

**WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A STUDY
OF ELECTED WOMEN MEMBERS OF UNION PARISHAD
LEVEL IN BANGLADESH.**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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BY

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REGISTRATION NUMBER -127, SESSION-2000-2001

Dedicated

To

My Beloved Parents

And

My Sisters & Brothers

402443



Mahbubur Rahman
Professor & Chairman
Department of Public Administration
University of Dhaka.

Certification

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Women Participation in Local Government: A Study of Elected Women Members of Union Parishad Level in Bangladesh”. submitted for the M Phil degree by Md. Jahangir Alam, is the product of his research work done under my supervision. This study is his original work and it has not been submitted anywhere for any degree.

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I do hereby declare that this thesis entitled “Women Participation in Local Government: A study of elected Women Members of Union Parishad Level in Bangladesh”, submitted to the University of Dhaka for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Public Administration, is my own work and has not been previously submitted to this University or any other University / Institution for award of any degree/diploma at any level.

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.....
Md. Jahangir Alam

Abstract

One of the key agendas which have gained high priorities during the last two decades is the representation of women at decision making levels in local government. It is widely recognized that women's political participation is an essential element of women's empowerment. Economic and social empowerment of women cannot be sustained unless women are made part of the political decision making process at all levels of the State government.

The Constitution of Bangladesh proclaims equal opportunity to all citizens and thus forms a fundamental policy statement applicable to all citizens of Bangladesh. Articles 12, 19, 27, 28(1), 28(2), 28(3) of the Constitution clearly forbid discrimination against citizens on grounds of gender, caste or creed.

One of the most important tiers of the recently (1997) introduced four-tier local government structure is the Union Parishad. In 1996 the Local Government Commission recommended that reserved seats for women in all tiers of the Local Government should be filled by direct elections. In pursuance of these recommendations by Act No. 20 of 1997 the 1983 Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance was amended. This amendment provided provision for direct election of women members to reserved seats. Consequently the first direct elections were held to elect representatives to the reserved seats in December 1997.

In Bangladesh, the recent Constitutional Amendments have brought a considerable number of women into the mainstream political arena, bringing to the fore a range of issues involving not only women's rights but their role in politics. It had enabled women to come to power, but not actually empowered them in the political sense of the term. However, there was a considerable status enhancement among women and has made a difference in the perception among the men in the society with regard to their credibility in politics. The attitude of a large number of men towards women in politics has been changing from one of hostility and underestimation to reconciliation and trust.

The empirical study of the Union Parishad has brought to the fore some emerging leaders among women at the grassroots level. However, in Bangladesh the one-third mark in the Union Parishads was more of a move in the opposite direction and a disabling factor since as against men who contested from one ward, a woman had to cover three wards with all odds stacked against her to contest for one position.

This study was an effort mainly to analyze the participation of women representatives at the local government compared to their male counterparts in the overall development. The research has been undertaken in a preliminary survey study. Both primary and secondary sources have been used for the study. Interviews had been conducted using pre-tested structured interview schedule. Primary data were collected from Shailkupa Upazila of Jhenidah district of Bangladesh

The present study has been an attempt to review the participation of women at grassroots level democracy in Bangladesh. The study examined the role of government of Bangladesh to ensure gender balance at local level policy planning. In Bangladesh women's participation at local level politics has been recently ensured through the constitutional reform. It has been found that although a large number of women are elected as local representatives, obstacles, related to women's gender identity, refraining them to play their roles effectively. It is evident that lack of effective and timely planning, lack of political background, absence of proper socio-economic and political environment, lack of appropriate organizational framework, lack of skill and training place women behind to prove their competencies compare to their male counterparts. It has been identified that women have limited scope to exercise political rights, lack of control over resources and limited choice in decision making. However, women have been trying to overcome the barriers through their active participation in the local level policy making. Attempts have also been taken to sensitize communities as well as local and national leaders and policy makers to the need for gender balance in the political process. Efforts are going on to make politics democratic, participatory, accountable and transparent so as to ensure a just, humane and equitable society.

There is a need to enable women members to be more effective members of local government bodies. Two aspects of effectiveness need to be considered: effectiveness in participating in overall Union Parishad operations and effectiveness in stimulating attention to women's development issues

That being the case the foremost task is to reach out women to make them politically aware and conscious. This task requires to be taken up on a mass and intensified scale. Coordination and cooperation of both government and NGOs are necessary to achieve this goal. Political parties have a significant role to play as well.

As far as the inspiration factor behind joining politics was concerned, majority of women and men revealed that it was because of a sincere urge for public service and for developing the village that they took such a step despite the fact that family response towards their joining politics was sometimes negative. Politics as a profession was not worthy, because of the dominance of muscle and money power, and that there was too much threat of violence. Most of the women emphasized the fact that their participation could be better if they had functional education and also training on the various intricacies involved in the political field.

- ✓ The study is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter is the introduction with the statement of the problem and the methodology used in the study. Chapter two focuses on the local governance in South Asia and the institutional background of local government system in Bangladesh. The following chapter is on women's political participation in local governance. Chapter four is on the profile of Union Parishad members and includes the socio-economic background. Electoral democracy at grassroots level is the focus of the fifth chapter which includes democratization and gender issues. Chapter six includes development activities at local level such as participation in various committees, interaction with government and non-government organizations and training facilities. Chapter seven presents the views about women's rights and development. The concluding chapter provides suggestions and recommendations of Union Parishad members. At the end of the study book references have also mentioned.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Due provisions have been included in the constitution and other statutes in Bangladesh to ensure better governance and fair representation of gender in the local government. This research work is intended to find out the inter-linkages between gender, participation, local governance and development. In fact, good governance needs not only fair representations but also effective participation of gender and subordinated social groups at the policy-making and implementation level.

It is a fact that an effectively strong local government system is one of the essential preconditions for ensuing good governance. It is also generally agreed that democracy is a key foundation on which the edifice of devolved local government has to be built. A sound local government system can initiate and strengthen local democratic process by constituting locally elected representative bodies for upholding democratic values and practicing democratic processes and procedures and carrying out development activities. Again, economic progress and development requires good governance with accountable delivery mechanisms as well as it needs sound and pragmatic development policies. Adequately empowered and accountable local government institutions are essential vehicles for ensuring formulation and implementation of such policies.

Devolution of power and decentralization of administration are key issues, which presently occupy central position in any political discussions. Integral to this debate is the issue of democratization and the flow of political power and authority from the top to the grassroots level. The need to reconceptualize local level political structures which are representative of a wide spectrum of interests has been felt and it is in this context that the dimension of gender becomes extremely important (*Khan, Z.R. 1999*).

One of the most significant goals set out by the Fourth World Conference on Women 1995 in Beijing was adequate representation of women in all decision-making bodies (*Beijing Platform for Action, 1996*). It has been suggested that in any representative

body there should be a 'critical mass' of both men and women to voice the concerns of the total society. Good governance means both participatory and representative governance. Equal participation and representation are parts of democracy. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that elementary fairness calls for a gender balance in political decision-making. Women's insights, values and styles of governance can enhance and enrich the total decision-making process. Their skills and talents need to be harnessed for the greater benefit. It is also important to note that at the local level women can be more sensitive to community issues.

All successive governments in Bangladesh since its independence felt the need to have viable local government institutions for ensuring effective governance of development policies and programmes. As a result we have seen 'decentralised' local government reform as an important policy agenda of all governments. Thus reforming local government is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh. The repetitive process of local government reform has been handed down to the sovereign state of Bangladesh from Pakistan along with its system of local government. The fact, however, that each successive government in Bangladesh felt the necessity to reform the existing structure of local government indicate the failure of innovations to be effective institutions for enhancing local democracy and delivering development programmes. In Bangladesh, there have been five major reforms attempts in the area of local government under five different governments. The objective of all, at least at the level of rhetoric, was to introduce participatory and accountable local governance through decentralisation of functions and powers to local elected institutions. All initiating governments also recognised the relevance and important of the role of decentralised local institutions in planning and implementing need based development projects for poverty alleviation and reduction of socio-economic inequality. However, the objectives remained unachieved and the governments failed to keep their commitment toward grassroots democracy and to devolve power to the people at lower levels to manage their own affairs. Consequently, the primary goal of poverty reduction, economic equity and gender balancing remained unfulfilled (*Khan, Z.R., 1999*).

One of the important reasons why women have not received adequate benefits from years of planning and development was their inadequate, non-participation and

involvement in the preparation and execution of plans for their economic development and social justice through decentralized institutions.

In Bangladesh, Article 9 of the Constitution promotes the special representation of women in local government. In the recent years, constant pressures on the *Union Parishad* from the academia, citizens and women's groups, a protected process to provide adequate gender representation has led to the *Union Parishad Amendment Act 1997*. This is truly remarkable initiative for providing adequate representation to women.

The Constitution of People's Republic of Bangladesh provides for formal equality of men and women. There is no legal barrier to women contesting or voting for any elective office, including that of the Head of the State. Article 9 of the Constitution promotes the special representation of women in local government. Although the constitution grants equal rights to all citizens in all spheres of life, yet there were very few women in local government (*Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972*). In 1976, provision was made for two nominated women members in addition to nine elected members and one chairperson in each *Union Parishad*, which increased to three nominated women members in 1983. In 1992, it was changed to indirect election where three women members in each local government body will be elected by the chairperson and other elected members. This process of filling women's seats in the local councils totally ignored the scope of women's active participation and role in these political organizations where policies are decided and crucial plans for local development are formulated. The nominated women could not play more than the role of a 'yes' person of the chairperson and members, who were predominately men (*Khan, Z.R., 1998*).

In 1997, the *Union Parishad Ordinance of 1983* was amended and through this amendment for the first time provision was made for direct election for the women members to three reserved seats for women in the *Union Parishad (The Local Government Union Parishad Amendment Act, 1997)*.

These are indeed, unique experiments in the world of democracy, wherein women at grassroots level of Bangladesh and India, irrespective of their educational, occupational and socio-economic background, have been found suitable enough to occupy political positions and participate in decision making and economic development through local governance.

Women, however few, have been articulating and trying to sensitize local and national leaders and decision makers to the need for women's participation in political process. Efforts are going on to take politics democratic, participatory, accountable and transparent so as to ensure a just, humane and equitable society. The urgency for political empowerment of women has therefore increased manifold. There is a need to enable women members to be more effective members of local government bodies. Two aspects of effectiveness need to be considered: effectiveness in participating in overall Union Parishad operations and effectiveness in stimulating attention to women's development issues.

It has only been eight years for Bangladesh since the constitutional change and that is too short a period to alter the dominant age-old patriarchal structure of society. We should, however, hope to see the beginning of the process of empowerment in local government. One would also hope that the process of empowerment in local government institutions will enable women to re-examine their lives, to recognize the source and structure of power and of their own subordination and to initiate action to challenge the existing ideology as well as structures and institutions.

By contesting and getting elected to local government, women have shattered the myth of their own passivity - that women are not willing to enter politics. However, women's representative in the decision-making positions with monitoring power, is still negligible. The present rules of the game and decision-making procedure do not allow a greater participation of women and in the absence of women, there is no effort to recognize or change the game. The very absence of women at these levels thus leads to preservation and reinforcement of male oriented and male benefiting types of decisions.

It is very necessary to identify the structural conditions and external interventions that can stimulate women's active participation in the public/political sphere and under what conditions can their political representation and participation lead the way to their empowerment.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The new leadership that has emerged at various levels especially at the local government has posed challenges to the traditional power structures. The women coming out of their traditional household roles and demonstrating their capacities of decision making, administration and execution at local level have been observed in different forms in the two countries under study. These examples are few yet reflect a great degree of hope for a positive change.

The main issue which can be raised as to whether the representation of such a large number of women in the local government institutions has made any significant difference to affect the existing gender biased social structures and norms. These changes need to be assessed in terms of:

- Whether recognition of such constitutional structures especially leadership of women for collaboration and joint efforts have been accepted by the traditional power structures
- Whether the constitutional power structures have over powered the gender-based, interest based, communal, religious or any other identity based institutions for larger socio-economic development
- Whether fund flow and implementation of programs in favor of the needs of women as well as men have taken place.

The term "Women's participation in the local government" is an important issue in current development discourses. Socio-economic development cannot be truly achieved without the active participation of women at the decision making level in society. Mumtaz Soysal defines participation as all forms of action by which citizen's "take part" in the operation of administration. The term "taking part" refer's to any

level of region from macro to micro or it may be of any type e.g. advisory or in decision making or in implementation etc. , people can participate through public or private bodies or organizations

R.C. Baetz states that participation in development means how community members can be assured the opportunity of contributing to the creation of the community's goal and services.

According to McCloski, political participation is defined in general as "activities by which members of a society share in the selection of leaders and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy" (Loven duski and Hills, 1981;3)

In Bangladesh about 85 percent of women live in rural areas. The rural social structure plagued with many problems such as illiteracy, unemployment, malnutrition and poverty.

But there is the traditionalization of social system and institutions that place them in unequal and disadvantaged position. The constitution of Bangladesh has granted equal rights to men and women both in matters relating to the state and public life. The constitutional provisions (Articles 9-10, 27-28, 37-39, 50, 66 and 122) clearly outlined the steps be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life.

It has also been realized and recognized by the government that the objectives of improving the status of women in Bangladesh is likely to be achieved if women get their rightful representations in National Parliament and the local government institutions. It would ensure their participation in the formal decision making process at the national and local level.

Women's improvement in the political process at the local level is needed to make them familiar with the problems of the local community in general and women's needs and issues in particular. The activities of the local level politicians, their constant contact and interaction with the women of the local community go a long way in raising the political consciousness of women around them. But unfortunately, as in the case of national level politics, women's role in the political process at the local level is also not significant.

With a view to associating women with all the tiers of local government institutions namely Union Parishad, the Upazila Parishad, and Poursave (Municipality) the system of reservation of seats for women was included earlier.

Union Parishad is the second tier of local government institution. It has been given an increasingly important role in civic development and judicial function. Women's participation in local government and politics is a contemporary but burning issue which needs further social research. Needless to say that women are facing numerous social, cultural and religious problems in our society.

In the present context of Bangladesh, we can assume that traditional values and norms are changing. In case of women's participation in politics or any activities outside home, there is a strong opposition from family member's (husband, father or mother-in-law), relatives, the community members (community leaders and neighbours) and also stand to lose their esteem and prestige in the society. In this stage very insignificant percentages of women have been continuing their political activities from the beginning in Bangladesh.

Therefore the main focus in the present study on women's participation in local government is to measure the attitude towards women participation in local government to find out the actual situation and existing position of women in the society and their involvement in politics.

1.3 Relevance of the Study

The study proposes to bring about the following:

- Suggestions for the effective performance of both men and women as political leaders by understanding the constraints as well as conducive factors in the process
- Bring out the needs and requirements of men and women leaders and suggest necessary measures
- Evaluate the necessity of training for them
- Analyze the need for reservation to bring a large number of women in decision making institutions at the local government level

- Point out those women leaders despite their problems take up issues of primary importance and are able to bring about development in their areas, by analyzing their performances.
- Focus on the change in attitude and opinions of the people at large about women from one of hostility and underestimation to reconciliation and trust.

The study is also an attempt to:

- Identify the inter-linkage between the emerging development phenomenon in the context of gender and local governance and participation
- Understand the grassroots democracy and the decentralization of power and help documenting the best practices promoting good governance and women's political participation

Along with these objectives, the research is looking at few fundamental questions i.e. How far the gender representation is effective in carrying out development work? To what extent does women's participation make a difference from their men counterparts? Particularly, on issues related to develop at the local governance. What are the limitations women are facing that obstruct their participation and exercising their power? These are few important aspects included in the questionnaire schedule of the study.

1.4 Data Sources

This study was an effort mainly to analyze the participation of women representatives at the local government compared to their male counterparts in the overall development. The research has been undertaken in a preliminary survey study. Both primary and secondary sources have been used for the study. Interviews had been conducted using pre-tested structured interview schedule

Selection of the Study Area

Shaikupa Upazila under Jhenidah district of Bangladesh was selected to conduct the study. [See Appendix B & C which include map of Jhenidah district & study area.]

Sources of Data Collection

The research has been undertaken in two phases: i) a preliminary survey, and ii) an in-depth study. Both primary and secondary sources have been used for the study. Interviews had been conducted using pre-tested structured interview schedule. Furthermore, field investigators observed the day-to-day activities of the respondents and attended meetings of the various committees of the local government.

Primary Sources

Primary data were collected from Shailkupa Upazila of Jhenidah district of Bangladesh.

Secondary Sources

A review of the available literature on local government was undertaken to get relevant information. The secondary sources included official documents, government policies and acts, statistical reports, reports of NGOs and networks, research studies and news clippings.

Selection of Sample

To conduct the research study, Shailkupa Upazila was purposively selected from Jhenidah district. About 100 Union Parishad members, both female and male were again purposively selected from all Union of Shailkupa Upazila of Jhenidah district.

All the 45 women members were interviewed of the 15 Unions of Shailkupa Upazila. On the other hand, 55 men Union Parishad members were selected randomly from the list of Union Parishad members.

Table 1.1 Study Areas and Sample Size by Gender

Name of District	Name of Thana	Number of Union Porishad	Female	Male	Total
Jhenaidah	Shailkupa	15	45	55	100
Total		15	45	55	100

Techniques of Data Collection

- Structured interview schedule was used for data collection. Pre-test of the interview schedule was administered in Jhenaidah district and the questions were modified accordingly. (See appendix 'A' for the full text of structured interview schedule which was used for data collection.)
- Observed day to day activities of the respondents

Data Processing and Analysis

Statistical information have been processed, analyzed and presented in graphs, tables the major findings.

1.5 Limitations

The research was limited to only one Upazila of Jhenaidah district given the availability of time and resources. Union Parishad members are very busy so it was very difficult to communicate with them and conducted the interview. Bad communication at grassroots level also hampered the study during conducting interview.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The study is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter is the introduction with the statement of the problem and the methodology used in the study. Chapter two focuses on the local governance in South Asia and the institutional background of local government system in Bangladesh. The following chapter is on women's political participation in local governance. Chapter four is on the profile of Union Parishad members and includes the socio-economic background. Electoral democracy at grassroots level is the focus of the fifth chapter which includes democratization and gender issues. Chapter six includes development activities at local level such as participation in various committees, interaction with government and non-government organizations and training facilities. Chapter seven presents the views about women's rights and development. The concluding chapter provides suggestions

and recommendations of Union Parishad members. At the end of the study book references were also mentioned in the report.

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CHAPTER II

INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH IN THE CONTEXT OF SOUTH ASIA

2.1 Local Government System in South Asia

The South Asian countries followed different paths towards political and economic development. India went the democratic route with import substitution economic policy, while Pakistan went the military route with an export-oriented economic policy. Sri Lanka went the democratic route with great emphasis on social development. Bangladesh played with military rule but settled on a democratic political system with increasingly greater emphasis on exports and regional and global integration. Nation-building activities, economic development planning, economic stabilization and reform and pressure for improving the quality of life led these countries to largely neglect the local government system.

Despite some advancement, both in terms of devolution and delegation in the local government system of South Asia, it can be stated with a fair degree of certainty that the local government systems are generally weak. They all lack managerial expertise, and adequate financial resources to undertake the activities within their domain. Dependence of grants from higher levels of government has increased overtime instead of declining. They lack appropriate knowledge and information to carry out the functions. Micro management and various types of interventions from higher levels of governments do not allow local government to grow and develop.

Sri Lanka experiment in local government in some ways moved forward in the 1980s. In 1980 the formation of the Development Council led the decentralization effort of the country although it is also led to the demise of the town and village councils. In 1987, the provisions of the Thirteenth amendment to the Constitution further developed the local government functioning from the central government to the newly created provincial councils which in turn led to the demise of the district development council. Despite such attempts, the current complex political condition

in Sri Lanka makes it difficult for the local government to thrive and flourish (*Siddiqui, 1994*).

Study of local government system in Bangladesh concludes that although the constitution provides for an autonomous local government system these provisions have not been implemented resulting in a local government system that is not functioning properly. The local government system has been subject to many changes and experiments, which has not only destabilized the system but caused the local government system to distance itself from the community it is supposed to serve (*UNDDSMS, 1996*). In the three countries India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, as well as in Pakistan the national political scenario as well as the national economic initiatives have generally tended to direct thinking away from local government contributing to a generally weak local government system. (*Rahman, S., 2000.*)

Women in Local Governance in South Asia

Women leaders in South Asia dominate the political landscape. From Indira and Sonia Gandhi, to Sheikh Hasina, Khaleda Zia and Benazir Bhutto, to Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Chandrika Kumaratunga, South Asia's women leaders are the epitome of powerful women reaching the highest echelons of governance. And yet, the statistics tell a different story. The vast majorities of South Asian women are illiterate, in poor health, invisible in the system of national accounts, and suffer legal, political, economic and social discrimination in all walks of life. Women in South Asia also have the lowest rates of participation in their governance structures. Only 20 per cent members of local government are women (*Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, 2000*).

The 1999 Report on Human Development in South Asia advocated that if governance is to promote human development, it has to go beyond being pro-people or people-centred. It has to be owned by the people. Women account for half the population of South Asia, yet they remain mostly invisible in all governing institutions. Women hold the top positions in major political parties of the region, yet these powerful positions have not translated into positive outcomes for the majority of South Asian

women. Most political parties do not even maintain data on their female membership and few women are granted party tickets for elections. In some countries women are more visible in local governance structures than in any other governing institution. Most gains have been made in India, where one-third of the seats in *Panchayats* are reserved for women. However, gender bias pervades at all levels of governance in South Asia, which may be one of the reasons for the region's governance crisis (*Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, 2000*).

Organizations at the grassroots level allow people to contribute significantly to the governance of their communities. For women, successful grassroots experience has meant a chance to from coherent voice, to be heard and to make a difference in their communities. Across South Asia, the experience of women in local government has varied, with some countries being more successful than others in attaining greater female participation.

With the exception of India and Bangladesh, women's representation within local bodies in South Asia remains minimal. Even in these two countries, female representation barely rises above 20 per cent. In 1992, the Government of India passed the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India. Termed the '*silent revolution*', these Amendments paved the way for women's entry into local governance by reserving 33 per cent of seats for them in all *Panchayats* and their Presidencies (*see Box 2.1*). In most states, reservation of seats has met with success, with female representation exceeding the 33 per cent quota in states such as Karnataka, Kerala and Manipur.

However, in some regions female participation remains low. For instance, in Madhya Pradesh only 2.99 per cent of the *Panchayat* members are women. Experience over the last decade has shown that women who have gained access to the *Panchayats* and Municipalities have performed well. Some of them have already established excellent records of service and even won distinguished awards for their performance. Being mostly illiterate, a large number of them have placed a high priority on acquiring literacy to be able to perform better at their jobs. Substantial numbers of teachers.

lawyers and other functionaries at the grass-roots level have been able to win elections and become members of the *Panchayats*.

In Bangladesh, women have been incorporated into local governance through reservation at the *Union Parishad* level. Bangladesh has experimented different forms of local government throughout its political history – sometimes at the village level, the *Gram Sarker* and sometimes at the sub-district level, the *Upazila*. But the *Union Parishad*, which consists of representatives from several villages, has remained the most effective administrative body at the local level. Currently there are about 4,276 *Union Parishads* in Bangladesh. Since 1997, a quota of 3 seats or one-fourth of the total has been reserved for women in the *Union Parishads*. This has brought up women's representation from a very few to over 20 per cent. However, reforms suggested for one-third female participation at the sub-district and district levels remain unimplemented.

