

Local Government and Development: An Institutional Review of the Role of Union Parishad

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M. Phil Thesis
Department of Public Administration
University of Dhaka

A Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the degree of M.Phil in Public Administration

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বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
গ্রন্থাগার

Monira Begum
Registration No.323, Session 1998-99
May 2005

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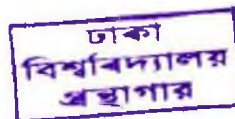
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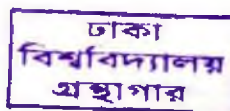
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ABBREVIATIONS

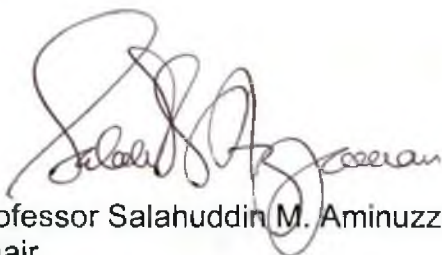
ADLG	Assistant Director of Local Government
ADP	Annual Development Program
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BD	Basic Democracy
CBO	Community Based Organization
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DDLG	Deputy Director of Local Government
DM	District Magistrate
FFWP	Food for Works Program
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
LG	Local Government
MGD	Millennium Development Goals
ILGRDC	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Cooperatives
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Government Organization
ORT	Oral Re-hydration Therapy
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
PIO	Project Implementation Officer
PRM	Post Flood Road Maintenance
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RMP	Rural Maintenance Program
RWP	The Rural Works Program
SDO	Sub-Divisional Officer
TRP	The Test Relief Program
ULO	Upazilla Level Officer
UN	United Nations
UNDDSMS	United Nations Department of Development Support and Management Services
UNDP	United Nations of Development Program
UNO	Upazilla Nirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
VGD	Vulnerable Group Feeding

DECLARATION

This dissertation entitled *Local Government and Development: An Institutional Review of the Role of Union Parishad* is submitted for the partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) degree in Public Administration. The research work has not been submitted for any other degree and or qualification in any University or other academic institutions.

Monira Begum

Monira Begum
Reg. No-323/1998-99
Department of Public Administration
University of Dhaka



Professor Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman
Chair
Department of Development Studies
University of Dhaka

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Monira Begum
Registration No.323/ 1998-99
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ABSTRACT

Local government is a significant institution in any democracy. It can also provide opportunities to local people for meaningful participation in public affairs and for management of local resources for the benefit of the people.

From the very beginning of introducing of local government system in this sub continent Union Parishad becomes more pertinent and unique instrument to implement and execution of development works in the areas of locality. Moreover all central government directed their local level policy through local level institutions.

The study have been designed to get an overview of the development role of Local Government specially regarding Union Parishad and examine the existing modalities of the prospectus and critical areas of Union Parishad in regards to development activities. It was also aimed at making an assessment of the strength and weakness of UP's towards development functions.

Data were collected through literature review and through interview method. The relevant persons were interviewed at the time of data collection to justify the authenticity of data and information. Various institutions related with LGRD were visited in this regard at central and local level. Various UP officials, the beneficiary of UP, local level GOB officials such as UNO, Upazila Eng, PIO (who is involved in UP's development projects) Upazila Agriculture and Upazila Fisheries Officers. The operational functions of UP in development projects were observed very carefully.

This study comprises seven chapters. This study has explained the meaning and concept of development and local government in particular UP. The discussion, different dimensions and models of development and how local Govt. involved in development literature have been elaborated. The section illustrates the salient features of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and recent changes in policies on local government and governance. Subsequent chapter (chapter 3) has presented evolution of UP, the structural and procedural changing form of UP. Chapter 4 discussed legal framework of UP specially emphasized on 1983 Local Govt. Ordinance. This section describes the macro level policy framework on local governance and in particular Union Parishad. Chapter 5 highlighted the role and functions of UP is described as 1983 LG Ordinance. The central control and authority over local government (UP) is shown in this chapter. Chapter 6 is the empirical part of the thesis. UP's involvement in the sector of local level development projects and programs and the possibility and problems in this context UP has to face is described in this discussion. The main objective of this chapter is to present an overview of the objective conditions of local level participation in rural infrastructure development projects. The researcher has examined the present and

potential involvement of the local government bodies particularly the Union Parishad (UP) in the overall development and management of rural infrastructure projects. Chapter 7 draws the conclusions of the thesis and presents some policy options and recommendations focusing on creation of demand aspects and rights-approach, strengthening the institutional capacity, community mobilization and involvement of CBOs in grassroots level governance. The study strongly emphasized the need for change and modifications in regulatory framework. .

Chapter 1: Introduction

Local self-government has been regarded as a means of both political as well as economic development. In modern democracy local Self- Government can provide opportunities to local people for meaningful participation in public affairs and for management of local resources for the benefit of the people at large. Local government thus provides an institutional base for decentralization of power and resources.

The constitution of Bangladesh recognizes local government institutions as an integral part of overall governance and its perspective including the much talked about Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Policy documents state that there should be a four –tier system of local government at the village, union, and upazila and district levels. Strengthening local government institution as embedded in the country's constitution and endowing them with their functions, responsibilities and authority for effective local level participatory planning and implementation is given high priority in all policy pronouncements.

The prevailing local government structure in Bangladesh is not very strong and said to be as not self-governing institutions. Local Government in Bangladesh works principally as subservient bodies to central authorities, which control their activities through circulars, directives and financial allocations. They have poor resource base, making them incapable of performing their mandatory and optional functions.

The power and authority of UP's are minimal compared to field administrative units, and they have difficulty in utilizing the little authority they have. The elected local government representatives have inadequate understanding of their tasks and responsibilities, especially for ensuring sustainable human development. Many of them have lack adequate managerial skills, including basic skills of record keeping, collection and dissemination of information, policy and project formulation,

participatory decision making, and also rudimentary leadership skills. The study carried out by the UN Department of Development Support and Management Services (UNDDSMS) in 1996 revealed that elected local government leaders particularly the Union Parishads (UPs) do not have basic resources such as office supplies, means of communication, transport, record keeping facilities, the necessary information etc. The limited number of staff and low level of their knowledge and skills make it difficult for the UP officials to act with efficiency and efficacy. Follow up studies of similar nature have also stated the same conditions of institutional weakness of UP (Aminuzzaman, 2003).

Problematic

At present, however, local government representatives are not capable of fully executing their responsibilities. In general, they suffer from three types of inadequacies: the absence of democratic sensibilities; lack of clarity of their roles; and deficiencies in their technical proficiency. Similarly the training and orientation provided to local government representatives in respect of their duties do not sufficiently address the twin requirements of building substantives and operational skills. Gender disparities manifested in lack of gender sensitization in general and the under representation of women in, local bodies, in particular, also work against good governance at the local level.

UP has also lack credibility among the members of community. Community expectation from UP is also low. Common people seem to have no confidence on the role and function of UP as an institution. UP has also its popular image, as large-scale and open corruption has characterized the institution. (CPD,2001)

There is virtually no planning system at the UP level. For UP planning is meant to be the preparation of a "wish list" of roads to be built under the food programme. In most Unions, none of the 12 standing committees is found to be operational and effective. Even the members do not know which committee she/he belongs to. UP standing committees have no role in planning and or designing of projects.

UPs have a very weak financial and resource base. Revenue generation particularly through tax collection is far low as against the target. Because of weak financial and resource base as well as lack of positive orientation, Union Parishads hardly take any initiative on their own to design and implement development project. Planning system is not participatory and fails to address the dire needs of the poor and disadvantaged.

In addition to its institutional weakness, UPs in Bangladesh work under severe political and administrative control and treats. But on the positive side, it is to be acknowledged that UPs have significant potential to establish good governance at the local level.

Objectives of the study

The main concern of this study is to show the impact and significance of Union Parishad for achieving overall development in rural areas.

Specific objectives of the study are to:

- a. make an overview of the evolution of the Union Parishad in the context of development management in Bangladesh;
- b. examine the regulatory framework and legal regimes that guide development role and functions of Union Parishads;
- c. assess the overall institutional features of the Union Parishads that affect the pace and process of development management at the grass roots level; and
- d. outline some broad policy options for future institutional reforms and interventions to make UP a viable and participatory institution for development.

Methodology

In view of the objectives, the study is based on the following methodological approaches:

Desk Analysis: Different documents like Local Government Ordinances, Local Government Commission Reports, Sectoral studies of Government; World Bank and other bi-lateral and multi-lateral donor agencies were reviewed to draw general observations and background information. In addition, content analysis of different some comparative literature on Local Government was also carried out.

Interview and discussion with selected officials of Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development & Cooperative: To get an in-depth insight of the dynamics of the undertake series of meetings with the senior officials of the MLGD and selected agencies (like Local Government Engineering Bureau, National Institute of Local Government, Office of the DDLG/ADLG, UNO) who are directly and indirectly involved with the UP. Such interviews and meetings would help the researcher in tapping the critical opinions and perspectives of the senior management as regards to the functional dynamics of UP.

Case Studies had been used to get a first hand impression of the functioning of UP, I (the researcher) have drawn empirical data from primary sources. Three Unions were drawn on random basis as case samples from greater Mymensing district which include Borogooan union of thana Muktagacha under Mymensing district, Khabirbari union of Trishal thana under Mymensing district and Usmanpur union of thana Kuliarchar under kishoreganj district. During the field visits, interview and Focused Group Discussion (FGDs) was applied as research methodology with the UP officials both elected and appointed, and some field based GOB functionaries.

For purpose of the study, data/information has been gathered through a field survey undertaken by the researcher UP officials (which include 11 Chairman, 9

Members and 5 Secretaries) have been interviewed. In addition, the researcher has interviewed 20 Upazila level officials like the *Upazila Nirbahi* officers and *Upazila* Engineers to obtain their opinion regarding the extent and dynamics of participation of the local bodies in the overall development management at the local level. In both cases a structured interview schedule and information blank have been used to collect the data/ information.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Concept of Development

Development is perhaps, the most popular and widely used term of this century. It has an enormous appeal at local, national and international levels and is talked about endlessly. Since World War II, it has been the main agenda of modern governments. Most governments, especially those in poorer countries, irrespective of their nature or political ideology, proclaim their commitment to development, and direct much of their efforts towards achieving this. Alongside the governmental initiatives, various private, non-profit and voluntary organizations are active in each part of the world with promoting and sustaining development.

Development is an elusive concept, which means different things to different people. Since the early 1950s the idea of development has undergone considerable modifications. The conceptual basis for development during the 1950s and 1960s came from the dominant modernization paradigm. Development was often equated with modernization, a process of change towards those types of economic, socio-cultural and political systems developed in Western Europe and the North America. Economically, modernization implies industrialization, urbanization and the technological transformation of agriculture. Socially, it involves the weakening of traditional ties and the adoption of 'achievement' as a basis of advancement. Culturally, modernization implies increased secularization of society, politically; it refers to increased political awareness and participation in democratic systems (Hettne 1990). Therefore, development was seen to be an initiative process in which the poor countries gradually assume these qualities of industrialized nations and demonstrate the triumph of western civilization.

During this period the idea of development was also influenced by the early theoretical constructs advanced by the classical political economists like Adam Smith and Karl Marx. It was viewed primarily from an economic standpoint

stressing GNP per capita as the main objective and indicator of development. The idea of development parallels what Korten and Camer (1983) have termed 'production-centred development' which stresses *interalia*, (i) industry over agriculture; (ii) urban development over rural development; (iii) utilization of capital resources. The prime emphasis of this approach was maximum production for maximizing returns on investment. Rostow's (1966) doctrine had profound implications for this development thinking. Rostow postulated a series of stages (viz. traditional society, the pre-conditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity and the age of high mass consumption) through which all countries must proceed for transition from underdevelopment to development. One of the principal tricks of development, according to Rostow's thesis, was the mobilization of domestic and foreign savings in order to generate sufficient investment to accelerate economic growth and achieve the "take-off".

Thus the earlier development endeavors (during the 1950s and 1960s) were based on the assumption that the benefits of industrial investment concerned in one or two major metropolitan cities would 'trickle-down' and spread throughout the economies of developing nations to alleviate poverty and generate increased income and greater savings. The capital mobilised through such savings would be reinvested, thereby expanding production and employment, raising incomes, drawing larger numbers of people into productive activities, and eventually pushing the poor societies into a stage of self-sustaining economic growth (Rondinelli and Cheema 1983). It is evident that during this period development was viewed mainly as a process of wealth creation. The main thrust of this thinking was the belief that the industry of import substitution variety would create employment, foster economic growth and produce goods for domestic consumption.

Evidently, in this construct development was conceived as unidimensional, it did not recognise the basic needs of the rural poor, nor did it show any concern for the equitable distribution of benefits that accrue from economic growth. Available data

indicate that the much hoped for 'trickle-down' or 'spread effects' did not bring any significant result.

