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Prospect of Building a Local Self-government at the Upazila/ Thana Level: Towards a Decentralized Rural Administration in Bangladesh

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Abstract: It has been said that local government is the level of government closest to the citizens. Various studies indicate that local government with decentralized authority is the key to improving accountability of public service delivery. However, local government in Bangladesh is usually dependent on the central government for most of their activities, and rural administrative units such as Zila, Upazila/Thana, Union are not properly structured. The present study examines the rural government administration in Bangladesh especially at the Upazilla level. The Local Government Ordinance 1982, provided details on the structure and functions of the Upazila. The Upazila replaced the oldest institution called Thana. It has been created as a local administration under the decentralization program of the government. Though the creation of Upazilla was a step towards decentralized administration, it has some weaknesses. The Upazila system has been abolished since 1991. Several studies show that Upazila system was a unique attempt to break the traditional bureaucracy at the grass-root levels, it should be continued in spite of initial problems. Recently, Care-taker governments in Bangladesh also have been considered to restart the Upazila system. Therefore, present study aimed to analyze the local government administration at the Upazila level, and examine the prospects of building a decentralized rural government in Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

Local self-governance and decentralization have become prominent agenda items in the twenty-first century. Many developing countries, including Bangladesh are pushing for decentralization and reforms of local government. This drive is due to increased political responsiveness, a growing demand for local-level participation in planning, and demand for proper implementation and efficient delivery of local services, to enhance allocation efficiency of public spending at the local level, higher competitiveness, and to create willingness to pay for local services (CIRDAP, 2002). Various studies indicate that decentralized local government/local self-government bodies may provide an effective means to promote peoples participation in the rural development process. It is a commonly held view that local self government (decentralized local government) could result in better performance in terms of effectiveness, equity and efficiency, particularly in developing local infrastructure such as transportation, communication facilities, water supply, marketing and other essential services (Conyers and Hills, 1984). Several studies have shown that decentralization is necessary, for effective improvement in the rate of progress of rural development (Harry, 1989; Khan, 1998 and Hussain, 2005), as it has been done in Canada and the USA.

Many studies have been conducted on the problems of local government systems in Bangladesh. Studies conducted by Hossain (2000) and Noor (1996) indicate that local government in Bangladesh is ultimately responsible and subordinate to central government. My previous study (Islam and Yoshizuka, 2006) also examined that local government in Bangladesh still highly centralized compared to the Japan. The central government controls the functional jurisdiction of local bodies, and also has the power to determine the structure and composition of

the local bodies. Even when local governments make regulations, these must be approved by central government. The Central Government exacts legislation on local bodies and formulates detailed rules relating to conduct of election, business, powers and duties of chairmen, assessment of taxes, preparation of budgets, making of contracts, appointment and service matters of local government employment, accounts and many other important areas (Ahmed, 1997). Several studies indicate that present rural government units such as Zila, Thana, and Union are not properly structured. These units are usually responsible for rural development programs, though policy and planning are formulated by the national government (Ahmed and Sato, 1985).

The creation of Upazilla (The Local Government Ordinance 1982) was a step towards decentralized administration (Haider, 1986 and Tofail, 2000). The Upazila Parishad has been given discretion to allocate and spend the development monies that were formerly managed by the central government line ministries (Harry, 1989). However, the Upazila system has been abolished since 1991. Recently, there have been political arguments emphasizing the people's right to participate in making decisions about their own development. The present care-taker government has also been considering how to decentralize to rural government administration level by restarting Upazila system.