Local government is also an integral part of the Nepalese governance system. Since adopting a policy of decentralization, local governing bodies have over the years acquired increasingly greater authority in Nepal. The Local self-Governance Act of 1999 is by far the most progressive act in terms of devolving authority from central to the local governing bodies. Local governing institutions now have some taxation authority at the local level as well as limited judicial authority to tackle local level disputes.

However, female representation in local governing institutions has been very limited in Nepal. Currently, there is less than 10 per cent of women in the District Development Committees (DDC) and Village Development Committees (VDC) combined. Not a single woman is the Chairperson of a DDC or Mayor of any Municipality. Out of 3,913 VDCs, there are only 13 chairpersons who are women. On the positive side, one of every five seats in each ward of a VDC and Municipality is reserved for women candidates has ensured the participation of an additional 36,023 women at the ward-level governance of VDCs and municipalities.

Sri Lanka's current system of governance consists of three tiers - the Municipal Councils, Urban Councils, and the *Pradeshiva Sabbas*. While total membership of these councils exceeds three thousand, less than 3 per cent are women. In the last bodies' elections, held in 1997, only one woman was elected Mayor of a Municipal Council in the province of Jaffna. Unfortunately, in 1998 she became the victim of political assassination. In the Urban Councils, while there are currently two female Vice-Chairpersons, women occupy none of the 36 posts for Chairperson. At present, three of the Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons in the *Pradeshiva sabbas* are women. Despite this, women represent only 1.72 per cent of the total membership of the *Pradeshiva Sabbas*. Currently the government has also put forward a recommendation for fixing a quota of 25 per cent for women in local government.

Until recently, female representation in local governance in Pakistan was negligible. The current government has scheduled fresh elections, starting December 2000, for local government at three levels- the Union Council, the Tehsil Council and the District Assembly. Fifty per cent of seats at the union level have been reserved for women. At the *tebsil* and district levels women will be allocated 5 and 10 seats respectively, forming roughly about 15 per cent of the total seats.

Since politics is traditionally a male domain and all financial, economic, commercial and political negotiations conducted outside the home are by males, South Asian women have very limited access to decision-making process, and they have a severe lack of access to and control over financial resources. This effectively reduces women's chance of contesting elections. Political equality is as yet an elusive idea in most South Asian countries, even though some progress has been made. As men have control over assets and have relatively better education, they have a dominant position in terms of political power remain surrogate actors in the political process.

Tokenism is more evident and problematic at the local level than at higher levels of government. Women councilors may not necessarily be educated. Lack of awareness leads to situations where they may become dependent on male councilors or political parties, focusing more on issues of men's interest than on women's concerns. In

some cases women are elected as councilors without actually participation in the functioning of local bodies. Many women councilors in Bangladesh concede that having fathers or husbands in the local bodies facilitated their own entry into local level politics.

Similarly in Baluchistan (Pakistan), while the proportion of women councilors was as high as 16 per cent prior to the 1998 local election, many of the women were council members only on paper. This is the situation for a majority of women councilors throughout South Asia. Most women lack any effective power or influence in local governance structure. Many of them do not have the necessary skills to present ideas effectively. Lack of awareness of the possibilities of political participation means inadequate contribution to public affairs on the one hand and women's empowerment at the other. Women councilors themselves recognise these problems. In Nepal, Representatives Training Programme have been initiated to strengthen women's capabilities and make them more active and participatory members of local governance. Similarly, several Indian NGOs act as support system for women *Panchayat* members by providing guidance and training for acquiring negotiation and management skills.

Local bodies, if properly utilized can be the vehicle by which women's participation can be effectively mainstreamed. Since these institutions function at the grassroots level, representatives, both men and women, are more aware of, and can be more responsive to the needs of women and children as well as to the problems of rural communities. Tapping into the latent capacity of women is essential to substantially enhancing the socio-economic development of South Asia. Decentralization is thus a prerequisite for effective mainstreaming of women's concern in development. However, unless existing mechanisms and attitudes that deny women equal chances in decision-making are not modified, simple devolution of power will not be enough to ensure greater female participation in decision-making. (*Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, 2000*).

LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA

Bangladesh

Levels of governance in Bangladesh consist of the following:

- National level, at which the national Parliament (Jatiya Sangshad) operates, and
- Local level, at which the following urban and rural based local government institutions function:

Urban-based institutions:

6 City Corporations, including the Dhaka City Corporation

106 Pourshavas (Municipalities)

Rural Based Institutions:

Zila Parishads at district level

Thana/Upazila Parishads

Union Parishads at the lowest administrative level.

India

The republic of India has been described as a quasi federation, consisting of the Union Government at National level, based on the parliamentary/cabinet system of government, with a President exercising nominal powers as Head of State.

State Governments operate at State level.

At local level, Local Government consists (in addition to Municipalities), of the system of Panchayati Raj, (generally operating at district, block and village levels) introduced in the 1950s in accordance with the recommendation of the Balvantrai Mehtra Study Team, and re-enforced and given constitutional status under the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution.

Thus, in relation to local government, the provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act States that

- There will be a 'Gram Sabha' (*Village Council*) for each village or group of villages comprising all the adult members registered as voters in the Panchayat area.

- There shall be a three-tier system of Panchayats at Village, Intermediate Block/Taluk and District Levels. Smaller districts with population below 200,000 will have the option not to have an Intermediate level Panchayats.
- Seats in Panchayats at all three levels shall be filled by direct election. In addition, chair-persons of Village Panchayats can be made members of Panchayats at intermediate level, and chair-person of Panchayats at intermediate level can be members of Panchayats at districts level.

Nepal

Levels of governance are to – fold: National and local

- At National level: the monarch is recognized as Constitutional Head of State, while the Parliamentary Cabinet system operates under the constitution of 1991. Parliament comprises the National Assembl (Rashtriya Sabha) or upper house, consisting of 60 members and the House of Representatives (Pratinidhi Sabha) consisting of 205 members.
- At local level: Nepal has a two-tier system of local government, with Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Municipalities as the lower tier, and District Development Committees (DDCs) as the upper tier.

Pakistan

Pakistan's institutions of governance operate at three levels:

- National: consisting of the National Assembly and the Senate,
- Provincial: Consisting of the Provincial Assemblies and
- Local: consisting of local authorizes established under the following ordinance:

Punjab Local Government Ordinance (1979), NWFP Local Government Ordinance (1979), Baluchistan Local Government ordinance (1980), and Sindh Local Government Ordinance (1996), Capital Territory Local Government Ordinance (1972), the Pakistan Cantonment Board Act (1924) and the Tribal areas FATA Local Government regulation (1972).

Local Government Ordinance 2000: On March 24, 2000, President Pervez Musharraf announced his plan to devolve power to the basic level with an enhanced representation of women, minorities, farmers and laborers. The plan entailed developing main systems/functions to local tiers as stated in the ordinance.

Sri Lanka

There are levels of governance in Sri Lanka:

- National Level: at which a nationally elected Executive President, as well as a Parliament consisting of 225 members function under the Constitution of 1978.
- Provincial level: Under 13th Amendment to the Constitution, a system of Provincial Council was established in 1987 for the 9 provinces in Sri Lanka, but with a temporarily merged council for the Northern and Eastern provinces. With the North-East Provincial Council becoming non-functional in 1990, Provincial Councils operate presently in seven provinces of Sri Lanka. These councils are directly elected by the people of the province
- Local level: Three types of local authorities (all elected by the voters of each local authority area) function at local level:

18 Municipal Councils for large towns, under the Municipal Councils Ordinance

36 Urban Councils for smaller towns, under the Urban Councils Ordinance

258 Pradeshiya Sabhas (Divisional Councils) in rural areas, under the Pradeshiya Sabhas Act No. 15 of 1987.

Table 2. 1 Levels of Governance

Country	National	State/Provincial	Local
BANGLADESH	National Parliament	-	District Councils Upazila Parishads Union Parishads City--

			Corporations/Municipalities
INDIA	Parliament *Rajya Sabha *Lok Sabha	State Governments	Panchayathi Raj Institutions at 3 levels Minucipalities
NEPAL	Parliament *House of Representatives *National Assembly	-	District Development Councils (DDC's) Village Development Councils (VDC's) Municipalities
PAKISTAN	Parliament *National Assembly *Senate	Provincial Assemblies	Union Councils Tehsil Councils Town Councils District Councils Municipal Corp/ Metropolitan Corp
SRI LANKA	*National Parliament *Executive President	Provincial Councils	Municipal Councils Urban Councils Pradeshiya Sabhas

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

Constitutional Provisions

In almost all South Asian countries, constitutional provisions have been included to ensure equal status of all citizens, without discrimination.

Thus the constitution of Bangladesh proclaims equal opportunities to all citizens, and under Articles 12, 19, 27 and 28, clearly forbids discrimination against citizen on grounds of gender, caste or creed.

The constitution of India guarantees equality to women in all spheres, but leaves their political representation to their own willingness, opportunity and support, while

providing reservation to the Scheduled caste (SC) and schedule tribes (ST) in parliament and state legislatures.

Nepal's constitution prohibits inequality and differential treatment on the basis of sex.

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal status to men and women in Pakistan. However, Zia's regime instituted religious intolerance in Pakistan. Parallel Judicial Systems and Discriminatory Laws are reflection of his draconian steps: Hadood Ordinance, 295 C (Blasphemy law), Qisas and Diyat Ordinance, Law of Evidence and separate electorate-recently changed back into joint electorate. Such steps violate the equal status of women guaranteed by the constitution of Pakistan.

Sri Lanka's Constitution ensures equality of all citizens and declares under Article 12 (2) that "No citizen shall be discriminated against on the ground of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, and place of birth or any one of such grounds."

Local Level

In Bangladesh, in relation to representation of women in local government institution, according to the latest City Corporation Act, Dhaka City Corporation is composed of a Mayor, 90 General Ward Commissioner and 30 female ward Commissioners against reserved seats who are directly elected. The other City Corporations are composed of a Mayor, 30 General Ward Commissioners and 10 female Ward Commissioners (except Khulna which has 31 Commissioners) against reserve seats, who are also directly elected.

The results of elections to their City Corporation, held on 25 April 2002, indicate that the percentage of women who have been elected, due to the provision for the reserved seats, range between 23.80% and 27.27%.

One of the most important tiers of the four-tier local government structure of 1997 in the Union Parishad. An amendment past in 1992 to the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance of 1983, provided for the reservation of three seats exclusively

for women in each Union Parishad. Since 1997, the members to these seats are directly elected.

The results of the elections to Union Parishads held in 1997 too illustrate the importance of reserved seats: that out of a total of 55854 successful candidates, 42466 were men while 13024 or 23.31% were women.

Within in India's systems of local governance, an important provisions that was introduced under the 73rd Amendment 243 D (3) was that

“Not less than one third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allocated by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat.”

Similar provisions have been made in relation to urban local government too. It is more over stipulated that one third of the office of Chairperson of Panchayats at all levels shall also be reserve for women.

Thus it is only at local level, that with the passing of the 73rd Amendment Act, all the State Panchyat Raj Acts provide for reservation of 33 1/3% seats for women. However, by implication, seats are given the discretion to have even a higher percentage of women. Thus, although the percentage varies in different states in the implementation of these provisions, in the majority of states very large numbers of women have obtained membership in the institution of governance.

The percentage of 25.97 given in Table 4 is based on the numbers of women at all levels of system of Panchayati Raj, on data by SAP India (Annexure I). This figure is less than 33 1/3% since the percentage of women in some states e.g Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkhim is very low. However, in Tamilnadu, for instance, 32,795(33.67) women have been elected to village Panchayats, 2295 (35.31), to Panchayat Union Councils and 225 (34.72) to District Council in 2000. In Gujrat, there are 41180 (33.35) women in Gram Panchayats, 1274(33.40) in Panchayat

Samitis, and 254 (33.38) in Zilla Parishads. In Kerala, the number of women in Village Panchayats is 3,383(37.81) in Panchayat Samitis, 563(36.39) and in District Panchayats 104(34.67). The percentages are even higher in the State of Karnataka, in which, at the elections held in 2000, a total number of 35940(44.86%) women have obtained election of Gram Panchayats, 1375(42.24%) women to Taluk Panchayats, and 339(38.08%) women to Zill Parishads.

In Nepal, at local level, the Local Self Government Act of 1997 makes provision to ensure representation and access of women and disadvantaged groups in local governance. At least one woman has to be nominated to each VDC (Village Development Councils) or Municipality executive committee. The VDC Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Municipality, parliamentarians elected from the district, and six nominated members including one woman, constitute the District Assembly, and they elect the (District Development Councils) DDC Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and members of its executive committee. Each DDC must also have at least one nominated to it.

However, in spite of the mandate, representation of women in DDCs and VDCs is still very low: 6.7 % and 7.7 % respectively, while municipalities show a higher percentage of 19.5 %.

In Pakistan, elections to Local Bodies were held in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992. In 1993, the caretaker government of Moeen Qureshi dissolved local councils. Since then, elections to local bodies were in Punjab (partially) in 1998, while the second phase did not take place. In Baluchistan, elections took place in November, 1998. Elections were announced in NWFP in 1998, but declared null and void on being challenged. In Sindh, where Governor's Rule had been imposed, no elections were held.

According to official sources, before the dissolution of local bodies (1993), there were 8295 female members (10.4%) out of a total of 79,155 nationally. The province-wise ratio was 11% in Punjab, 12 % in Sindh, 1.32 % in NWFP, and 16 % in Baluchistan , 0.58 % in the northern areas, and 7.8 % in Islamabad territory.

At the recent elections to local bodies in Pakistan, 33 % of seats in local authorities were reserved for women, out of which 30 % were filled.

In Sri Lanka, at local level, representation of women, especially in the rural local authorities, seems to be even worse than at national and provincial levels. Thus at the elections for local authorities held in 1997, out of total of 3720 elected members, only 73 or 1.96 % were women.

At the last elections to local authorities, in 2002, out of 3902 members, 77 were women, which shows a very negligible increase in the percentage from 1.96 % to 1.97 %.

Reservation/ Quotas for Women

The section on Obstacles/Deterrents to Women's Participation has brought out the factors which, in the South Asian countries, have resulted in low representation of women in the decision making process. It was the realization in most of these countries that due to these constraints women were unlikely to obtain adequate representation through the electoral system and need for affirmative action in the form of special seats reserved for women was considered.

This is seen that in the South Asian region, with the exception of Sri Lanka, all other countries did adopt the quota system, if not at all levels, at least in some of the levels of governance.

It is however regrettable that in Pakistan and Bangladesh, while reservations were operative for a number of years, this provision became defunct: in Pakistan since 1988, and in Bangladesh since 2001.

However it is heartening to note that in Pakistan, reservation has been reintroduced in 2002, while in Bangladesh the need for its re-introduction is being highlighted.

Bangladesh

The Provision of reserved seats was made in consideration of the socio-economic and cultural constraints faced by women in Bangladesh society, which are mainly

responsible for their inability to secure adequate representation in the national Parliament.

In the Constitution framed in 1972, 15 seats were reserved for women in the national parliament (Jatio Sangsad) for 10 years under Article 65 (2) (3). The system of indirect election provided for the seats kept reserved for women. The directly elected members of the National Parliament were to elect the women members in the reserved seats. But the reservation of seats for women placed no bar on women who wished to contest general seats from territorial constituencies.

An Amendment in 1978 increased the number of reserved seats to 30 and extended the period to 15 years. Reserved seats ceased to exist on 16th December 1987 when President Ershad dissolved Parliament. Thus in the parliamentary election of 1988, there were no reserved seats as this provision was not operative. The Tenth Amendment passed in 1990 re-incorporated the reservation provision, with 30 seats reserved for women for a period of 10 years.

In accordance with these provisions, the reservation system in Bangladesh expired on 1st April 2001.

Thus at the last election held on 1st October 2001 there were no reserved seats, so that only 2% were elected to the National Parliament. It should be noted that with reservation of seats that prevailed earlier, the percentage of women at the elections of 1996 was 11.20%. Reserved seats for women are still provided at local level.

City Corporations: The City Corporation of Dhaka has 30 reserved seats for women, while the others have 10 reserved seats each. Members for all these seats are directly elected.

Union Parishads: In each Union Parishad, these seats are reserved for women, who are directly elected under the Amendment to the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance passed in 1997. Thus at the elections held in 1997, in addition to 110 women who came in on general seats, 12894 women were successful in reserved seats, which was 23.31%.

India

In India the question of reservation for women was taken up quite early, along with reservation for the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).

Thus the Balvantrai Mehta study team in 1957 suggested co-option of two members 'who are interested in work among women and children' by the 20 or so elected members of the block level Panchayat Samiti. It also suggested similar co-option in the village Panchayat. It thus reflected the almost universal tokenism in respect women's representation in Panchayats.

The Central Council of Local Self-Government in 1958 noted, "it is imperative that we ensure adequate representation of women, on the Panchayat. Some States have reserved one seat for women but, in practice, it is found that a solitary woman is unable to express herself freely on the aspects touching women's life in the villages. It is therefore felt that at least two seats must be reserved for women. This step would go far in enabling Panchayat to assess total needs to village development from a fuller angle."

It is surprising that with the realization of the inadequacy of one-woman representative the Council could visualize the need of only two women representatives.

The State Acts 1950s and early 1960s reflected this ideology and consensus. Even so, different State Laws either just provided for a grudging reservation of two seats or cooption/ nomination of up to two women, if no women came through election.

However, due to concern over the law representation of women, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts were passed in 1992. This amendment provided for 1/3 representation of women in local government institutions, as well as for 1/3 of their chairpersons to be women.

There are no reserved seats for women in State Legislative Assemblies nor in Parliament at national level. A bill is still pending at the Parliament for last several years due to stiff resistance from male MPs.

Nepal

In Nepal, in order to provide at least some representation to women, Article 114 of the Constitution proclaims that for election to the House of Representatives, at least 5% of the total number of candidates contesting from any organization or party should be women.

Moreover, Article 46 (1) of the Constitution ensures that at least three women members will be elected to the National Assembly (Upper House) by the House of Representatives, on the basis of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.

In relation to local government, The Local Government Act (1997) has introduced provisions for women's participation at local level. Thus all Village Development Committees (each of which is divided into 9 wards) has an elected ward committee, and each ward must have at least one woman in the ward committee.

At least one woman is nominated to each VDC or municipality executive committee.

The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, parliamentarians elected from the districts and six nominated members, including one woman constitute the district assembly and they elect the DDC Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and member of its executive committee. Each DDC must also have at least one woman nominated to it.

Pakistan

Provision was made for reserved seats for women in the National Assembly (NA) as well as in the Provincial Assemblies (PAs) as far back as the 1956 Constitution of 1962, the Legal Framework Order of 1970, and the constitution of 1973 too provide for reserved seats for women.

Thus the provision for the reserved seats for women until 1988 (when the provision expired) was as follows:

No seats were reserved for women in the Senate

In the NA, 20 seats were reserved for women out of a total of 237 (8.4%). Out these 12 were allocated to the Punjab Province, 4 to Sindh, 2 to NWFP and 2 to Baluchistan.

Until 1990 there were 20 reserved seats for women. However, 1990, 1993, 1997 there were no women reserved seats. Important to note here that in 1993 Benazir Bhutto was in power but she could not restore women seats.

However, reserved seats have been re-introduced in 2002, and 60 seats are reserved for women in Pakistan's National Assembly. Thus, presently, as a result of reservation, a

total of 71 women have obtained representation at national level; 60 on reserved seats and 11 on general seats.

In the Provincial Assemblies, according to a 5% formula, a total of 23 seats were reserved 12 in the Punjab Assembly, (4.6%), 5 in Sindh (4.4%), 4 in NWFP (4.6%) and 2 in Baluchistan (4.4%), which amounted to 4.5%.

But presently, due to the new provision that have been introduced, women occupy a total of 128 seats in the Provincial Assemblies: 66 in Punjab, 29 in Sindh, 22 in NWFP, and 11 in Baluchistan, which is 16.9%.

In relation to local government, in 1979, Provincial governments were directed to reserve a minimum of 2 seats in local bodies. Such reservation was made, except in NWFP. Thus, before the dissolution of local bodies, there were 8295 (10.4%) women out of a total of 75, 155 nationally.

As in the legislative assemblies, women in reserved seats in local bodies were also elected through the indirect vote of the elected members of the respective local councils.

Presently, 33% seats are reserved for women, and a total of 36, 191 women have been elected to local councils.

Sri Lanka

Quotas/ reserved seats for women do not operate in Sri Lanka at any of the three levels of governance.

Draft proposals for constitutional reform at various stages had included and subsequently excluded provisions for a quota system. One such example was that 25% of seats were to be reserved for women at local government level in the Draft Constitution of October 1997. However surprisingly, these provisions had been excluded from Draft Constitution presented to Parliament after the revisions made in 2000. (The alleged reason being that the Muslim and Tamil Parties are unable to field the required number of candidates)

Thus the promise made to introduce the quota system did not see the light of day.

At the 2001 elections the Women's Manifesto of United National Party (UNP) which came into power and which forms the Government presently, pledged to implement a 25% reservation for women in local government within the next 5 years. Even though the UNP has been in power for over a year, no mention of this promise has been made so far. However at an informal level the Prime Minister in the present government, Ranil Wickramasinghe, requested that nomination lists of his party (UNP) should contain at least 20% women candidates for the 2002 local government elections. (Source South Asian Partnership, 2003)

2.2 A Vision for Local Government in Bangladesh

What are missing are the general societal acceptance and a broad consensus for developing a strong local government system in Bangladesh. To develop this consensus, a local government system must be framed within a broad vision. In two articles of the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh an administrative vision of local government is provided:

Articles 59

- (1) Local Government in every administrative unit of the republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law.

(2) Everybody such as is referred to in clause (1) shall subject to the Constitution and any other law, perform within the appropriate administrative unit such function as shall be prescribed by Act of Parliament, which may include functions relating to: (a) administration and the work of public officers; (b) the maintenance of public order; and (c) the preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development.

Article 60

For the purpose of giving full effect to the provisions of article 59 Parliament shall by law, confer powers on the local government bodies referred to in that article, including power to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds.

The 1996 UNDP study on local government system also provides a vision statement, which can form the basis of developing a consensus on the issue of governance at the local level. Supporting the intent of the Constitution of Bangladesh, the UNDP study prepared for the Government of Bangladesh suggests fundamental vision statement.

These are four:

- The individual Bangladeshi is capable and resilient, despite adversities, and is deserving of trust and management of public goods and services.
- Self-governance is possible and is a desirable outcome of democratic institution building.
- The inclusion of all social groups is a fundamental necessity for autonomous local government.
- Local government is an integral part of a comprehensive national governance vision of partnership between central government units and local government units (*Rahman, S., 2000*).

2.3 Decentralization and Functioning of Local Government

The history of local government in Bangladesh goes way back to the British Colonial period. It can be traced back to the Bengal Local self Government Act of 1855, which established the three-tier system: District Board, Local Board and Union Committee. The system showed differentials in number of member with a minimum of 9 at a district level, and differentials in elected and in nominated as well as selection of chairman. During the period 1885 and 1947 much of the development of the local government system in South Asia remained stunted due to undue role of the administrative system as controlling authority of the local government system. During the British period, several acts were passed to promote local-level self-rule and people's participation in the administration was almost absent (*Siddiqui, K., 1994*). Although there was nomination system at different levels with different proportions, it was not until 1946, when the Union Board consisted of both elected and nominated members. However, autonomy was not granted to the local bodies. The system of nomination at the Union Level continued for a long time, but there was no provision specifically for nominating women members (*Alam, 1981; Tinker, 1976*). Thus during the British period local government remained an exclusive domain of men.