Critical scholars however perceive development as an elusive concept, the false hope of the "Trojan Horse" (Aminuzzaman, 1983). Nevertheless, the word "development" has become so fashionable that it is found in most policy packages of all organizations under the U.N. The western concept and ideas of development have become issues of debate among contemporary political economists. Some branded those models of development and development supports as the "contemporary form of capitalism". Another has labeled it as "Neo-mercantilism". Still another called it the "third stage of imperialism".

Development Models: An Overview

Development models have been until recently utilized primarily by economists. However, its usage has increasingly spread to other disciplines of the social sciences. Although the concept had gained currency among other social scientists during the classical era, none come up with a comprehensive and satisfactory model.

In the relatively short history of econometric modeling and political economy the following prominent models were developed. These are: (a) The Organic Model, (b) The Technological-Education Model, (c) The Input-Output Model, (d) The Capacity Performance Model, and (e) The Systems Model.

Other scholars having different sets of assumptions and inferences in model building, classify their devised models as: (a) The Neo-Colonial Dependency Model and (b) The False Paradigm Model.

Organic Model

Still now many of social scientist favored this as oldest conceptual model. The model influenced the nineteenth century thinkers who conceived national progress

or development as the organic unfolding of the "volkegist". This model stresses functional interrelationships of systems and calls attention to the possibility of different styles or patterns of development. Since it makes extensive use of the biological metaphor, it tends to assume the "natural" unfolding of development in each country according to its innate genius so that essentially development is seen as an almost passive inevitability. Today, However, development is seen in another sense. It is seen as something, which can be achieved only through concrete action in spite of its limitation and existing constraints. Furthermore, Organic Model is criticized for its tendency to mystify the concept of development. In essence, the organic metaphor is too far-fetched since a socio-economic process such as development is far more complex and unpredictable than a biological process.

The Technological-Education Model

This model views development as a learning process where the acquisition of new technology, knowledge and skills by the individuals and institution leads to development. Formulated in France in the 19th century, this model focuses on the most critical element in development i.e. technological change and innovation. It stresses knowing rather than doing and thus structural and psycho-behavioural changes are not dealt with.

The Input-Output Model

Since the Second World War, this has been the basic conceptual model favoured by the economists. They believe that the problem of development is in getting the proper input to achieve the maximum output and in the processes of conversion. The model's active orientation gives it a great advantage, as it provides a useful paradigm for planning. It also has corresponding measurability, primarily through GNP, GDP. But the nation undergoing development is not a super-factory nor a super-organism, and thus the model fails when development is viewed in its socio-economic totality.

The input-output model tends to have a universalistic thinking about development. This is a weak area since countries may respond differently to the same set of stimuli or input depending on circumstances. Although attempts to consider social variables in the model were made, such efforts were generally not development indicators in an interdependency condition.

Capacity Performance Model

Development, according to this model, is the enhancement of a society's capacity to function for the well-being of its members. This concept puts weight on structural rather than superficial change. It advocates the development of technological and educational capacities as well as structural and institutional capacities of a nation. This model puts forwards a set of qualitative and quantitative tools and indicators for development. However, it also clearly points out that quantitative indicators have their limitations and should not be confused with development as a whole. The problem is how to devise a scheme of development analysis that can combine quantitative and non-quantitative elements. Being a one-way model, like input-output model, it also fails to work in a situation of interdependence or circular causation.

The Systems Model

The systems model was adapted by sociologists from the biological sciences. Its basic approach tends towards a dialectic interpretation of events. As a model of development, it views society as composed of subsystems each relatively independent, yet linked together to form a network of interdependent relationships. This development model advocates a comprehensive multiple initiative of action in all component subsystems. Since any change in the subsystem affects other subsystems of the network, the model advocates comprehensive planning along with cybernetic coordination. Among its basic characteristics are "equifinality" and "dynamic equilibrium". In terms of national –scale development, a nation's political and economic ideology constitutes "equifinality" while its political parties, planning

institutions and executive bodies helps to bring the "dynamic equilibrium" of the nation.

Neocolonial Dependency Model

The Structural-internationalist, one of the prominent neo-Marxist schools, views the problem of development in terms of international and domestic power relations, institutional, structural and economic rigidities. This school considers the proliferation of a dual economy and a dual society as contributing factors to underdevelopment. The neocolonial dependency model also assumes that underdevelopment as a phenomenon arising the politico-economic structure. It is particularly relevant to the problem of underdevelopment peculiar to developing countries where the ruling elite enjoys unquestioned dictatorial power over the masses.

The primary interests of the ruling elite are coupled with those of the international power hierarchy due to the neocolonial bondages and historical linkages. This collaboration between one center and periphery results in greater inequality leading a polarity type of development. In essence, the powerful elite characteristic of a dual society and the comprador class acts as negative agents against the national interest and favours the "global lords". They do not only surrender their economic and political obligations but also act as a "watch dog" of the neo-imperialistic forces across the continent.

False Paradigm Model

This model views underdevelopment in Third World Countries is caused primarily by the inapplicability of show-piece types "exported models", institutions and technology. This is perpetuated by well-meaning but often misinformed international experts. They come mostly from international assistance agencies and international donors groups like the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO etc.

These experts offer sophisticated concepts, elegant models and complex technical packages which in most cases lead to inappropriate policy formulation. Because of

institutional and structural facts, these policies often serve the vested interests of existing power structures both domestic and international. Moreover, the tools and techniques are costly and culturally alien to the developing world and often fail to produce the expected results. Raymond Vernon, a Western scholar, vehemently criticized the model building experimentation of his fellow Western experts in developing countries. He considered these models as “imaginative plans” with “half-hearted” involvement and “hypothetical assessments” that propose immediate solutions resulting in long-range frustrations.

After a quarter century of experimentation, development theorists concluded that a development methodology without an ideology would be purely technocratic and econometric. In no case they effect the desired socio-political and economic change in society.

Most of the development models have fostered the ideological view that underdevelopment is caused primarily by cultural and institutional elements of underdeveloped communities. These models have conceived development and underdevelopment as distinct and unrelated entities.

Some models, however, prescribe peaceful and evolutionary development through gradual ideological and institutional changes, but failed to specify the exact change mechanisms. Some political economists, in fact, argue that empirical evidence tend to show that revolution is perhaps the only successful way to break through the enclaves of underdevelopment. Goulet, however, argues that studying the past empirically and the future may devise a truly useful model of development constructively.

Trends in Development in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has had almost three decades of development efforts at lifting the economy out of its abject poverty. Every Five Year Plan since 1973 targeted at an average annual GDP growth rate of above 5 per cent but achieved about 4 per

cent. In spite of large inflow of foreign assistance to augment meagre domestic resources, the planned effort for development has not been able to free the economy from the low growth trap. Almost half of the population of Bangladesh still continues to eke out an existence below poverty line with very little access to the basic amenities of life.

Planned development has been frustrated by a number of factors. *First*, political instability loomed large over most of these years since independence though a semblance of elected government was maintained. It was in the nature of thing that the absence of a truly representative government led to political turmoil adversely affecting development process. *Secondly*, foreign aid flow and its modality affected the development effort. Although Bangladesh received generous aid, its level was not adequate to mount the investment programs which the successive plans envisaged. Also utilization rate of foreign aid was remarkably low. Furthermore the modality of aid has also drastically changed with the gradual withering of commodity aid which used to generate counterpart fund for local currency financing of projects, and commitment of counterpart fund of food aid to selective projects. *Thirdly*, the development process has been disrupted by frequent occurrences of natural disasters like flood, cyclone and drought. They not only pre-empted scarce resources for relief work and rehabilitation but also sapped saving and investment habit, particularly in the agriculture sector due to high risk. All these compounded to frustrate planned development with shortfalls in investment and output.

Income distribution: The average per capita GDP has doubled in about 20 years, but is still at a very low level. This has been accompanied by some improvement in the poverty situation. The percentage of population below poverty level declined from 83 per cent in 1974 to 73 per cent in 1981, to 55.60 per cent in 1985 and to 47.50 per cent in 1995. Preliminary estimate shows that in 1996, percentage of such population was 45.8. But Gini coefficient shows a deterioration in income distribution since 1985, rising from 0.372 to 0.430 in 1995.

Economically active population: While population has grown between 1974 and 1991 by 54.50 per cent, the economically active population has gone up by 63.90 per cent, indicating an increase in the refined activity rate from 44.30 per cent in 1974 to 69.60 per cent in 1990/91. In 1995/96, activity rate was 64.80 per cent against 48.30 per cent. Due to this growth in activity rate, the volume of unemployment increased from 0.5 million in 1974 to 1.27 million in 1995/96. But because of the shift in the structure of the economy and improvement in winter cultivation, overall employment condition improved and the unemployment and under-employment rate declined from 38.78 per cent in 1972 to 27.95 per cent in 1996/97. Agriculture has not been able to absorb increased labour force and as a result, there has been large migration from the rural to the urban areas. This is supported by phenomenal growth of over 6 per cent in urban population per annum since the 1970s. However, some of the demographic variables improved. The rate of growth of population has slowed down. Despite that, employment opportunities continued to lag behind the labour force growth.

Health and family planning: Despite low level of per capita income Bangladesh has achieved impressive progress in the area of population planning and family welfare. The rate of population growth declined from over 2.50 per cent in 1971 to 1.80 per cent in 1996. TFR declined from 6.3 in 1975 to 3.4 in 1996, infant mortality rate declined from 140 per thousand live births in 1975 to 78 per thousand in 1996 and maternal mortality rate from 6.2 in 1981 to 4.4 per 1000 live births in 1996. Contraceptive prevalence rate went up from 8 per cent in 1975 to over 48 per cent in 1996. Life expectancy at birth rose from 45 years in 1970 to 58 in 1996. There have been some impressive achievements in the area of primary health care and sanitation also. Expanded programme of immunisation, increased its coverage from 2 per cent in 1985 to 77 per cent in 1996. Dramatic improvement in the use of oral re-hydration therapy (ORT) has also improved child survival significantly.

Safe water: Over 90 per cent of the people in the rural areas now use safe drinking water compared with 56 per cent only in 1975. There has also been improvement

in the coverage of the sanitary methods from 9 per cent in 1991 to 36.90 per cent in 1996. The trend in the ratio of population to physicians and hospital beds, although improving, is still low.

Literacy: Time series of literacy shows that adult literacy rate which was 25.80 per cent in 1974 rose to 29.20 per cent in 1981 and to 35.30 per cent in 1991. This means that in about 20 years time it rose by only 13 percentage points, while 64.70 per cent of the population remained illiterate. The progress has been extremely slow. The government has not only made primary education compulsory but has also given a big push to the development of primary and mass education. It has allocated higher amounts and adopted innovative programmes like Food for Education for rapid expansion of primary and mass education. As a result, the gross primary enrolment ratio has gone up, particularly among girls. Gross secondary enrolment ratio also rose from 17 per cent to 19 per cent during the period of 1986-92.

Indicator of male-female gap: Labour force participation rate of the females increased from 4.10 per cent in 1974 to 18.20 per cent in 1996. Life expectancy of the females is hardly different from that of the males. These went up from 51.6 and 49.7 in 1974 to 58.1 and 57.6 in 1996 for males and females respectively. Literacy ratio of the females as percentage of the males has gone up from 35.50 per cent in 1974 to 68.50 per cent in 1996. Primary school enrolment of the females as a percentage of the males has also gone up steadily. Access to credit and employment of women is also on the rise. Women are increasingly entering into industrial employment. The percentage of female workers rose from 24 per cent in 1984/85 to 38 per cent in 1995/96. Ninety per cent of the workers in garment industries are presently women. Share of women in public service went up from 6.30 per cent in mid 1980s to 9.10 per cent in 1994.

Following two tables provide an overview of selected social development indicators of Bangladesh.