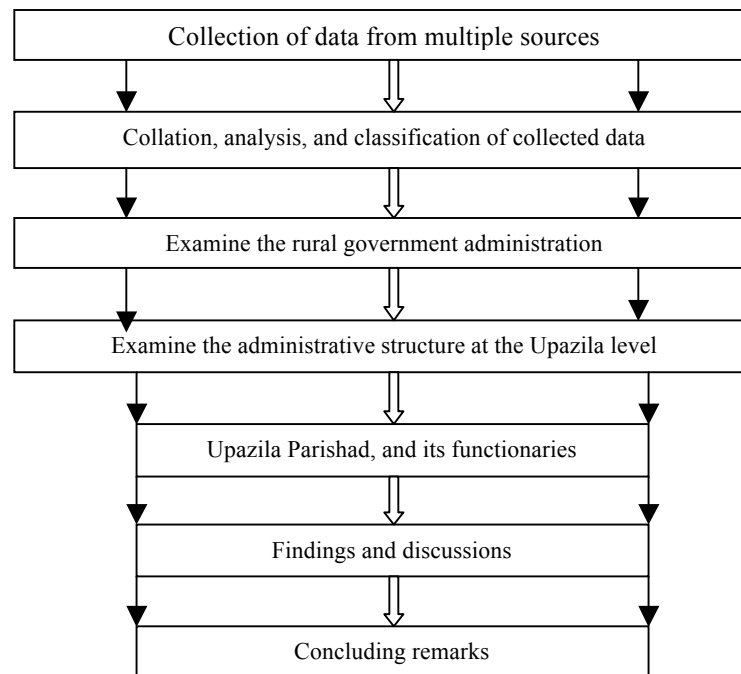
In light of the above, the present study focused on the rural government administration especially the administrative pattern at Upazila level. Moreover, to increase attention paid to the decentralization of rural development administration, it is important to address conditions existing within the country. Specifically, the study aims to –

- Examine the rural government administration in Bangladesh;
- Examine the administrative structure at the Upazila level, and its functionaries;

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Upazila system; and evaluate the prospects of building a decentralized rural administration to accelerate rural development in Bangladesh.

2. Study Materials

In the current study, data were gathered from multiple sources including administrative agencies such as the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistic (BBS), and the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB). The researcher also visited the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and National Institute of Local Government (NILG) to collect data and information. Various publications, censuses and study reports were also used. The following methodological outline is followed in the present study:



3. The Basic Feature of Rural Government Administration

To have an in-depth understanding of rural government administration in Bangladesh, the historical background must be taken into account. The history of rural government is relevant to assessing the prospects of successfully accelerating rural development through administrative devolution. Therefore, this study describe the composition of rural government in the past, its functions and relationship with central government under the statutory division of power. The concept of rural self-government is not new in the history of the subcontinent. No one would, dispute the existence of fairly well developed “village-panchayats (village councils)” in ancient India (Basham, 1954). Several writers have commented that the local government was highly developed in ancient India. The village-panchayat could be said to have formed an integral part of the united India (Lord, 1954). The modern rural government administration history can be divided into three periods: Colonial period/British period (1757-1947), Pakistan period (1947-1971); and Bangladesh period (1971 to present). The present study concentrates on the Bangladesh period.

Colonial/British Periods (1757-1947): Bangladesh was part of British India for about two hundred years (1757-1947). During British rule over the Indian subcontinent, a number of experiments were made with the local government system. All the experiments were intended to devise a system that would serve Britain’s imperial interests. The major objective of the British in India was two folds: maximization of land revenue collection and maintenance of law and order. Naturally, as an imperial power Britain’s representative had little understanding of interest in indigenous local self-governing institutions. The colonial rulers were primarily concerned with law and order, administration and revenue collection in the rural areas. During the second half of British rule, some state interventions were made to redress the suffering of rural people. The

measures taken, through enactment of certain laws, were reflected in the following legislation: The Chowkidery Panchayet Act of 1870; Land Improvement Act of 1883; Agricultural Disaster Loan Act of 1884; Local Self-government Act of 1885; Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act 1935; and Cooperatives Societies Act 1912, 1940 (Chowdhury, 2001; and Rahman, 1990). These legislative measures failed to significantly improve the situation in rural areas.

Pakistan Period (1947-71): With the partition of India in August 1947, Bangladesh became part of Pakistan and remained so until independence was declared in 1971. There was no specific development in local government system until 1958 (Zaidi, 1991). The period 1958 to 1969 saw the introduction of Pakistan's first Martial Law and the establishment of a military government as well as the development of an extensive system of elected local government. After disbanding the provincial and national governments, the military government realized that there was a need for at least a semblance of involvement of the people in their own affairs. This gave rise to the Basic Democracies System providing for a new local government system across the country and through which members were elected (Siddique, 1995). In the Basic Democracies System, a District Council was created, consisting of an Electoral College of which all Chairmen of Union Councils, town and union committees were members, removing the distinction between urban and rural areas. However, the concept of Basic Democracy, a four-tier system, lacked novelty and innovation. After the fall of the Ayub Khan regime, with which the system was closely associated, it fell into disfavor. Moreover, the first general elections of 1970 and the separation of East Pakistan from Pakistan resulted in the formation of an altogether new system of government in the country.