Despite several attempts by successive regimes to 'reform' local government institutions, elected local government officials have never enjoyed their constitutionally guaranteed political and economic autonomy since the birth of Bangladesh. Central bureaucratic control over administrative and financial processes, lack of power and capacity to mobilize local resources, lack of participation and local government institutions by the rural poor and women, and institutional instability have all characterized governance processes at the local level over the past decades. This has created a situation where local governments have neither promoted democratic control nor been effective in bringing about growth, equity or greater access to resources (*Local Governance Study: One World Action*).

During Pakistan period, the names of local government bodies were changed but their status remained almost the same with very little increase in autonomy. After

Bangladesh became independent the attempt was to strengthen local government institutions at three levels and to make provision for women members.

Much later under the Basic Democracy during the Pakistan period, the structure at the rural level was enlarged to four - *Union Council*, *Thana Council*, *District Council* and *Divisional Council*. This system was based on indirect democracy. Direct citizens' participation took place only at *Union Level*. The tiers above the *Union Council* consisted of representatives from the immediate lower level. Units higher than the *Union Council* also had appointed members. The role of controlling authority remained the source of stunting a local government system already limited by the concept of "guided democracy" (Rahman, S. 2000).

The Awami League government in power initiated to reorganize local government at the district level. The District Governors scheme of the regime sought to upgrade all existing sub-divisions into districts, each to be headed by a Governor appointed by the President. The scheme was not implemented as the regime was overthrown in a military coup in August 1975.

A study of local government system in Bangladesh concludes that although the constitution provides for an autonomous local government system these provisions have not been implemented resulting in a local government system that is not functioning properly. The local government system has been subject to many changes and experiments, which has not only destabilised the system but also caused the local government system to distance itself from the community it is supposed to serve (UNDDSMS, 1996).

The first Bangladesh Government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman changed the name of the local body at the lowest level to *Union Panchayat* and then to *Union Parishad*, the *Thana Council* to *Thana Development Committee* and the *District Council* to *Zila Board*. Total membership of each *Union Parishad* was 11 members, with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman directly elected from the entire *Union*, and 3 members each from three separate wards of the *Union*. *Union Parishad* elections were held in 1973. Although plans were announced for further changes in the local government

system resulting from the introduction of a presidential form of government, these changes were abandoned due to forced change in the governance of the country (Rahman, S. 2000).

General Ziaur Rahman came to power in 1976 and experimented with a new system of local government and the Local Government Ordinance, 1976 brought into existence a three-tier local government system, with the *Union Parishad (UP)* at the *Union*, *Thana Parishad* at *Thana* and *Zila Parishad* at *Zila* (District). This system for the first time introduced the nomination of women members in the *Union Parishad*.

During this regime, Zia introduced *Swanirvar Gram Sarkar* (self-reliant village government) in each of the 68,000 villages in 1980. Headed by a *Gram Proddhan*, the *Gram Sarkar (GS)* was composed of elected members representing farmers, landless labourers, artisans, women and youths. *Gram Sarkar* was given the responsibility for looking after such sectors as agriculture, health, family planning, law and order. But having no revenues of its own *Gram Sarkar* failed to discharge most of its functions. Besides, as the *Gram Sarkar* was used by the Zia regime for party political purposes, as such the institution came to be viewed as an adjunct of the ruling party rather than an autonomous local body. In 1981, after the assassination of President Zia, *Gram Sarkar* was thrown into oblivion and later abolished altogether by the new political leadership that came to power in 1982 (Khan, Z.R., 1998).

The military regime of General Ershad having assumed power in 1982 took little time to introduce a massive decentralization program. Hundred *thanas* out of the 460 existing *thanas* were upgraded into *Upazilas* giving them considerably enhanced power and authority for local development. The salient features of the *Upazila System* were:

- An elected *Upazila* Chairman to head the *Upazila Parishad*, (sub-district council)
- The elected Chairmen of the *Union Parishads* were represented in the *Upazila Parishad*
- There were also three nominated women and one male member in the council

- A large number of activities including agriculture, health, education, development of infrastructure, sanitation, public health, food for work/rural public works program were transferred to the *Upazila Parishad*
- *Upazila Parishad* was empowered to raise finances from a number of important local sources
- Senior officials of various departments were posted at the *Upazila* level and were made accountable to the *Upazila Parishad*
- Officials were made members of the *Upazila Parishad* but divested of the voting rights in the meetings
- *Upazila* was declared to be the focal point of local administration and development; and
- The *Upazila Parishad* was authorized to plan and implement projects without seeking approval from higher authorities.

With all these features, the *Upazila* system marked a significant step forward in the history of decentralization in Bangladesh. The government channeled a substantial amount of money to *Upazilas* under Development Assistance Funds for development projects to be prepared, approved and implemented by the *Upazila Parishad*. But the development programs and other economic activities that created a lot of enthusiasm among the local populace in the mid-1980s started to decline with the reduction of government allocation to the *Upazilas*. On the other hand, the *Upazilas* failed to mobilise resources from local sources (Crook, R. and Manor, J., 1994). Moreover, the *Upazila* became a den of corruption and misuse of public money in which both elected chairmen and appointed officials were involved and faced severe criticism from different quarters.

The mass upsurge of 1990 led to the downfall of General Ershad and his government. The new government under the leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia, Chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) dismantled the existing *Upazila* System with a professed commitment to set up decentralized structures at appropriate levels.

The *Upazila* was renamed as *Thana* (the earlier name) and the executive officer at the *Thana* was authorized to take control of the defunct *Upazila Parishad*. Instead of decentralizing local government the BNP choose to install the Thana Development Co-ordination Committee (TDCC), a de-concentrated unit at the *Thana* level which was hardly effective.

Again in 1996, following the parliamentary election the Awami League came to power. Keeping its pre-election to develop a strong, decentralized and effective local government, the Awami League government appointed a eight-member high powered Local Government Reform Commission in September 1996. The Commission submitted its report in May 1997 suggesting again a four-tier system of local government: *Gram Parishad*, *Union Parishad*, *Upazila/Thana Parishad* and *Zila Parishad* at village, *Union*, *Thana* and district levels respectively.

The main thrusts of the recommendations are:

- Directly elected council chairmen at all levels
- Directly elected women at all levels
- Inclusion of NGO and other local development agency representatives as non-voting members
- Strengthening of councils in terms of authority, resource base, functional boundaries, local level planning, local budgeting and implementation; provision for bureaucratic accountability to local representatives at relevant levels
- Constitution of a permanent statutory Local Government Commission and a Finance Committee (*GOB, 1997*).

In 1997 legislation was passed to form a *Gram Parishad (GP)* at the ward level as the lowest tier of local government. Consisting of elected ward members of *Union Parishad* as chairmen, six male and three female members to be elected by voters of each ward in the Union, the *Gram Parishad* was assigned as many as 14 categories of functions ranging from socio-economic surveys, adjudication of petty disputes to

help UP in the discharge of its functions (*The Local Government, Gram Parishad Act, 1997*).

At the same time the 1983 Union Parishad Ordinance was amended. Through this amendment for the first time provision was made for direct election for the female members to three reserved seats for women in the Union Parishad. The second amendment was the division of the *Union* into nine wards in place of the existing three. Other provisions of the Union Parishad Ordinance, (e.g. directly elected chairman) have remained unaltered. (*The Local Government, Union Parishad Amendment Act, 1997*).

Moreover, a Local Government *Upazila Parishad Act* was passed in Parliament in December 1998, providing for creation of a elected council at the *Thana/Upazila* level. The election to this council is to be held in near future. In the new *Upazila Parishad* system, the chairman to be elected directly by the people, will head the *Parishad* and have the executive power. Chairmen of the *Union Parishads* and municipalities will be the members of the *Upazila Parishad*. One third of the total number of women members of the *Union Parishads* and municipalities concerned will be the members of the *Upazila Parishad*. The women members of the *Union Parishads* (UP) and the municipalities will elect them (*The Local Government, Upazila Parishad Act, 1998*).

According to the Local Government, Union Parishad Ordinance 1983, a *Union Parishad* shall consist of one chairman, nine elected members and three nominated women members. The Union Parishad Act, 1993 has brought about some changes in the composition of *Union Parishad*. The *Union Parishad* shall be divided into 9 wards and 9 members, one from each ward shall be elected by the voters of the concerned wards. Instead of nomination, the 3 women members will be indirectly elected by the Chairman and members of the concerned *Union Parishad*.

The right to vote in local bodies was dependent on the possession of property, tax payment and education. Women ordinarily being deprived of property and educational opportunities were automatically left out of this voting right which in a way amounted

to discrimination. Till 1956, women were not even able to cast vote in the election to rural local bodies, when for the first time election was based on the basis of universal suffrage.

However in 1997, on the basis of the recommendations of the Institutional Review of the WID Capability of the Government of Bangladesh and the Local Government Reforms Commission, direct election for women representatives was provided in the *Union Parishad*. According to the new law, a *Union* is divided into wards. One member will be elected from every ward. Furthermore every *Union* comprising 9 wards has been divided into three parts for women members who will be elected through direct vote.

Local government is part of overall governance. Like the central government authority local government institutions at various levels perform almost the same functions (agriculture, health, education, road development) within their jurisdictions. The scale and scope of these activities are however limited. But being nearer to the community the development activities and services provided by local government institutions can have immediate impact on their lives. The central government, on the other hand, relieved of myriad of small-scale activities and services can concentrate on major works. When this division of work between the national government and the local government institutions is determined, distinct and clear-cut principles can ensure productivity and efficiency for both. More often than not, they are also likely to be cost effective.

Local government institutions, being nearer to people, can involve them in various ways: (a) planning and implementation of projects (b) supervision of educational institutions, hospital and other government financed units (c) mobilization of support for new initiatives like campaign against dowry, child labour etc. (d) enforcement of laws regarding gender discrimination, violence against women, environment protection (e) mobilization of resources in the form of taxes, fees, tolls etc. Popular participation also assumes importance because of its potentials for holding the local government institution accountable to the community. On the other hand, local

government institutions as the representative organization of the people can enforce accountability the central/national government authorities. The more aware, vigilant and active the community becomes through their participation in local government bodies, the greater is the pressure on both local government institutions and the government authorities to become transparent and responsive.

The potentials of local government institutions can be realized more effectively where there is decentralization and devolution of powers. Accountability, transparency, participation, participation, empowerment, equity and all other attributes of good governance can be in full play and become a part of the daily work of both the government and local government bodies when decentralization and devolution take place.

Decentralization and devolution ensure that the needs of the disadvantaged groups in the community are addressed adequately and environmental issues receive due attention because of their proximity to the decision-making authority. Transparency and accountability in decentralized units encourage people to take more interest in local affairs and pay to their dues timely. Without decentralization and devolution local government bodies remain paper organizations without any effective role. It will be no exaggeration to say that it is in a decentralized local government system that most of the attributes of good governance have a chance to survive and prosper. Strengthening of local government institutions can, therefore, be seen as a positive trend towards good governance.

2.4 Assessing Local Government

A number of authoritative sources exist regarding decentralization and local governance and local government in Bangladesh (*Ali, Shaikh, et. al., 1983*). Alamgir (1988), in assessing the development strategy for Bangladesh, concludes that while there was a felt need for a strong local government by the developers of the First Five-Year Plan, many of the programs of the First Five Year plan failed because

there was no local government system which could bring about effective local participation need to formulate and implement the Five Year Plan.

The Report of the Task Forces on Bangladesh Development Strategies for the 1990's in Volume II entitled "Managing the Development Process" also provides a review of decentralization initiatives (*Task Force*, 1991). This report concludes that local government system is needed not only to fulfill the objective of training in political system but also to make national level bureaucracies operating at the levels responsible and responsive to the demands and sensitivities of the local people. More recent studies include the 1993 "New Local Government System in Bangladesh" sponsored by the Local Government Division (GOB, 1993). This study outlines the salient features of the *Union Parishad*, *Zila Parishad* and the *Pourashava*. The study also outlines the salient features of the Gram Unnayan Committee (Village Development Committee) and the Thana Unnayan Samannaya Committee (Thana Development Coordination Committee). Finally, there is the 1996 co-sponsored study by the UNDP and the government of Bangladesh entitled "Local Government in Bangladesh: an Agenda for Government."

The UNDP study goes on to suggest challenges for implementing a system based on these four vision statement. First, People at all levels in Bangladesh are organizing themselves. Second, governments at all levels should be cognizant of this fact and must respond to the needs of the people or the people are likely to withdraw their consent. Third, the apparent complexity of local conditions will require re-thinking local government not as a single uniform entity but a broad framework, which can show many different shapes and configurations. Finally, different levels of local governments can have completely different functions, or that the same function can be performed at different levels. For example, the study notes that from an organizational perspective, the Union can serve as the focal point for economic development and local planning, the village or ward may be the appropriate place for community decision-making, participation and local leadership, while resource

mobilization and allocation may be at a higher level than the union and the district may serve as the training ground for national political leadership.

Process Context

Among the findings of most studies on decentralization and local government reviewed, conclusion, which states that most local government systems are unable to conduct all their responsibilities, is common. The formal responsibilities currently assigned to local governments are numerous and varied. Rural local governments are formally allocated 38 separate functions. Realistically, they are able to undertake five to six of these activities and even then in a very limited manner.

Motivation and Leadership

Successful local endeavor is usually internally generated and leadership, the ability to convince and encourage the local community to get going, sets the tone for innovation and change.

Mobilization of Resources

In most successful cases resources were generated from a multiplicity of sources.

Good Management

Key to the success of the best home-grown cases was the recruitment of skilled management personnel but also the development of sound management practices including accountability of financial resources and responsiveness to all stakeholders.

Impact and Multiplier Effect

In successful cases, the impact of the local endeavour is not only felt by the immediate beneficiaries, but the larger community. Successful project also has the ability to generate supportive projects and add-on project to the main project.

Sustainability

Successful projects at the local level lead to the development of individual, group, or community self-confidence and independence. In addition, lessons learned from the effort is institutionalized and regularly practised.

Collaboration and Co-optation

A sixth variable, one which is not derived from the analysis of the 12 best home-grown practices but nevertheless a strong indicator of successful local endeavour, is co-operation and co-optation between local government and other community and other non-governmental agencies and international assistance programs. (*Rahman, S., 2000*).

❑ The major areas of achievement of local government identified in the following:

- Providing a clear vision for local government.
- Gender dimension leading to empowerment of women.
- Giving recognition to local government units as unites of administration as required by the construction
- Creating Hill District councils for the tribal with participation from the non-tribal.

The major areas of failures are:

- Construction of the tradition of centralized administrative, financial and other controls
- Inadequate attention to skill development and manpower requirement especially at the *Union* level
- Contradictory provisions of laws
- Lack of accountability
- Lack of participation of people other than elected officials
- Intention to local resource mobilization
- Resorting to frequent ad hoc measures to run the affairs of the councils (*Ali, S., 2001*).

Comparative statement showing successes and weaknesses of Local Government Systems under different regimes in Bangladesh (1971-2000)

Local Government System	Successes	Weaknesses
<p>1971-75</p> <p>Inherited the rural government consisting of <i>Union, Thana</i> and District. But changed the system as follows:</p> <p>Deputy commissioner was appointed as administrator of <i>Zila</i> Board</p> <p>Circle Officer was appointed as administrator of <i>Thana</i> Development Committees, in place of <i>Thana</i> Council.</p> <p>Members of the Constituent Assembly (MCAs) were to select committees of local council in consultation with other political leaders, Chairman and members of the <i>Union Panchayat</i> and select one of them as Chairman of TDC. For <i>Zila</i> Board the MCAs were to select one of them as a member of each Sub-division.</p> <p>In January 1975 the Constitution was amended providing for one-party rule and a presidential form of government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Basic Democracies System introduced. ▪ Participation of people in the local Council ensured, specifically at the Union Council and the Municipalities through holding elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulties in selection of persons for nomination and appointment for the different bodies because of (1) lack of unanimity among the MCAs themselves and (2) involvement of non-elected political leaders that led to inter and intra-party rivalries and factions. ▪ In some districts MCAs took over the administration of TDCs as Chairman, but failed to run the affairs of the committees on the basis of fixed agenda. ▪ Absence of elected local councils at <i>Thana</i> and Districts Level. ▪ The vision of the elected local government totally discontinued in the wake of imposition of one-party rule.
<p>1975- 81</p> <p>The local government law of 1976 provided for elected local councils at all levels except <i>Thana</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Election to the <i>Union Parishad</i> and Municipalities were held. ▪ Constitutional amendment was 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of firm decisions from the part of government to rely on the existing apparatus of local government for decision

	<p>made dealing with the local councils to include special representations from peasants, workers and women.</p>	<p>making in areas that affect the day- to day life of the people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thana Councils were not made effective ▪ No Zila Parishad election was held. ▪ Decision-making at the local level was politicized. <p>The Concept of Gram Sarkerrepeated but never got off the ground.</p>
<p>1982-90</p> <p>The <i>Upazila</i> System was introduced with the concept of promoting decentralization process at the <i>Thana</i> level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eliminated a more than century-old administrative unit called the Sub-division. ▪ Updated the <i>Thana</i> to include both regulatory and developmental functions. ▪ Converted the old subdivisions into districts but without creating any corresponding local councils at these levels. ▪ Assigned greater authority to the <i>Thana</i> councils renamed <i>Upazila Parishads</i>, in terms of decision making in planning and implementation of local development projects. ▪ Placed <i>Upazila Parishad</i> under the control of a directly elected Chairman and all functions at the Upazila level of government were placed under the administrative control of Chairman of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zila Parishad was never constituted and continued to administered by the Deputy Commissioner.

	<p>Upazila Parishad.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appointed judicial officers at the Upazila level to try both civil and criminal cases. ▪ Introduced a new legislation on Zila Parishad with representation of all members of the parliament, elected Chairman of Upazilas and Municipalities of the district' ▪ Established three separate Zila Parishads in the District of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari with a persisting demand of the tribal population to manage their own affairs with sufficient autonomy. 	
<p>Care Taker Government (1991) Special Ordinance was put in place relating to <i>Union Parishads</i> and Municipalities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The specific responsibilities assigned to these local bodies include maintenance of law and order to ensure a free and fare election to the parliament. This added a new domination of task for the local bodies. 	
<p><u>1991-96</u> The provision for elected local councils during this period was made through twelfth amendment of the Constitution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Union Parishads worked as an elected local body ▪ Municipalities / City Corporations functioned as part of the local government system. ▪ Gave effect to constitutional provision of declaring Union and Municipalities as administrative units. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Thana</i> or Upazila as a unit of elected government was not accepted. ▪ No action taken to have elected Zila Parishad on the lines. ▪ No attempt was made to install Gram Sava as recommended by the Local Government Commission.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set up Thana Development and Coordination Committee at the Upazila level as recommended by the Local Government Commission. 	
<p>1996-2000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New local government laws relating to the constitution of Upzila was passed by the Parliament. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A new local government law relating Upazila was passed and the Upazila was declined to be an administrative unit of the purpose of article 59 of the Constitution. ▪ The law introduced gender dimension. ▪ It make MPs whose constituency fall within the Upazila, to be the Advisers. ▪ Zila Parishad Act was passed which also provided gender dimension and making the MPs Advisers to the Parishad. Moreover it was to be an elected body. <p>Establishment Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Palli/Gram Parishad was not implemented. ▪ Except the Union, Paurashva, City Corporations and Hill Districts Councils, no elected local government functioned. The void continued to be there in respect of Upazila and Zila Parishads.

(Ali, S, 2001)

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CHAPTER III

GENDER AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL

The need for equal participation in politics of both women and men, however, is newly introduced in the discourse of development of Bangladesh. For example, local Governance is an old phenomenon in the political structure however, political empowerment has been not-so-very-old an issue. Democracy, good governance, development and egalitarianism have been very strong words, which sounded quite powerless as far as gender equity is concerned. These words held a serious connotation to the male domain of power structure. The struggle for gender equity is very much related to the struggle for social justice as well as democratization. Gender equity is the most crucial aspect of democracy and development. Despite the fact that women are half of the population, their participation in any/every field is not overtly felt. They remain on the periphery. The factors leading to women's low or negligible participation in the socio-political arena (the public sphere) and within the household (the private sphere) are manifold. The vicious interplay of the various patriarchal traditions has solely been the reason.

Political participation is one of the major ways to ensure women's empowerment, to increase decision-making power and greater ability and to influence matters that affect their lives in the community and the larger society. In the broader sense, participation in politics goes far beyond electoral politics, such as voting and election to public office. Women's empowerment begins with her consciousness - perceptions about herself and her rights, her capabilities and her potentials, awareness of how gender and socio-cultural, economic and political forces that affect her. Women's political empowerment and equal representation in all decision-making institutions are critical inputs in women's struggle for freedom from patriarchy subjugation.

In Bangladesh, although women comprise nearly half of the population of a country having 13 million people, women are deprived of their socio-economic and political rights. Women constitute a majority among the poor bear the major brunt of poverty.

Secondary status of women in society, globally and in Bangladesh, may be attributed historically to the patriarchal system. The ideology of sexual division of labour confines women's roles within the domestic spheres primarily as wives and mothers and men's role outside the home as breadwinners, economic managers and decision makers. The gender discrimination that is practiced is deeply embedded within the social structure of Bangladesh. Women are discriminated against in family, society, workplace and political arena. The traditional society of Bangladesh is permeated with patriarchal values and norms of female subordination, subservience and segregation. A high premium is placed on female chastity; and *parda*, the veiling and segregation of women, shapes the norms of societal and gender relations. Thus women's political participation in Bangladesh occurs in the context of the country's poverty, the culture of female subordination, and weak political institutions.

3.1 Women's Movement in Politics

There is no end to the battles, a woman has to fight-the battle for space, for identity, for freedom of thought and freedom of choice regardless of her geographical boundary or economic position. Universal suffrage in principal made the individual the smallest political unit legally in a family the husband enforces his choice on the wife and dependents. In many ways family as a unit replicates the hierarchical structures of the states.

In 1947 Bengal became East Pakistan with the end of British colonial rule and partition from India. The marriage with West Pakistan did not prove compatible over issues of language to economic exploitation of the east wing and domination of the dominantly Punjabi bureaucracy and military. In 1971 Bangladesh was born to fulfill the dreams and aspirations of the people.

In the past 29 years since independence the people have experienced the forced and abrupt transition from democracy to military dictatorship, restoration of democratic government, collapse of social cohesion, rise of sectarian politics, increase in inequality, persistence of mass poverty, test and spread of micro-credit, speedy globalization and liberalization, spread of information technology, failure of

conventional governance, growth of vibrant NGOs, rise of aspiration for alternative development and desire for greater participation in decision-making by women at all levels.

Studies indicate that women remain behind men in crucial areas of development, participation in political institutions and in decision-making bodies, in employment and wage rates, in literacy and income.

The socio-demographic indicators for Bangladesh highlight the secondary status of women in Bangladesh. The sex ratio is 106 that shows lower life expectancy of women than men, that is 59.2 for men and 58.7 for women. By contrast in developed countries life expectancy of male is lower than that of the female. In the literacy rate there is sharp gap between male and female population. At the rural level it is 36 per cent for female and 56.1 per cent for male; at the urban level it is 60.2 per cent for female and 75.4 per cent male (Source: Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, PLAGE Project).

There remain extensive practice of violence against women, child marriage is widely practiced, wage discrimination continues despite legal safeguards, and women are victims of religious fundamentalism. Both the head of the government and the leader of the opposition in Bangladesh for the past nine years have been women, which however does not truly reflect the status of women in society in general.

