed by the church. A large number of people have access to medicine because of this clinic, which provides medical support much more cheaply than other public clinics. This may in part be due to management by the church - the church can and does dismiss malefactors which prevents the malpractices that commonly exist in government institutions, adding to their costs.

### *HBC and Educational Development*

As already explained, Chin State is poor, and due to poverty parents cannot afford school fees. Countless children in Chin State lacked accessibility to and availability of the right to education before the churches in Hakha started to work on educational development. Many children had no chance to go to nursery school in Hakha, especially those who lived in poor areas, and lower class children.

This is why church institutions including HBC started their educational work. HBC introduced two main programs - the SNS nursery school and the LCC orphanage. They also have other activities and programs such as the summer courses, Christian Education Sunday, students' day, etc. The Church is looking ahead and taking steps to enlarge these programs. The Church by its nature is a teaching institution as well as a preaching one. HBC has a long and noble history in education, having trained some of the Chin's finest religious and secular leaders. Underprivileged sections of society, such as needy children and women, received the seeds of their emancipation through the efforts of the HBC.

HBC provides financial support for university students who could not otherwise enjoy a university education. The government introduced a university for the Chin in 1993 in Kalay, Sagaing Division, 144 miles from the State's capital. People had difficulties in getting to this University because of the poor state of the roads. In December 2008 the government opened a Government Technical Institution for tertiary education in Hakha.

### *HBC and Economic Development*

The conflict between the Chin and the Burmese government stifled economic growth and gave birth to human rights violations. As a consequence, thousands of Chin fled to neighboring countries for safety. The central government systematically neglected Chin state in terms of state development budgets. Inadequate basic infrastructure - electricity, communications and transport - are obstacles faced by the entire Chin population. The roads that link towns and villages are poor. Of nine towns in Chin State, just six have a road network which people can rely on to do business or move goods from one place to another.

The church has initiated many mini-projects for economic growth and the well-being of the local people. The mini-projects include supporting local government by funding consultancies; advocacy roles such as organizing seminars on small and medium size enterprise (SME) issues; and skills training to enable people to secure employment. The HBC's economic development work is part of the effort to combat poverty, to fight for social justice, and to improve the daily lives of the poor and marginalized.

### *HBC and Culture Development*

HBC is widely involved in Chin cultural development. This includes small projects such as making film documentaries about Chin culture, training for traditional dance, seminars and talk shows. Women from HBC have produced films recording traditional songs and dance, which they have disseminated free of charge throughout Chin communities. HBC organized a culture show which aimed to maintain and improve Chin culture among the people. The HBC youth contribute to the development of Chin culture, for example at their camps where they learn and practice Chin dance and songs. The HBC has organized a seminar for local people, especially the young, to learn and develop Chin culture. They hold conferences to promote cultural development activities and to exchange knowledge on Chin culture, and public debate competitions on Chin cultural issues.

### *HBC and Political Development*

HBC has organized small seminars on a regular basis to discuss political conditions on the road to peace and the transformation to democracy. HBC has invited Chin politicians, activists, and human rights defenders to take part in worship at HBC and to give talks to local people as part of political development.

## **Analyzing the rights-based approach to development in HBC's activities**

As education is part of development, the study merged the rights-based approach to development and the rights-based approach to education in the 4As frameworks. A human rights-based approach to development in the Chin context needs to focus on peace building, people participation, and capacity

building. In merging the 4As frameworks of the rights-based approach to education and the human rights-based approach to development, people participation was analyzed as part of *Accessibility*; capacity building as part of *Acceptability*; peace building as part of *Adaptability*; and church community development work as part of *Availability*.

### *Accessibility*

The study found that the church and people's participation in community development can be understood in two ways.

Firstly, the study found that the Church perceives its development projects as charity. In the rights-based approach it is fundamental to upgrade poor people's lives for sustainability rather than giving them charity. The church approach is more charity purposed than rights-based purposed. The accessibility of local people to participate in the development of their economic, social, cultural, and political lives is purely passive. Important cases and plans are discussed in public general meetings, but decisions are taken by the leadership. Local people are just told what is going to happen or what has already happened. They are consulted about projects but they cannot alter them since the major decisions have already been made. For example, after Holy Communion, the church collects money for the poor i.e. as charity. The church and its members are happy to donate rather than building up poor people's capacity to meet their needs. The poor are being treated as receivers instead of being empowered. This creates a dependency of poor people on the church. This suggests that the church needs to apply a rights-based and people-centered approach to participation in its institutional practice and actions.