Bangladesh Periods (1971 to Present): After independence in 1971, the first action of the new government was to rename the rural local bodies. The name of the Union Council was

changed to Union Panchayat, the Thana Council was changed to Thana Development Council and the District Council to Zila Board. By the president's order in 1973, Union Panchayat was renamed to Union Parishad (Hye, 1985). The Local Government Ordinance 1976, provided for three types of local government, namely Union Parishad at the Union Level, Thana Parishads at the Thana level, Zila Parishads at the Zila level. The Local Government (Swanirvar Gram Sarkar) Ordinance 1980 was introduced at the village level. This tier was abolished by Martial Law in July, 1982. Since 1982, several new Ordinances and Acts have been passed, such as The Local Government (Thana Parishad and Thana Administration Reorganization) Ordinance 1982, The Local Government (Upazila Parishads and Upazila Administrative Reorganization) Ordinance 1982, The Local Government (Zila Parishad) Act 1988, Hill Tract District Local Government Parishad Act 1989, and The Palli Parishad Act 1989 (Faizullah, 1987; Siddqui, 1992 and Tofail, 2000).

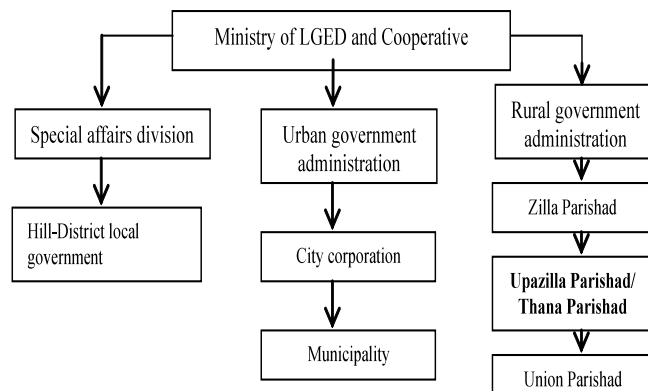


Figure 1. Structure of Local Government in Bangladesh

Sources: Based on the references: Siddiqui, 1995; Habibullah, 1996 and Mallick, 2004

Figure 1 shows the structure of local government in Bangladesh. Local government in Bangladesh is mainly divided into two categories: rural and urban government administration.

However, there is a special affairs division that was enacted to grant autonomy to the ethnic minorities living in three Hill-districts.

Table 1. A Comparative Administrative Unit in Some Selected Countries

Countries	Lowest-tier	Middle-tier	Upper-tier
Bangladesh	Union Parishad	Upazila Parishad/Thana Parishad	Zila Parishad
India	Gram Panchayet	Pachayet Samittee	District Council
Pakistan	Union Council	Tehsil/Taluka	District Council
Britain	Parish Council	Rural District	Country Council

Sources: Based on data from: Robert and Jenie, 2001; Nagendra, 2003; and Zaidi, 1991.

Table 2. Rural Local Government Tiers with Population and Area

Administrative Tier	Rural Government Tier	Average Area and Population	Remarks
District (64)	Zila Parishad	Area 2,250 Sq. Km. Pop. 1.9 millions	The variation in area and population between the largest and smallest are 9 and 25 times respectively
Upazila (463)	Upazila Parishad	Area 300 Sq. Km. Pop. 250,000	The variation in area and population between the largest and smallest are 925 and 42 times respectively
Union (4490)	Union Parishad	Area 30 Sq. Km. Pop. 27,000	The variation in area and population between the largest and smallest are 952 and 111 times respectively

Sources: Based on data from: UNDP, 2002; CIRDAP, 2002; Tofail, 2000 and World Bank, 2002.

Table 1 shows the wide divergence in the structure and composition of the local government bodies in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Britain. Although there is no direct equivalence between rural local government in Bangladesh and those of other countries, a rough comparison

is given. The system of local government in Bangladesh is quite different from that of other countries. Bangladesh inherited its local government system from British India which was quite different from the system of local government prevailing in Britain. In the British system, the local bodies are fully elective while in Bangladesh, the local bodies are a mixture of elected, nominated and official functionaries at the Upazila level (Nagendra, 2003). Local government in Bangladesh is usually dependent on the central government for most of their activities, and the central government has the power to dissolve a local body on charges of gross inefficiency, abuse of power, or inability to meet financial obligations (Habibullah, 1996).