The political status of women in Bangladesh merely reflects their position in society and the socio-economic and cultural values that is placed on a woman. She holds a secondary position except as a voter. Women as a vote bank to political parties is gaining renewed significance since the restoration of democracy in 1970. Much effort is made to mobilise them but little for social transformation or political restructuring to develop a political system and culture of gender equity. The demands for social transformation and political restructuring have been coming from the women's movement.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

British Colonial Period

The women in what is today nation state of Bangladesh belonged to united India and were involved in the nationalist movements against the British. They were beneficiaries of the social reforms movements in West Bengal. However, as the majority of the women belonged to Muslim families they were restricted by *pardha* and had limited opportunity of pursuing education. The Muslim adopted the western system of education much later than the Hindus and was not amenable to progressive and liberal thinking to the same extent as in West Bengal.

However, there were women who struggled to establish the right to education for women. The outstanding women in Bangladesh whose lives and ideals started two different sets of forces in motion are characterized in the persons of Begum Rokeya and Pritilata.

In the early 20th century Begum Rokeya (1880-1932) the daughter of a large Muslim Landholder and wife of a civil servant, through her short stories and essays tried to raise awareness of the society. She portrayed a caricature of *pardah* (seclusion) whose biting satire and irony, drew on her the wrath of the religious leaders and set the upper class Muslim men and women reluctantly thinking. Her other contribution was the setting up of the first girls school in 1911. She also organized the first Muslim women's organization in 1916.

A different kind of brazenness was manifested by Pritilata, Kalpana Datta and others. Pritilata was the member of an organization fighting against British colonial rule. The organization was strictly male, refusing women the right of membership. She rationalized her right to join her brothers in the anti-colonial struggle and became an active member.

The very different struggles of Rokeya and Pritilata become clear when viewed in the context of early 20th century colonial India, in the gaps of a nationalist struggle which ranged from agitational petition based politics to terrorist attacks. Excluding underground politics women had generally participated in the nationalist movement –

and the level of their participation had accelerated at different phases, for instance, disobedience of salt tax, formation of Atma Rakkha (self-defense) Leagues etc.

Partition and displacement of the population created gaps in various arenas of the society and there was a period of lull. However, the Bengalis were faced with a new colonialism that of the West Pakistanis and they resisted it with all their strength.

Pakistan Colonial Period

Immediately post partition women organized around the issue of female education and the Language Movement of 1952. East Pakistan was marked by large scale immigration of the Hindus to India. This created a vacuum in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres as the Hindus dominated these areas for different political and socio-cultural reasons. As both Hindu men and women were more advanced than the Muslims in the educational sphere a critical situation arose with the large scale departure of Hindu teachers and female students.

The provincial education Minister Abdul Hamid decided to close down the girls schools, as there weren't enough teachers and students. It was decided as not being feasible to

keep it open. The closure of Sylhet Women's College was resisted by Jobeda Khatun Chowdhury (the first Muslim woman politician of East Pakistan) who sought an interview with the then Government on this matter. He stipulated a one year period within which if the requisite number of students were not present the college would be closed down. Jobeda and a few other dedicated women then began a door to door campaign in search of students in the style of Rokeya Sakhawat. They were successful and the college remained open.

In 1949, the All Pakistan women's Association was founded by the wife of the then Prime Minister Leaqat Ali. It was dominated by educated urban upper and middle class women.

Women also took part in the language movement of 1952. Soon after the killings on 21st February 1952, women met in a house in old Dhaka condemning the police atrocities. As women were arrested, tension mounted in Dhaka and Chittagong. High

school girls were mobilized by the students organizations and they went round the cities in buses and trucks chanting slogans for establishing Bangla as the official language for East Pakistan.

The trends of organizing strikes as means to achieving immediate demands was adopted by the nurses in the 50s, the only known professional women's group to have agitated. Their demands were to stop continuous night duty for one month without rest, lack of visiting room in the nurses hostel, demand for arrears salary, free supply of medicine for sick nurses etc. after the nurses had gone on a hunger strike in support of their demands, they were partly met by the government and the strike was called off.

Bangladesh Period

Women's engagement in social action gave rise to an increased awareness of the need for concerted action. Women's organizations carry women's voices to the public arena and seek women's advancement and equality in terms of socio-economic and political emancipation. The women's movement in Bangladesh has gained momentum as well as strength over the years.

The early 1980s were years of tentative coalition building. The UN Decade for women (1976-86) had increased awareness among members of women's organization and consequently their level of activity working together on issues like violence against women, dowry; and retransformation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

In preparation for the world conference, some 20 women's organizations in Bangladesh established a national committee to formulate and adopt a united program. The gains of concerted action began to be consolidated in the latter half of 1987. A coalition of 14 organization called the *Okkyo Baddha Nari Samaj* (United Women's Forum) issued a 17 Point Program in February 1988 demanding equal right for women-as enunciated in the Constitution – on a broad range of legal, economic and political issues. The program fell short of advocating gender equality and feminism.

The forum mainly coordinated member organizations in taking common stands. It protested the *English Amendment Bill* passed in 1988, which declared Islam the state religion and it took part in several programs during the final days of the democracy movement in 1990.

In December 1990, during the transition to democracy after the fall of the Ershad regime, the forum submitted a memorandum to the acting president that incorporated many of the demands earlier put forward in its platform. The demands put forwards by the forum, with a few exceptions, are similar to those voiced by the Mahila Parishad, one of its active members, over the years since 1972.

The objectives of Mahila Parishad, the largest women's organization in Bangladesh is to fight against gender discrimination and organize women to assume a public voice. The Parishad had met with Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1972 and placed a demand of electoral reform- introduce direct election for the women seats reserved in Parliament. They met with resistance and the women interested to contest direct election were asked to join political parties and compete from the general seats.

The Parishad takes well-defined position in the areas of women's education, employment, and health and it raises social, economic and political demands designed to remove discrimination and to attain equality for women in Bangladesh. Politically, the Parishad stands for an exploitation-free society and full realization of women's equal rights as enunciated in the constitution in the country.

The Parishad also waged a campaign for government ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) through public meetings, rallies and press conferences and worked with 13 women's organizations in 1984-85 to mobilize public opinion.

sammilita Nari Samaj has been actively protesting any violation of the rights of women and excesses by the state particularly police. Women's groups agitated and lobbied to end economic exploitation. They extended support to women garment worker's demands and to change public policies. Amendment of the Women and Children Repression Act, 1995, electoral reform for enhancing women's

representations and the promotion of the mainstreaming of women in national development plans, have been on the agenda of women's movement recently.

Women's participation in politics is the cumulative result of movements and struggle initiated by women themselves, social reformers, intellectuals, students, civil society and the government's affirmative efforts in recent times. However, pressure on government to formulate appropriate national policies to improve women's status comes from international bodies, national women's organizations and NGOs.

The visibility of female students, women activists and housewives, women from the performing arts and formal political, social, cultural and women's organizations on the streets of the capital during the final surge of the democracy movement in November and December 1990 that toppled the Ershad regime points to their heightened political awareness and suggests their political awareness and suggests their potential collective strength. Yet the collective strength has not been nurtured and cultivated for enhancing women's political participation to the anticipated or desired level.

3.2 Women in Local Politics

The importance of local level government to women (and men) is two folds. First, decisions made at the local levels have implications for the distribution of resources and opportunities between women and men. Second, the lower tiers of government are also arenas in which individuals gain experience and knowledge and a political base for seeking office at higher levels. Within local bodies, women are generally, expected to represent women's interests. That is, women's development is seen as women's business rather than the responsibility of all members of the Union Parishad. Allied to this is the perception that women serving on the Union Parishad should focus on women and children issues rather than the full range of issues before the council.

In 1976, provision was made for two nominated female members in addition to nine elected members and one chairperson in each Union Parishad, which were increased to three nominated female members in 1983. Similarly, *Upazila*, *Zila* and

Pourashava Parishads had three nominated women members (number of nominated women members of city corporations depend on population). The nomination system in local government was changed in 1992 to indirect election where three women members in each local government body will be elected by the chairperson and other elected members.

This process of filling women's seats in the local councils totally ignored the scope of women's active participation and role in these political organizations where policies are decided and crucial plans for local level development are formulated. The nominated women could not play more than the role of a 'yes' person of the chairperson and members, who were predominantly men. In addition, such nomination also takes away the credibility and acceptability of the women to the women constituencies who and whose causes they represented. Once again, in the provision of reserved seats for women to be filled through nomination reflects the male biases in policy making with the net result that the elected bodies become extremely male dominated (*Khan, Z. R., 1998*).

The 'selected' or nominated women members usually came from a rural elite group. In the nominating process - status, kinship and especially the relationship with the chairman were considered. The constituents, especially the rural women, had no way of 'electing' their own representatives. As the 'selected' representatives do not come through the election process, they usually do not know or care about their role and functions as people's representatives. Even most of the women voters do not know who their representatives are in the local government and what responsibilities and duties the representatives have towards constituents.

Therefore, the nominated female representatives are far less accountable to than those elected. In fact, they are more accountable to the men who have 'selected' them, if they wish to retain their posts, than to the electorate or the people who should really matter (*UNDP, 1994*).

It was also found that female representatives lacked political awareness and training and could not play an active role. The women representatives were designated as

change agents for rural women but the present representatives do not yet have enough knowledge or training on development and organisational issues and legal aid and have little access to decision-making to provide a support system for rural women (*Qadir & Islam, 1987; Hussain, 1993*).

However, there is extremely low level of women's presence in the most important local council, the *Union Parishad*. No woman was elected in the local government elections of 1956 and 1969. One woman was first elected as chairperson in 1973. Although in 1992, the number increased to thirteen women *Union Parishad* chairpersons being elected and subsequently twenty in 1997, still in the case of local government bodies, women are grossly under represented (*Table 3.1*).

Table-3 1 Elected Female Chairpersons in Union Parishads

Year	No. of Unions	No. of Female Chairpersons
1973	4350	1
1977	4352	4
1984	4400	6
1988	4401	1
1992	4451	13
1997	4479	20

Source: Local Government Division & Election Commission, GOB, 1999.

In 1992, out of 17,444 candidates for the post of chairman, there were only 115 women candidates, of whom a negligible number of 13 women (11%) came out successful and became the chairpersons of *Union Parishads*. These were 6 from Dhaka Division, 6 from Rajshahi Division, 1 from Chittagong Division. There were no women chairpersons from Khulna or Barisal Division. However, later on when elections were held in the remaining *Union Parishads* about 6 more women were elected as chairpersons from different regions while 4 were elected through by-elections after the death of their husbands who were elected chairmen of *Union Parishads*.

3.3 Direct Election for Women: A Major Breakthrough

In 1997, for the first time in the history of the country that direct election for women representative was provided in the local government at the lowest tier, the *Union Parishad*. Much enthusiasm has been observed among the women centering *Union Parishad* election. The tangible reason behind this is the substantial change in the electoral rules and regulation, especially women's participation in the direct vote.

The number of voters was 50 million and the most striking feature of the election was the overwhelming participation of women voters. About 210,334 candidates including 45,000 female candidates contested in the Union Parishad election. (Figure 3.1& 3.2). A total of 13,000 women candidates were elected in the election to represent women's reserved seats (*The Daily Janakanta, 15 December 1997*). The whole process was a major breakthrough for the rural women in Bangladesh.

Figure 3.1 Number of Men and Women Candidates who contested in the Union Parishad Election, 1997

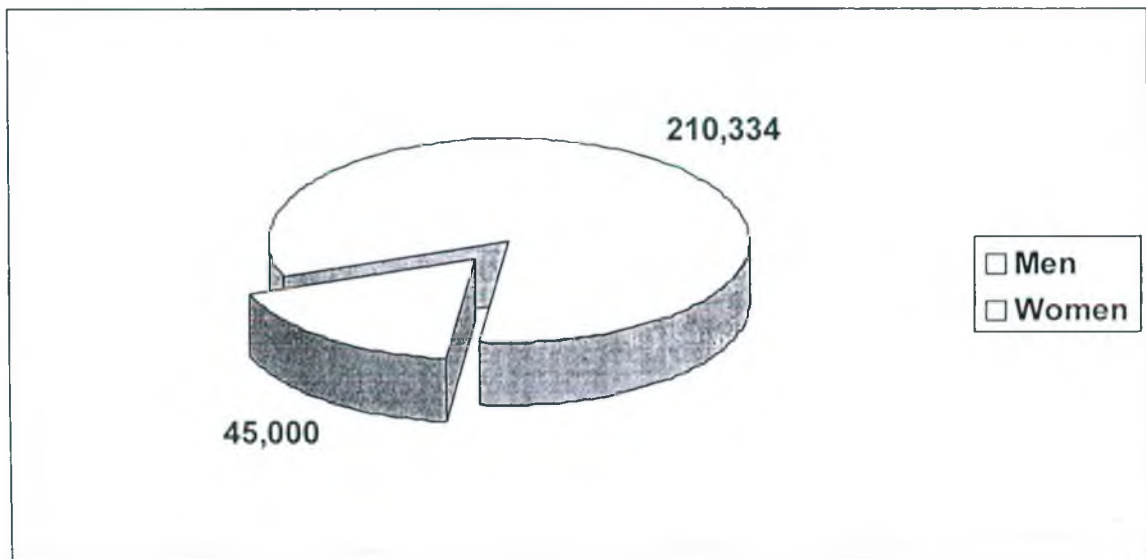
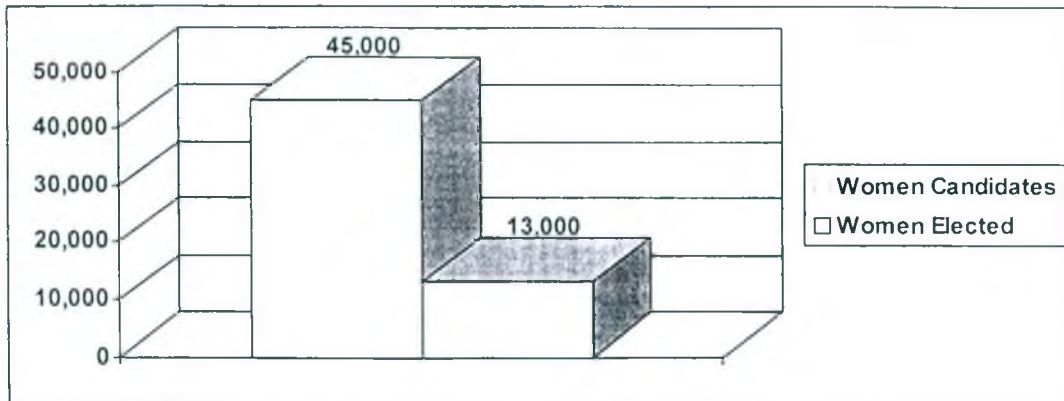


Figure 3.2 Women Candidates by Women Elected in the Union Parishad Election



Union Parishad consists of 13 members, who represent 9 wards of a *Union*. A Chairperson, nine men and three women members, i.e. women member is representing three words, whereas each man is representing only one word.

The 8th UP Election 2003: National Scenario

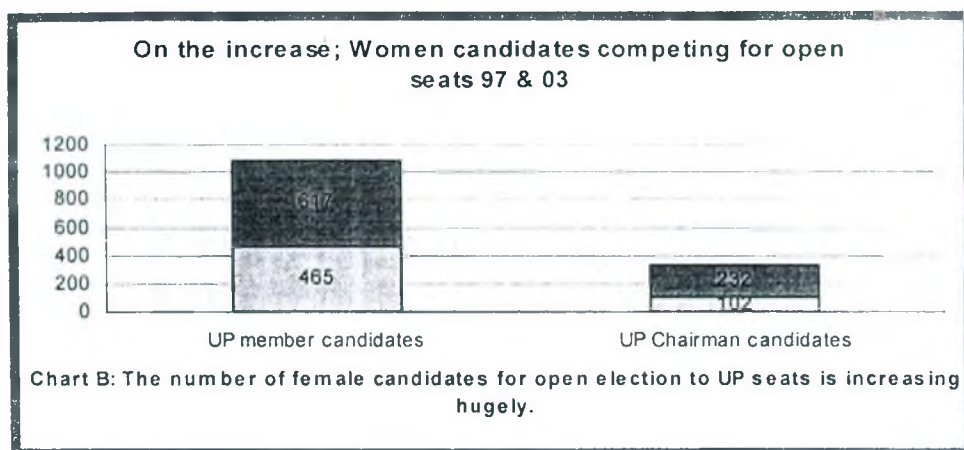
Given the importance of the Union Parishad in local life, it is crucial to have a picture of how female voters and candidates are participating in shaping these forums of influence. Below are some statistics on UP elections in 2003 providing a glance at voter participation and candidature by sex?

Number of UPs holding elections:

Elections took place in 4223 of the 4495 UUPs under the 470 Upazillas. The Election Commission (EC) postponed elections in the remaining 267 UPs because of problems related to electoral boundaries and non-completion of the previous term.

Percentage of population voting:

Prior to voting, the EC put the number of eligible voters at 61, 515, 866 (31,171,698 female, or roughly 50% male, 50% female²). The actual number of votes cast was 49,237,253, which is 80% of the total eligible votes. While this is a high turnout compared to many countries, it actually represents a decrease in voter participation in 97 where the EC reported that 83.51% of eligible voters took part in UP polling.³



Number and gender breakdown of candidates:

A total of 198,704 candidates competed in these elections. 21,376 candidates competed for chairman posts (21,144 male and only 232 female), 137,909 for member posts (137,292 male and 617 female) and 39,419 candidates for 12,669 reserved women's seats.⁴ Note the very low numbers of women competing here, just 1.1% of candidates for chair and 2.2% of candidates for open seats were female.

Numbers of women candidates for reserved seats:

For every reserved seat women's candidature declined: in 97 there were 3.49 women competing for each seat, in 2003 this was reduced to 3.1 women per seat.

Source: Steps, Vol-3. August, 2003

Empowered Women Candidates

Female Union Parishad members faced various types of hurdles, however, most of them tried to overcome those problems and proved their competences. The case of Sakina Begum is one of vote struggle, while Manjura Aziz got support from the members of the community.

Sakhina Begum has won the election by harsh struggle. Being elected in reserved seat from the *Dola Union of Sadar* thana she had set an example among women by subduing her male counterparts in that area. Sakhina worked in the village saving project of donor agency CARE and being paid only Tk 22 daily (.05 \$ dollar). From the very beginning, she was facing several obstacles during the election campaign. The first hindrance came from her husband who is a day laborer. Her husband used to

oppress her regularly. Defying all oppression against her, she continued her election campaign. At one stage, her husband burnt all her *saris* except which was worn so that she cannot go out for election campaigns. Hearing this news, some local valiant youth came to help Sakhina. After counting the votes, it was observed that another contestant of Sakhina has obtained the same vote. As a result authority concerned decided to declare the winner through bid. Finally she was lucky and was declared victorious (*The Daily Ittefaq*, 3 March 1998).

Women Denied Voting Rights

Although the Bangladesh Constitution guarantees equal right irrespective of sex, the reality is quite different. In some parts of the country, women are being deprived of their voting rights due to *fatwas* given by the fundamentalist groups. Some *Unions* of Bangladesh where women could not exert their voting rights are given below:

Patuakhali

About 20,000 female voters in two *thanas* of the Patuakhali district did not take part in the last *Union Parishad* election due to superstitious beliefs and norms. Earlier some 15,000 female voters covering the same area in nine unions of two *thanas* could not cast their votes in the last Parliament Election held in June 1997 due to superstition. There is a superstition that women should not cast their votes in compliance with the social and religious customs. During the last two decades, village elders and so-called religious leaders introduced the custom. And since then the women voters of *Sadar* and *Kalapara thanas* are not going to the polling centres to cast their votes. As a result the female and the male candidates for these nine *Union Parishads* are going to be elected by the male voters. Despite the motivational activities of many non-government organizations in the area, local conservative people are very much active against casting votes by the females (*The Daily Star*, 6 December, 1997).

Brahmanbaria

Some 5,000 women voters of *Sadar Thana* failed to participate in the *Union Parishad* election due to intransigence attitude of the orthodox religious leaders. This condition is prevailing for the last 30 years. Some vested quarters are co-operating with them directly and indirectly. Like previous years, they had declared that women would not be allowed to cast their votes. The women voters feared whether they would be able to cast vote or not. Women of *Kalisima, Gastala, Narsingsa, Kenduai, Baroharan, Choto Haran, Shalgaon* and *Sadekpur* villages were victims of such religious *fatwa*. A negligible number of women did cast their vote in the last Parliament election when one of the State Ministers of Bangladesh requested them to do so. The older people of villages regarded it as traditional heritage and perceived that mobility of women outside the house was anti-Islamic. About 30 years ago, miscreants manhandled one of the female voters. Since then, village leaders have decided not to allow women voters to go to the polling centres (*The Daily Janakantha, 19 December 1997*).

Dinajpur

Women candidates of the reserved seats were in a fix due to the overwhelming activities to resist the participation of women in election by the fundamentalists in *Nawabganj thana*. Sixteen women candidates of *Mahmudpur Union* of this *thana* did not go out due to the threat from the staunch religious leaders. The total number of voters were 12,802, of whom 6,362 were women voters. One of the woman voters informed that superstitious people declared women's voting rights as anti-Islamic. They stated in public that if women went to exert their voting rights, their legs would be broken. Besides, if women candidates went outside their home, they would be ostracized. One of the tribal woman candidate of *Chakdoat* village stated that her husband's life was being jeopardized as she was contesting in the upcoming *Union Parishad* election. It was also informed by another candidate that if women from other religious groups contested in the election, then there was no restriction as *purda* (veiling) was not compulsory for them. (*The Daily Janakantha, 20 December 1997*).

Jhinaidah

Women voters of *Surat Union* could not cast their vote due to *fatwa*. Since erstwhile Pakistan, women's voting rights had been denied whether the elections were held for the National Assembly or local bodies. But village women came out ignoring all *fatwas* to contest in the *Union Parishad* election for their reserved seats. In this *Union*, seven women had contested. The situation was very tense when 7 women candidates submitted their nomination papers to contest in the election. Community people tried their level best to stop women's participation in the *Union Parishad* election. At last the women candidates were compelled to abide by the decision of the male members that they would not take part in the election. More than 2,859 women including candidates for the reserved seats could not cast their votes. However, the male voters have elected three women candidates for the reserved seats (*The Daily Sangbad*, 31 December 1997).

Constraints Faced by Women in Local Politics

Use of force and money were the two major factors, which influenced and manipulated election results. Women who had no ability and capacity to exert pressure or use money were in disadvantaged position in the election. It was not safe for them to contest in the election. In some areas women were threatened not to contest in the election. If they did not comply, they were threatened that they will be killed. These types of activities created barriers to women contesting in the *Union Parishad* election.

Violence in election is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh. Vested quarters, in some areas, have tried to resist women's participation in the election. Being defeated in the election, supporters of chairman violated the wife and sister of Tarun Mandal, an activist of the contestant candidate at *Sheikh Nazirpur* village of *Pirojpur* District. Miscreants raided Mandal's house with the motive of killing him. Failing to apprehend him, they outraged his wife and sister, and had beaten his parents mercilessly. In *Narshindi*, two women were injured in sporadic incidents of violence

during the election in *Sadar* thana. In *Lalmonirhat*, three women namely *Rehana Begum*, *Shahitonna* and *Bela Khatun* were critically injured in the pre-election violence (*The Daily Ittefaq*, 30 December 1997). In *Monohordi* and *Narshingdi*, five women received severe injuries in post election violence. In another incident in the same *thana*, miscreants manhandled the wife of a principal of *Salanga* college. One woman was killed at *Budichang* in Comila district in election violence. (*The Daily Janakantha* 7 January 1998).