On the other hand, the church does tend to promote meaningful participation by local people in some circumstances. For instance, the church usually hosts and organizes public consultations in order to lobby the government about social relations and decision making issues. Seminars, workshops, and training are basic initiatives of the church on a regular basis. The church is also involved in local people's participation in particular projects in the fields of social services, economic development, and cultural development where the church makes a major contribution to local people's participation in the right to development.

Using the 4As frameworks to evaluate the educational development work of the church with regard to SNS and LCC, both institutions are accessible to children with no language barrier and no discrimination as to gender or disability. Even children who live in poor areas and who are marginalized by their social status can access the church-based school since the fees are low compared to other types of school. The interviewees reported that HBC's activities related to education development are in great demand by local people, as enhancing their right to education.

This analysis concludes that the church's role in the accessibility of community development works leaves only a passive role for local people. The church sees accessibility as a right but the way it operates in some sectors is based on a charity approach to the poor instead of getting them actively involved in community development work. On the other hand, the church does promote local people's participation in some of their cultural, economic, political, and infrastructure development works. In some sectors the church is the only institution that provides local people with accessibility and their right to development.

### *Acceptability*

This section looks at capacity building as part of *acceptability* and empowerment in the rights-based approach to development. The *acceptability* of programs and projects from the government and the local community including church led programs is the first thing to consider, in particular whether the local people are satisfied with the capacity building programs on offer - programs which should function to build up the capacity of the local people including institutional development.

The study found that the government totally neglected the Chin community. Instead of promoting and supporting the entry of international organizations into Chin state, the government ensured that INGOs/NGOs were rarely seen in building the capacity of institutions and people. At the same time, in recent years, the church, as the only institution providing education and training, has focused on spiritual approaches, activities and programs. There has been little focus on capacity building for the local people to improve their social and economic development by understanding the obstacles that prevent them from doing so - mainly the government. For instance, the church has

been seen in Chin State as the first institution to teach and practice ideas, philosophy and education. But those activities and programs mainly related to spirituality, Christian ideology and philosophy.

The study also found that there was a huge gap in the church's knowledge about and resources for engaging with development actors. In specific areas the church needs to undertake a baseline assessment on which to design programs for themselves and for poor communities. The church needs to review and upgrade its policies and constitution to enable it to provide technical training for church institution personnel and for the local people including the poor and marginalized. In this way, the church will be able to expand its activities in terms of providing training, seminars and workshops for significant change in society.

For the educational development work, the church has been playing fundamental roles as regards local people's rights and the acceptability of education. This paragraph evaluates *acceptability* in the cases of SNS and LCC. The curricula used at SNS and LCC are up to date with well trained teachers as evidenced by the teacher recruitment criteria ascertained from the committees. The teaching materials and facilities are of good quality and fully supported by the church. Interviewees stressed that they register their children at church-based nursery schools in the expectation of their children growing up with Biblical teaching.

Since there is little or no involvement of the government and international organizations in capacity building in the Chin community, the church has become the main actor in promoting people's empowerment, including in institution building. The church's capacity building work is significant for local people. The church sees acceptability as a process of capacity building but there was a weakness in how the church ran the capacity building programs as regards people's participation. The church needs to collect and take account of the voice of the people before running their programs to make them more effective and more compliant with local people's needs.

### *Adaptability*

This part of the research analyzes one of the actions of the church for peace building with the human rights-based approach, to see whether the church's activities are really effective and successful, and benefit local people

and the current political situation. The adaptability of local people to political change, involvement in peace building and the democratization process at state and national levels will be assessed.

The study found that the church and church institutions are the only social and civil society institutions that can act for the people, because of their legal status and financial means. Most of the leaders of the Chin armed group are Christians. The church has a major role to play in mediation and peace-building. Being Christian, they are naturally open and tolerant since Christian teaching is to live in peace with neighbors. This is morally binding for Chin Christian leaders, and the divine command to do justice is fundamental to their political outlook and ideology. These two aspects of Christian teaching underpin their political understanding.

The involvement of the church in peace building has been highly appreciated and successful, as evidenced by the current peace process and the transformation to democracy in Myanmar. As explained earlier, the cease-fire in Chin State was brokered by church leaders. The role of the church in peace building is still ongoing and crucial, because the church provides a social platform for both sides. The Chin armed group needs to meet with the people to sound out public opinion, and it is the church that provides the space for such meetings. Most public consultations, meetings and workshops are held in church buildings. Church leaders conduct workshops, seminars, and fora on peace and democracy, in order to disseminate democratic ideas among the ordinary people to foster peace and democracy through conscious participation and commitment by the public.