Table 2 shows the rural local government administrative tiers with population and area. Among the rural government administration, the lowest administrative tier is the Union, and each Union comprises 10-15 villages. Several Unions form an Upazila, and several Upazila form a Zilla. There are 64 Zillas, 463 Upazila and 4490 Unions in Bangladesh. This Table reconfirms the findings of several studies that local government units such as District, Upazila/Thana and Union levels are not properly structured. Table 2 also shows the unusual variation in area and population between the largest and smallest entities within each type of rural administrative units.

4. Upazila Administrative Structure, and its functionaries

The Upazila replaced the oldest institution in Bangladesh called the Thana. It was a nation-wide reform. The significant change in the rural government was the insertion of the term “Upazila” to replace the word “Thana”. Generally, an Upazila corresponds to a Thana, although in some places two Thanas have been united as one Upazila (Faizullah, 1987). Literally, Upazila

means sub-district (upa = sub, zila = district). The Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administrative Reorganization) Ordinance 1982, provided details on the structure and functions of the Upazila Parishads (Larry, 1984 and Huque, 1988). It was created as a local administrative entity under the government's decentralization program. In 1991 the provisions of the 1982 ordinance were abolished and Thana again replaced the Upazila. Presently Thana Councils are presided over by a chief executive officer (not elected), known as the *Thana Nirbahi Officer*.

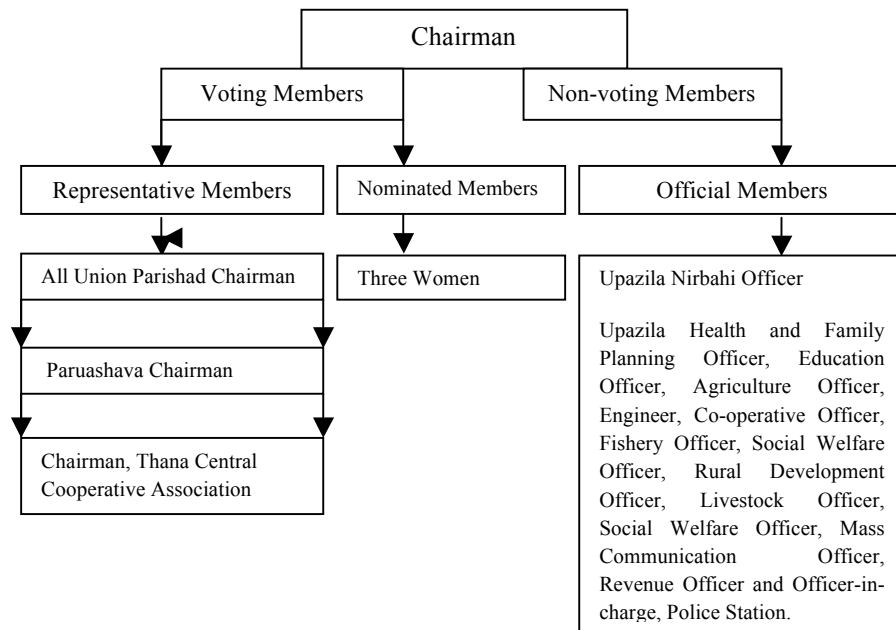


Figure 2. Upazila Parishad Membership

Note: Representative and Nominated members are voting members within the Upazila Parishad, and Official members are non-voting members designated by the government among the Officials at the Upazila.

Sources: Based on data from: 1. Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Local Government Division, "Notification No. S-8/3E-3/83/41", Dhaka, January 1983; and 2. Taniguchi and Hossain (2007): *Local Governance and Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh*, Asia Pacific Research Center, Kobe Gakuin University, Japan.

Figure 2 shows membership of the Upazila Parishad. This Figure indicate that Upazila Parishad(UZP) consists of a chairman elected by all voters within Upazila. All chairman of the

union parishads; paurashava located within the upazila; the chairman of the Thana Central Cooperatives Association; three women nominated by government; and official members as designated by the government among the official at the upazila level are members of the Upazila Parishad. The chairman of the Upazila Parishad is to be elected directly by the voters of the entire Upazila on the basis of adult franchise (Citizens who are 18 years or older, both male and female have equal rights). Until election of the chairman of Upazila Parishad, the chief executive officer (UNO) of the Parishad has been authorized to act as chairman.