In the revised *Union Parishad* system three women members were directly elected for the first time. Each of these women's constituencies consist of three wards for the general seats, i.e. women have a larger constituency and are responsible to a large number of population. This has brought a significant change in the local government bodies in Bangladesh. However, there were still some constraints which women *Union Parishad* members encountered in performing their roles, some of those problems were related to their gender identity. It is evident that women's voices were not heard and opinions were not accepted. Moreover male colleagues showed negative attitudes towards women members. Lack of education and lack of experience led women members to become self-confident. Moreover, in the new system there was no specific job description for elected women members. As a result chairmen and members were reluctant to hand over any job to their women colleague. Lately government circulated by-laws indicated specific activities for women members. These circulars helped women *Union Parishad* members to prove their credentials in the local elected bodies (*Nasreen, M., 1999*).

Women's political participation is hindered by a system of social relations in the male-dominated society, reflecting the orthodox male-centric mentality like religious fundamentalism. Experience shows that irrespective of the legal recognition of women's equality, in conditions where the whole nation lives in poverty, women have no real opportunity to participate in grassroots level politics.

Only men were consistently educated and trained for leadership, while very few rural women had the opportunity to pursue their education because of tradition. Women

themselves have been strongly influenced by male-dominated village communities and have little faith in their own capabilities to take on leadership roles.

In the *Union Parishad* election, the enthusiasm that was observed among the women at grassroots level is a symbol of inception of women's political emancipation in Bangladesh. The path of struggle is uphill. Historical evidence testifies that power is not given to anyone but have to be achieved. However, there is long way ahead to reach the goal.

WOMEN UNION PARISHAD MEMBERS ARE STRUGGLING FOR EQUAL

Distribution of Power

Within a few months of the elections, women members of the *Union Parishad* started to lodge complains against their male counterparts for ignoring them and marginalising their role as council members. The reasons for this gender conflict are both institutional and attitudinal. The male-female ratio in each *Parishad* is three to one and there are no formal rules or guidelines indicating women member's specific responsibilities, powers or jurisdiction. Their job assignments, if any, decided on an ad-hoc basis by the chairperson of the *Parishad*. It should be noted here that the women members were voted to power by an electorate three times the size of that which voted in the male members women members marginalisation is also reinforced by the prevailing male chauvinist attitudes of the male members of the *Parishad*. Both chairman and male members of the *Union Parishad* have argued that their female counterparts are not skilled enough for public jobs, should not get involved in local politics; do not have enough time to attend meetings after performing their household chores and lack social legitimacy for public jobs. Women members have been systematically marginalised in area of relief distribution, which is a critical instrument of patronage distribution, and have not been allowed any role in the implementation of local development projects (*Broti, 1998*). This involuntarily passive and marginal role in the in the *Union Parishad* has put women at a

disadvantage in meeting their constituency demands. This might contribute in turn to reinforcing the gender stereotype that women are incapable of playing an effective role in the public sphere, especially in the realm of competitive politics.

Reasons identified as barriers to women members' active involvement in the *Parishad* are the heavy burden of domestic work (most members are housewives), financial dependency (they can only afford the transport costs to go to meeting if their husband provides it), and non co-operation by male chairman and other male members of the *Parishad*.

Their demands include, among others, adoption of rules of business that state specific roles for women members in the *Union Parishad*, specific allocation of funds for them and upgrading of their status. They have also demanded opportunities for institutionalised participation in the process of decision-making and the implementation of program directly related to women's welfare and development.

Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed the newly elected *Union Parishad* women chairpersons and members in a conference organised by the *Jatiya Mahila Sangstha* on 25th April 1999 in Dhaka. Twenty-three chairpersons and 13,432 elected women members who attended the Conference in their deliberation identified the issues and problems at grassroots level politics. The female chairpersons and members have gained enough confidence in their ability to discharge administrative job, but the 'discriminatory attitude' of their male counterparts has been the main stumbling blocks.

One of the participants Joynab Begum, a housewife having read up to class 10 is now member of Ward No. 3 of *Saguna Union Parishad* in *Tarash Thana* of Sirajganj district, bought a new sari to wear only to attend the Conference said, "It was a special day for me when I got elected. There were celebrations all around. We thought we have authorities to deal with projects for the welfare of the women or our areas. But unfortunately the men at the *Union Parishad* do not think so. They say why bother about power. Women have no business here. Listen to what we say and keep quiet." Accusing her area's male UP chairman of misconduct and

discrimination, Joynab said the chairman one day asked her, “What was her business with power? Do you know how to run the administration? His remark sounds as if we have no roots.”

“Though I am an elected chairperson I cannot smoothly carry out my job in my area due to non-cooperation of our male *Union Parishad* members,” said Suraiya Mannan of *Bidyandapur Union* in *Mehandiganj* thana of Barisal. “They seem always ready to trap me,” said Rabeya Rashid, a 50-year-old woman was elected member from Ward No. 1 of *Utra Union* in *Uzirpur thana* of Barisal district. She also finds herself in an awkward position. Her victory has turned into a burden. “I did a great mistake by contesting in the election. I cannot defend my position when people ask me about my responsibilities,” Rabeya said in a choked voice. “Now I want to know from the Prime Minister why she has encouraged us. Is it to humiliate us in the name of sharing power?” she questioned. She alleged that women members are not being allowed to take part in any development activities like Test Relief, Food for Work projects and relief distribution process of *Union Parishad*, although there are provisions in the law in support of us.

According to Clause 38(1) of the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 1986 (Amended), elected women *Union Parishad* members will act as chairperson in at least three of 12 standing committees of the *Union Parishad*. But in many *Union Parishads*, the standing committees have not yet been formed. Moreover, where they are formed, the women members have no responsibilities despite their inclusion in the committees.

Speaking at the conference, most of the women members alleged that they have not given the responsibilities of distributing Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards. “I got only five cards for three wards while one male member received 10 times more than I had,” said another female member. She further added, “Women members are held responsible for any irregularities in distribution of Vulnerable Group Feeding cards and even cases are also being filed against them although they have no authority to distribute Vulnerable Group Feeding cards.”

“The reality is that representation of the women members have been kept in black and white, not in the working system,” said a *Union Parishad* member. Quoting one of her male colleagues, she said they (male members) do not hesitate to pass indecent comments such as: “You women are the ornaments of our *Parishad*, you need not feel uneasy.”

The working area of a female member is three times larger than that of a male member as only one woman is elected from three wards in the reserved seat. So, the responsibility and power of a female members is more than her male colleagues, said Lovely Akhter, an elected member from Ward No. 2 of *Bakshimul Union Parishad* in *Burichang thana* of Comilla district. She said that when a woman member is supposed to enjoy the same power what a male colleague does, the female member could not avail the scope to verify even official documents in case of necessity. Standing beside her was Khaleda Begum, another member from Ward No. 3 of Patua Bangha *Union Parishad* in Pakundia *thana* of Kishorehanj district. She said it’s not the feeling of the same because we are the victims of social system. “A section of villagers found me guilty of criminal offence for contesting in the election. One day some of them dragged me, my husband and children out of our house for committing the crime. Still I am facing the same obstacle by the vested group even after winning the election,” Khaleda bemoaned.

While the organisers of the conference looked optimistic about the government move that kept seats reserved for women, a large number of women members looked very confused about their role in nation-building activities. They urged the Prime Minister to take steps for specifying their jobs at *Union Parishad* and strict enforcement of the related rules and regulations so they can work without facing any difficulties or harassment (*News Network, Observer Magazine, 9 July 1999*).

Thus we see that the participation of women in the case of Bangladesh has been conditioned by two factors. The policies undertaken to facilitate women's participation contain male biases and do not consider women's particular situation in the economic socio-cultural and political environment in which they exist. And also

the existing contextual realities of contradictions between changing roles and the strong patriarchal values and norms which create and complicate their participation in the formal political arena. Patriarchal nature of the society and state permeates into the policies for women's integration in the formal political processes of elections to parliaments and local councils, and in the hierarchies of political parties. All this has critically affected women's participation in formal structure of political system adversely and hindered their incorporation in the mainstream politics and economy of the country. This has also at the same time, resulted in serious backlashes and backward steps in the evolution of an alternative ideology of norms and values commensurate with and conducive to women's emerging new roles. An example of this is the introduction of new forms of oppression and violence against women brought in by the expansion of fundamentalism. The increasing cases of violence against women meted out by the *fatwa* of the powerful *mullahs* in the rural countryside are being reported.

There has been a rising trend in religious fundamentalism which gradually pushed its presence into the mainstream political space. A number of actions on the part of successive government led to its growth. The constitutional adoption of Islam as the state religion, the growing aid dependency of the government on middle-eastern Islamic countries, the formation of successive governments with the supporting seats of the Jaamat-e-Islam party, the increasing governmental allocations to religious educational institutions, all contributed towards the growth of fundamentalist political parties with strong and active student wings. In addition, Government's attention to gender discrimination and exploitation have and featured more in developmental discourse than in mainstream politics. This resulted in policies on women ending in 'tokenism' and piecemeal applications bypassing the fundamental questions about legal rights of women and their economic exploitation and oppressive notions of sexuality perpetuated by socio-cultural and religious norms. In circumstances like this, it becomes imperative to understand gender exploitation within the context of a patriarchal socio-political order.

In spite of all the hindrances, defying all the barriers and superstitions women's throughout the country spontaneously came forward to exert their voting rights. According to the election officials about 85-90 per cent women participated in the election. Most of the women are empowered because they were able to exert their voting rights and their representatives will speak out about their problems.

UN Convention: By ensuring women's representation in the Ups, the Government of Bangladesh acted in line with the UN Convention of 1982, on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women ratified by the world community, which defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, cultural, civil or any other field.

The convention provided the basis for realizing equality between men and women through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life. This includes the rights to vote and to stand for election as well as equality on education and employment. All states agreed to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can participate in human rights activities and enjoy fundamental freedom (Elected Women Member of Union Parishad: A socio-economic study-World Food Programme, December-1999)

3.4 The National Policy for women's development and the National Action Plan (NAP) for women's advancement

The fourth world conference on women was held in Beijing in end- 1995 analyzed the progress made in implementing the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS) for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000. NFLS was drawn up in Nairobi in 1985, The Government of Bangladesh in 1997 also decided to adopt the "National Action Plan for Advancement of Women (NAP) to implement the decisions made of the Beijing Conference whose salient features are as follows: to achieve the equal

status of women as participants, decision makers and beneficiaries in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of life; to promote and ensure the human rights of women at all stages of the life-cycle; to create or reorient political, economic and social progress and institutions to enable women to participate fully and actively in decision-making in the family, community, national and international levels; and to empower women and men to work together as equal partners.

It has also been realized and recognized by the government that the objective of improving the status of women in Bangladesh is likely to be achieved if women get their rightful representation in National Parliament and the local government institutions. It would ensure their participation in the formal decision making process at the national and local levels. It is noted that women constitute half of the voters among all adult members.

Women in Development Plan:

Bangladesh has a population of about 130 million of which 48.50% are women and the women population is considered as a distinct target group by the national development plans.

Among the previous plans, the **First Five Year Plan (1973-78)** emphasized a welfare oriented approach and focused on the rehabilitation of war affected women and children. Population control was the most important area in which women were considered as beneficiaries. Their productive role was not emphasized. Under the Social Welfare Sector a programme entitled “Rehabilitation of War Affected Destitute Women and Children” was undertaken. In the later years of the planned development, the importance of women in development was recognized, and a few women specific projects, such as National Women’s Development Academy, Women’s Development Centers, Bangladesh Shishu Academy and Career Women’s Hostel in Dhaka were undertaken.

The Two Year Plan (1978-80) (TYP) was characterized by a move from welfare to development-oriented efforts. Women’s development was taken as a central focus. The main emphasis of the Two Year Plan was on the fields of vocational training:

agriculture based rural development programmes, establishment of cottage industries, a production and sales center and creation of facilities for working women and their children.

The Second Five Year Plan 1980-85 (SFYP) emphasized on undertaking more dynamic and diversified programs. The major objective was to create atmosphere for making women's participation in development activities increasingly positive through expanding opportunities for specialized training, skill development, credit and entrepreneurship development programmes. Second Five Year Plan emphasized on training and creation of employment opportunities for women. Accordingly a number of programmes were outlined for the sector which included a crash training programme for primary teachers, career women's hostels in four Divisional Headquarters, the National Women's Training Academy at Dhaka and Bangladesh Jatiyo Mahila Sangstha offices at National, Division, District and Thana Levels and the Bangladesh Shishu Academy.

The Third Five Year Plan 1985-90 (TFYP) was formulated on the previous plan activities. To achieve the overall integration of women in the development process the Plan had specific objectives to reduce imbalances between the development of men and women. Appreciating the role of women in agriculture, The Third Five year Plan including two agriculture related projects, viz. "Agricultural Training Centre for Women" and "Agriculture Based Programme for Rural Women". Objectives of these two projects were to train rural poor women in agriculture and agriculture related activities. Considering the increased problems of prostitution, beggary and other anti-social activities another project of this kind was undertaken to provide training and to rehabilitate them. For raising awareness about the need for women's development, a project named "Advocacy Awareness and strengthening of Information Base for WID" was undertaken for implementation.

During the TFYP, under the women affairs sub-sector around 60,000 women were trained in different vocational skill and other human resource development activities. around two lakh women were given non-formal education and around 20,000 women were provided with credit facilities for self-employment. Some special training

facilities for women were also organized under different sectoral programmes. In the Plan period, 5 hostels for career women, daycare centers for working mothers children at some

districts, one legal aid cell and one employment information center were established under different projects. The budgetary allocation for TFYP was Tk. 40.00 core.

The Fourth Five Year Plan 1991-95 (FFYP) The plan emphasized on the development of poor and disadvantage women. Special attention was given to increase opportunities for income generation, access to institutional credit and organization building for participation in bottom-up planning. Women were considered direct beneficiaries as well as change agents in the development process. In the previous Five Year Plans, programmes/projects for women's development were taken up in an isolated fashion. The Fourth Five Year Plan, however, aims at integrating the women's development into the macro framework for multi-sectoral thrust to bring women into the mainstreaming economic development. An amount of Tk.5500.00 lakh was allocated during the Fourth Five Year Plan for implementing some spilled over projects from TFYP and 14 new projects undertaken during the FFYP to achieve the goals set in the plan.

Bangladesh endorsed the Platform for Action without any reservation in the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing on September, 1995 and as a part of commitment formulate and approved National Action Plan (NAP). The NAP emphasizes the strategy of mainstreaming women's development in all government policies and programmes by all sectoral ministries and agencies.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MWCA) identified as the national machinery for women's development is to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender equality concerns in all areas and various initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen the capacity of MWCA. The Prime Minister declared national Policy on Advancement of Women on 8 March 1997, which provides a comprehensive framework for women's development in the country.

Its main goals are as follows:

- Ensure equality between women and men at all spheres of lives

- Establish women's human rights
- Develop women as educated and efficient human resources
- Eradicate poverty among women
- Establish equality between men and women in administration, politics, education, sports, family life and all other socio-economic spheres
- Recognize women's contribution in social and economic spheres
- Eliminate all forms of oppression and violence against women and adolescents girls
- Empower women in the fields of politics, administration and economy
- Develop appropriate technology for women and application of harmful technology for women's well-being
- Ensure housing and shelter for women
- Rehabilitate effected women due to natural calamities and armed conflict
- Meet needs of women in specially difficult circumstances
- Ensure appropriate support services for development of women
- Assist talented and genius women in developing and enhancing their qualities
- Ensure gender perspective including projection of positive images of women and girls child in the mass media
- Ensure security for widows, spinsters, abandoned and barren women
- Ensure security for women in all spheres of national, social and family life
- Ensure adequate health and nutrition for women

At the end of the 4th Five year Plan, a Twenty Years Perspective Plan was framed but later on a Fifth Five Year Plan from 1997-2002 was made operational

The Fifth Five- Year Plan 1997-2002 (FFYP)A major thrust of the Fifth Five Year Plan is on developing skills of women with the aim to yield substantial increase in productivity of existing women labour force and opening up new windows of opportunities for future entry into the labour force. This will be supportive of the Fifth Plan macro-objective of poverty reduction and human resource development. Gender perspective is to be integrated within the context of the macro-economic

framework. Women's needs and interests are incorporated with quantifiable time-bound targets in all the major social and economic development sectors.

The MWCA and its implementing agencies are implementing different types of projects envisaged in FFYP. The broad categories of the projects are as follows:

- Poverty alleviation;
- Capacity building;
- Legal assistance;
- Support services;
- Awareness and Advocacy;
- Strengthening Policy and advocacy role of MWCA

A total of 20 projects were undertaken during the period 1995-1997 for development of women, out of which 2 projects were completed and 18 projects were spilled over to the Fifth Five Year Plan

12 new projects along with the 18 spilled over projects were undertaken for the current FYP. And to implement all these projects a budget allocation of Tk. 27800.00 lakh is earmarked for women's development for FFYP. In addition to this there is food aid grant worth Tk. 5980.00 lakh and wheat grant of 62,3370 metric tons.

(Public Policy on Women and Development: Gender Dimensions in Development Statistics of Bangladesh, 1999. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Govt. of Bangladesh)

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CHAPTER IV

PROFILE OF UNION PARISHAD MEMBERS

4.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Union Parishad Member

4.1.1 Age

The total number of *Union Parishad* members was 100, of which 55 were men and 45 were women. Among the men members, majority of them (84%) were in the age ranged of 25-54 years, with highest concentration of about 49 per cent in the age group 35-44 years. On the other hand, vast majority of women members (94%) were in the age ranged 25-54 years with the highest concentration of 40 per cent in the age group 25-34 years. However, 12 per cent men members were in the age group of 55-64 years, while there was only 2 per cent among women belong to the same age group. Moreover, it is interesting to note that males continued to be involved in local governance even when they were above 65 years of age. On the other hand, there was no elderly woman member of that age. Only 4 women members were below 25 years of age. It might be explained by the fact that men members were in politics for longer time but females started their political career at the local level in 1997 after the amendment of the ordinance.

From the age analysis, it seemed that maturity of the members was a very significant criterion not only during election campaigns but also as an important factor to have an impact on the decision making process. Maturity also was regarded as the yardstick to be acceptable to the members of the community.

Figure 4.1 Union Parishad Members by Age and Sex

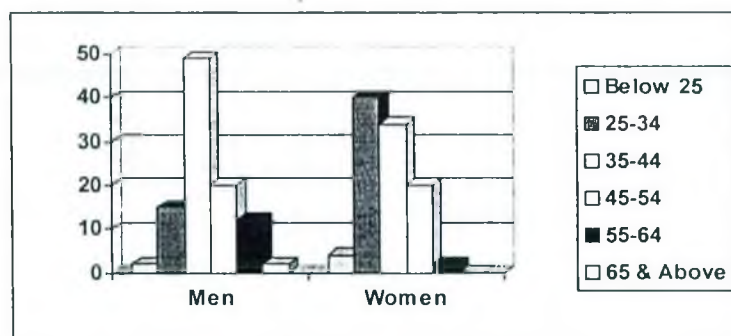


Table 4.1 Union Parishad Member by Age and Sex

Age Group	Men	%	Women	%
Below 25	01	02	02	04
25-34	8	15	18	40
35-44	27	49	15	34
45-54	11	20	9	20
55-64	7	12	01	02
65 & Above	1	02	00	00
Total	55	100	45	100

4.1.2 Religion

Vast majority of the men members (93%) were Muslims compared to only 7 per cent Hindus. On the other hand, majority of women members (89%) were Muslims while 11 per cent were Hindus. But it is interesting to note that among the Hindu members the percentage of females (11%) was higher than the percentage of men (7%), which was uncommon in the case of Muslims. It can be said that females of Hindu community were more educated, more willing and faced less constraints to participate in politics than the females of Muslim community. The lower participation of Muslim women compared to Muslim men may also be related to the cultural ideology of *puarda*, particularly in rural areas.

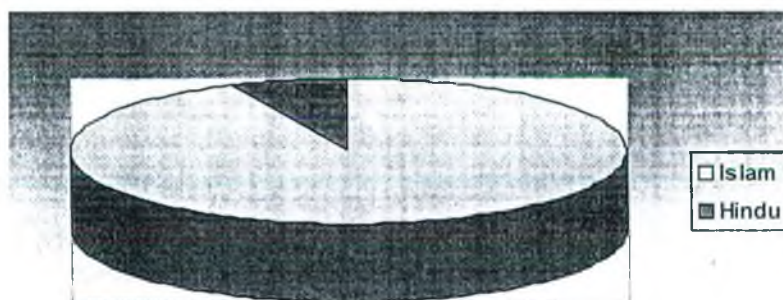
Figure: 4.2 Union Parishad Members by Religion and Sex

Table 4.2 Union Parishad Members by Religion and Sex

Name of Religion	Men	%	Women	%
Islam	51	93	40	89
Hindu	04	07	5	11
Total	55	100	55	100

4.1.3 Marital Status

An overwhelming majority of both men and women were married, with higher percentage for men (96%) compared to that for women (94%). It clearly indicated that married people were more accepted as political leaders in rural Bangladesh due to maturity and stable family life. As of widower, we found only 4 per cent women were widows, which was quite significant because they were usually the heads of their households and hardly received support from other men members of their in-law households. On the other hand, insignificant number of 4 per cent men and 2 per cent women were unmarried. It can be inferred that both unmarried men and women were less acceptable due to their age as well as their lack of experience.

Figure 4.3 Union Parishad Members by Marital Status and Sex

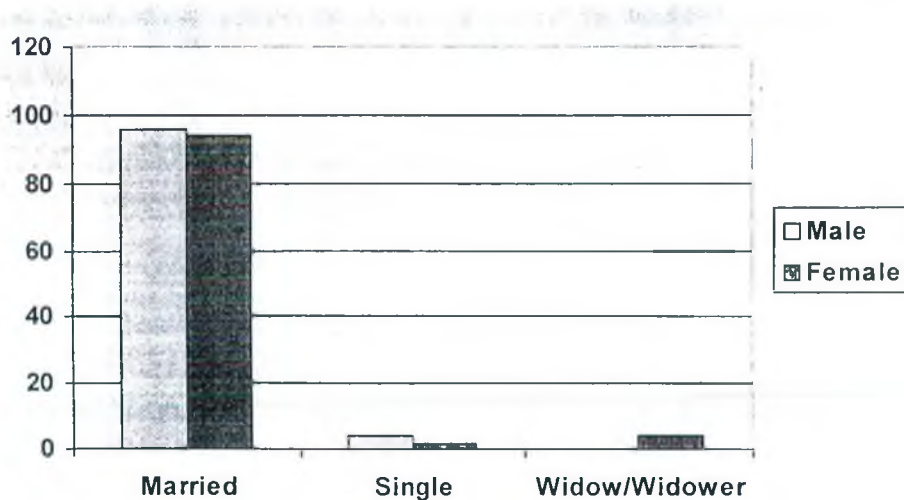


Table 4.3 Union Parishad Members by Marital Status and Sex

Marital Status	Male	%	Female	%
Married	53	96	42	94
Single	02	04	01	02
Widow/Widower	00	00	02	04
Total	55	100	45	100

4.1.4 Education

As for the level of education, the majority of men and women members were educated up to the secondary level which was between class VI to X and Secondary school certificates (SSC). The most interesting point was that both male and female had attained higher education and very few could sign only. There were two female members and two male members who had obtained Bachelor degree. It indicates that both male and female in rural areas were not only becoming educated but also becoming confident to play active roles in politics.