Table 1: Selected Development Indicators

Area/Indicators	1975	1981	1985	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Demographic Indicators									
Population (million persons)	80.1	89.9	99.9	111.5	113.2	115.5	117.7	120.8	122.0
Population density (persons/sq. km)	543	609	677	755	767	782	798	818	832
Population growth rate (%)	2.57	2.35	2.07	1.98	1.92	1.88	1.87	1.85	1.80
Crude birth rate (per 1000 persons)	46	35	35	32	31	29	27	28	27
Crude death rate (per 1000 persons)	18.0	12	12	13	11	10	9	9	9
Total fertility rate (birth per woman)	6.3	5.04	4.7	4.3	4.2	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.4
Net reproduction rate	2.3	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.5
Contraceptive prevalence rate (% of married couple between 15-49 yrs)	7.7	21.8	25	40	-	44.6	46.3	48.0	48.0
Maternal mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	-	6.2	6.3	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.4
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	140	111	112	92	88	84	77	78	78
Life expectancy (National)	46	55	55	56.1	56.3	57.2	57.9	58.0	58.0
Male	47	55	56	56.5	56.8	57.8	58.1	58.1	58.1
Female	45	54	55	55.7	55.9	56.6	57.5	57.6	57.6
Health and Sanitation Indicators									
EPI coverage (% of one year old children)		1	2		69		74	76	77
Sanitary system of excreta disposal (% of population)				9			35	35.3	36.9
Access to safe water (% of population)	56			80			95	96	96
Daily per capita protein intake (grams)	43	-	63	-	63				65
Daily per capita calorie intake (k. cal.)	1760	-	2191	-	2266				2244
Income Distribution Indicators									
Income ratio of highest 20% to lowest 20% of population	6.0	6.9	6.6	-	6.9				8.8
Gini co-efficient									
National		0.39	0.37		0.39				0.43
Rural		0.36	0.36		0.36				0.38
Urban		0.41	0.37		0.40				0.44
Population below poverty level: per capita calorie intake < 2122 k.cal.									
National		73	55.7		47.5				47.5
Rural		74	54.7		47.6				47.1
Urban		66	62.6		46.7				49.7
Income per capita GDP									
in Taka	1594	2574	4174	7490	8001	8208	8754	760	10660
In US\$	180	158	161	210	210	210	219	243	261

Source: BBS/Planning Commission, 1997

Table 2: Projection of Major Physical and Social Indicators

Items	Unit	1996/97 Base Year	2001/2002 Terminal Year	Percentage Increase over Base Year
Social Sector				
1. Primary School Enrolment (6-10 yrs)	million persons	17.28	18.99	9.90
2. Primary School Enrolment (6-10 yrs)	ratio	95.00	100.00	5.26
3. Primary School	'000' number	75.00	80.00	6.67
4. Literacy Rate (adult)	percentage	47.30	70.00	48.00
5. Female Literacy Rate	percentage	38.10	60.00	57.48
6. Drinking Water				
(a) Urban Area (Piped Water)	million litre/per day	850.00	1250.00	47.06
(b) Rural Area (Tubewells)	million number	1.03	1.56	51.46
7. Sanitation				
(a) Urban Area (Sewerage in Dhaka)	coverage (%) of hh	35.00	40.00	14.29
(b) Rural Area (Sanitary Latrine)	million number	2.56	5.38	110.16
8. Hospital Beds	'000' number	37.13	42.00	13.12
9. Population Growth Rate	% per year	1.75	1.32	(-)24.57
10. Population (mid year)	million persons	123.80	132.50	7.03
11. Life Expectancy	years at birth	58.00	60.00	3.45
12. Infant Mortality Rate	per 1000 live births	78.00	55.00	(-)29.49
13. Maternal Mortality Rate	per 1000 live births	3.60	3.00	(-)16.67
14. Immunisation (Under 1 Year children)	percentage	66	85	28.79
(a) BCG	percentage	73	80	9.59
(b) DPT	percentage	80	90	12.50
(c) Measles	percentage	75	85	13.33
(d) Polio	percentage	80	90	12.50
15. Population Below the Poverty Line	percentage	45	30	(-)33.33
16. Nutritional Status /Energy Intake	k.cal	1,950	2,300	17.95
17. Contraceptive Prevalence Rate	percentage	48	60	25.00

Source: Planning Commission, 1997

The above social and economic indicators do show some significant changes and trends. Those also reveal that as a typical third world country Bangladesh is to a great extent moving towards the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) set by the UNO. However a critical overview would further reveal that such demand for changes would not be fulfilled without the active participation of sub-national governments specially the rural based governance structure i.e. Union Parishads.

Local Government and Development

Local Government is a very important institution of any country. The question of local government becomes more pertinent in case of Bangladesh, a rural based country. Local government is a form of political decentralisation which " involves some sort of locally established usually with elected members. This crucially has a substantial element of autonomy from central government, even through it is linked to it in different ways " (Wallis, 1989:122)

Local government is a very important institution of the government in Bangladesh. Because after the recognition as a sovereign country, the whole development activities is directed through local government in rural areas of Bangladesh.

The GOB has developed the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The GOB claims that "the PRSP for operational purposes, will form the core of the Sixth Five Year Plan". The PRSP has assumed that decentralization and devolution of power is a technical necessity for good governance rather than a matter of political choice.

The PRSP has unequivocally favored the creation of a multi-tier ensemble of effective local government bodies at union, thana, and district levels. The policy noted that " the consensus view emerging from the consultation supported the idea of a strong with adequate financial and administrative power and popular local government. Local government was seen as one of the key instruments for ensuring improved quality and enhanced accountability of public services both in rural and urban areas".

The research work has also identified some critical areas where local government can play an important role. These include:

- management and coordination of many nation-wide programs such as targeted food or cash assisted programs designed for the poor.
- management of schools, community clinics, union-level family planning and health centres,
- coordinating various government and non-government programs in an area thereby reducing wastage and duplication, and facilitating greater synergies.
- promotion of grass-roots organizations as well as fostering community activities that encourage greater social solidarity.

Local government has a significant constitutional mandate. The GOB policy documents over the years, irrespective of the regimes, have also highlighted the importance of local government. In addition, all major political parties have unanimously acknowledged the need and importance of strong local government in their respective election manifesto, but in reality no serious attempts have been made either the party in power or major opposition to strengthen the local government system.

Chapter 3

Institutional Framework of Local Government with Reference to Union Parishad (UP)

Evolution of Local Government

Local Government in the sub-continent has a long history and institutional linkage. The following section presents an overview of the evolution of Local Government system in this part of the sub-continent.

British Period (1757-1947)

During the British colonial rule the most important task the bodies in rural Bangladesh performed was the collection of land revenue. The Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 created a class of landlords whose prime responsibility was the collection of land revenue and maintenance of law and order in the villages. This measure supplanted the last vestiges of local government existing in rural areas. The British, however, made attempts to revive the traditional *Panchayet* system by the Bengal Chowkidari Act of 1870. It authorized the District Magistrate to appoint at the village level a *Panchayet*, with the authority to assess and collect taxes from villagers to pay salaries of the chowkidars, the village watchman. A body of five members, nominated by the DM, this *Panchayet* remained in position at his pleasure, though refusal to become its member entailed a fine of Taka fifty. The sole purpose of creating this body was not any welfare of the local people but to serve the British interests.

Under the Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1885, based on Lord Ripon's resolution, three tiers of local bodies came into being: (a) the District Board in the District; (b) the Local Board in the Sub-Division; and (c) the Union Committee for the Union comprising a group of villages. The District Board consisted of nine members—two-thirds being elected and one-third nominated by the government for five years—and was headed by a Chairman who could either be nominated by the Lieutenant Governor or elected by members of the Board, subject to approval of Lieutenant Governor. Under the local self-government framework, the District

Board was the focal point with such responsibilities as communications, health and sanitation, water supply, education, census, relief and vaccination. Cess, fees and government grants were their main sources of income.

The Local Board, consisted of not less than six members—two-thirds being elected and one-third nominated by the government, had no functions or responsibilities of their own than to act as agents of District Boards. One of their functions was to supervise the activities of Union Committees, including disbursing grants to, and receiving reports from, them. They either elected their Chairman from amongst the elected members, or requested the Lieutenant Governor to appoint him.

Each Union Committee had 9 members elected by the villagers, and took care of ponds, primary schools and roads. But the maintenance of the law and order rested with the *Chowkidari Panchayet*, which worked side by side, in the same area, with Union Committee. The 1885 Act kept no provision for Chairman for the Union Committee.

The Bengal Village Self-Government Act of 1919 produced the next landmark in the local government system, replacing three-tier system with two-tier system, comprising Union Boards and District Boards. Under the Act, Union Boards replaced existing Union Committees and *Chowkidari Panchayets*. With two-thirds nominated and one-third elected members, a Union Board usually consisted of 6 to 9 members.

Since 1921 the Board was given the privilege of electing its own Chairman from among its members, subject to approval of the provincial government, in place of allowing the District Magistrate to act as the Chairman. The Chairman was the Chief Executive of the Board, who could be removed by the government on charges of corruption, inefficiency and criminal offence.

Pakistan Period

During the Pakistan era, government maintained the British inherited Local Government structure. The major change that local government system embraced was the Basic Democracies Order that President Ayub Khan introduced in 1959. Since BD system was the brainchild of Ayub Khan as the system was uniformly put into practice in the then East Pakistan which is now Bangladesh.

Bangladesh era

After independence, the first action the new government took was to rename the rural local bodies. By new nomenclature, Union Council became Union Panchayet, Thana Council became Thana Development Council, and the District Council came to be known as Zila Board. These local bodies were dissolved, and official administrators took over in each of them. The District Council came under the control of Deputy Commissioner, and the Thana Council under the Sub-Divisional Officer, while the Circle Officer became the head of the Union Council. These arrangements continued until 1973.

The Union Parishads in the rural areas underwent, by the President's Order No. 22 of 1973, changes in its composition, retaining the same functions and sources of income as were under the Basic Democracies Order of 1959. Under the new arrangement, a position of Vice-President was created in each Union Parishad. Each Union was divided into 3 Wards, and each Ward directly elected 3 members. One Chairman and one Vice-Chairman were also directly elected, in addition to 9 members, for each Union Parishad by the voters of entire union. The District Council and the Thana Council continued functioning in its previous format until the promulgation of Local Government Ordinance, 1976, which provided for (a) a Union Parishad for a Union; (b) a Thana Parishad for a Thana; and (c) a Zila Parishad for a District.

The Thana Parishad comprised SDO, who was the ex-officio Chairman; the Circle Officer, who was the ex-officio Vice-Chairman; Chairmen of all the Union

Parishads. Primarily, the Parishad was concerned with coordination of all development activities within its jurisdiction. Preparation of Thana Development Plan, based on Union Development Plans, was also within its purview. It extended all possible assistance to Union Parishads. Promotion of family planning, care of the environment, along with training of UP functionaries were among its responsibilities.

The Local Government Ordinance of 1976 provided for the creation of a Zila Parishad in each district. A Zila Parishad consisted of elected members, official members and women members whose numbers were determined by the government. Its term of office was five years. Both Chairman and Vice-Chairman were elected from among the elected and women members. However, no elections were held. Instead, the Deputy Commissioner worked as Chairman of the Zila Parishad and another government officer (Assistant Director for Rural Development/Assistant Director of Local Government) worked as its Secretary. The Zila Parishad had been entrusted with 97 functional responsibilities classified under two categories: compulsory and optional. It was the responsibility of the Zila Parishad to coordinate the developmental activities of all local Parishads, Municipal bodies and Cantonment Boards within the District.

The main functions the Zila Parishads performed were construction, preservation and repair of libraries, hospitals, dispensaries, roads, culverts, bridges, gardens, playgrounds, rest houses, etc. The main sources of its income were government grants, taxes, tolls, fees, etc.

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Structure and composition

Since 1982 significant devolutionary changes introduced by the government characterized the rural local government. The aim was not only to shore up rural local bodies, it was also aimed at taking the administration nearer to the doorstep of local people by facilitating their participation in the administration and

development. To facilitate these changes, two new Ordinances and five new Acts were passed. These are:

1. The Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganization) Ordinance 1982.
2. The Local Government (Union Parishads) Ordinance, 1983.
3. The Local Government (Zila Parishad) Act 1988.
4. The Bandarban Hill Tract District Local Government Parishad Act 1989.
5. The Rangamati Hill Tract District Local Government Parishad Act 1989.
6. The Khagrachari Hill Tract District Local Government Parishad Act 1989, and
7. The Palli Parishad Act 1989.

Based on these Ordinances and Acts three tiers of rural local government, that is, Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad, and Zila Parishad in 61 districts, and three Hill Tract District Local Government Parishads (equivalent to Zila Parishad) in three hill districts, namely Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachari, are functioning in the country. Now *Gram Parishad* is another tier of local government though it is not constitutionally recognised.

Under the respective Laws each local government body in the country has been provided a council that exercises its power and authority. Under the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 1983, a Union Parishad is composed of one Chairman and nine elected members representing nine wards (three old wards). The Chairman is directly elected by the entire population of the Union through adult franchise, while the members are also elected on the basis of adult franchise by the people living in the respective wards. The tenure is five years.

Under the decentralisation program of the government, the Thana Parishads were abolished and all Thanas were upgraded into Upazilas (Sub-District). Significant basic changes were brought about in the Upazila Parishad. According to the Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganization) Ordinance 1982, a Upazila Parishad consists of (a) an elected Chairman; (b)

representative members (all Chairmen of the Union Parishads within the Jurisdiction of the Upazila; (c) three women members nominated by the government from amongst the women residing in the Upazila; (d) official members (the holders of the offices in the Upazila as specified by the government will be ex-officio members without voting right); (e) chairmen of the Upazila Central Co-operative Association; and (f) one nominated male member (eligible for election as Chairman of Upazila Parishad). All representative members and the five nominated members are allowed to vote in the Upazila Parishad meetings. The chairman of the Upazila Parishad is directly elected by the entire Upazila on the basis of adult franchise. Till the election of the Chairman of the Upazila Parishad, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) acts as the chairman. The tenure of the Parishad is five years.