To analyze the educational development work of the Church, adaptability in the 4As framework also refers to special needs in the local context, and adaptability to political change including education reform, economic change and future careers. The Myanmar education system requires children to take first the nursery class and then continue to their primary class. The government school accepts the certificate from the church-based nursery school for admission to primary classes. The church can adapt to conditions of political change which is evident from the nation-wide elections in 2010 and 2015. The church can adapt to government educational reform. The church gives equal opportunity based on gender and there is no discrimination for disability. Children enjoy the courses and programs which have been running for some years. This research finds that

children who grow up with a church-based education are more secure for their future lives than children from government schools, since they are well trained in livelihood skills, vocational skills, and handicrafts.

This study found that the church sees adaptability as part of political reform and the peace building process, as evidenced by church activities and involvement. The church played a brokerage role in the current political transformation to democracy in Myanmar. The local people are consulted and involved in the peace building process in many ways. The church involvement in the peace process is effective and successful. At the same time, the churches are the main places in Chin State where political leaders can hold public consultations. The involvement and role of the church in current political events and the processes of peace building will be significant for their legal and financial status. Churches are supportive of peace building in terms of hosting seminars, workshops, and dialogue. The general public are consulted in those meetings and their voices are recognized and taken into account for building smooth transition.

### *Availability*

Availability in the Chin context refers to the local people's right to development and cultural, infrastructural, economic, educational and social well-being. These activities can be helped by focusing on analysis, diagnostics and sustainability - in particular, in improving sustainability in difficult circumstances. The church has provided and promoted the right to development in the Hakha community, for instance by providing strong support for Chin cultural development by campaigning and training the youth. The church has also organized seminars, discussions, and public debates on cultural issues, and has arranged seminars and meetings in collaboration with other CBOs, NGOs, and INGOs and government to build up small projects for economic development, which can include SMEs and other livelihood projects.

The churches' work in promoting the right to education is significant and successful for the Chin especially for the poor, orphans and marginalized groups. The church initiated educational development programs by inaugurating SNS for nursery education and LCC for the education of orphans. Since the church became involved there are now options for choosing a nursery school in Hakha.

### ***Barriers***

Many of the barriers for promoting the right to education that have been reported in previous studies, such as lack of transport services and free school uniforms, were not found to be major barriers in this research. Lack of government recognition of faith-based schools was the biggest barrier. Instead of giving support, the government obstructs the church's activities. The land ownership issue is another barrier to the church's moving forward into wider roles of community development: land ownership in the name of faith-based organizations is not allowed by the government, and HBC has to register its land in the name of private church members such as pastors and deacons.

### ***Opportunity***

As mentioned above in the context of the Summer Course Program, the Church makes use of opportunities arising from local contexts and conditions. This is evidenced by the interviewee who was asked for a perspective on the summer course program. The interviewee explained that church and community elders worry about young people's participation in the Buddhist water festival. The intention of this program is to encourage the children to avoid the Buddhist culture that has intentionally influenced religious minorities in Myanmar. It is also a good opportunity to utilize the summer holiday in a productive way for the young people.

## **Analyzing the Role of the Youth Department**

The role of the Youth Department in promoting the right to education in church programs is highly valued and reminds the church that the young are not marginalized members, but fully fledged colleagues in community development work. The youth play many roles as volunteers, for example, as volunteer Sunday school teachers. The church would be in a critical condition without the active participation of the youth.

## **Analytical Conclusion**

It is clear from this research that the biggest challenge for the Church-based schools is lack of recognition from the government. Several interviewees believed that the church should extend its programs of community development

especially in education. They argued that students from the church-based schools were better prepared than children from government schools. However, the government does not allow official registration in the name of religious institutions, and without government recognition there can be no extension.

The study found that the philosophy of the local people is highly influenced by the practice and beliefs of Christianity. Parents put their children in a church-based school expecting them to grow up with the extra-curricular teaching of the Bible. Church involvement in community development will always be crucial for the Chin. The local people highly value the contribution of the church to their well-being and its support for social welfare, livelihoods, education, etc. For these reasons the government ought to recognize and support the church officially in their community works, rather than being obstructive.

The Church based schools in Hakha have played a major role in securing the right of the local people to education, and hence to human development not only in its religious aspect but more widely. Church-based schools are the main source of access to the right to education for the Chin. The churches have met the fundamental needs of the people educationally in accordance with the basic principle of the human right to education as defined in UDHR and other international conventions.