Table: 4.4 Union Parishad Members by Education and Sex

Level of education	Men		Women		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Can sign only	6	11	2	4	8	8
Class I-V	9	16	4	9	13	13
Class VI-X	17	31	14	31	31	31
Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C)	16	29	15	33	31	31
Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C)	5	9	8	18	13	13
Bachelors degree	2	4	2	4	4	4
Total	55	100	45	100	100	100

4.1.5 Family Structure

Families of *Union Parishad* members were predominantly nuclear. The percentages of nuclear families among female and male members were 82 per cent and 69 per cent respectively. The numbers of joint families were higher among the male members (27%) than women members (14%). The numbers of extended families were equal among the male members (4%) and female members (4%). Better socio-economic condition was the cause for the prevalence of nuclear families among the women members. Majority of the families of male (49%) and women members (47%) had 4 to 6 family members, which were nuclear families.

Table: 4.5 Union Parishad Members by Family Structure and Number of Family Members

Number of family members	Family structure of women members						Family structure of men members					
	Nuclear		Joint		Extended		Nuclear		Joint		Extended	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1-3	14	31	-	-	-	-	9	16	1	2	-	-
4-6	22	49	4	9	1	2	26	47	9	16	1	2
7-9	1	2	2	5	1	2	3	6	5	9	1	2
Total	37	82	6	14	2	4	38	69	15	27	2	4

Note: n = 45 (female) and 55 (male)

4.1.6 Primary and Secondary Occupation

Among *Union Parishad* members, an overwhelming majority of 91 per cent male members had farming and business as their primary occupation while 83 per cent of female members were housewives. While 9 per cent of the female members were in service, it was 5 per cent for male.

As of secondary occupation, a handful of *Union Parishad* members had secondary occupation as an extra source of income, the proportions being 89 per cent among

male and only 33 per cent among female. Male members were involved in various types of activities as a supplement their primary occupation, of which majority (51%) were involved in farming and 36 per cent in business. Social work were also some of the secondary occupation of male members. On the other hand, of the few 1 female members who had secondary occupation as social worker?

Table: 4.6 Union Parishad Members by Primary and Secondary Occupations

Occupational Status	Female members				Male members			
	Primary		Secondary		Primary		Secondary	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Farmer	2	4	5	11	8	15	28	51
Business	-	-	-	-	42	76	20	36
Service	4	9	-	-	3	5	-	-
Social worker	1	2	1	2	-	-	1	2
No occupation	-	-	30	67			6	11
Self-employed	1	2	1	2	2	4	-	-
Housewife	37	83	8	18	-	-	-	-
Total	45	100	45	100	55	100	55	100

4.1.7 Monthly Income

Monthly income of the member was an important indicator of economic solvency of *Union Parishad* member's families, as well as economic empowerment, especially of the women members. There were sharp differences between level of income of women and men members. Majority of the women members (85%) had income below taka 4,000 per month, while the trend among majority of men members (85%) were in higher income group starting from taka 4,001 and above. It was more depressing to find that 33 per cent of women members earned as low as taka 500 per month, 13 per cent were in the monthly income ranging from of taka 501-1,000 and

16 per cent between taka 1,001-1,500 per month. Monthly income of the number of women members gradually decreased from taka 1,501 and above.

On the other hand, for the men members 27 per cent earned between taka 4,001-5,000 per month while the highest concentration of 33 per cent among them earned between taka 5,001-6,000. However, the percentage decreased in the higher income range. A handful of men members, 15 per cent earned less than taka 4,000 per month. The trend of income was quite obvious given the fact that men members were the bread earners of their families, while the women members were mostly dependent on their husband's incomes. A woman's income was seen as a supplement to her husband's earnings. As such, women members were dependent on family decision for contesting in the election and getting financial support for their success.

Table 4.7 Monthly Income by Sex

Level of Income	Male	%	Female	%
500 & below	01	02	15	33
5001-1000	01	02	6	13
1001-1500	01	02	7	16
1501-2000	01	02	3	07
2001-3000	01	02	4	09
3001-4000	03	05	03	07
4001-5000	15	27	02	04
5001-6000	18	33	02	05
6001-7000	9	16	02	04
7001 & above	5	9	01	02
Total	55	100	45	100

4.1.8 Land Holding

Ownership of agricultural land plays a very important role in the power relationship. However, individual ownership of agricultural land among rural women was rare, the land they owned was the family land, jointly owned by all the family members. The mode of operation varied in accordance with the amount of land owned by the female members. Cultivation of agricultural land was usually done by the men family members of the female *Union Parishad* members. There were different modes of operation related to agricultural land under own cultivation, and shared in, and land shared out.

About 98 per cent among women members had land under own cultivation. Unfortunately, the remaining 2 per cent of female members did not have any agricultural land. Female members who had land amounting to 100 decimals and below had under their own cultivation (16%), shared in (4%). Of the next category amounting to 101-200 decimals of land, 13 per cent were under own cultivation, while 7 per cent were shared in. Amounting 201-300 decimals 22 per cent were under own cultivation, shared in (4%). On the contrary, amounting 301-400 decimals had under own cultivation 25 per cent, shared in 7 per cent. Amounting in 401 & above decimals 22 were under own cultivation and 2 per cent shared in.

Table: 4.8 Female Union Parishad Members by Agricultural Land and its Mode of Operation

Amount of land (in decimals)	Mode of Operation					
	Land under own cultivation		Shared in		Shared out	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
100 & below	7	16	2	4	1	2
101 – 200	6	13	3	7	-	-
201 – 300	10	22	2	4	-	-
301 – 400	11	25	3	7	-	-

401 & above	10	22	1	2	-	-
None	1	2	-	-	-	-

Male members having 401 & above decimals of land had highest percentage of land under their own cultivation (33%). It was interesting to note that the number of male members having land from 100 to 400 decimals gradually increased. The fourth category amounting to 301-400 decimals of land was found to be 24 per cent under their own cultivation and 4 is shared out.

Table: 4.9 Male Union Parishad Members by Agricultural Land and its Mode of Operation

Land (in decimal)	Mode of Operation					
	Land under own cultivation		Shared in		Shared out	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
100 & below	5	9	-	-	4	7
101 – 200	8	15	-	-	4	7
201 – 300	7	13	1	2	2	4
301 – 400	13	24	-	-	2	4
401 & above	18	33	-	-	-	-
None	4	7	-	-	-	-

CHAPTER V

ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY AT THE GRASSROOTS

5.1.1 Democratization and Gender Issues

Affiliation with political parties was significant for male local government representatives, whereas females were less likely to be actively involved into politics. On the other hand male members were less likely than female supporters of any political parties. The main reason behind these was the recent change in the electoral process: women being elected and not selected. As such women were hardly involved in local politics in past. Moreover, the social obstacles against females to be actively involved in politics or provide support to political parties also played a negative role in bringing women into local level politics.

Significant numbers of male members (24%) were actively involved in politics whereas only 13 per cent female members had active participation in politics. A considerable number of female members (40%) and an insignificant number of male members (29%) were supporters of various political parties. Forty seven per cent among female members had no involvement in politics and it was about equivalent to female members (47%).

Table: 5.1 Political Involvement of Union Parishad Members by Gender

Involvement in politics	Female members		Male members		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Actively involved in party politics	6	13	13	24	19	19
Supporters of political parties	18	40	16	29	34	34
No involvement	21	47	26	48	47	47
Total	45	100	55	100	100	100

5.1.2 Sources of Inspiration

The 2003 election was a contributing factor for candidates who had strong desire to succeed. More so, they were dependent on their neighbors and close relatives who provided the moral supports during election. It can be mentioned that 100 per cent among females and 100 per cent among males succeeded by competition.

About 91 percent male and 89 female members were inspired by their neighbors. About 78 per cent women members were inspired by their husbands. Other sources of inspiration mainly were relatives, parents, siblings and NGO workers were also significant for both male and female members.

Table: 5.2 Union Parishad Members by Gender and Sources of Inspiration

Sources of Inspiration	Female Union Parishad Members				Male Union Parishad Members			
	2003 –2007				2003-2007			
	Competition		Without competition		Competition		Without competition	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Neighbor	40	89	-	-	50	91		
Self	45	100	-	-	55	100		
Wife/husband	35	78	-	-	45	82		
Union Parishad Members/Chairman	3	7	-	-	33	60		
Relatives	39	87	-	-	40	73		
Son/daughter	10	22	-	-	12	22		
Brother	3	7	-	-	17	31		
Father	3	7	-	-	4	7		
NGO	4	9	-	-	3	5		
Mother	2	4	-	-	3	5		
Sister	3	7	-	-	10	18		

Answer in more than one category

5.1.3 Election

All the respondents both male and female were elected members for the term 2003-2007, however, in previous years the success rate was lower. Among the female members, they were as low as 16 per cent in 1997 and 18 of male members. In the previous election of 1997 only 5 per cent failure among male members.

Table: 5.3 Consecutive Election Results of Union Parishad Members by Gender

Election year	Female members = 45		Male members = 55			
	Success		Success		Failure	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1997	7	16	10	18	3	5

5.1.4 Problems Faced During Election

Majority of the respondents did not face any problem during election, 67 per cent among females and 42 per cent among male candidates. Of the problem faced during election, lack of economic resource was a major obstacle because most of the candidates were not very well off. It was more true in the case of the male candidates. Female candidates hardly had viable income or landed property of their own and were usually dependent on their husband's earnings. As such, they also encountered social constraints and lack of family support. However, social security, especially during campaigns seemed to be a major problem

Table: 5.4 Union Parishad Members by Problems Faced During Election and Gender

Problems faced during election	Female members		Male members	
	n = 45	%	n = 55	%
Economic impoverishment	10	22	21	38
Social & family problems	9	20	15	27

Lack of security	8	18	-	-
Lack of education	3	7	10	18
Political problem/threat of opposition	1	2	7	13
No problem	30	67	23	42
Religion	7	16	2	4

Answers in more than one category

5.1.5 Attitudes and Opinions

The nature of attitude whether positive or negative was an important indicator which reflected the working environment of *Union Parishad* and to carry its activities out by both male and female members. It was interesting to note that among male 46 per cent had conservative attitude, while 27 per cent had negative attitude towards female members. On the other hand, another 27 per cent male members had broadminded attitude towards female members. It is evident that the negative attitudes hampered the smooth functioning of overall development activities.

Table: 5.5 Attitudes of Male Members Towards Female Members

Nature of attitude	Male Members	
	n	%
Broad minded	15	27
Conservative	25	46
Negative	15	27
Total	55	100

Although majority of the men members had positive opinion regarding women members, still those who had negative opinion gave several reasons. According to men members was a major issue which sometimes compelled women members to send their husbands to carry out their duties, made them dependent on others and ultimately caused problems in their families. Moreover, women lacked training, were less courageous because of security reasons and they could not carry out their responsibilities without the help of other men members.

Table: 5.6 Opinions of Men Union Parishad Members Regarding Women Union Parishad members to carry out their responsibilities in time

Opinion regarding women Union Parishad members	Men members		
		n	%
Positive opinion		30	55
Negative opinion		25	45
Total		55	100
Reasons for Negative opinion		n=25	%
	Lack of skill among women members	4	16
	Women members send their husbands to perform their responsibilities	3	12
	Women members are dependent on others	3	12
	Family problems	3	12
	Lack of training	2	8
	Women are less courageous	2	8
	Lack of security	2	8
	Without help of men members they cannot perform their responsibilities	1	4
	Women members cannot threat others	1	4
	Chairman does not give scope to work independently	1	4
	Women cannot go out at night	1	4
	Women cannot go out for long distance	1	4
	Religious obstacle	1	2

5.1.6 Opinions Regarding Equal Power

Equal power for both women and men members should be regarded as essential to uphold women's rights so that together they could develop the nation. In fact, as elected members they must have equal rights. However, opinions of women and men members differ regarding distribution of equal power at *Union Parishad* level. Regarding positive opinions, 20 per cent among women members and only 9 per cent among men members emphasized that women members should be given more power as they were elected representatives of a large constituency. An equal distribution of power between men and female, all members were elected representatives and it was essential to ensure equal power so that they could develop the nation and the society. there was hardly any significant difference between women and men members.

On the other hand, as of the negative opinions there were significant differences among women and men members, for example, 7 per cent men members opined that women members were not equally capable as males in performing their duties and responsibilities. Another 7 per cent of men referred to *Shairah* law against women's equal power.

Table: 5.7 Opinions of Members Regarding Equal Power between Male and Female at Union Level by Gender

Positive opinions regarding equal power between male-female	Female members		Male members	
	n	%	n	%
Women members should be given more power as they are elected representatives of a larger constituency	9	20	5	9
An equal distribution of power for both men and women is essential to uphold women's rights.	10	22	7	13
All the members of are elected representatives	16	36	22	40
It is essential to ensure equal power for both men and women to work together with a view to develop the nation and the	8	18	12	22

society.				
Sub-total	43	96	46	84
Negative opinions regarding equal power between male-female				
Women members should be given less power than men members as they are less in numbers	1	2	-	-
Women are less powerful than men according to the Islamic <i>Shariah</i>	1	2	4	7
Females are not equally capable as males in performing their duties and responsibilities	-	-	4	7
Women members would have dominated men members if they were given more power	-	-	1	2
Sub-total	2	4	9	16
Total	45	100	55	100

5.1.7 Opinions Regarding Qualifications of Members

Union Parishad members should have special qualifications, especially educational, to undertake the various types of activities efficiently at the local level.

More than 60 per cent of both men and women representatives opined that education and good behaviour were very important qualification for both men and women to become members. More than 60 per cent males emphasized on the need for honesty and upholding social justice for both women and men members 66 per cent and 64 per cent, in contrast to that identified by the women members 56 per cent for males and 51 per cent for females. Moreover, 40 per cent women members mentioned 'mentality to serve the community' as an important qualification for both males and females. Other qualifications identified included financial solvency, patience, wisdom, reformative mentality, courage etc.

**Table: 5.8 Opinions of Members Regarding Qualifications to Become Members
by Gender**

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Qualities to become Union Parishad members	Female members = 45				Male members = 55			
	Qualities of Men Union Parishad Members		Qualities of Women Union Parishad Members		Qualities of Men Union Parishad Members		Qualities of Women Union Parishad Members	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Education	28	62	29	64	35	64	42	76
Honesty and upholding social justice	25	56	23	51	33	60	65	64
Good Behavior	28	62	27	60	34	62	30	55
Mentality to serve the community	19	42	18	40	25	45	25	45
Courage	2	4	3	7	6	11	4	7
Financial solvency	3	7	3	7	3	5	3	5
Patience	2	4	2	4	1	2	2	4
Wisdom	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Leadership quality	1	2	1	2	-	-	1	2
Public relations	2	4	-	-	-	-	1	2
Reformative mentality	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Family tradition	2	4	1	2	1	2	1	2
Social consciousness	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	2
Power to curb corruption	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Religious minded					2	4	2	4

Answers in more than one category



5.1.8 Positive Opinions of Union Parishad members Regarding Reserved Seats for Female at Union Level

Union Parishad members' views on 'reserved seats' were of mixed type. Of the positive ones most important one was "reserved seats are essential to evaluate women" were identified by 91 per cent women and 36 per cent men. To work towards women's development, awareness raising and the overall development of the nation had 89 per cent of the women and 16 per cent of the men opinions. On the other hand, 85 percent women emphasized on to uphold women's rights while only 2 per cent male members opined the statement. About 78 percent female members opined to play an active role to combat violence against women reserved seat is essential. About 36 percent female and 11 percent male emphasized on equal power.

Table: 5.9 Positive Opinions of Members Regarding Reserved Seats for Female at Union Level by Gender

Positive opinions regarding Reserved seats	Female members		Male members	
	n	%	n	%
To work towards women development, awareness raising and the overall development of the nation	40	89	9	16
To uphold women's rights	38	85	1	2
To encourage the women to be elected	28	62	2	4
Reserved seats are essential to evaluate women	41	91	20	36
To give women equal power	16	36	6	11
To place women in leading position	5	11	4	7
To improve the activities of Union Parishad	3	7	-	-
It opened the door to carry on local government activities by the women representatives	14	31	-	-
To play an active role to combat violence against women	35	78	-	-
To investigate/monitor the activities of men Union Parishad members	1	2	-	-

5.1.9 Negative Opinions of Union Parishad Members Regarding Reserved Seats for Female at Union Level

The male Union Parishad members identified some issues against reserved seats for females. They (16%) reported that the reserved seats for women are not necessary as men and women have equal rights. Some (5%) also opined that women are not fit in performing their duties as Union Parishad Members.

Table: 5.10 Negative Opinions of Union Parishad Members Regarding Reserved Seats for Female at Union Level by Gender

Negative opinions regarding Reserved seats	Female members		Male members	
	n	%	n	%
Reserved seats for women are not necessary as men and women have equal rights	-	-	9	16
Women are not fit in performing their duties as Union Parishad members	-	-	3	5

Answers in more than one category

CHAPTER VI

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AT LOCAL LEVEL

6.1.1 Development Activities of Local Representative

Union Parishad members are involved in various developments activities, which can be broadly categorized into socio-economic development, infrastructure development, human resource development, improvement of law and order situation. There is a clear difference in the participation between men and women members in development activities. In the economic development sector participation of female is much higher than that of the male members. The highest participation of 80 per cent among women was in poverty alleviation, which was again much higher than 20 per cent among the males. In other categories of economic development, participation of women members was very insignificant in comparison to the participation of the men members.

In the physical development sector the scenario is almost opposite. Women members have 27 per cent, 89 per cent and 18 per cent participation in construction of roads, reconstruction and infrastructure development respectively, while in case of men members, it was more than double or triple. However, in welfare services, the participation of male and female members was about equal. In both Vulnerable Group Development, Vulnerable Group Feeding programmes, Allowance for Aged People, Relief Distribution, Children's Welfare and Allowance for Widows women participation was 47 per cent, 67 percent, 62 percent, 89 percent, 82 percent, and 71 percent while among males, it was about 53 per cent, 100 percent, 100 percent, 82 per cent and 20 percent but none of them took part in allowance for widows.

In overall social sector development, male participation was lesser than that of the female members. For example, in promoting education, male participation was only 24 per cent while among females 77 per cent. In activities related to health, sanitation and drinking water this was also as low as 47 per cent for females and as high as 96

per cent for females. The same trend was found in activities related to environment and disaster management, where women members were more active than males.

In human resource development, such as women development, the participation of females was greater than that of males, which was quite obvious. But in case of youth development participation of women members were only 18 per cent, while among men members it was 87 per cent.

In case of law and order sector the participation of women members was little bit lower than that of the men members. However, in village courts, women and men participation was about equal which was 91 per cent men and 93 per cent female. In improving the law and order situation 38 per cent women and 80 percentage men participated.

**Table: 6.1 Development Activities of Union Parishad Members at Union Level
by Gender**

Types of development activities	Female members		Male members	
	n = 45	%	n = 55	%
Economic Development				
Poverty alleviation	36	80	11	20
Credit program			22	40
Agricultural development	34	76	21	38
Advisory role in agriculture				
Physical Development				
Construction of roads, etc.	12	27	55	100
Reconstruction/repair	40	89	55	100
Infra-structure development	8	18	35	64
Test Relief Mosque			29	53
Welfare Services				
Vulnerable Group Development Card	22	47	29	53
Vulnerable Group Feeding	30	67	55	100
Allowance for aged people	28	62	55	100

Allowance for widows	32	71	--	-
Relief distribution	40	89	45	82
Children's Welfare	37	82	11	20
Social Sector Development				
Education	35	77	13	24
Health, sanitation & drinking water	43	96	26	47
Environment	30	67	14	25
Disaster Management	33	73	9	16
Human Resource Development				
Women development	38	84	24	43
Youth development	8	18	48	87
Law and order				
Gram Adalot (Village court)	42	93	50	91
Improvement of law & order	17	38	44	80

Answers in more than one category

6.1.2 Support Systems

Union Parishad members received cooperation from colleagues, relatives, members of the community, *wife/husband* to carry out their development activities. Local government representatives elected from the grass-root level received cooperation mostly from the community people as mentioned by 93 per cent women members and 95 per cent men members. Regarding other sources of cooperation, there is a differential scenario by gender. While women members received highest cooperation (89%) from their women colleagues, only 36 per cent men members reported to have such cooperation from their women colleagues. And regarding cooperation from the men colleagues 82 per cent females and 95 per cent males reported in favor. In case of women members the support from the spouse was found among 87 per cent of the women respondents, while among the men members this percentage was 91. It was interesting that 78 percent men members received

cooperation from their relatives but none of female members received cooperation from relatives.

Table: 6.2 Union Parishad Members by Gender and Source of Cooperation

Persons/organizations who cooperate	Female members		Male members	
	n	%	n	%
Women colleagues	40	89	20	36
Community people	42	93	52	95
Men colleagues	37	82	52	95
Wife/husband	39	87	50	91
Relatives	-	-	43	78

Answer in more than one category

6.1.3 Opinions Regarding Suitable Activities for Female Members

Among the male members 98 per cent opined women development activities was the most suitable for female members. While family planning and health activity was chosen by 91 percent male members. About 58 per cent male members suggested VGF, VGD, aged allowance and widows allowance cards distribution activities for female members. About 96 percent male members identified social development activities was suitable for female members.

On the other hand, majority of women members (89%) identified VGF, VGD, aged allowance and widows allowance cards distribution the most suitable activities for women while social development activities was chosen by 84 percent women. Besides these, 715 percent women suggested that women development activities was the most suitable work for women members

Table: 6.3 Opinions of Male and Female Union Parishad Members Regarding Suitable Activities for Women Union Parishad Members

Suitable activities for women Union Parishad members	Female members		Male members	
	n = 45	%	n =55	%
Family planning & health	30	67	50	91
Women development	32	71	54	98
Distribution of VGF* /VGD*, aged allowance, widow allowance cards	40	89	32	58
Justice for women	17	31	40	72
Social development activities	38	84	53	96
Adult Education	24	53	22	40
Every work	18	40	6	11
Every activities of Union Parishad	27	60	13	24
Tree Plantation	9	20	17	31
No comments	2	4	1	2

Answers in more than one category

VGF-Vulnerable Group Feeding, VGD- Vulnerable Group Development

6.1.4 Reasons given by Members Regarding Suitable Activities for Women Union Parishad Members

Reasons regarding suitable activities for women members as reported by the local government representatives showed that while about 36 percent of the women members were confident of doing things in their own environment only about 13 percent of the men reported so. Instead, about 40 per cent of the men reported that they could easily do their work, in contrast to 31 percent women. The proportion of both women and men members who expressed that women members were able to solve the problems of women better were 16 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.

Table 6.4: Reasons given by Members Regarding Suitable Activities for Women Union Parishad Members

Reasons	Women members		Men members	
	n =45	%	n = 55	%
To work with honesty	5	11	7	13
Can do such work in own environment	16	36	7	13
Support influence of men in the society	1	2	1	2
Some women are brave	3	7	6	11
Strength to do work	2	4	2	4
Mentality to do every work	3	7	16	29
Can easily do the work	14	31	22	40
Women can easily solve the problems of women	7	16	11	20
Can go every where at night and any time	-	-	7	13

Answers in more than one category

6.1.5 Attendance in the Meetings

Attendance in the meetings was not only an important indicator of active participation but also a forum to discuss on development activities and decision - making. It appeared that an overwhelmingly majority, (as high as 78%) among male members and 78 per cent among females regularly attended the meetings. Unfortunately there were about 22 per cent of women and another 22 per cent of men members who were irregular in meetings. And the majority of them gave the main reason that they faced familial problem, illness, communication problem and others.