The Local Government (Upazila Parishads and Upazila Administrative Reorganization) Ordinance 1982, provided the necessary grant-support provision for the Upazila Parishad to meet their pay and establishment costs (Fazullah, 1987 and Rahman, 1995). The moneys constituting the income of the Upazila Parishad can be categorized into: government grants and own income. The grants provided by the government usually categorized as follows:

- Grants made by various government ministries from the revenue budget for pay, allowances, and contingency expenditures of officers and staff deputed to the Parishad;
- Grants made out of the development budget for Block Development Assistance to finance the development activities of the Upazila Parishad;
- Grants made by central government agencies in divisible components of centrally administered development projects; and
- Functional contingencies provided by some government agencies in respect of specialized services rendered by the Upazila Parishad such as health and family planning.

Upazila Parishads have been given powers to generate their own income from the following revenue sources: lease money on Jalmahals (natural inland fisheries); tax on professions and

trades; tax on dramatic and theatrical shows; fees for fairs and exhibitions, licenses and permits; tolls on services and facilities maintained; and lease money from bazaars. Several studies indicated that though Upazila system had been given the authority to collect taxes, they mostly depended on the development assistance funds they received from the central government (Ahmed, 1997 and Larry, 1984)). The central government closely supervises and controls finances, and can wield power by reducing or increasing grant-in-aid to local bodies.

Table 3. The Role of Rural Government towards Development Programs

Level of Government	Agency	Role
Zilla Parishad	Office of the Deputy Commissioner/District Council/Municipality Authority,	Convey directions, disburse funds, coordinate and supervise project implementation at the district level.
Upazila/Thana Parishad	Upazila Nirbahi Officer/ Thana Nirbahi Officer/Thana Council	Pass on directions, disburse funds, coordinate and supervise project implementation at the Thana and Union levels, prepare projects involving more than one union, audit the accounts of union council.
Union Parishad	Union Council	Disburse funds to project committee, implement project at the union and village levels.

Sources: Based on data from: Mahabub, 1993; GOB, 1989; Habibullad, 1996; and Mallick, 2004.

The role of local government varies from one country to another, but obviously in every democratic society, local government has some part to play (Alan, 1997). The role of rural government in Bangladesh has been limited from the time of its establishment (Hussain, 2005). Table 3 demonstrates the role of rural government in infrastructure development and rural works programs in Bangladesh. This Table shows that these activities have been mostly operated by

the rural government administrations such as District, Upazila/Thana and Union Parishad, though policy and planning are formulated by the national/central government.

Under the Local Government (Upazila Parishads and Upazila Administrative Reorganization) Ordinance 1982, Upazila Parishads were given total control to the local level development work (Sato, 1994). Studies conducted by Faizullah (1988) and Ahmed (1991) show that Upazila Parishads (UZP) have been assigned with the responsibility of formulating local level plans for the development of the locality. The aim is to achieve the all-round development of the area and people's participation in development activities. The scope of the UZP plan is limited to the project areas devolved to Upazila Parishad. These include: agriculture including extension service; live-stock; primary education; health and family planning; rural water supply and sanitation; food for works program; co-operative-based rural development; and social development. The studies also indicated that an efficient organizational network is necessary to undertake such wide-ranging activities under UZP planning.

A Charter of duties was prepared for the range of duties performed by the Upazila Parishad. The following seventeen articles were duties transferred to the Upazila (Larry, 1984 and Sato, 1994). Very briefly these are: 1. Civil and criminal law; 2. Taxation; 3. Law and order; 4. Registrations; 5. Essential commodities; 6. Electric power; 7. Irrigation; 8. Technical education and secondary school education; 9. Hospitals; 10. Facilities for research and experimentation; 11. Large-scale breeding centers; 12. Large-scale industries; 13. Transportation and communication between district and upazila; 14. Flood control and water resources; 15. Marine fisheries; 16. (p) mining and resources; and 17. National statistics. Moreover, the Upazila Parishad was able to request responses from the pertinent central government administrators concerned with the above

areas. However, personnel matters, even for administrators concerned with both transferred and reserved subjects, were retained by central government.