The research shows that the church is filling the gaps in the educational development of the Chin - gaps due in part to the failure of central government to budget for Chin State development. The activities of the church are highly appreciated by the people since these programs respond to their needs in terms of the 4As. HBC has helped many children and young people with their education and future careers, especially those who otherwise would have had no chance to be educated through lack of financial support. The perceptions and philosophy of the Chin are highly influenced by religion, and programs which are set in a religious context are thus more acceptable, adaptable, available, and accessible for them.

Looking at all the data, interviews and findings of this research, we can conclude that the faith-based organizations fill the gaps between government and local people. It was because the availability and accessibility of the existing school system was not proportionate to the population that the faith-based schools became involved in improving education development. The faith-based organizations help in promoting the right to education for the children,

including the underprivileged. The analysis shows that children who grow up from a church-based education are better equipped than those from other types of school as regards livelihood skills, vocational skills, and handicraft skills.

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## Appendix I

### *Survey Questions*

#### *Major development programs and changes*

- What are the main programs of HBC in community development works?
- What about the leadership roles of HBC for those programs? Who takes responsibility for what program?
- In your opinion, why did the church start their involvement in community development works?
- Do you think HBC's works in such projects are effective for the local people? How?
- What kind of difficulties do you see to moving forward and enlarging those programs?
- Is there any barrier or problem with the government as regards the church's works in development programs?
- Do you think the church should change their approach and way of working as regards those works?
- Why it is important for the church to be involved in community development works?
- What do you think would happen if churches were not involved in those works?
- Do you think those works improve the local people's lives?
- If yes, which programs do you think are most effective?
- What major change can be seen in Hakha community after HBC projects have been implemented?
- In your opinion, do you think the church will continue its works in coming years? Why?

- Do HBC plan to extend its community development works? (Including budgets.)

*Educational Development works*

- What programs do HBC have for education development?
- Can everyone join or attend HBC's education development programs?
- What about availability for children? Any problem in terms of transportation?
- Are you aware of the human rights-based approach? And of the right to development?
- Are you happy with HBC programs for education development?
- What do you like most and what do you dislike most about the programs?
- Why are HBC programs for educational development so important to you?
- What are your biggest problems living at LCC as an orphanage? Are you satisfied with the education programs?
- Do you receive extra-curricular tuition from government schools? Which?
- Do you have any transport problem in getting to your school?
- Do you feel safe there regarding the buildings, other items, food, clothes, etc.?

*In-dept. Interview*

- Could you describe the structure of HBC and the responsibility of each of the departments?
- What kind of community development work programs do you have?
- How do you run those programs in term of budget, in terms of human resources and management?
- What are the main problems you have in running such programs?
- Do you think the church work for community development is effective for the local people? If yes, how and what major change do you see?

- Should the church change the way it approaches people?
- What about political development work? Do you have any special program for this?
- Why is the church important for political development in Chin state?

*Youth engagement*

- Does the Youth Department have particular community development programs?
- What are the main responsibilities of the Youth Department in the church's programs?
- Why are young people important for the church programs and development works?
- How do you see the church programs? Is there anything that you want to change in the way the church runs their programs? Please describe?

## Appendix II

### *Photographs*



Photo: Rungtlang, destroyed by landslide in July 2015. HBC planted many seeds for reforestation. *Source: Author*



Photo: Chin traditional cloth waiving by youth apprentices. *Source: Aidii*



Photo: Chin Culture dance by youths. *Source: CMN*



**Photo: Hakha Baptist Church. Source: CMN**





# Assessing Faith-based Organizations in Development

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Case Study of Hakkah Baptist Church,  
Chin State, Myanmar

*Thawng Tha Lian*

This book focuses on the work of the Baptist Church in Chin State, in North East Burma, adjacent to India and Bangladesh. The half million or so Chin population, like Burma's other ethnic minorities, have fared badly under Burmese military government. They also have religious minority status, being 90% Christian in a predominantly Buddhist society. Chin State is Burma's poorest region, marginalized by the government and under-developed.

Years of armed conflict between Chin nationalists and the government led many people to flee, creating a significant diaspora in India, Malaysia and the West. In 2012 the churches brokered a peace agreement between the nationalists and the government, which still holds.

Social development in Chin State is almost entirely in the hands of church organizations. The Baptist Church, as the largest such organization, has played a major role, in particular in the field of education. Church youth make major contributions.



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