Table: 6.5 Attendance in the Meetings of Union Parishad Members by Reasons for Non-Attendance

Attendance	Female members		Male members	
	n	%	n	%
Regular	35	78	43	78
Irregular	10	22	12	22
Total	45	100	55	100
Reasons for Irregularity				
Family problem	3	30	2	17
Illness	3	30	1	8
Communication problem	-	-	3	25
Others	4	40	6	50
Total	10	100	12	100

6.1.6 Participation of Union Parishad Members by Level of Acceptance and Gender

Active participation of members and the level of acceptance in meetings were important indicators of their involvement in development activities. An overwhelming majority of females (92%) and 29 per cent men fully participated in the meetings, but ironically when it came to full acceptance of comments and suggestions, men members (11%) were given priority against 45 per cent of women members.

Partial acceptance was the trend, 42 per cent among women members and 9 per cent among men members. There was also non-acceptance, which was about 5 per cent among females and only 9 per cent among males. This shows that suggestions and comments of both women and men members are not taken seriously. Although partial and total non-participation was significant, still there were valid reasons for such inactive role. Among the women members, 3 per cent participated partially in meetings because they did not wish. An overwhelming number of men members

(25%) pointed out that they did not wish and 18 percent mentioned that comments or suggestions given by them were not considered at all.

Of the very few who did not participate in meetings also gave the same reasons as of those who partially participated in discussions at meetings.

Table: 6.6 Participation of Union Parishad Members by Level of Acceptance and Gender

Participation in Union Parishad Meetings	Level of Acceptance/Reasons	Female members		Male members	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Full Participation</i>	Full acceptance of comments	21	47	6	11
	Partial acceptance	18	40	5	9
	Non acceptance	1	2	5	9
<i>Sub-Total</i>		40	89	16	29
<i>Partial Participation</i>	Do not wish to participate in discussion	2	4	13	24
	Do not feel the need to participate in discussion	-	-	5	9
	Comments are not taken seriously	-	-	10	18
<i>Sub-Total</i>		2	4	28	51
<i>Non-participation</i>	Do not wish to participate			4	7
	Do not feel the need for participation			5	9
	Comments are not taken seriously	3	7	2	4
<i>Sub-Total</i>		3	7	19	20
Total		45	100	55	100

6.1.7 Interaction with Government and NGOs

Both female and male Union Parishad members participated in meetings held by various government and non-government organizations. It was evident that women's participation was higher than men in meetings related to women and child rights.

development, Union Parishad activities and family planning for both government and NGO meetings. On the other hand, men participated more in the meetings of environment development and health and sanitation. Women's participation in development of electoral areas and village market is almost negligible as against men's participation.

Table: 6.7 Members by Participation in other Meetings outside the Union Parishad

Participation in Meetings	GO				NGO				Other agencies			
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Promotion of education	-	-	10	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Health and sanitation	24	53	34	62	13	29	16	29	-	-	-	-
Family planning	38	84	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Women & child rights and development	-	-	-	-	7	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Environment	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	22	-	-	-	-
Village development	-	-	-	-	20	44	-	-	-	-	-	-
Political party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
Mosque development	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	24
Human rights	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	20	-	-	-	-
Agriculture and plantation	7	16	15	27	-	-	5	9	-	-	-	-
Village market development	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	7

Answers in more than one category, Women Members=45, Men Members=55

6.1.8 Obstacles in Functioning

Women members faced different problems in performing their activities. About 93 per cent of women named several problems they encountered in performing their activities. Majority of women identified lack of funds, less allocation of development work, lack of education, confidence and security and they are not well informed about their proper duties. A handful number of the women who faced problems mentioned that chairmen did not allocate development works for them and men members opposed females' involvement in development activities. Women members also mentioned problems of non-cooperation from local people and corruption of chairmen and male members.

Table: 6.8 Problems Faced by female Union Parishad Members in performing their Activities

Female Members		
Problems faced by women members in performing their activities	n = 45	%
Problems with Chairman regarding allocation of development work, funds	12	27
Lack of funds, less allocation for development work	38	84
Lack of education, confidence and security, poor honorarium, financial problem and female members are not well informed about their right duties	40	89
Villagers don not cooperate	6	13
Corruption at the high levels, among Chairman and members	19	42
Problems faced from male members who oppose female members to get work, laugh at them	4	9
No problem	3	7

Answers in more than one category

6.1.9 Problems Faced by Men Union Parishad Members in Performing their Activities

The problems of male *Union Parishad* members were different from their women counter parts. Problems were encountered by 84 per cent of men *Union Parishad* members, which was 93 per cent in the case of women members about 16 per cent of men did not face any problems at all in performing Union Parishad activities. Most of the males who faced problems reported that they were paid very poor honorarium. Men members also reported less allocation from government and project money did not get in time. Some of them mentioned chairmen's negative attitudes towards allocating work and money to members. Other problems faced by men members included political interference, economic problem, lack of transportation and so on.

Table: 6.9 Problems Faced by Male Union Parishad Members in Performing their Activities

Male members		
Problems faced male members in performing their activities	n= 55	%
People do not agree to give land for road construction	2	4
Chairman does not agree to give work	6	11
Less allocation from government	29	53
Forced subscription to political party	13	24
Project money does not get in time	19	35
Very poor honorarium	46	84
Lack of transportation	7	13
Chairman does not circulate government information	5	9
Harassed by MP for the protection against corruption	10	18
Economic problem	15	27
Chairman does not want to work in time	7	13
Chairman creates obstruction in members activities	5	9
No problem	9	16

Answers in more than one category

6.1.10 Union Parishad Members by Level of Implementation and Reasons for Non-implementation of Union Parishad Activities

It is evident from previous sections that women *Union Parishad* members were assigned less work than their men counterparts. However, in context of implementing the allocated works, it was found that women members were more successful than their men colleagues (Table 6.11). There were significant difference between the work fully implemented by women and men *Union Parishad* members as well as cases of partial but there was no significant difference in cases of implementation level not at all. It is evident that difficulties in getting funds worked as major barriers for women, whereas for men the reasons were different.

Table 6.10 Union Parishad Members by Level of Implementation and Reasons for Non-implementation of Union Parishad Activities

Level of implementation	Female members		Male members					
	n	%	n	%				
Fully	40	89	35	64				
Partial	3	7	18	32				
Not at all	2	4	2	4				
Reasons for non-implementation	Female members				Male members			
	Partial		Not at all		Partial		Not at all	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Did not get fund in time	1	33	-	-	8	44	-	-
Lack of co-operation from higher authority	1	33	1	50	10	56	-	--
Lack of Co-operation from other Union Parishad members	-	-	1	50	-	-	2	100
Did not get Notice in time	1	33	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chairmen did not give any work					-	-	-	-

6.1.11 Training

Training has been identified as an important tool to carry out development activities. Training is essential especially for women because their participation in local government and in public sphere is a new phenomenon. It is evident that through out the last two years majority of women and men members received training. Out of the total 55 men members, 96 and out the total 45 women members, 91 received training from government and non-government source. It should be mentioned here that women *Union Parishad* members received training from both government and NGOs. Majority of women (60%) and 67 per cent male members received training from government organizations. On the other hand, 31 percent female and 29 percent male members received training from different NGOs

Table 6.11 Training Received by Union Parishad Members

Received Training	Female members		Male members	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	41	91	53	96
No	4	9	2	4
Total	45	100	55	100

Table 6.12 Training Received by Union Parishad Members from Different Organizations by Gender

Received Training	Female						Male					
	GO		NGO		Total		GO		NGO		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	27	60	14	31	41	91	37	67	16	29	53	96
No					4	9					2	4
Total	27	60	14	31	45	100	37	67	16	29	55	100

6.1.12 Suggestions for Training

It was evident that training suggested for women and men by the women and men members differ significantly. For example, while training on agriculture, fisheries and forestry was overwhelmingly suggested for the men (68% by women and 27% by men), for the women it was nil. Training on promoting women rights, family planning, women development emphasis for only women where men emphasis for Gram Adalat and development of infrastructure. However, one point is evident that our local government representatives were not free from the conventional ideas. Majority of men and women members emphasized on the training of rules, regulations and functions of Unions Parishad. It was also interesting that a significant number (38%) women suggested training on the prevention of violence against women.

Table: 6.13 Suggestion given by Union Parishad Members Regarding Types of Training

By Gender

Types of training	Female members				Male members			
	For male		For Female		For male		For Female	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Agriculture, fisheries & forestry	34	67	-	-	15	27	-	-
Rules, regulations and functions	28	62	17	38	32	58	30	55
Development of infrastructure	17	38	23	51	-	-	-	-
<i>Gram Adalat/Salish</i>	14	31	14	31	40	73	40	72
Promoting education	15	33	9	20	6	11		
Poultry, vegetable & plantation	1	2	16	36	-	-	20	36
Social welfare	6	13	5	11	-	-	-	-
Family planning	12	27	28	62			32	58

Women rights	-	-	35	78	-	-	12	22
Health care of mother & child	-	-	28	62	-	-	7	13
Women development	-	-	39	87	-	-	-	-
Human rights	9	20	8	18	-	-	-	-
Community development	17	38	18	40	-	-	-	-
Prevention of violence against women	-	-	17	38	-	-	-	-
No training needed	-	-	6	13	-	-	-	-

Answers in more than one category

6.1.13 Knowledge of the Ordinance

About 22 per cent women members lacked knowledge of the ordinance and it's by laws, while 15 per cent of the men faced this problem. This is reflected in the series of percentages of knowledge of women versus men members with lower percentage for the females. Even the rights of the women members were not clear to them since very low percentage of women members had knowledge of by laws.

Table: 6.14 Union Parishad Members by Knowledge of the Ordinance and its by-laws

Knowledge of By Laws of the Ordinance	Female members		Male members	
	n	%	n	%
One meeting will be held every month	22	49	20	36
Formation of Local Court	10	22	22	44
Membership could be invalid in absence of 3 meetings continuously without proper reason.	15	33	10	18
Every project will be conduct through a committee	15	33	13	24
Every committee should be formed with Chairman, 9 men members and 3 women	14	31	19	34

members				
Women members' will conduct one-third of total Union Parishad activities	20	44	7	13
Special meetings should be called for emergency	9	20	22	44
Union Parishad members will be involved in preparing the list of births and deaths.	10	22	8	15
Village judiciary committee can fine maximum Tk.5,000 as punishment	9	20	14	25
Lack of Knowledge	10	22	8	15

Answers in more than one category.

6.1.14 Knowledge about Circulars

Both women and men members were aware of various circulars and responsibilities given to women members but 44 percent women and 27 percent men were lack of knowledge about the circular. Some of them, 44 per cent among women and 24 per cent among men are knowledgeable that women members should be involved in one-third of the work of Annual Development Plan. At the same time, a considerable number of men members, 33 per cent, were aware that minimum one women member should be included in every committee at the Union level, which is very important for women members to carry out their development activities. Men members also acknowledged the fact that women members will distribute and monitor Vulnerable Group Development. About the social aspects like working in committees dealing with violence against women, only 13 per cent men members were knowledgeable.

**Table: 6.15 Knowledge of Union Parishad Members about Circular for Female
Union Parishad members by Gender**

Union Parishad members familiarity with Circulars	Female members		Male members	
	n	%	n	%
Women members will be involved in one-third of the work of ADB, KABIKHA and TR	20	44	11	24
Minimum one women member will be included in every committee	17	38	18	33
Women member will be involved in distributing and monitoring VGD, VGF, Old aged/Widow allowance card	12	27	10	18
Women member will be included in the committee to combat violence against women	-	-	7	13
Women members will be involved in family planning activities in the community	18	40	14	25
Women Union Parishad members will be involved in selecting the place of tube-well installation				
Women member will implement projects worth at least TK. 25,000.				
Lack of knowledge	20	44	15	27

Answers in more than one category

CHAPTER VII

OPINIONS OF UNION PARISHAD MEMBERS ON DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

7.1.1 Views about Women's Rights and Development

While giving their opinions about women's rights, *Union Parishad* members of both sexes 42 per cent men and 78 per cent women, stated that both men and women should have equal rights. About 36 per cent women members opined that there should be full participation of women in all activities, while this was only 24 per cent among men members. On the other hand, about 89 per cent female and 44 per cent male members emphasized on equal opportunity. It was interesting that 53 per cent female members wanted the integration of men and women in development activities. Among other views given by both men and women members were the follow up of the above opinion, namely equal opportunity to employment in every sector, security in the workplace. About 56 per cent women also opined that equal sharing in wealth and property is a prerequisite to women's right, which will give them self-independence and economic solvency.

Table: 7.1 Views of Union Parishad Members about Women's Rights by Gender

Views regarding women's rights	Female members		Male members	
	n = 45	%	n = 55	%
Full participation in all activities	16	36	13	24
Equal rights between men and women	35	78	23	42
Equal opportunity	40	89	24	44
Equal power	13	29	-	-
Self sufficient/ independent/ Economic solvency	28	62	40	73
Employment of women in every sector	26	58	23	42

Equal honour	9	20	-	-
Security in the workplace	12	27	15	27
Freedom of movement	9	20	-	-
Free from physical and mental torture	20	44	12	22
Equal share of wealth and property	25	56	-	-
Right to education	30	67	35	64
Right to Decision making	10	22	6	11
Free from gender discrimination	19	42	10	18
Integration of men and women in development activities	26	53		
Cooperation from men	14	31		
No response			3	5

Answers in more than one category

7.1.2 Views of Union Parishad Members about Women and Development by Gender

Views of women *Union Parishad* members about women and development showed highest percentage (87%) in the category of 'Equal opportunity to work together' while 20 per cent men members supported this view. The next highest percentage supported the view of uphold women's rights. For the women this was 82 per cent and 31 per cent for the men. View of 'To be educated and create awareness of their rights' had higher priority for men (72%) rather than to the women members (58%). However, the per cent of women expressing their view about women and development through arranging training is higher (67 %) than that of the men (53 %).

**Table: 7.2 Views of Union Parishad Members about Women and Development
by Gender**

Views about women and development	Female members		Male members	
	n	%	n	%
To be educated and create awareness of their rights	26	58	40	72
Self independent	19	42	30	55
To uphold women's rights	37	82	17	31
Equal opportunity to work together	39	87	11	20
To arrange training	30	67	29	53
Empowerment of women	13	29	8	15
To create awareness	16	36	14	25
Others	24	53	25	45

7.1.3 Suggestions to Overcome Obstacles

Majority of women (77%) and men (66%) were given emphasis to provide transport facilities for them. On the other hand, 84 percent male and 76 percent female emphasized on the empowerment of both men and women members. The men members gave more priority to the 'Need for administrative help' with a percentage of 43, which was 36 per cent for the women. The another important suggestion of the men members was for increasing activities of the *Union Parishad* members with a percentage of 62. This category received lesser importance from the women 49 per cent. Only women members (73%) suggested to arrange training for all members.

Table: 7.3 Suggestions given by Union Parishad Members to Overcome Constraints Faced by the Union Parishad members

Suggestive Measures	Female members		Male members	
	n = 45	%	n = 55	%
Need of administrative help	16	36	24	44
Uphold the rights of women <i>Union Parishad</i> members	17	38	-	-
Increase activities of <i>Union Parishad</i> members	22	49	34	62
Provide training to all <i>Union Parishad</i> members	33	73	-	-
Provide transport facilities to <i>Union Parishad</i> members	35	77	36	65
Empowerment of both men and women U.P members	34	76	46	84

Answer is more than one category

7.1.4 Suggestions given by Male Union Parishad Members to Overcome Constraints Faced by the Female Members

On the other hand, the most emphasized suggestion of the men members regarding overcoming the hurdles faced by the women members was to make them educated (91%). As of other suggestions to increase awareness through training (82%) to increase awareness through training. Men members gave priority to training, support services and administrative reforms rather than social reforms. Majority of men members (78%) suggested to upgrade the financial position of women to resolve their problems.

Table: 7.4 Suggestions given by Male Union Parishad Members to Overcome Constraints Faced by the Female Members

Suggestive measures	Male members	
	n =55	%
Make them more educated	50	91
Awareness should be increased through training	45	82
Administrative security should be ensured	12	22
Transportation facilities should be given to women members	25	45
Equal rights of men and women should be achieved	26	47
Government allotment should be increased	40	73
Financial position of women should be upgraded and resolve their problems	43	78

Answers in more than one category

7.1.5 Suggestions Regarding Smooth Functioning of Union Parishad by Gender

Decision making power at local level of *Union Parishad* members achieved the highest percentage of the suggestions made by men and women members as it related to the smooth functioning of the *Union Parishad*. Among women the percentage was 91 and among men it was 95. Majority of both women (89%) and men (91%) emphasized on the financial control at local level. Empowerment of the *Union Parishad* members was the next prioritized suggestion for the smooth functioning of the *Union Parishad* with 89 per cent among women and 93 per cent among the men.

Table: 7.5 Suggestions Regarding Smooth Functioning of Union Parishad by Gender

Suggestions	Female		Male	
	n =45	%	n=55	%
Increase of remuneration of <i>Union Parishad</i> members	25	56	-	-
Empower <i>Union Parishad</i> members	40	89	51	93
Decision making power at local level	41	91	52	95
Financial control at local level	40	89	50	91
Extension of local office	11	24	18	33

Answers in more than one category.

7.1.6 Coordination Efforts

Both the women and men members of *Union Parishad* opined that cooperation among all concerned was the most important factor, concerted efforts of the Government, NGOs and the community in performing *Union Parishad* activities which was supported 93 per cent among women and 91 per cent among men. Local people should cooperate was the next prioritized suggestion for the coordination with 89 per cent among women and 96 per cent among the men. Among other views given by both men and women members were the follow up of the above opinion, namely discussion meetings should be held among all stakeholders, government should allot sufficient relief and so on.

Table: 7.6 Opinions of Union Parishad Members Regarding Coordination among Government, NGOs and Community People in Performing Union Parishad Activities

Opinions regarding concerted actions of all sectors	Female Members		Male Members	
	n =45	%	n =55	%
There should be cooperation among all concerned	42	93	50	91

Local people should cooperate	40	89	53	96
Discussion meetings should be held among all stakeholders	32	71	45	82
Government should allot sufficient relief	41	91	38	69
D A Loan with minimum interest should be given from NGOs	30	67	45	82
Problems of local people should be discussed and resolved with concerned government departments	16	36	25	45
No comment	2	4	1	2

Answers in more than one category

7.1.7 Poverty Alleviation Programs

Suggestions regarding poverty alleviation by the government showed that increasing employment had 71 per cent among women and 60 percent among men members. Setting up of small and cottage industries was suggested by 73 per cent women and 73 per cent men. Loans with less interest was another suggestion with 87 per cent women opinion and 80 per cent of men opinion. About 78 per cent of the women suggested for increasing the rate of education, while among men the percentage was 82. Majority of women 86per cent and men 91 per cent had given emphasis on training. Among other views given by both men and women members were the follow up of the above opinion, namely family planning, youth development, fisheries, increase agricultural production and so on.

Table: 7.7 Suggestions of Union Parishad members regarding the poverty alleviation programs to be undertaken by the government

Suggestions regarding poverty alleviation programs	Female members		Male members	
	n =45	%	n =55	%
Increase employment	32	71	33	60
Introduce small cottage industries set up	33	73	40	73
Loans with less interest	39	87	44	80
Increase the rate of education	35	78	45	82
Training	39	86	50	91
Family planning	13	29	35	64
Development activities	22	49	33	60
Youth development	11	24	10	18
Fisheries	12	27	6	11
Increase agricultural production	25	56	26	47
Development of transportation facilities	9	20	-	-
Distribute <i>khas</i> land to the landless	6	13	-	-
Anti-corruption drive	-	-	22	40

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Unequal participation of women and men in the government planning works as a barrier to ensure good governance in South Asia. After three decades of research focused on gender equality, it is clear that there is a crucial need for a gender-specific development paradigm into all areas of policy making and planning so that women's needs can be met and their participation ensured.

The present study has been an attempt to review the participation of women at grassroots level democracy in Bangladesh. The study examined the role of government of Bangladesh to ensure gender balance at local level policy planning. In Bangladesh women's participation at local level politics has been recently ensured through the constitutional reform. It has been found that although a large number of women are elected as local representatives, obstacles, related to women's gender identity, refraining them to play their roles effectively. It is evident that lack of effective and timely planning, lack of political background, absence of proper socio-economic and political environment, lack of appropriate organizational framework, lack of skill and training place women behind to prove their competencies compare to their male counterparts. It has been identified that women have limited scope to exercise political rights, lack of control over resources and limited choice in decision making. However, women have been trying to overcome the barriers through their active participation in the local level policy making. Attempts have also been taken to sensitize communities as well as local and national leaders and policy makers to the need for gender balance in the political process. Efforts are going on to make politics democratic, participatory, accountable and transparent so as to ensure a just, humane and equitable society.

There is a need to enable women members to be more effective members of local government bodies. Two aspects of effectiveness need to be considered:

effectiveness in participating in overall Union Parishad operations and effectiveness in stimulating attention to women's development issues

That being the case the foremost task is to reach out women to make them politically aware and conscious. This task requires to be taken up on a mass and intensified scale. Coordination and cooperation of both government and NGOs are necessary to achieve this goal. Political parties have a significant role to play as well.

8.1 Role of Government and Political Parities:

Election rules and regulations to be restructured: Election rules to be restructured in the light of facilitating women's participation in the electoral processes, i.e. right to choose their representatives, freedom to express their views and opinions, right to vote, strict ban on use of violence in elections, limits on expenditure and its strict implementation.

Representation by women in the nomination for election: An amendment (Regulation Order 1972) to the effect that all political parties must ensure a certain percentage (10-20 per cent) of representation by women in the nomination for election of the existing 300 seats under Article (2) of the Constitution. The aim would be to ensure that at least 10 per cent of the elected Members of Parliament are women. This should be monitored and regulations changed as appropriate to achieve this objective.

Representation of women members at the local level committees: At the local level, planning and decision making committees should comprise at least 50 per cent women. Social programmes should be introduced to encourage women's effective participation in such activities.

Information and training to women members of local bodies: The Local Government Division and National Institute of Local Government (NILG) should provide information and training to women members of local bodies to increase their knowledge of local government responsibilities and functions and their skills in fulfilling them. This could be through information manuals, mobile training

programmes and programmes offered centrally Leadership training for women politicians must be carried out by women's organizations and political parties at both the national and local levels. Women should be given various opportunities for leadership training and education in order to encourage them to take up political and leadership position in all fields. Supportive services should be provided to allow women to participate in local bodies.

Exchange of information and experience: Through the Local Government Division, develop a programme or project that would allow for meetings for the exchange of information and experience on the ways in which women members can pursue issues of women's equality and development as members of local government.

Literacy in legal rights and politics: In all formal and non-formal schools, proper training and exposure to the legal and political rights of women should be given to bring about attitudinal changes among both genders.

Improvement of motivational program: To create greater awareness among women about their legal status in society and the need to improve it, motivational programs for expending opportunities for education, health care and employment should be launched

Participation of women in all activities: To ensure participation of women as judges, salish (local arbitration) and other social activities and equal importance should be given to their opinion. To ensure an active participation of women in all activities of *Union Parishad* such as roads, canal, set up bridge and repair, distribution of VGD cards, tree plantation, digging pond, etc.

Conscientization to women's issues: To raise the political consciousness of the people and to sensitize them about women's issues, political parties should organize workshops, dialogue discussions and mass meetings. Political parties should also sensitize party leaders and party workers about women's issues by organizing discussion sessions.

