BUREAUCRACY’S PERSPECTIVE ON THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE REFORM IN BANGLADESH

Atiur Rahman*

Final draft paper prepared for the World Bank
25 June 2007

---

* Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka and Chairman, Shamunnay, Dhaka. E-mail: atiur@sdnbd.org.
Contents

Acronyms iii
Executive Summary iv
Introduction 1
Methodology 1
Evolution of Bureaucracy in Bangladesh 2
Section 1 Understanding Decentralization 3
Section 2 Experiences with Upazila Parishad 8
Section 3 Trajectories in UZP reforms 15
Section 4 Desirable relationship between UZP and other local governments 24
General Conclusion 31
Annex
Synthesis Matrix
Methodology
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Assistant Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Anti-Corruption Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACR</td>
<td>Annual Confidential Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADP</td>
<td>Annual Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARD</td>
<td>Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCS</td>
<td>Bangladesh Civil Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAG</td>
<td>Comptroller and Auditor General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>Gram Parishad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGI</td>
<td>Local Government Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGRD&amp;C</td>
<td>Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGSP</td>
<td>Local Government Support Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIO</td>
<td>Project Implementation Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>Public Service Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDO</td>
<td>Sub-Division Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLGDP</td>
<td>Sirajganj Local Government Development Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDCC</td>
<td>Upazila Development Coordination Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNO</td>
<td>Upazila Nirbahi Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Union Parishad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UZ</td>
<td>Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UZP</td>
<td>Upazila Parishad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZP</td>
<td>Zila Parishad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

Of late, current caretaker government has taken some initial steps to move forward with the agenda of strengthening Upazila Parishads (UZPs) and urban local government institutions (LGIs). Bureaucracy is one of the major stakeholders in the political dynamics of decentralization. The objective of the study is to promote formal national dialogue on the subject of decentralization and provide a forum for different voices to articulate their views on decentralization. It mainly covered the existing bureaucrats ranging from bottom- to top-level in service. Including former top bureaucrats, as many as 40 bureaucrats have been intensively interviewed.

Evolution of bureaucracy in Bangladesh

In the early years of Bangladesh, bureaucracy came under pressure from the elected politicians to operate under political supervision. But this phase did not last long. Subsequent phases of military rule reinstated the bureaucrats in their entrenched positions and strengthened their grip over the system. After the restoration of electoral democracy in 1991, the dominant role of bureaucrats in policy formulation and policy implementation continued. Bureaucrats working in different ministries, department and corporations were summoned to appear before parliamentary committee and respond to the questions and queries posed to them by the parliamentary committee members.

1. Understanding Decentralization

1.1 By decentralization all the bureaucrats understand financial autonomy of the local government. Financial dependency of local government bodies on the central government curtails their autonomy. Local government reforms were imposed in a hurry and the opposing parties were not consulted. The officials at the upazila level regardless of their cadre affiliation prefer an elected upazila chairman to an elected MP.

1.2 Bureaucrats are strongly in favor of restoration of UZP. Their bitter experience of working with MPs particularly after 1991 has convinced them to opt for elected upazila chairman. Grass-root level activists of different political parties also want UZP back. This was disclosed by the officials working at the upazila level. They felt that local politicians will find stronger local governments as launching pads for higher level political leadership positions.
1.3 The status of an Upazila chairman is equivalent to a deputy secretary. That is why the government officials including the UNO will feel more comfortable while working under the supervision and leadership of upazila chairman than the MP.

1.4 Bureaucrats want limited devolution. Earlier there was deconcentration, i.e., extension of the central government. Administrative bureaucrats support the placement of officials as transferred subject at the disposal of the UPZ. However, they want central government to retain the final authority to regulate their conditions of services such as appointment, transfer, promotion and incentives.

2. Experiences with Upazila Parishad

2.1 Upazila system was primarily designed and driven by the then military government during mid-1980s. Senior bureaucrats pointed out that upazila system was initiated without consultation with the major political parties. An overwhelming majority of senior generalist bureaucrats acknowledged that at the initial stage most UZPs could not perform mainly due to the reluctance and reservations of the bureaucrats.

2.2 Senior and mid-level administrative bureaucrats reported that they had to encounter conflicts with the UZP chairmen at the formative stage of UZP. As time passed, UZP chairmen were provided capacity building training by various agencies and the conflicts between them and the bureaucrats began to resolve.

2.3 Specialist bureaucrats expressed mixed reactions regarding the performance of UZP. UZ level agriculture, fisheries and livestock, education, youth and sports etc officers explained that UZ system provided the opportunity to undertake highly customized development projects according to the local needs.

2.4 It was reported that generalist bureaucrats at the UZ level reluctantly accepted the authority of the UZP chairmen for writing their Annual Confidential Report (ACR). Initially UZP chairmen captured the offices and vehicles of UNOs. This resulted unwanted but bitter conflict between UZP chairmen and UNOs. Later on, there were severe conflicts among MPs and UZP chairmen over resource allocation at the UZ level. Officials from the group of Twenty-Eight specialist cadres pointed out one negative practice by the UZP chairmen in project planning and selection. It was reported that UZP
chairmen usually did not promote people’s participation at great length. The UZP engineers (junior specialists) were especially not happy with the allocation guideline of development budget as directed by the Planning Commission (central government) to UZPs.

2.5 When UZP system was in place, significant proportion of development budgets from line ministries like LGRD, education and health etc. were channelled through UZ development fund under closed supervision of the chairman. Some UZP chairmen developed enough autonomy to reject a project developed by a line ministry if it did not match the local development objective.