Under the Local Government (Zila Parishad) Act 1988, a Zila Parishad comprises four categories of members: (a) Public representatives such as Parliament Members, Upazila Parishad Chairmen and Pourashava Chairmen of the respective district; (b) nominated members; (c) nominated women members; and (d) certain officials. The government nominates the male and women members from amongst male and female residents of the district. The officials are the district level officials including the Deputy Commissioner. Instead, the Deputy Commissioner worked as the Chairman of the Zila Parishad and another government officer (Assistant Director for Rural Development/ Assistant Director of Local Government) worked as its Secretary. The Zila Parishad had been entrusted with 97 functional responsibilities classified under two categories; compulsory and optional. It was the responsibility of Zila Parishad to coordinate the development activities of all local parishads, Municipal bodies and Cantonment Boards within the District.

Chapter 4: Legal and Regulatory Framework of Local Government

There are as many as three specific Articles in the Constitution (Article 11, 59 and 60) that provide the foundation of local government in Bangladesh. Article 59 (1) provided that "Local Government in every administrative unit¹ of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law". Article 59(2) spells out the broad functions of the Local government as: administration and the work of public officers; the maintenance of public order; the preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development.

The Article 60 of the Constitution stipulated that: "For the purpose of giving full effect to the provisions of Article 59 Parliament shall by law, confer powers on the local Government bodies to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds".

Apart from these two Articles, Article 11 of the Constitution provided as a Fundamental Principle of State Policy that 'The Republic shall be a democracy in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured.'

The Constitution provides the framework for local government institutions consisting of elected members, so that local level participation in the formulation, planning and implementation of development programs and delivering of basic services to the people of the locality can be ensured.

Local government has a significant constitutional mandate. The GOB policy documents over the years, irrespective of the regimes, have also highlighted the importance of local government. In addition, all major political parties have unanimously acknowledged the need and importance of strong local government in

¹ An 'administrative unit' has been defined in Article 152 (1) of the Constitution as a 'district or other area designated by law for the purposes of Article 59.

their respective election manifesto, but in reality no serious attempts have been made either the party in power or major opposition to strengthen the local government system. Most of the recommendations of two different high powered Local Government Commission reports constituted by the last two political regimes did not get implemented. More interestingly it is to be noted that major political parties have also not effectively demanded or rallied in favour of a strong and effective local government system. Members of the Parliaments are also not all that serious and committed to promote the local government system rather there are instances where MPs (including Ministers) resisted the introduction of Local Government at Upazila level.

Legal framework

The present pyramidal structure of local institutions of Bangladesh owes its origin to the British rule. Originally intended to maintain village law and order by local initiative, the *Chawkidari Panchayet Act* of 1870 was the first step taken by the British rulers towards the establishment of the Rural Local Government. Subsequently, the Local Self-Government Act 1885, the Village self-government Act 1919, and the Basic Democracy Order 1959, and finally the Local Government Ordinance 1976, The Local Government (Thana Parishad) Ordinance 1982, the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 1983, 1986, Local Government (Union Parishad Second Amendment) Act 1997, and of late Local Government (Amendment) Act 2001 etc shaped the institutional make-up and gradual evolution of the present local government system in Bangladesh.

In the year 2003, a new institutional framework has been designed called "*Gram Sarkar*". The "*Gram Sarkar*" is by definition not a Local Government as such but considered to be the auxiliary body of Union Parishad. The "*Gram Sarkar*" is comprised of 1 Chairman, 1 consultant, 10 male members and 3 female members being chosen by the community on consensus basis. The concern Union Parishad ward member represents the Chair of "*Gram Sarkar*". However, a section of researcher and observer have heavily criticized the "*Gram Sarkar*" and opined that

the body has been formed to institutionalise and consolidate the platform of the party in power as well as violate the constitutional principles of Local Government.

A recent study (Aminuzzaman, 2004) observed that the present legal framework of UP is essentially control oriented and provide little scope for the UPs to act in an autonomous manner. The study therefore strongly argue that there is a need for through review and amendment of some of the selected sections of the LG ordinance- selected section includes provisions of central control through section 31(3), transfer of financial resources (section 35), formation of committee system (section 38), processes of planning (section 40, section 51) financial and resource management and investment plan (section 40, 44,46, 47, 55) maintenance and development of UP property (section 50), supervision and monitoring (section 60,61,76), project management (section 39), personnel management (section 42) etc.

Summaries of observations of the regulatory framework as prepared by Aminuzzaman (2004) are as follows:

Focus	Sections
<p><i>Central and Executive control</i></p>	<p><i>Police function of UP</i> 31(3) where the Deputy Commissioner is of the opinion that in any union or a part thereof, special measures are required to secure village defense or public security, he may, by order, require, that all or any of the able bodied adult male inhabitants of the union or such part thereof shall be liable to patrol duty for such period and in such manner as may be specified in the order.</p> <p><i>General Administration</i> 32(1)(a) [UP] to render such assistance in the preparation of records and assessments, and in the work of survey or crop inspection, and of other branches of revenue administration in the Union as the Deputy Commissioner may require;</p> <p><i>Transfer of fund from UP to Govt.</i> 35 (a,) any institution or service maintained by a Union Parishad shall be transferred to the management of the government or in any authority.</p> <p><i>Committee system</i> 38 (2) UP can also form additional Standing Committee with prior permission from the Deputy Commissioner</p> <p><i>Planning</i> Government by rules provide: 40(a) the preparation of plans and estimates for works to be executed by a Union parishads; 40(b), the authority by whom and the conditions subject to which such plans and estimates shall be technically approved and administratively sanctioned; and 40(c.) The agency by which such plans and estimates shall be prepared and executed.</p> <p><i>Charged Expenditure of Union</i> 46(a) all sums paid to any government servants who ins in service of a Union.</p>

46(b) Contributions towards conducting elections,
46(2) any expenditure charged on a Union fund is not paid, the government may, by order, direct the person or persons having the custody of the Union Fund to pay such amount.

Budget

47(1) every Union Parishad shall, in the prescribed manner, prepare before the commencement of each financial year, a statement of its estimated receipts and expenditure for that year, and send it to the Deputy Commissioner for approval.

47(2), if the budget is not prepared by a Union Parishad before the commencement of any financial year, the Deputy Commissioner may have the necessary statement prepared and certify it, and such certified statement shall be deemed to be the sanctioned budget of the Union Parishad.

47(3) The Deputy Commissioner may, by order, modify the budget within 30 days and the revised budget will be treated as the Union Budget

Property of UP

50.(1) The Government may, by rules,-

- a. Provide for the management, maintenance, improvement and development of the property belonging to or vesting in Union Parishad;
- b. regulate the alienation of such property; and
- c. provide for the compulsory acquisition of such immovable property as may be required by a Union Parishad for the purposes of this ordinance.

Development Plans

51(1) a Union Parishad may, and if so required by the Government shall, prepare and implement development plans for such periods as may be specified

51(2) such plans shall be subject to approval of Deputy Commissioner and shall provide for manner in which the plans shall be financed, executed, implemented and supervised, and the agency through which the plans be executed and implemented

Supervision of Union Parishad

60. the government shall exercise general supervision and control over the Union Parishads in order to ensure that their activities conform to the purposes of this ordinance.

Control over activities of Union Parishad

61, if, in the opinion of the Government, anything done or intended to be done by or in behalf of Union Parishad is not in conformity with law, or is in any way against public interest, the Government may, by order,-

- (a) quash the proceedings;
- (b) suspend their execution of any resolution passed or order made by the Union Parishad
- (c) prohibit the doing of anything proposed to be done; and
- (d) require the Union Parishad to take such action as may be specified.

Power of Government to give direction to Union Parishad

62(1) the Government may direct any Union Parishad, or any person or authority responsible thereto, to take, within such period as may be specified, such action as may be necessary for carrying out the purposes of this ordinance.

Supersession of Union Parishad

64. After inquiry if the Government is of opinion that a Union Parishad

- a. is unable to discharge or persistently fails in discharging its duties, or
- b. is unable to administer its affairs or meet its financial obligations, or
- c. generally acts in a manner contrary to public interest, or if failed to generate 75% tax, rate, levies of the fiscal year, unless there are enough reasons otherwise to satisfy the government.

Standing Orders

76. the government may, by standing orders, issue from time to time-

- a) define and regulate the relations of the Union Parishad inter se and with order local authorities; b) provide for coordinating the activities of Union Parishads and the Government authorities, c) provide for general financial assistance to Union Parishad, including the making of grants of specified purposes on specified terms and conditions; d) provide for the making of financial contributions by one Union Parishad to another Union Parishad or to any other local authority, and e) Provide for the general guidance of Union Parishads in carrying out the purposes of this ordinance.

Delegation of power

77. The Government may by notification delegate any of its power under this ordinance or rules to a Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, or any other officer subordinate to him or to any other person or authority.

Power to make rules

	<p>83. the government may make rules for carrying out the purposes of this ordinance.</p> <p>83(2) In particular , and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) power and duties of chairman and members; b) regulation of the functions of Union Parishad with regards to village police including the appointment, terms and conditions and training and discipline of member of the village police; c) functions of Union Parishad with regards to agricultural, industrial and community development, and food production; d) regulation of making of contracts behalf on Union Parishads; e) regulation of the execution of works by Union Parishads; f) prescription of records, reports and returns to be maintained, prepared or published by Union Parishads; g) administration, regulation, custody, investment and operation of Union funds and special funds; h) preparation and sanction of budgets and all matters relating thereto; i) maintenance of accounts and their audits j) matters relating to management, maintenance and alienation of property of Union Parishads k) preparation, regulation, consolidation, sanction and implementation of development plans; l) regulation of assessment, collection and administration of taxes, rates and fees and all matters relating thereto; m) manner in which, and the authorities to whom, appeal shall lie against the orders to Union Parishads; n) manner in which Union Parishads shall be inspected, and the powers of inspecting officials; and o) any other matter required under of the provisions of this ordinance to be prescribed or determined by rules. <p>85(3) the government may frame model regulations and in framing their regulations, the Union Parishad shall be guided by such model regulations.</p>
<p><i>Financial Management & Budgeting</i></p>	<p><i>Works</i></p> <p>40: the government may, by rules, provide for-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The preparation of plans and estimates for works to be executed by a Union Parishad. (b) the authority by whom and the conditions subject to which such plans and estimates shall be technically approved and administratively sanctioned; <p><i>Budget</i></p> <p>47 (1) every Union Parishad shall, in the prescribed manner, prepare before the commencement of each financial year, a statement of its estimated receipts and expenditure for that year, herein after referred to as the budget , and send it to the Deputy Commissioner for approval.</p> <p>47(2) if the budget is not prepared by a Union Parishad before the commencement of the financial year, the Deputy Commissioner, may have the necessary statement prepared and certify it, and such certified statement shall be deemed to be the sanctioned budget of the Union Parishad.</p> <p>47(3) within thirty days of the receipt of the copy of a budget under sub-section (1), (Deputy Commssioner)36] ,as the case may be, may , by order, modify it, and the budget so modified shall be deemed to be the sanctioned budget of the Union Parishad.</p>
<p><i>Resource Management</i></p>	<p><i>Custody or Investment of Union fund</i></p> <p>44(1) the money credited to a Union Fund shall be kept in a Government treasury, or in a bank transacting the business of a Government treasury or in such other manner as may be specified by the Government from time to time.</p> <p>44(3) a Union Parishad may, if required by the Government shall, establish and maintain a separate fund for any special purpose, which shall be administers and regulated in such manner as may be prescribed.</p> <p><i>Property of Union Parishad</i></p> <p>50.(1) The Government may, by rules,-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide for the management, maintenance, improvement and development of the property belonging to or vesting in Union Parishad; b. regulate the alienation of such property; and c. provide for the compulsory acquisition of such immovable property as may be required by a Union Parishad for the purposes of this ordinance. <p><i>Development Plan</i></p> <p>51(3) the Government may direct that any specified item of income of a Union Parishad shall wholly or in part be earmarked for and applied in the implementation of a development plan.</p>
<p><i>Monitoring</i></p>	<p><i>Transfer of functions</i></p> <p>35(b) any institution or service maintained by the government or (any authority) shall be transferred to the</p>