Since the launching of the decentralization program in 1982, which promised a democratization of local government through the Upazila system, two elections were held (Nagendra, 2003 and Rahman, 1991). The first elections were held in two phases, May 16 and May 20, 1985. The Second Election was held on March 12-25, 1990. The studies conducted by the Nagendra (2003) and Rahman(1991), indicate that conflicts associated with the Upazila Parishad decentralization process were broadly either political or administrative. The political conflict may be viewed from two angles, national and local. From the very beginning of the Upazila policy, political parties at the national level opposed any steps towards the implementation of the concept. Their argument was that only a sovereign parliament could take a decision on such a radical change. Therefore, the opposition political parties boycotted the Upazila elections to elect the chairmen of the Parishads. In spite of such a boycott Upazila polls were held. After the first Upazila polls, political conflict appears to have settled at the national level. However a new type of local conflict developed after the polls when the elected chairmen took office. The conflict between Chairman and UNO (Upazila Nirbadhi Officer) was not political but administrative. Such conflict was observed during the early days in office of newly elected chairmen who replaced the UNOs then acting chairman of the Parishad. In the pre-election period the UNO exercised all the power of the chairman; after election he became a subordinate to the Chairman at the same Upazila. This change hurt the vanity of the UNO and that was the real source of conflict. Administrative conflict may be two kinds, one is the conflict between Chairman and UNO that has been discussed, and the other is the specialist-generalist controversy. The specialist-generalist controversy reached a peak when the UNO was the acting

chairman. The members of the specialist services at Upazila level refused to recognize the UNO, a generalist, as being in a position of supremacy. On the other hand, according to the Local Government Ordinance 1982 and 1983, Union Parishads are mostly dependent on the assistance and co-operation of the field of administration at the Upazila level for the management of their development work (Chowdhury, 1987). But the relationship between UP chairman and UPZ chairman suffered from problems of co-ordination (Khan, 1986).

5. Findings and Discussions

Though the creation of Upazilla is a step towards decentralized administration, the following weaknesses and strengths have been found in the present and previous studies:

Weaknesses

- One of major weakness of the Upazila system was that this organization had been started without any pilot project program. As Bangladeshi peoples are familiar with pilot projects, many people raised questions about its success and particularly cast doubts whether the country's economy would be able to sustain such a major proliferation of administration (Chowdhury, 1987; and Hyder, 1986).
- Upazila system belongs to that type known as "Decentralization within Centralism". Decentralization policy at the Upazila level did not succeed in ensuring popular participation in rural Bangladesh (Conyers 1983; and Hye, 1985).
- In the present British system, local bodies are fully elected. However, in the Upazila system, local bodies are a mixture of elected, nominated and official representatives.

- Lack of adequate technical and managerial competence among government functionaries to perform their expanded roles under a decentralized local government set-up at the Upazila level (CIRDAP, 2002).
- The interdepartmental activities at the Upazila Parishad have had various co-ordinations problems, such as the relationship between Upazila and UP chairman; UNO and Upazila chairman. Several studies indicate that co-ordination problem was a constant in Upazila administration and development program (Ahmed, 1991; and Hye, 1986).
- Various studies show that government guidelines were not capable of ensuring the development of all Upazilla of the country irrespective of topographical variation (Faizullah, 1987; and Rahman, 1991).
- The studies conducted by the Ahmad (1991) and Fazullah (1988) show that government has circulated elaborate guideline and instructions with respect to plan formulation. These guidelines have placed emphasis on the sectoral approach with respect to strategies for formulation on Upazila Plan. According to the sectoral approach, the different activities under the transferred subjects have been grouped into several sectors in the manner of the national plan. But the classification adopted for UZP planning does not match the national classification. The study also indicates that in the name of planning, all UZPs were engaged in the preparation of a list of schemes with estimates of costs. In most cases, even the committees recommended by the government guidelines were ineffective. In many cases committees for project selection and preparation have not been formed. Another study conducted by Khatun (1986) shows that the individual choice of the UZP chairman dominates the scene with respect to the final approval of projects. Moreover,

there is much evidence of corrupt practices and abuse of authority by the UZP chairman in connection with project selection, approval and implementation.

Strengths

- ❖ Upazila was a nation-wide movement. Prior to 1982, local government at the Thana-level termed the Thana-Parishad was perfunctory. Thana-Parishad did not contain political leaders elected from the population. However, the Upazila with elected, nominated and official members headed by an elected chairman, was a powerful forum (Larry, 1984).
- ❖ The Upazilla administration is organized with an elected chairman, as the chief executive. On the official side there is Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), a staff officer to the chairman. Then there are twelve other mid-ranking departmental officers dealing with subjects relating to department. These subjects have been transferred to Upazila Parshads.
- ❖ Upazila parishad organically linked both with Union Parishad and the Zilla Parishad. Several studies indicate that Upazila Parishad is entrusted with administration, planning and development activities.
- ❖ The studies conducted by the Fazullah (1987) indicate that the system of financial management that has been introduced at the Upazila level with implementation of the Upazila program has considerably decentralized the country's financial management system.