Gender equity within the structure of political parties: Political parties can demonstrate their commitment to the promotion of skilled women by providing opportunities for them within the party structure. Party manifestoes and constitutions should include gender equity as one of their goals and have a plan of action for its achievement.

Maintain linkages with voters: Political parties should encourage their women candidates to maintain continuous linkage with the voters, with special emphasize on women voters, so that they are not misled by their male family members.

Fair elections at all levels: Political parties should work towards free and fair election so that women candidates can contest.

Stand against religious dogmatism: Political parties should take positive stand against fundamentalism and misinterpretation of religious beliefs, which stands in the way of women's political participation.

Implementation of legal reforms and UN Conventions: Political parties should ensure the implementation of legal reforms and UN Conventions relating to women

Level of education of Union Parishad members: There should be minimum level of education for the women to be members of Union Parishad. The required educational level should not be below class VIII or Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C).

Age limit of the Union Parishad members: Minimum age limit of Union Parishad members, 25 years should be strictly followed for the indirectly elected women members at the time of considering their qualifications.

Political awareness and consciousness: In order to develop political awareness and consciousness women should be involved in social, economic and political activities. Therefore, adult education program and some income generating programs should be adopted *by the government for self-reliance of women.*

Discrimination to women members: Women members were discriminated by the chairmen and male members because they were elected by the electoral collage.

Under the alternative system three women members may be directly elected by the voters of respective ward as male members which may provide a scope for the women to familiarize with the democratic system and perhaps be considered as a training ground for political education so that can context at upper local government tiers.

Media provides. Curriculum and media should be adequately utilized so as to change patriarchal social values and encourage women toward leadership roles and activities.

Selection Procedures of Parties candidates: Rural women do not have clear appreciation and adequate awareness of the issues faced by the women because of the respective environment. Women members, whatever may be their selection procedure, are recognized as the leader at the grassroots level by the government and by the local community. They should, therefore, be given proper training and exposure to the issues, which stand in way of the integration of women with socio-economic life of the society.

Methods of elections campaign: Political parties should provide financial allocations for the campaign expenditure of women candidate.

8.2 Role of NGOs and Civil Society

NGO Agenda: Political empowerment of women should be incorporated in NGO agenda. They should consciously make an effort to emphasize the issues of gender equity and women's empowerment in its right perspective.

Sensitization towards women's issues: Both men and women leaders at the grassroots and national levels must be sensitised to women's issues, and form pressure and advocacy groups for the realisation of gender equity.

Act as role models: Women should be made aware of their potential political power and their contribution to political process as voters. Women who are already in the political arena should creatively develop their own strengths and strategies and act as role models for aspiring politicians.

Organize support groups: To support women candidates and mobilize funds for increasing women's participation in politics, NGOs should organize support groups and raise political consensus of women through seminars, workshops, orientation training, mass media, etc.

Pressure groups: To lobby for increasing women's participation in politics, pressure groups should be formed within and outside the Parliament.

Participation in political parties: To increase the number of women in the rank and file in all levels of political parties, grassroots women's organizations should mobilize women at all levels. They should also highlight the potentials of women and their competence as candidates.

Knowledge about the functions of Union Parishad: Majority of the women members had lower level of education. Besides nearly one-fourth of the women members had very poor knowledge about the functions of the Union Parishad and their responsibilities. Training program should be organized to acquaint them with the functions and management of local government institutions specially the Union Parishad. This training may be conducted by the relevant training institutes or by the respective district authority with the financial support of the government or assistance from the donor agencies/development partners. A training or instructional handbook on women's power, rights, functions and management of Union Parishad should be provided to them after being elected as women member of Union Parishad.

To participate in the Union Parishad meetings: In order to ensure proper participation of Union Parishad women members may be undertaken by the government for membership of the women members in the different committees specially the committees dealing with family planning and women development. A mechanism should be developed for ensuring regular attendance of the women members in the meetings. A nominal conveyance allowance may be provided to the women members from *Union Parishad* fund.

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APPENDIX A

Sample of

Interview Schedule for Women & Men Representatives of Union Parishad

**Women's Participation in Local Government: A Study of Elected
Union Parishad Member at Shailkupa Upazila under Jhenidah
District.**

Interview Schedule for Women Representatives of Union Parishad

Name:

Designation:

Address:

Village:

Post:

Ward:

Union:

Upazila:

District:

Name of the Interviewer:

Date:

Socio-economic Characteristics

1. Name of the head of the family

Female Male

2. Type/nature of house

- Mud & Straw
- Mud & Tin
- Bamboo & Straw
- Bamboo & Tin
- Brick & Tin
- Brick building
- Wood & Tin
- Wood & Palm leaves
- Others (specify)

3. Sources of drinking water

- Tubewell
- Pond
- River
- Canal
- Ring-well
- Large pond
- Others (specify)

4. Types of latrine

- Kutcha
- Ring Slub

- Sanitary
- Open latrine
- Hanging latrine
- Others (specify)

5. Structure/type of family

- Nuclear family
- Joint family
- Extended family

6. Number of household members (including respondent)

S L	Name	Relatio n with respond ent	Sex	Age	Religi on	Marital status	Educa tion	Occupation		Income (per month)
								Prima ry	Seco ndary	
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

7. Assets of respondent

A. Land

Type of land	Own land	Share in	Share out	Mortgage in	Mortgage out	Ownership
Cultivable land						
Homestead land						
Pond						
Garden						
Others						

B. Assets other than Land

Type of Assets	Total Number	Ownership
Draft animal		
Milching cow		
Goat/sheep		
Hen/duck		
Fisheries		
Others		

C. Other Moveable Assets

Type of Assets	Total Number	Ownership
Furniture		
Television		
Radio		
Jewelry		
Others		

8. Expenditure

SL	Type of expenditure	Monthly Expenditure (Amount in Taka)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

9. Income

SL	Sources of Income	Monthly Income (Amount in Taka)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Participation in Local Government**10. Political background**◆ **Are you involved in politics?**

- a) Not involved
- b) Supports in politics
- c) Actively involved in politics

◆ **By whom you have been nominated?**

- a) Political party

Name of the party:

b) NGO

Name of the NGO:

c) Others

Specify:

11. Involvement in politics

Year of involvement	Position	Place	Election result	Causes of positive/negative result

◆ How have you been elected?

• By competition

• Without competition

12. Sources of inspiration

i) Self

ii) Husband

iii) Father

iv) Mother

v) Son

- vi) Daughter
- vii) Brother
- viii) Sister
- ix) Neighbour
- x) Relatives
- xi) NGO worker
- xii) Chairman/member
- xiii) Others

13. According to you, what kinds of qualifications are required to be a member of Union Parishad?

Female

Male

A.

A.

B.

B.

C.

C.

Participation in Union Parishad Activities

14. Are you familiar with the Union Parishad Activities?

Yes

No

◆ If no, why?

.....

◆ If yes, please mention three rules of Union Parishad?

i)

ii)

.....

iii).....
.....

15. Are you aware of by-laws/government circular describing specific functions of female Union Parishad members?

Yes
No

If yes, please specify the various functions

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

◆ From which sources have you got the information?

.....
.....

16. Do you think there is the necessity of reserved seats for women in Union Parishad?

Yes
No

◆ If yes, why?

.....

◆ If no, why?

.....

17. Do you think, the Man and Woman should have equal power in the Union Parishad?

Yes
No

◆ If yes, why?

.....

◆ If no, why?

.....

18. As a member of Union Parishad which functions are you involved in followings:

Functions	Government	Non-government
VGF		
Poverty alleviation		
Old age allowance		
VGD card		
Infrastructure development		
Construction work		
Reconstruction/repair		
Relief distribution		
Disaster management		
Health, sanitation & drinking water		
Environment development		
Education development program		
Youth development		
Women development		
Children's welfare		
Agriculture development		
Judiciary & Shalish		

Improvement of law & order		
Credit program		
Widows allowance		
Others (specify)		

19. How much time, do you spend in different activities of Union Parishad?

.....
Hours

20. According to you, what kinds of work is suitable for male members?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

◆ Why do you think, this kind of work is suitable for male members?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

21. According to you, what kinds of work is suitable for female members?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

◆ Why do you think, this kind of work is suitable for female members?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

22. From which source you get more cooperation as a member of Union Parishad?

Male colleague

Female Colleague

Wife

Relatives

Neighbours

NGO activist

Others

(specify).....

Participation in Non-government Organization

23. Are you involved in any NGOs?

Yes No

If yes, specify the NGOs

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

Participation in Union Parishad Meetings and Committees

24. Do you regularly participate in Union Parishad meetings?

• Regular

• Irregular

◆ If regular, how many meetings did you participate in last three months?

- No of meeting held

- No. of meeting attended

- No. of special meeting held

- No. of meeting attended

◆ If regular, what are the reasons behind absence?

- Family problem

- Sickness

- Distance and communication problem

- Notice of meetings not received

- Verbally abuse in meetings

- Opinion and views are not heard

- Reluctance of attending for not given any responsibility

- Others please specify

.....

25. Do you participate in discussion of the agenda of these meetings?

- Full participation

- Partial participation

◆ If yes, why?

26. Are your views and opinions acceptable in these meetings?

Level of acceptance

Please specify reasons

- Fully accepted

.....

- Partial accepted

.....

- Not accepted

.....

27. Are you a member in any committee of Union Parishad?

Yes

No

◆ If yes, please tell me position and committee name.

	<u>Name of the Committee</u>	<u>Position</u>
A.		A.
B.		B.
C.		C.
D.		D.

**Participation in Government, Non-government and other Agencies
Meeting**

28. Do you participate in any meeting other than meetings of Union Parishad?

Yes

No

◆ If yes, please tell me.

Agenda of the meeting	Name of organization	Year	Duration	Impact/result

Training Related Issues

29. Do you receive any training as a Union Parishad Member?

Yes No

◆ If yes, please mention

Areas of training	Sources of training	Year	Duration	Impact

--	--	--	--	--

30. Do you think more training will benefit you?

Yes No

◆ If yes, in which areas do you think training is necessary?

Male

Female

i)

i)

ii)

ii)

iii)

iii)

iv)

iv)

Problems Faced by Union Parishad Member

31. Have you faced any problem during election propaganda?

Yes No

◆ If yes, what kind of problems you have faced?

- Economic problem

- Social problem

- Education problem

- Lack of self confidence

- Lack of security
- Others (specify)

32. According to you, what kind of problems face a female Union Parishad member?

- Lack of working environment
- Negative attitude of male chairman and member towards women member
- Lack of knowledge on activities, rights rules and regulations
- Lack of involvement in committees
- Lack of exchange information
- Lack of enough facilities
- Lack of education
- Lack of security
- Religious dogmatism
- Lack of confidence of power of women
- Lack of recognition of work
- Lack of training of female members
- Lack of cooperation from political parties
- Influence of terrorist
- Lack of implementation of national policy
- Lack of equal rights in decision-making in family and society
- Others

33. As a Union Parishad member what are the problems you face during your activities?

a)

- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)

34. Can you implement the responsibilities given to you?

- Fully
- Partial
- Not at all

35. What are the reasons for not been able to carryout the responsibilities?

- Did not get notice in - time
- Did not get fund on time
- Did not get cooperation from higher authority
- Lack of cooperation from colleagues
- Others (specify)

36. What is the attitude of male member towards female member?

- Broad minded
- Conservative
- Negative

Recommendations

37. What policy should be taken to overcome the obstacles faced by Union Parishad member?

- a)
- b)

- c)
- d)
- e)

38. What steps to be taken to simplify the Union Parishad functions?

- Decision-making in local level
- Extending local office
- Financial control
- Empowering of Union Parishad members
- Increase allowance of members
- Others (specify)

39. How the government, NGO and local people collaborate with each other carrying out the activities of Union?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

40. According to you what types of policy the government should adopt to alleviate the poverty from Bangladesh?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

41. What do you mean by women's rights and women in development?

**Women's Participation in Local Government: A Case Study of Elected
Union Parishad Member at Shailkupa Upazila under Jhenidah District.
Challenges and Prospects**

Interview Schedule for Men Representatives of Union Council

Name:
Designation:
Address:
Village:
Post:
Ward:
Union:
Upazila:
District:

Name of the Interviewer:

Date:

Socio-economic Characteristics

1. Name of the head of the family

Female Male

3. Type/nature of house

- Mud & Straw
- Mud & Tin
- Bamboo & Straw
- Bamboo & Tin
- Brick & Tin
- Brick building
- Wood & Tin
- Wood & Palm leaves
- Others (specify)

3. Sources of drinking water

- Tubewell
- Pond
- River
- Canal
- Ring-well
- Large pond
- Others (specify)

4. Types of latrine

- Kutcha
- Ring Slub

- Sanitary
- Open latrine
- Hanging latrine
- Others (specify)

5. Structure/type of family

- Nuclear family
- Joint family
- Extended family

6. Number of household members (including respondent)

S L	Name	Relation with respondent	Sex	Age	Relig ion	Mari tal statu s	Educat ion	Occupation		Incon (per mont
								Prim ary	Second ary	
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

7. Assets of respondent

A. Land

Type of land	Own land	Share in	Share out	Mortgage in	Mortgage out	Ownershi
Cultivable						

land						
Homestead land						
Pond						
Garden						
Others						

B. Assets other than Land

Type of Assets	Total Number	Ownership
Draft animal		
Milching cow		
Goat/sheep		
Hen/duck		
Fisheries		
Others		

C. Other Moveable Assets

Type of Assets	Total Number	Ownership
Furniture		
Television		
Radio		
Jewelry		
Others		

8. Expenditure

SL	Type of expenditure	Monthly Expenditure (Amount in Taka)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

10. Income

SL	Sources of Income	Monthly Income (Amount in Taka)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Participation in Local Government

10. Political background

◆ **Are you involved in politics?**

- d) Not involved
- e) Supports in politics
- f) Actively involved in politics

◆ **By whom you have been nominated?**

- a) Political party

Name of the party:

b) NGO

Name of the NGO:

c) Others

Specify:

11. Involvement in politics

Year of involvement	Position	Place	Election result	Causes of positive/negative result

◆ How have you been elected?

• By competition

• Without competition

12. Sources of inspiration

xiv) Self

xv) Wife

xvi) Father

xvii) Mother

xviii) Son

xix) Daughter

- xx) Brother
- xxi) Sister
- xxii) Neighbour
- xxiii) Relatives
- xxiv) NGO worker
- xxv) Chairman/member
- xxvi) Others

13. According to you, what kinds of qualifications are required to be a member of Union Parishad?

Female

Male

A.

A.

B.

B.

C.

C.

Participation in Union Parishad Activities

14. Are you familiar with the Union Parishad Activities?

Yes

No

◆ If no, why?

.....

◆ If yes, please mention three rules of Union Parishad?

iv)

v)

.....

vi)

.....

15. Are you aware of by-laws/government circular describing specific functions of female Union Parishad members?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify the various functions

iv)

v)

vi)

◆ From which sources have you got the information?

.....
.....

16. Do you think there is the necessity of reserved seats for women in Union Parishad?

Yes

No

◆ If yes, why?

.....

◆ If no, why?

.....

17. Do you think, the Man and Woman should have equal power in the Union Parishad?

Yes

No

◆ If yes, why?

.....

◆ If no, why?

.....

18. As a member of Union Parishad which functions are you involved in followings:

Functions	Government	Non-government
VGF		
Poverty alleviation		
Old age allowance		
VGD card		
Infrastructure development		
Construction work		
Reconstruction/repair		
Relief distribution		
Disaster management		
Health, sanitation & drinking water		
Environment development		
Education development program		
Youth development		
Women development		
Children's welfare		
Agriculture development		
Judiciary & Shalish		
Improvement of law & order		

Credit program		
Widows allowance		
Others (specify)		

19. How much time, do you spend in different activities of Union Parishad?

.....

.....Hours

20. According to you, what kinds of work is suitable for male members?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

◆ Why do you think, this kind of work is suitable for male members?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

21. According to you, what kinds of work is suitable for female members?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

◆ Why do you think, this kind of work is suitable for female members?

- A.

- B.
- C.
- D.

22. From which source you get more cooperation as a member of Union Parishad?

Male colleague

Female Colleague

Wife

Relatives

Neighbours

NGO activist

Others

(specify).....

Participation in Non-government Organization

23. Are you involved in any NGOs?

Yes No

If yes, specify the NGOs

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

Participation in Union Parishad Meetings and Committees

24. Do you regularly participate in Union Parishad meetings?

• Regular

- Irregular

◆ **If regular, how many meetings did you participate in last three months?**

- No of meeting held
- No. of meeting attended
- No. of special meeting held
- No. of meeting attended

If regular, what are the reasons behind absence?

- Family problem
- Sickness
- Distance and communication problem
- Notice of meetings not received
- Verbally abuse in meetings
- Opinion and views are not heard
- Reluctance of attending for not given any responsibility
- Others please specify

.....

25. Do you participate in discussion of the agenda of these meetings?

- Full participation
- Partial participation

◆ **If yes, why?**

26. Are you views and opinions acceptable in these meetings?

Level of acceptance

Please specify reasons

- Fully accepted

.....

- Partial accepted
- Not accepted

27. Are you a member in any committee of Union Parishad?

Yes

No

◆ If yes, please tell me position and committee name.

	<u>Name of the Committee</u>	<u>Position</u>
A.		A.
B.		B.
C.		C.
E.		D.

**Participation in Government, Non-government and other Agencies
Meeting**

28. Do you participate in any meeting other than meetings of Union Parishad?

Yes No

◆ If yes, please tell me.

Agenda of the meeting	Name of organization	Year	Duration	Impact/result

--	--	--	--	--

Training Related Issues

29. Do you receive any training as a Union Parishad Member?

Yes

No

◆ If yes, please mention

Areas of training	Sources of training	Year	Duration	Impact

30. Do you think more training will benefit you?

Yes

No

◆ If yes, in which areas do you think training is necessary?

Male

Female

v)

i)

vi)

ii)

vii)

iii)

viii)

iv)

ix)

Problems Faced by Union Parishad Member

31. Have you faced any problem during election propaganda?

Yes No

◆ If yes, what kind of problems you have faced?

- Economic problem
- Social problem
- Education problem
- Lack of self confidence
- Lack of security
- Others (specify)

32. According to you, what kind of problems face a female Union Parishad member?

Lack of working environment

Negative attitude of male chairman and member towards women member

Lack of knowledge on activities, rights rules and regulations

Lack of involvement in committees

Lack of exchange information

Lack of enough facilities

Lack of education

Lack of security

Religious dogmatism

Lack of confidence of power of women

Lack of recognition of work

Lack of training of female members

Lack of cooperation from political parties

Influence of terrorist

Lack of implementation of national policy

Lack of equal rights in decision-making in family and society

Others

33. As a Union Parishad member what are the problems you face during your activities?

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

35. Can you implement the responsibilities given to you?

- Fully

- Partial

- Not at all

35. What are the reasons for not been able to carryout the responsibilities?

- Did not get notice in - time
- Did not get fund on time
- Did not get cooperation from higher authority
- Lack of cooperation from colleagues
- Others (specify)

36. Do you think the female member can implement their responsibilities in time?

Yes No

If no what are the reasons?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

Recommendations

36. What policy should be taken to overcome the obstacles faced by Union Parishad member?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

37. What policies should be taken to overcome the constraints faced by female member?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

38. What steps to be taken to simplify the Union Parishad functions?

- Decision-making in local level
- Extending local office
- Financial control
- Empowering of Union Parishad members
- Increase allowance of members
- Others (specify)

39. How the government, NGO and local people collaborate with each other carrying out the activities of Union?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

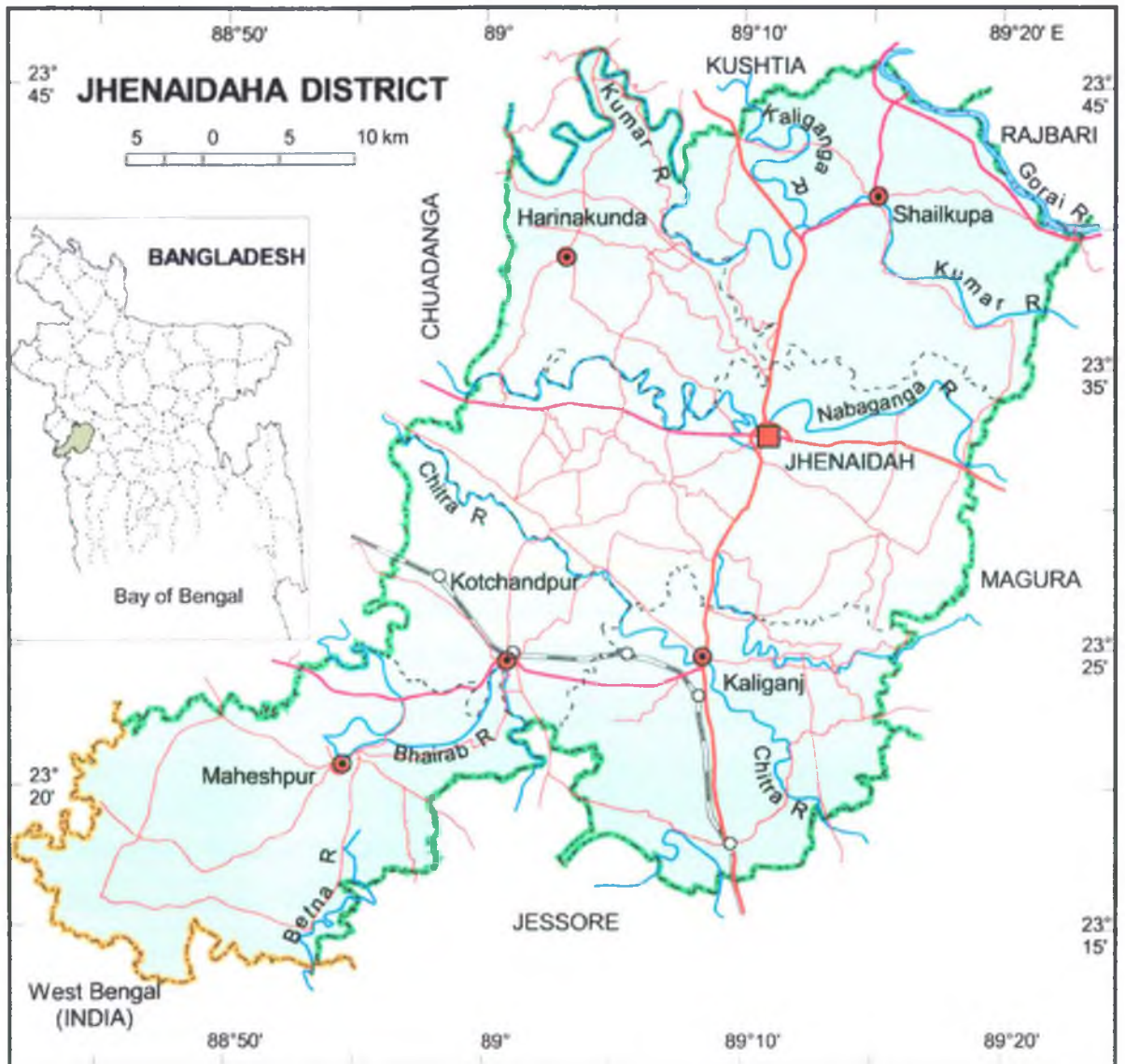
41. According to you what types of policy the government should adopt to alleviate the poverty from Bangladesh?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

42. What do you mean by women's rights and women in development?

Appendix B

Map of Jhenidah District



Appendix C

Map of Study Area