	<p>management and control of a Union Parishad</p> <p><i>Inquiry into the affairs of Union Parishad</i> 63(1). The Government may either <i>suo moto</i> or application made to it by any person, cause an enquiry to be made by such officer as may be authorized by it in this behalf, into the affairs of the UP generally, or into any particular matter, concerning a UP and take such remedial measures as may be warranted by the findings of such enquiry.</p>
<i>Planning</i>	<p><i>Development functions of UP</i> 33. A Union Parishad shall be responsible for agricultural, industrial and community development in the Union, and may, for that purpose, perform such functions as may be prescribed.</p> <p>33(2)(a). A UP may, for the purposes of rural development, adopt such measures and perform such functions as may be prescribed.</p> <p><i>Development plans</i> 51(1) a Union Parishad may, and if so required by the Government shall, prepare and implement development plans for such periods as may be specified</p> <p>51(2) Such plans shall be subject to the approval of the Deputy Commissioner, as the case may be, and shall provide for-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The manner in which the plans shall be financed, executed, and implemented and supervised; • The agency through which the plans shall be executed and implemented; and • Such other matters as may be necessary
<i>Project Management</i>	<p><i>Contracts</i> 39 (1) all contracts made by or on behalf of a Union Parishad shall be-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in writing and expressed to be made in the name of the Union Parishad; • Executed in such manner as may be prescribed; and • Reported to the Union Parishad by the Chairman at the meeting next following the execution of the contract.
<i>Committee system</i>	<p>38 (2) UP can also form additional Standing Committee with prior permission from the Deputy Commissioner.</p>
<i>Other Rules of Business</i>	<p><i>Revenue and general function of UP</i> 32(1 b,) to render such assistance in the preparation of records and assessment, and in the work of survey or crop inspection, and of other branches of revenue administration in the union as the Deputy Commissioner may require;</p> <p>85(3) the government may frame model regulations and in framing their regulations, the Union Parishad shall be guided by such model regulations.</p>
<i>Accountability</i>	<p><i>General Administrative functions</i> 32(1 b,) to render such assistance in the preparation of records and assessment, and in the work of survey or crop inspection, and of other branches of revenue administration in the union as the Deputy Commissioner may require; 32(1.f) to assist officials in the execution of their official duties, and to furnish such information as may be required by them for official purposes. 32(2), Nothing in sub-section (1) shall be construed as authorize the chairman to interfere in the performance by any official of his official duties.</p> <p>35 (a,) any institution or service maintained by a Union Parishad shall be transferred to the management of the government or in any authority</p> <p>35(b) any institution or service maintained by the government or other authority shall be transferred to the management and control of a Union Parishad.</p> <p>60. the government shall exercise general supervision and control over the Union Parishads in order to ensure that their activities conform to the purposes of this ordinance.</p> <p>62 (3) should the expenses be not so paid, the government may make an order directing the person having the custody of the balance of the Union fund to pay the expenses, or so much thereof as may from time to time be possible.</p>

Aminuzzaman (2004) observed that the legal framework (LG Ordinance 1983) has the following features:

- The Deputy Commissioner holds enormous power and authority in managing the affairs of the Union Parishads.
- Central government holds the extra ordinary power to quash the proceedings of the UP meetings, suspend the execution of any resolution, prohibit the doing of any activities proposed by the UP.
- The ordinance retains considerable power to the central government in terms of finance and resource management.
- Under the legal framework (Section 83), Government also retains the power to make regulation by standing order on various important functional areas of local government.
- LG laws in general tend to maintain considerable central control on role and function of UP, planning and overall management of UP affairs

The forgoing analysis clearly indicates that the regulatory framework of Local Government, particularly, the Union Parishad needs a thorough review and subsequent amendment to make it viable both functionally and institutionally.

Chapter 5: Role and Function of Union Parishad

The present legal framework of the Union Parishads lies with Local Government Ordinance 1983. UP is broadly responsible for economic, social and community development. As set out in the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance Article 30(2), the UP has some 10 compulsory functions, which include the followings²:

- Maintenance of law and order, including assistance to the law enforcement agencies and resolution of disputes.
- Adoption of measures to prevent disorder and smuggling.
- Implementation of development schemes in the field of agriculture, forest, fisheries, live stock, education, health, cottage industries, communication, irrigation, and flood protection with a view to increase economic and social upliftment of people.
- Promotion of family planning.
- Development of local resources and their use.
- Review of the development activities undertaken by different agencies (government, semi-government) in the Union.
- Protection and maintenance of public property such as roads, bridges, canals, embankments, markets, telephones and electricity lines.
- Motivation of people to use sanitary latrines.
- Conducting of censuses of all kinds.
- Registration of births, marriage, deaths, blind people, beggars and destitute.

²In addition to 10 compulsory functions, UP has several other auxiliary functions. The genesis of the auxiliary functions of the UP lies with the Third Schedule of the (Part I) of the Basic Democracy Ordinance 1959. The Order provided as many as 37 functions of the then Union Council (now Union Parishad). Later in 1976, under the Local Government ordinance, the First Schedule outlined 40 different functions of the Union Parishad. LG Ordinance 1976 retained all the function of the then Union Council of the Basic Democracy Ordinance 1959 and added three more functions: promotion of family planning, management of environment, maintenance and regulation of cattle pounds. Later in 1983, the First Schedule was again changed and the number of functions were reduced to 38, while the dropped functions like registration of birth and death and promotion of family planning was included in the list of compulsory civic functions of the UP. Furthermore, the ordinance also changes the Section 30 (as regards to the civic function of UP) and the revised version included "adoption and implementation of agriculture, forest, fisheries, livestock, education, health, cottage industries, communication, irrigation and flood protection with a view to increasing the economic and social upliftment of the people" as another major functions of UP.

An objective assessment reveals that the major functional responsibilities of the UP as mentioned in the ordinance is indeed wide and demand an extraordinary level of competence, capacity and resources. A close look to some of the assigned functions would also indicate that those are far beyond the legal, managerial and financial capacity of the UP. Since the original list of the functions of the UP was prepared about 40 years back during an authoritarian and colonial regime, some of these functions also appear to be redundant if not obsolete in the light of the changed reality. There is a need to have a critical review of the functions assigned to the UP in the light of the changed socio-political and economic reality.

On the other hand, as a grass root based Local Government, UPs in effect do not have any authority to make "policy decisions and choices". UP can not take any substantive and or policy decision without the approval of the controlling authority. As per the clause 83 of Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 1983, Government retains most of the powers to make rules and regulations³.

Government also retains the power to make regulation by standing order on the following areas:

- a. Define and regulate the relationships of the UP inter se and with other local bodies.
- b. Coordinating the activities of UP and the government authorities.
- c. Financial assistance to UP including making of grants for special purposes on specific terms and conditions.

³ Such power includes: a. Power and duties of Chairman and members; b. Regulation with regards to Village Police; c. Functions of the UP with regard to agriculture, industrial and community development and food production; d. Regulation of making contracts on behalf of UP; e. Regulation of the execution of works; f. Prescription of records, reports and returns to be maintained, prepared or published by UP; g. Appointment and terms and conditions of services of UP staff and employees; h. Administration, regulation, custody, investment, and operation of the Union fund and special funds; i. Preparation and sanction of budget; Maintenance of accounts and audit; j. Management, maintenance and alienation of property of the UP; k. Preparation, regulation, consolidation, sanction and implementation of development plans; l. Manner on which the liabilities of officers and employees of Union Parishad and other persons for any loss, waste or misapplication of any money or property belonging to UP may be determined; m. Regulation of assessment, collection, and administration of taxes, rates, fees; n. Manner in which and the authority to whom, appeal shall lie against the order of UP; o. Manner in which the UP will be inspected and the powers of the inspecting officials; and p. Any other matters required under any provision of the Local Government Ordinance 1983.

Amendments of Local Government Ordinance

During 1996 to 2002 as many as 29 laws on Local Government have been passed by the parliament. Out of 29 laws, 25 were amendments of previous laws. There were only four new laws: Local Government (Gram Parishads) Act 1999, Upazila Parishads Act 1998, Chittagong Hill Tract Regional Council Act, 1998, Zila Parishad Act 2000.

For all purpose the Local Government Ordinance 1983 is the prime legal framework of Union Parishad in Bangladesh. In the discussion, following aspects is shown the salient features of the Local Government Ordinance 1983 with particular emphasis to : a. Central control, b. Financial management and budgeting, c. Resource management, d. Monitoring, e. Planning, f. Project Management, g. personnel management, h. Committee system, i. Rules of business, j. Women's participation, and k. accountability

Structure and Staffing of Union Parishad

As per Local Government (Union Parishads) Amendment Act, 1997, a UP consists of a chairman and twelve members. They are elected on the basis of adult franchise. Each UP has a full-time Secretary, appointed by the Deputy Commissioner (DC). For maintaining law and order, UP has *Gram Police* (1 to 2 Dafadars, 5 to 9 Chowkidars). The *Dafadar* (local policeman) and *Chowkidan* (village watchmen) are selected by the UP but final approval is given by the Deputy Commissioner through the UNO. To collect tax a UP can appoint 1 to 3 Tax collectors temporarily on the basis of commission at a rate of 15% to 20% of tax collected.

Standing Committees of Union Parishad

Each UP will have 13 Standing Committees. Following is the list of these committees:

- a. Finance and establishment;
- b. Education;

- c. Health, family planning, epidemic control and sanitation;
- d. Audit and accounts;
- e. Agriculture and other development works;
- f. Social welfare and community centers;
- g. Cottage industries and co- operatives;
- h. Women and child welfare;
- i. Fisheries and livestocks;
- j. Tree plantation;
- k. Union public works;
- l. Mass education;
- m. Environment.

With prior permission of the Deputy Commissioner, the UP can also constitute additional Standing Committees as and when needed.

A Standing Committee will elect one of its members as its Chairman and will consist of not more than one-third of the total members of the Union Parishad. No member will, at the same time, be member of more than two committees. UP may co-opt a person who is not a member of the Parishad but who may in the opinion of the Parishad possess special qualifications for serving in any standing committee as a non-voting member.

A Union Parishad may join any other Union Parishad or Parishads or any other local authority or authorities in forming a Joint Committee for any purpose, which is of mutual interest of these bodies.

The functions of such committee are supposed to be "prescribed by regulations" of the GOB. In most cases UP Committees are hardly formed. UP Chairmen are not even fully aware of the existence of such committees. Even where such committees have been constituted these are just for name sake and are hardly active. Except the

Project Implementation Committee (PIC), none of these committees has been formally constituted in most UPs.

The above discussion clearly indicates that functional responsibility of Union level local government in Bangladesh underwent substantial changes only in 1985 and 1959. There is, however, a big gap between what is prescribed and what is practiced. Law prescribes for Union Parishads a large list of functions, but practically their functions remain confined to assessment and collection of taxes; maintenance of law and order through village police; maintenance of birth and death registers and other records; construction and maintenance of village roads, bridges, culverts, ponds, etc; maintenance of haats and bazars; excavation and re-excavation of derelict ponds for pisciculture; issuance of various kinds of certificates and licences; plantation of trees; settlement of local petty disputes; promotion of cottage industries; motivation of people to adopt family planning methods and celebration of national days.

In addition to the functions as prescribed in the Ordinance, the Union Parishads perform such other functions as are not included in the Ordinance but are important in the national context. Such functions, generally carried out under instructions from different ministries and agencies of the government, relate to administration of public welfare programs like issuance of certificates, selection of dealers, relief work, clearance of loan, settlement of petty disputes, etc.

Profile of UP leadership

The representation in the local bodies characterise both youthfulness and vigour. People in their forties are more interested in such bodies than those outside this age group. The level of education, both in urban and rural bodies, is generally SSC. There is however striking different in the professions of these groups. While the functionaries in the rural bodies are mostly agriculturists, those coming to play role in urban bodies come from the middle class, mainly belonging to business.

Though they get elected and fight elections on party lines, they demonstrate a tendency to change shores with the change in government and ruling party.

Personnel

Each UP has a full-time Secretary, appointed by the Deputy Commissioner (DC). In the Union Parishad, the secretary is all-in-one. He acts as clerk, tax collector and custodian of records, apart from assisting the chairman in dealing with day-to-day administration of the Parishad who is appointed and transferred by the Deputy Commissioners.

For maintaining law and order, UP has *Gram Police* (1 to 2 *Dafadars*, 5 to 9 *Chowkidars*). The *Dafadar* (local policeman) and *Chowkidan* (village watchmen) are selected by the UP but final approval is given by the Deputy Commissioner through the UNO. Union Parishads do exercise administrative control over them, but then again the nature and scope of such control is defined by the central government through circulars and executive orders issued from time to time or in the parent Act itself.

Functional Jurisdiction

The government determines and controls the functional jurisdiction. The Ordinance or Acts of the local bodies have incorporated the details of functions that a local body is to perform and the powers it can exercise. Besides, there is a blanket clause in the Ordinance or Act that allows the government to use discretion to assign a local body any other function that it deems fit. The government is empowered to transfer any development scheme to Union Parishad, which implement these under directions, administrative supervision and control of the central government. Union Parishads thus become more and more subservient to governmental control and executive interference.

Financial Control

In the field of finance, the government supervision and control is as stringent and comprehensive as it is with regard routine administration. The government regulates, in this instance, the income of Union Parishads. Ordinances or Acts prescribe in detail the sources of income, powers of taxation, nature of grants-in-aid that may be available. The government further maps out the scale and the limit of the taxes that Union Parishads may be allowed to impose. However, in the event Union Parishads want to impose tax other than the one specifically mentioned in the law, they must obtain prior government sanction. They thus enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy within this general framework.

As regards grants-in-aid, it is somewhat difficult to specify their scope and scale in detail. However, their nature is well defined. Though the government is under a statutory obligation to provide these grants, it can exercise a considerable degree of control over Union Parishads by reducing or enhancing their quantum or by making their release conditional. The Government can very effectively use this mechanism to curb freedom of Union Parishads or to make them knuckle down, since a delay in the release of, or a cut in, certain grant-in-aid would mean unbearable hardships on the part this institutions, which chiefly rely on government aid for their activities and survival.