6. Concluding Remarks

Local government in Bangladesh has a long history. As described above, the area which is now known as Bangladesh was colonized for a long period of time by the British East India Company and the British Crown. Foreign domination continued under Pakistani rule. None of these foreign rulers made efforts to make local government institutions decentralized and delegate authority to the rural levels (Huque, 1988). Local government in Bangladesh has traditionally been dependent on central government for most of its activities (Noor, 1996). The role of local government in Bangladesh has been limited from the time of its establishment. Within the existing framework, central government provides services uniformly to all localities irrespective of geographic, culture, ethnic and historic conditions. This may not always satisfy the public. Since preferences for different services vary from place to place, the public service is more likely to be satisfied with services offered by local government bodies which can more easily respond to local tastes and needs.

Local government with decentralized authority is the key to improving accountability of public service delivery at the regional or rural levels (CIRDAP, 2005; and Habitat, 1998). Various studies indicate that decentralized local self-government could result in better performance in terms of effectiveness, equity and efficiency, particularly with a policy of human resource development, including enhancement of the social role and status of disadvantaged groups, with provision of universal primary education, skill development, primary health care, shelter for the poor and support of adequate financial resources (Chowdhury, 2001; Harry, 1989; and Hussain, 2005). Decentralization, according to administrative reforms measures consists of bringing changes into the administration to make it more capable of understanding development

programs (Jamil, 2007). The creation of Upazilla was a step towards decentralized rural administration in Bangladesh.

Table 4. Local Finance in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka

Fiscal Years	National Government Revenue/GDP		Central Transfer/Total Local Body Revenue	
	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka
1980	17.4	48.7	28.1	49.6
1981	19.3	39.2	36.7	n.a.
1982	21.5	35.4	23.5	51.7
1983	18.4	34.8	33.9	54.9
1984	18.3	34.2	60.5	38.1
1985	17.6	37.2	94.4	46.4
1986	18.0	36.2	61.1	47.4
1987	18.1	36.8	64.9	35.2
1988	17.4	37.8	59.5	64.0
1989	17.3	36.0	54.2	n.a.
1990	17.6	30.9	n.a.	n.a.

Notes: National government revenue includes current revenue and capital receipts, domestic and foreign. Local bodies includes municipality, Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Union Parishad for Bangladesh, and for Sri Lanka municipality, urban committee, town and village committee, district council. Central transfer includes general grants and works program grants for Bangladesh. In Sri Lanka central transfer are composed of current and capital transfer.

Sources: Based on data from: Sato (1994), p. 3; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, various issues; Statistical Pocket Book of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Various Issues; and Annual Report, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Various Issues.

It is very difficult to measure the extent of decentralization. World Bank (2002) in one of its reports observes, “so far, the government has refused to give local authorities fully delegated control over their own finances and personal. Without this there can be no genuine empowerment of local government”. A Workshop jointly organized by the CIRDAP and Commonwealth Secretariat (2005), concluded that the local government expenditure as a proportion of GDP, would be one of the criteria to measure decentralization issues. The representation of women, who are directly elected, may be another measurement criterion of decentralization. Considering the first criteria Table 4 shows the local body finance in

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Unitary states like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka both have their institutions as well as for financial adjustment between the central and local governments. Table 4 indicates the budgetary transfers in both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are made from the central government to local bodies on several different levels. In Bangladesh these transfers were extremely small in scale even after the establishment of Upazila system.

As the Upazila system has created for the first time as a decentralized local government at the grass-root level, at the initial stage some weaknesses are to be expected, though proper corrective measures and constant monitoring such problems may be overcome. Possibly no organization is able to attain absolute perfection from the beginning. There needs to be more research and model project to realize its desired goals. The success of the Upazila parishad largely depends on how well the local leadership, the government officials and the people can inter-act in an environment of cooperation and partnership (Rahman, 1986 and Rahman, 1991). Various studies show that Upazila system was a unique attempt to break the traditional bureaucracy at the lowest tier, it should be continued in spite of initial problems (Hyder, 1986; Ali, 1986 and Nagendra, 2003). Therefore, the process of decentralization of development through Upazila Parishad should be continued.

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