The second field over which the government exercises its control is the maintenance of accounts. It specifies where the funds of Union Parishads have to be kept, lays down the rules regarding the nature and form of account books to be maintained, the procedure to be followed for operation of funds, the authority for sanctioning expenditure and signing bills, cheques and drafts, and the limit of expenditure that Union Parishads can incur, etc.

The government has also worked out the procedure and principles for preparation and sanction of annual budgets. The general practice is that the annual budget, prepared by Union Parishad, be presented to its council in a special meeting

convened for the purpose, and must be passed before the commencement of each financial year and sent to the government for approval. For example, a Union Parishad is to send its budget to the Deputy Commissioner. If a Union Parishad, however, fails to prepare the budget before commencement of the financial year, the Deputy Commissioner may prepare the budget for Union Parishad. The government has also worked out detail instructions with regard to manner of constitution and utilization of a Union Parishad's fund.

Union Parishads can utilize the fund for general purposes and for meeting the charged expenditure. The general purposes include the payment of salaries and allowances to employees and in fulfilling any obligation and in discharging any duty imposed on Union Parishads under the Ordinance or Act. The charged expenditure refers to the payment of salary of Secretary, Dofadars and Chowkidars of Union Parishad, contribution towards the conduct of elections, the auditing of accounts and other matters as the government may specify, and the sums required to satisfy any judgement, decree or award against Union Parishads by any court or tribunal. The pattern of income and expenditure of Union Parishads are, by and large, the same and must, therefore, be strictly adhered to.

Administrative Control

The administrative control takes into account the day-to-day functioning of Union Parishads. The powers and functions of these institutions are defined in the parent law or the rules framed thereunder. The government keeps an eye over them lest they misuse their power or transgress the limits of their territorial or functional jurisdiction. Furthermore, the government guides these institutions in regard to national policies and principles and also sees that these are adhered to. However, the chief media of administrative control are:

I. Review of Resolution

The Union Parishads are to furnish to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer and the Deputy Commissioner, a copy of the proceedings of their meetings and resolutions passed

therein. If in the opinion of the government anything done or intended to be done by a Union Parishad is not in conformity with the law or in any way against public interest, the government as the prescribed authority can pass orders to quash the proceedings; suspend the execution of any resolution passed or order made by a Union Parishad; prohibit the doing of anything proposed to be done; and require the Union Parishads to take specific action.

ii. Periodic Inspections

The government exercises a lot of control, through its officials, over the functioning of Union Parishads by conducting periodic inspection of their papers, records and property. The officials conduct the inspection in accordance with the scale and procedure laid down either in the law or the rules formed thereunder. These officials generally conduct two types of inspections: periodic and occasional. For example, Upazila Nirbahi Officers, Assistant Directors of Local Government (ADLG), Additional Deputy Commissioners (ADC) and Deputy Commissioners (DC) are supposed to personally visit a prescribed number of Union Parishads under their jurisdiction. Besides, the officials from the government and government departments may visit and inspect Union Parishads. Furthermore, the government may order an enquiry into the affairs of a Union Parishad generally or into any particular affair either on its own initiative or on an application made by any person to the government. The enquiry is to be made by an officer authorized by the government.

iii. Removal of Chairman/Member

The government may remove the chief executive (the Chairman) and a member if he (a) without reasonable excuse, absents himself from three consecutive meetings of the council; (b) refuses to perform or becomes disabled from performing his functions; (c) is guilty of misuse or misconduct (which means misuse of power, corruption, jobbery, favouritism, nepotism and willful misconduct) or is responsible for any loss or misapplication of money or property of Union Parishad. A Chairman or a member shall not be removed from his office on any

ground mentioned above unless, at a special meeting called for the purpose in the prescribed manner, a resolution to the effect that he is liable to be removed is passed by the votes of not less than fifty percent of the elected members and unless the resolution is approved by the government. The government may also suspend the Chairman of a Union, on the grounds that (a) proceedings have been initiated for the removal of the Chairman or (b) criminal proceedings have been started against him and the exercise of power by him is either likely to be prejudicial to the interest of the Parishad or undesirable from an administrative point of view. The ground of such suspension is the inability of Union Parishads to run the particular department or institution efficiently. When so suspended, the government may itself take over the management of the department or institution or make an alternative arrangement.

iv. Supersession and Dissolution

The law gives the national government the extreme power of dissolving a Union Parishad if on enquiry the government is of the opinion that a Union Parishad is unable to discharge, or persistently fails in discharging, its duties, or is unable to administer its affairs or meet its financial obligations, or generally acts in a manner contrary to public interests, or otherwise exceeds or abuse its powers.

During the period of supersession, the Chairman and members of a local Parishad cease to hold office, and all of its functions are performed by such a person or authority as the government may appoint. However, the act of superseding a Union Parishad is of a judicial or quasi-judicial nature and not merely administrative.

Chapter 6: Developmental Role of Union Parishad

Union Parishad's (UP) Development Plan

A UP is empowered to manage, maintain, improve and develop all its properties. By law, properties refer to streets, places, grounds and buildings under the custody of the Union. With the permission of the DC, the UP can acquire, transfer, sell, mortgage, lease, and exchange any UP property for its development initiatives. The UP may request the DC to acquire land for the purpose of its development.

Development initiatives that a UP can undertake include:

- Infrastructure development (roads, culverts, irrigation, embankment, health, educational- institution religious institution)
- Development of Hat and Bazaars.
- Digging of canals
- Development of sewerage system
- Tree plantation
- Development of *Jalmahal*

The UP is supposed to prepare a five year development plan to be approved by the Deputy Commissioner (DC). A UP has to prepare plans and estimates for works under ADP grants and Food-for-work program for a particular plan period.

Due to weak capacity as well as lack of awareness of the benefits of planning, most UPs do not maintain any annual and or multi-year development plan. The few exceptions are where NGOs have assisted such as in the five CARE UPs in Jamalpur. Moreover there is no assured resource allocation for long term planning at UP level.

Sources of Income and Items of Expenditure

Generally, the sources of income of a Union Parishad in Bangladesh are: taxes, fees, rates and charges levied by UP; rents and profits accruing from its properties; sums received in performing its functions; contributions from institutions, individuals, etc; grants from the government; profits from investments; receipts from the trusts placed with UP;

Union Parishads utilize the money they receive in the following order of preference:

- a. To meet the salaries and allowances of the employees of UP.
- b. To meet the expenditure charged on the Fund
- c. To fulfill any obligation and to discharge any duty imposed on UP under the law.
- d. To meet the expenditure declared by UP, with the previous sanction of the appropriate authority, to be an appropriate charge on its Fund.
- e. To meet the expenditure declared by the government to be an appropriate charge on UP Fund.

The following expenditures are usually charged on a UP's Fund:

- i. All sums to be paid to, or in connection with the employment of, any government servant or any member of Union Parishad, who is or has been in the service of Union Parishad.
- ii. All sums as UP may be required by the government to contribute towards the conduct of elections, the maintenance of service of UP, the auditing of accounts, and such other matters as may from time to time be specified by the government.
- iii. Any sum required to satisfy any judgement, decree or award against UP by any court or tribunal; and
- iv. Any expenditure declared by the government to be so charged.

In order that UPs can execute their functions effectively, they are empowered to generate revenue from their sources, apart from what they get in the form of grants. On the whole, the main sources of revenue for UPs are taxes and rates, non-tax revenue and grants. They seldom try to collect contributions from private sources.

There are two ways for collection of taxes and rates: UPs collect their taxes and rates themselves, and taxes the national government collect in their behalf (such as immovable property transfer tax). There is no doubt that the tax schedule for UP is fairly comprehensive, but the items they select to collect taxes from serve double purpose: these fetch them reasonable income on the one hand, but may not produce irritation for the public on the other.

Holding tax, the most common local revenue, is levied on the annual valuation of buildings, determined on the basis of rental value, actual or nominal. But the problem lies in its realization. There is enough room for evading taxes in collusion with assessors who tend to under-assess property in return for kickbacks. The rich and influential are the common beneficiaries of this malpractice.

UP also derive income from non-tax revenues. These are two kinds: (a) fees and tolls, and (b) rents and profits on properties. Ferries, markets, bridges, registration, issuance of certificates, etc. are the sources from which fees and tolls are collected. Whatever volume is the amount collected from these sources, it is the government grants that constitute the most important source of revenue for majority of UP. These grants serve to bridge the gap created between local revenue needs and local revenue collection and to encourage specific development expenditure in keeping with national priorities.

The existing law provides for the Union Parishad to levy taxes, rates and fees on five items. These items are Union rate or rate on annual value of homestead and residential land adjacent thereto; rate for village police; fees on birth, marriage and

feasts (the rate of fees on birth is to be progressive); community tax on adult citizens of the Union for civil works aimed at providing or improving public welfare; and fees for specific welfare or maintenance of public utility service rendered by the Union Parishad. Instead of employing tax collectors on full time basis, Union Parishads engage tax collectors on commission basis. Usually they get 15 per cent commission on the amount collected. Tax collection has however always been much below satisfactory level.

The government grants, the other source of revenue for the Union Parishads, are of two kinds: specific grants, and general-purpose grants. Union Parishads get another kind of additional grant, known as percentage grants.

Specific Grant: The specific grants are given to the Union Parishad under three separate but similar programs: These are: (i) The Rural Works Program (RWP); (ii) The Food for Works Program (FFWP); and (iii) The Test Relief Program (TRP). To obtain fund under RWP, Union Parishads submit schemes to the concerned Deputy Commissioner every year, with complete project estimates in the prescribed format, for onward transmission to the government. The ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives allocates the total grant money under RWP for distribution among the local bodies in the country. The concerned Deputy Commissioner distributes the amount received among the Union Parishads under his jurisdiction on the basis of population ($2/3$) and area ($1/3$). Under the FFWP, the grant comes in kind, not in cash. Price of wheat, which is given as wage, is deliberately kept below the market rate in order to both attract and help the most needy among the rural poor. Both under RWP and FFWP, projects are implemented by Project Committees. The basic difference between these two programs is elsewhere. While the RWP is coordinated at the national level by the Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives, the FFWP is coordinated by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. The FFWP is generally undertaken during the dry season, and the Test Relief Program (TRP), basically a part of the FFWP, is implemented during rainy

season. The purpose of these programs is to help the rural poor during the period of the year when employment opportunity there is few and far between.

General Purpose Grant: The general purpose grants, provided to the Union Parishads to enable them fulfil their financial obligations, come under three different categories: (a) development grant; (b) compensatory grant; and (c) budget deficit grant.

The development grant is provided to the Union Parishads to meet their development expenditure. The compensatory grant is meant for the salaries of their employees and other office furniture and equipment they need to purchase. The budget deficit grant is given to make up the deficit in their budgets originated from their failure to realize the revenues estimated in their budgets.

Percentage Grant: This may be called the salary support grant, as these grants are given to meet 50 per cent salary requirements of the UP employees. Union Parishads have to generate fund to meet the remaining 50 per cent of the salary requirements from their own incomes. At present over 60 per cent of the total receipts of the Union Parishads come from the grants-in-aid.

Due to the decisions taken by the government to increase the salaries of the employees of the Union Parishads and allowances of elected representatives with effect from July 1977, the expenditure of Union Parishads has taken sharp leap. The increase is more than two hundred per cent over their existing expenditure. The UP expenditure is mainly divided into three major heads: (a) establishment; (b) development and maintenance; and (c) miscellaneous.

As the primary rural body the Union Parishad has to perform a wide range of functions in the field of rural development and social welfare. Its activities, therefore, cover every aspect of local administration, including law and order and adjudication of disputes. The expenses required for these activities are called

development and maintenance expenditure. Generally, construction and maintenance of irrigation works, embankments and canals, roads, bridges and culverts, public buildings like mosques, offices, etc., and haats and bazars are undertaken with this fund. Most of the development expenditure comes from works programs funds.

Under the miscellaneous expenditure, items such as training of chowkidars and dafadars, return of security deposits of tax collectors, ration cards, family planning, adult education, swanirvar, cottage industry, public health and sanitation, jungle clearing, rickshaw plates, fees on crossed cheques of grant money, Zakat, contribution (chanda) and cost of tree plantation are covered. It's very unlikely that UP can arrange funds for the above-mentioned activities. So, activities and responsibilities are on paper only, not in reality.

Annual Development Program Block Grants

The nation wide budget allocation for the Block Grant for Union and Upazila Development was Tk. 2,342 million in 2000/2001. The allocation between Upazilas is made using a formula with the following weights - population 40%, land area 30%, and degree of backwardness 30%. The degree of backwardness is determined by the transport conditions, literacy rate, nutrition status and unemployment rate in the Upazila, using data provided by the District Statistical Officer.

The guidelines for allocation of the Block Grant between sectors (Government Circular of 25th October 1993) are set out in the Table-3. The guidelines also state that priority should be given to:

- Completion of unfinished rural roads and maintenance of finished schemes.
- Construction of bridges/culverts on rural roads, particularly where one or two structures will give complete access along a road.

- Projects which facilitate inter-village and inter-union communication, and bring benefits to the people.
- Road-side tree plantation.

Table- 3: Guidelines for Allocation of Block Grant

Sector	Min(%)	Max (%)
Agriculture and irrigation Intensive crop production, seeds program, pond and tank excavation, social afforestation, fisheries, poultry, cattle, etc. Small-scale water resources, drainage, irrigation, and flood control.	15	30
Transport and Communication Construction, repair and maintenance of Rural Roads, small bridges and culverts.	25	60
Physical Activities Provision of water supply and sanitary latrines	10	15
Education and Development Repair and development of primary and mass education institutions and supply of teaching aids.	10	25

The Block Grant is released by central government to the Upazila in four quarterly installments.

Certain limitations of Block grants procedures inhibit the planning autonomy of UPs.

- First, the guidelines for allocation of the funds between sectors are restrictive in terms of responding to different local problems and priorities in different Upazilas. There tends to be an emphasis on financing rural roads schemes. 'Transport and Communication' has the largest sectoral allocation. Roads schemes are sometimes financed under the 'Agriculture and Irrigation' Sector. The agricultural component tends to be used for irrigation and drainage engineering works and other forms of hardware. The requirement for the Block Grant to be administered through LGED is also an influence on the type of utilisation,
- There is some evidence that Upazila representatives of line agencies, especially LGED, and the Members of Parliament, exert pressure for the Block Grant to be applied to the project which they regard as their priorities,

- Overall, there is little evidence of communities being meaningfully involved in the planning of fund use.

A UP is authorised to implement up to five Block Grant projects, each with a value not exceeding Tk.50,000. For each project, a Project Implementation Committee (PIC) is formed comprising 5-7 members including the UP Chairman, a Ward member of the UP, a school teacher, the Imam of the local mosque and local elite. The female members are supposed to be the chairperson of at least one-third of the total PICs of the UP. The membership of the PIC must be approved by the UDCC, and one person cannot be Chairman of more than one PIC. The Block Grant funds for the project are transferred to the PIC Chairman as a lump sum, and s/he is then responsible for all payments and for accounting for expenditures. The PIC can engage petty contractors, or employ local people, to undertake the works.

Implementation of projects financed by the Block Grant is supposed to be supervised through a Project Supervision Committee comprising the relevant Union Chairman, a member of the concerned government agency at Upazila Level, a Sub-Assistant Engineer nominated by the LGED Upazila Engineer, and a Ward member of the concerned UP. Construction and procurement contracts are tendered through a Upazila Tender Committee and let by the Upazila Engineer after approval by the UDCC. The relevant Union Chairman the UNO and the Upazila Engineer sit on the Tender Committee. The UP is responsible for visiting the schemes regularly and reviewing progress, i.e. it has a monitoring function. Infrastructure works are supervised by the Upazila Engineer and his staff. Funds for works tendered by the Tender Committee do not flow through the concerned UP accounts, they are managed at upazila level with approval for payment by the UNO and the Upazila Engineer. In practice, supervision is carried out by the LGED.

In addition to the block grant projects, UP undertakes other development projects. These are presented in the following table (Aminuzzaman, 2003).

Table- 4:UP Development Projects

Name Of The Project /Program	Management Structure Of The Project/Program	Role of The Project Committees
1. Food For Work Program (FFWP)	<p>It is managed by a Project Implementation Committee (PIC). A PIC is composed of following members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chairman/person 2. Member (Male) (1) 3. Member (Female) (1) 4. Social Worker (1) 5. School Teacher (1) 6. Ansar/VDP member (1) 7. Labour representative (1) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Chairman and Secretary of the PIC will be held responsible for the overall performance of the project. b. Acknowledging the responsibility, Chairman and Secretary will sign a contract on a non-judicial stamp of Tk.50. c. The PIC will be accountable to the UP through the UP Chairman. d. PIC will be responsible to withdraw, storage and distribution of the wheat. e. To measure the work of the labourers. f. To keep the account and records of the project. g. Ensure the distribution of food on given rate and amount. h. Ensure the implementation in line with the design and track. i. Maintain the records like: a. Regular Master Roll (RMR); b. Short Master Roll (SMR) j. Immediate after the completion, a Project Completion Report has to be prepared in a given format.
2. Rural Maintenance Program (RMP)	<p>There should be a 5 to 7 member Project Implementation Committee constituted by the UP. The Committee members would include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Chairman of the UP b. One UP Member of the concerned Ward c. VDP leader d. One Imam and e. a social elite. <p>Elected Female member of the concerned ward will act as the UP Monitor for the project.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create the opportunity for employment of destitute women. b. Maintenance of the Important and Feeder B type roads within the Union.
3. Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF)	<p>The PIC is composed of following members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Chairman of the UP b. Block Supervisor c. UP Family Welfare Assistant d. Field Assistant of BRDB e. A noted women representative f. One UP member g. UP Secretary h. A representative of Bank/Post Office i. One VGF card holder. 	<p>The role of VGF committee includes the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Distribution food on specific dates. b. Preserve and Maintain the list of beneficiaries, attendance registrar, and report of the food expenditure. c. Ensure the distribution of food in exact amount. d. Prepare the Food expenditure report and present it to the Project Implementation Officer (PIO). e. Ensure that a signboard is maintained showing the amount of food received.
4. Post Flood Road Maintenance (PMR)	<p>The PIC is composed of 5 to 7 members. Members include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Chairman of the UP 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Responsible for the proper implementation of the project. b. Ensure the erection of a signboard

Name Of The Project /Program	Management Structure Of The Project/Program	Role of The Project Committees
	b. UP member from concerned Ward c. One School Teacher d. One Freedom Fighter e. One member of VDP f. One women representative.	showing the project in the project site. c. The Committee will appoint a supervisor. He will maintain the attendance registrar/ list of the labourers, stock of wheat/ transport and other costs. d. Ensure the proper distribution of wheat to the women labourers.
5. Test Relief Program (TRP) (during Floor or disaster)	The Test Relief Implementation Committee is composed of 7 members. Members include: a. Chairman of the UP b. One Male UP member from concerned Ward c. One Female UP member from the concerned Ward d. One School Teacher e. One Imam f. Local VDP Leader g. One Social elite.	The Project Committee will be responsible for the overall implementation of the project and proper distribution of food.
6. Old Age Allowance Program	Ward member of the Union will act as the Chairmen and the Female Member of the Ward will act as the Vice Chairman of the selection committee.'	There is no formal committee of the UP for this program.

The Role of Union Parishad in Infrastructure Development and Management:

Conceptually it is argued that any meaningful participation in the development process, particularly in infrastructure type projects, is directly linked with the resource base of the local bodies. Available studies, both regional and continental, empirically establish the fact that local resource mobilization is the essential precondition of conception, identification, formulation, design and implementation of local level infrastructure development projects. Based on these assumptions the researcher has gathered some basic data on the institutional capability and the financial base of the Union Parishads in the study area.

It is revealed from the empirical data that the overall financial base of the local bodies particularly the Union Parishads is excessively weak. This finding is not surprising, rather very much in line with the observations drawn by many other studies (Aminuzzaman, 1993). Table-5 indicates the existing financial base of the Union Parishads as identified by the respondent members. Though the local

government ordinance directly and indirectly identifies several heads of local taxes and associated sources of income, it is observed that Union Parishads, due to complex socio-economic and political reality, do not make concerted efforts to maximise their revenue earnings from existing heads of taxes, rates, fees etc. not to speak of taking initiative to further expand the financial support base. Because of the local socio-political dynamics, the UP officials are "casual" if not "reluctant" in expediting the collection process.

Table-5: Sources of UP Fund

Sources of Income	%
Household tax	18
<i>Hats & Bazaars</i>	41
<i>Kheya Ghat</i>	9
<i>Chowkidari tax</i>	18
Fees & Fines of Village Courts	5
Land transfer	7
Trade licence	1
Misc.	1
Total	100

Source: Field data drawn from sampled Unions

Upon further investigation it has been noticed that an average UP can hardly collect 15 to 20 percent of the overall targeted tax for any financial year. For some UPs, tolls and lease of the local Hats and bazaars provide a handsome percentage of the revenue collection. In addition, household tax, *Chawkidari tax*, *Kheya Ghat* and transfer of land are also the regular heads of revenue collection of the UPs.

Though it is said that UP is the focal point of local level development process, the objective conditions reveal that almost all development efforts and initiatives are undertaken by the higher level of Government without any "meaningful and effective participation" of the rural people and even of the elected representatives at the local levels (Upazila and Union Parishads). As one UP chairman stated, "we are consulted only to 'agree with' what the UNO wants us to agree."

On the other hand, because of the poor financial and resource base, Union Parishads in particular have never taken any initiative of their own to design. Any development project from the locally generated funds. Apart from some small maintenance work like earthen roads, bamboo bridges etc., none of the Union Parishads have undertaken any development project on their own initiative, with local funds. On the basis of interviews, following observations can be drawn:

1. UP officials are not concerned about their own potential sources of earning
2. For several political and socio-cultural reasons UPs have developed a "perpetual dependence" upon Centre for the centrally regulated funds.
3. UPs have never been asked or compelled to generate funds, which eventually led to a condition of 'spoon-feeding'.
4. UPs also lack political, administrative, and managerial skill to develop local level projects and take fund raising drives.
5. In general, UP officials do not even regard that they are entitled to take local level development initiatives with locally mobilized fund.
6. Most UP members have a tendency to consider that development projects, whatever their nature, should always be funded by Central Government through the Upazila level GOB functionaries.

The survey data show that roughly about 21 percent of the existing resources of UP are utilized for development projects whatever the nature may be. The rest of the UP's earnings is used for salaries, honorarium and maintenance.

Table- 6:Major Sources of Expenditure of the Union Parishads (in %)

Salary of Chawkidars (Village Police)	21
Honorarium of the Chairman & Members	39
Office Maintenance	19
Minor road maintenance	15
Minor Earth Work	6
Total	100

Source: Field data drawn from sampled Unions

Considering their weak financial resource base, the local leaders are also very much skeptical about the potentials of the role of UP. When asked to identify new sources of local development resource mobilization, a significant percentage of the interviewed local leaders could not identify any tangible source of local resource mobilization. A number of respondents, however, noted that the UP can enhance its financial base by commercial tree plantation schemes. Interestingly enough, commercial tree plantation was the most common item for all the respondents who could identify any new source.

Table- 7:Sources of Additional Income as Identified by the UP Officials

Leasing Khas Land	21%
Commercial Tree plantation	75%

At present virtually all development activities undertaken by the UPs are externally funded by the Central government. Table below provides a list of projects that have been undertaken by the UPs in the study area. It can be seen that all but a few minor maintenance projects have been funded by the national government. This provides an indication that the overall awareness and interest to develop and implement development projects at the local level is significantly low. Only 3

respondents believed that UPs should look for its own sources to take independent projects based on local need.

Table- 8:Infrastructure Projects and Sources of Fund

Major Projects	Source of Fund
Earth Road	GOB/LGED
Repairing Earth Roads	PIO Wheat
Repair works of Primary School	ADB
Canal Digging	ADB

The perception of UP leaders as far as development is concerned is still confined to road and road related infrastructures. No one could mention any other project ideas. Table below shows the present level of involvement of the UPs in rural infrastructure development projects.

Table- 9:Present Nature of Involvement of UP in Rural Infrastructure Development Projects (in %)

Activities	Nature of involvement		
	No involvement at all	Partial involvement	Significant involvement
Selection	56	33	11
Planning	81	11	8
Management & Implementation	12	55	33

The involvement of UP in rural infrastructure development projects is far too limited than expected. UP is merely involved in the initial proposition of the roads. During the rest of the processes, surprisingly, UP's role is practically non-existent. The UP leaders are not even concerned about this state of affairs. Though in some cases the UPs are supposed to share certain portion of the project cost, given their weak financial base, they have not been able to contribute their share in time. In many cases they became gross defaulter.

Interviews with the UP officials give the impression that they are not quite happy with the present level of their participation and involvement in the infrastructure and other development projects. Asked to what extent they are satisfied with their present level of involvement in the infrastructure projects with the given mode and models of participation, almost all respondents said that they were "not satisfied" with the present limited extent of involvement of the UP in the organization, management, and implementation of the projects (see Table below).

Table- 10:Opinion of the UP officials about the present nature and level of Infrastructure Development Projects (in %)

Satisfied with the level of involvement	11
Not satisfied with the level of involvement	89

In general the UP officials feel that they should have more control over the resources of the project and also that they themselves should take their own respective projects based on broader consultation with the local population. In other words, the UP leaders want to have more control over the project fund and access to project management. However, when asked to specifically mention the areas of management that the UP should be involved in more intimately, the UP officials provided only some vague and half-baked ideas. This indicates that UP's participation in development project management is more of an expectation based on no concrete plan or proposal which is a demonstration of frustration at unfulfilled desire.

In order to strengthen the development management capacity of the UP, the Chairmen/members suggested that some of the development functions of the Upazila Development Committee should be transferred to the UP. Here again the UP officials could not come up with a precise idea as to what areas/activities could be transferred to the UP from Upazila level.

UP leaders insist that they could be further involved in the development management process at the local level. More specifically they have suggested several functional areas where the UP could take active role in managing the development functions at the local level.

Table- 11: Selected Areas of Development Management where UP could get involved (in %)

Control and Management of Fund	78
Selection of Projects	94
Planning of projects	88
Supervision & Monitoring	90

UP officials duly acknowledge their institutional weaknesses, too. All respondents in one voice mentioned that weak financial base is perhaps the most significant weakness of the UPs. However, none of the respondents could identify any concrete institutional weaknesses of the UPs. Based on in-depth interviews with UP officials and personal observations the researcher has identified a number of institutional weaknesses that stand as a serious stumbling block for a meaningful participation of the UPs in the organization, management, and monitoring of the local level infrastructure and other development projects. These weaknesses are as follows:

- Lack of over all management and planning skill
- Lack of financial management skill
- Lack of long range planning
- Poor or lack of information and data base
- Lack of objective assessment/ project appraisal skill

Moreover, because of the complex power politics, the UP officials tend to have a built-in mistrust of each other. This ultimately frustrates the efforts taken by the Chairmen or some enthusiastic members of the UP. There are examples where UP

members, because of their personal rivalry, sabotaged the initiative taken by local NGOs to take some income generation projects.

Observations of GOB officials based at Upazila level

A number of Upazila level officers which include UNO, Upazila Engineers, Upazila Social-Welfare Officers, Upazila Agriculture Officer, Upazila Fisheries Officer, Upazila Co-Operative Officers and in particular Project Implementation Officers (PIO) who are very much involved with Union Parishad's development projects. The prime interest of such interview sessions was to get an idea about the perception and attitude of the Upazila level officers (ULOs) regarding the involvement and the role of the UPs in the local level development management. The opinions of the (ULOs) on the role and capabilities of UPs as revealed in the interviews are summarised in Box 1 and Box 2.

Box 1: Observations of ULOs on Financial Management by UPs

100 percent Upazila level officers noted that Unions are very weak both financially and institutionally.

75 % ULOs noted that the Union Parishads do not have any financial plan. All major expenses are made on the basis of adhoc decisions.

100 percent ULOs observed that the major sources of the earning of the UPs are grants from the Central Government.

About 90 percent ULOs hold the view that Union Parishads tend to have developed a permanent and perpetual relationship of dependency with the Central government.

Some ULOs (68%) opined that the financial resources of the UP are not only badly managed but a considerable amount of the UP resources are "abused" by the UP leadership.

A certain percent of (28%) of the ULOs noted that there is rampant corruption at the UP level.

Box 2 : Observations of ULOs on the Management Capabilities of the UP Leadership.

UP leaders are primarily political managers and lack the required managerial skill to organize and manage develop projects at the local level.

About 73 percent of the ULOs strongly noted that UPs should not be given more role in the management of development project at the local level.

Given the low level of management skill and organizational competence of the UPs , 95 percent of the ULOs argued that the UP's involvement in the development should not be further extended.

Given their personal experiences, the ULOs almost unanimously opined that there is no need for further extending the involvement of the ULOs in the development management process.

As high as 95 percent of the ULOs rejected the idea of further transferring some of the Upazila based authority, functions, to the Union level.

ULOs seem to have developed a sceptical attitude and a kind of apathy towards the Union Parishads. When asked to note some of the institutional strengths and weaknesses of the UPs, a considerable number of ULOs could not identify or acknowledge any institutional strength. A large majority of them, however, indentified the major institutional weaknesses of the UPs which are summed up in Box-3.

Box 3: Institutional Weakness of the UPs as Identified by the ULOs

Too much dependence on Central Government

Lack of popular support from the people

Internal factions

Lack of fund

Poor management skill

Lack of manpower

Overall Assessment of the Role of UPs in Development Activities

The major findings and observations of the foregoing sections of this Chapter on the role of UPs in development activities can be summed up as under:

- a. As far as financial base is concerned, Union Parishads are very weak. Moreover, elected representatives are reluctant to use their financial powers much apprehending unpopularity.
- b. Institutional capabilities, both managerial and functional, of the Union Parishads are also very much limited.
- c. Role of Union Parishads in organization, management and implementation of development projects is insignificant and very much limited.
- d. Being a popularly elected local body UPs have some noticeable institutional strengths.
- e. Union Parishads being the grass-root level bodies have a lot of potential to be the partners of development.
- f. In order to strengthen the institutional capabilities of the Union Parishads the following specific interventions should be made:
 - i. identify alternative sources of income other than the conventional ones ;
 - ii. develop institutional collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and private sector development enterprises;
 - iii. enhance the institutional and managerial capabilities through training and organization design.

g. Observations indicate that the ULOs tend to maintain a safe distance from the UP officials. Functional relationship between the ULOs and the UP officials as far as development management is concerned is far less than expected. There appears to be a mutual mistrust between the ULOs and the UP officials.

h. An objective assessment of the development dynamics at the local level suggests that a viable and effective institutional arrangement needs to be designed so that a partnership relations could be developed between the Ups and the Upazila level GOB functionaries.

Strengthening of Union Parishad as Development Partners

Local government bodies in Bangladesh, especially the Union Parishads, are weak not only financially but also in terms of institutional and management capabilities. All Commissions and Committees constituted by the Government repeatedly noted the "weaknesses" of these bodies. Unfortunately, however, none of the committees/ commissions proposed any "realistic" and "long terms" solution of these problems.

At this juncture a pertinent issue to address is how to strengthen the local bodies, particularly the Union Parishads.

Strengthening local bodies can be addressed from two perspectives: (a) from within through structural reorganization; (b) from outside through institutional collaboration and capacity building.

Institutional Collaboration and Strengthening of the UP

Since the early 1970s, NGOs became a part of the institutional framework for development, poverty alleviation programs, and pro-active development management in the third world countries. There has been a steady growth in the number of national NGOs in Bangladesh over the last one and a half decades.

There seems to be a noticeable ambiguity in the policies of the GOB on the role and scope of the involvement of the NGOs in Bangladesh. As a result, NGOs are getting involved in a wide variety of projects. In the absence of an integrated plan, NGOs are working in the local areas almost completely in isolation without any interaction with the GOB functionaries and/or the Local Government bodies. Following areas of NGO and Local Government collaboration have been identified: a. identification of resources; b. identification of needs in the area; c. assist and develop programs and projects according to local priority; d. identify the target groups and beneficiaries. e. assist the Local bodies in implementing small scale development projects; f launching special projects for the rehabilitation and change of attitudes of villagers towards economic, social and cultural development.

Though there are some experimental collaborative projects between the National Government and the selected large NGOs like CARE, BRAC etc., the Union Parishads have no direct role in the process of planning and implementation of such projects. The only exception is the RMP of CARE.

Drawing from the Philippines experiences Bangladesh may initiate policy options for formalizing the institutional relationship between NGOs and the Local bodies. The significant areas of involvement are: a. Planning ; b. identification of projects ; and c. mobilization of people for popular participation in development management.

As gathered from the survey, the UP officials strongly believe that there should be some mode of formal linkages between the NGOs and the UPs concerned in organizing and managing the projects.

Those who underscored the importance of formal communications with the NGOs have identified some advantages of such links. A significant percentage of the UP officials think that such linkages and formal communications will ensure "popular" and "total" participation of the community as such in the projects of the NGOs. Others hold the view that this will induce some form of local accountability of the NGOs.

UP officials, considering their limitation of resources and capability, have specifically marked some program areas and projects where NGOs could collaborate with Union Parishads. The suggested areas of program support are: health and family planning services, design and management of income generating and poverty alleviation projects, mass education, livestock and fisheries, social forestry and environment, infrastructure and agricultural development, etc.

Based on the findings of the survey the following broad observations may be made that there are certainly some rooms for mutual cooperation and support for both NGOs and UPs. UPs would possibly be more benefited from such kind of linkages. Support from NGOs can positively enhance the program development and project management capabilities of the UPs.

Considering political sensitivities and economic realities, NGOs' involvement in development interventions can not be ignored. Their role has now assumed much greater significance in the light of recent concerns to strengthen democratic institutions and promote civil society.

Experiences drawn from the Asia Pacific countries (Aminuzzaman 1995, Williams, 1992) have established that the NGOs have demonstrated particular strengths in their work with the disadvantaged groups in: a. devising management practices adapted to difficult areas and client groups; b. devising technologies that meet the needs of the rural poor, particularly rural women; c. designing linkages with input suppliers and the local groups; d. delivering inputs and services either of their own or being contracted out by the GOs; e. developing new technologies and methods; f. developing new social innovations which bear on technological changes; g. lobbying for specific projects at the local level; and h. mobilizing disadvantaged groups for empowerment.

Chapter 7 : Conclusion and Recommendations

Empirical evidences have widely established the fact that the UPs in Bangladesh are structurally and functionally very weak and lack capabilities to design, organise and manage development programs. For these, the efficiency and effectiveness is not achieved basically in spite of being an old reputed institution.

UP system in Bangladesh works within a broad set of constraints and functional premise:

No genuine devolution

The system of decentralization in Bangladesh can be characterized as deconcentration, where the central government has retained the decision making powers, only allowing for some responsibilities of implementation and decision-making to be devolved to local authorities. The lack of real devolution of authority to local levels in itself inhibits the flourishing of real participation by people in decisions affecting their lives.

Enhanced capacity building regarding i.e. planning, budgeting, accounting, roles of elected members and civil servants, primarily divided through training, study-programs, etc.

Strengthening the local body interaction by supporting the organization and participation of vulnerable groups, village organizations, etc. in the decision-making process of the Union Parishad. Special emphasis could be put on the involvement of the women members.

Enhancing the financial management, accounting and auditing of the UPs, in particular to strengthen the accountability towards the public, e.g. through increased involvement of the elected members, access of the public to information, etc. Access to the audited reports by the public and the elected public representatives should be facilitated to strengthen the local democracy;

Strengthening the gender-aspects of local governance through main-streaming of gender considerations in planning, budgeting and implementation, emphasis on female chairpersons of key standing and project committees, gender-wise data processing in monitoring and reporting, preference of local projects involving or employing women, and compliance of the directives on the establishment of various development committees, and other GOB guidelines designed to give enhanced role to the elected women members of Union Parishad;

Local Development funding for socio-economic infrastructure, directly availed to the local bodies on a matching funding basis at Union Parishad levels. The objectives would be to use the additional funding as a catalyst for local participatory planning, and to gain experiences for policy planning at the national level. The recurrent costs implications, and the sustainability of any additional investments must also to be considered;

Promotion of increased national and local taxation through studies and review of existing legislation, rules and procedures, tax ceilings, etc. As conditions vary from one Union Parishad to another, specific regional and localized studies of the taxation and potential revenues could be undertaken.

Role of UP – Scope and need for Advocacy

The Constitution of Bangladesh places emphasis on the democratic process to realize economic and social justice and encourages the strengthening of local government institutions at all administrative levels with effective participation by people through elected representatives. However development dynamics of Bangladesh does not reveal any indication that Union Parishads have been treated with political significance. In fact the discussion on UP reveals that it is not self-governing institutions nor have considerable image both as development support provider or even as political institution. It works principally as subservient bodies to central authorities which control its activities through circulars, directives and

financial allocations. It has poor resource base, making it incapable of performing its mandatory and optional functions.

Local government is a very important institution of the government in Bangladesh. Because after the recognition as a sovereign country, the whole development activities is directed through local government in rural areas of Bangladesh.

The findings and analysis of the research work demonstrate that Union Parishads in spite of its institutional limitations play a significant role in the overall political economic milieus of local rural area.

Empirical evidences suggest that UP's tend to work in isolation from other major development actors. This is perhaps the result of UP's lack of institutional capacity and preparedness as well as absence of integrated planning to be linked with other development initiatives of local level agencies. Ups development initiatives thus centre around the area of UNO, Upazilla Engineer and Project Implantation Officer (PIO). There is hardly any meaningful and development interaction of UP with other development extension workers of the Government at the grass roots level.

Under the PRSP framework the role and importance of UP and other local bodies have got a new magnitude in development management. Under the new PRSP framework local government in particular Union Parishad is expected to a critical role in management and coordination of targeted food or cash assisted programs designed for the poor, schools, community clinics, Union-level family planning and health centres, coordinating with various governmental and non-governmental programs to reduce wastage and duplication, and facilitating greater synergies. More importantly UP as the grass roots level local body can play an active role in strengthening local level democracy through the promotion of grass-roots organizations as well as fostering community activities that encourage greater social solidarity. Empirical evidences strongly suggest that UP can play a significant role in economic management as well as local business development.

The problematic area of UP can be rationalized and make it efficient and effective taking some steps. Following are some of the areas for policy interventions and advocacies:

- Creating demand with awareness and right approach.
- Strengthening capacity or developing institutional capacity.
- Creating community mobilization and increase involvement of CBOs in Union Parishad's role and functions and planning processes.
- Reduce of central control over Union Parishad.
- Increase the scope for technical support to Union parishad in development programs.

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