3. **Trajectories in UZP reforms**

3.1 Upazila level bureaucrats have some certain incentives and disincentives in future reforms. There should be strict rule to handle funds by UZP chairman and UNO to avoid conflict and tensions. At the same time job description of bureaucrats is needed in the future Upazila Ordinance to make the institution effective and greater coordination among bureaucrats and between bureaucrats and chairman. UZPs should be adequately funded from ADP to become local growth zones.

3.2 Social interaction through people’s participation in UZP’s budgetary process should be mandatory. This will help increase local resource mobilization, ensure proper implementation of development schemes, and reduce corruption and malpractice by UZP chairman.

3.3 Regional developments like successes of Indian *Panchayet* system may be learnt through cross-learning visits. Reconciling internal and external would require advanced level training and orientation. IOs and domestic institutions may provide training. IOs may be involved in enhancing efficiency of the bureaucrats, properly handling the funds allocated to UZPs, and reduce domineering power of the UZP chairman.

3.4 To ensure political autonomy elections must be held regularly. People should choose their leader at UZP to ensure it as a truly democratic institution and properly functioning. To de-link national politics from local self-government institutions, the chairman candidates must not be nominated by the political parties.

3.5 UZPs should have strong administrative autonomy. An independent Local Government Commission with power to impeach a UZP in case of substantial irregularities would be a
countervailing mechanism to properly function the system. The Commission may also provide policy support to the UZP.

3.6 Fiscal autonomy should be the driving force, followed by administrative and political autonomy. But in order to ensure the fiscal, administrative and politicalautonomies, the central government’s control should be minimum. Effective decentralization implies independently functioning LGIs. But this requires regular elections and sufficient fund transfer directly to the UZP. The reform agenda should have clear mention about creating people’s space in upazila budget to help establish an accountable and transparent UZP.

4. Desirable relationship between UZP and other local governments

4.1 The bureaucrats opined that central government should work on the principle of ‘circle within circle’. LGs should have its own treasury, budget, and accounts along with substantial authority to raise its own revenue. LGIs should be elected body. Central government administrators should serve purely as external advisors and inspectors and have no role within the local authority. The specific functions of each tier of local government including UZP and UP have already been assigned and written in government manual and those should followed. The bureaucrats in general are of the view that the UPs should have full entitlement over the revenue generated by them.

4.2 The Upazila chairman must prepare the yearly budget with the active participation of functionaries from every union parishad. Central government, through CAG office, must audit the tax collection and ADP expenditure of each UZP. The former will ensure that no Upazila chairman provides any unethical preference to any voter group in tax collection.

4.3 The UZP should consist of the union parishad chairmen within the respective upazilas as well as government officials, the latter without voting rights. The upazila parishad should be headed by a directly elected chairman. The entire upazila administration shall work under the control and supervision of the upazila parishad chairman. In most cases, the bureaucrats suggested the characteristics of the pre-1991 upazila system.

4.4 The district level administrative superior of UNO (i.e., DCs) and other officials of line ministry/department will write the ACR of upazila level officers and the upazila chairman will write counter performance report which will complement the whole performance evaluation process.
4.5 Bureaucrats regardless of cadre affiliation are of the view that the MPs worked as the advisor to the Upazila Development and Coordination Committee (UDCC) and exercised his/her authority in the allocation and use of development fund at the upazila level. The existing provision of MPs as an advisor to the UDCC should be scrapped.

4.6 In order to ensure coordination between the paurashava and upazila and resolve dispute between the two (in terms of functional jurisdiction, revenue collection, infrastructural development) the chairman of paurashava (except class-1 municipality) can be made an ex-officio member of the UZP.

Conclusion

Bureaucrats are not sharply divided on their opinions on the local government reform. They prefer the constitution of a permanent Local Government Commission which can play the coordinating role between the centre and local government tiers. Majority of the interviewees suggested holding elections at every tier of LG simultaneously in order to avert undesirable circumstances. They also strongly favored substantial financial, political and administrative autonomy of the LGIs in order to let the LGs evolve as viable institutions and enable the local people to reap full range of benefits from future local governance reforms initiatives.
Bureaucracy’s Perspective on the Local Governance Reform in Bangladesh

Introduction

Of late, current caretaker government has taken some initial steps to bring some policy changes for strengthening Upazila Parishads (UZPs) and urban local government institutions (LGIs). Bureaucracy is one of the major stakeholders in the political dynamics of decentralization. Their views are, therefore, crucial in shaping the evolving process of decentralization in Bangladesh. The objective of the study is to promote formal national dialogue on the subject of decentralization and provide a forum for different voices, including the traditionally marginalized, to articulate their views on decentralization, *i.e.*, both the ongoing process and desired results. Recognizing that the bureaucracy is not a monolithic entity and their opinion regarding the local government reform initiative are variable, the objective of this paper is to capture different voices in the bureaucracy and reflect on decentralization.

Methodology

Interviewing the members of bureaucracy has been the prime instrument of conducting the study. This component of the study covered mainly the existing bureaucrats ranging from bottom- to top-level in service. The former top bureaucrats have also been covered. As many as 40 bureaucrats have been intensively interviewed under the study (please see Annex 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Bureaucrats Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Generalist (Deputy Secretary and Above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior/Mid-level Generalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior/Mid-level Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A couple of former cabinet secretaries (former Economic Adviser to the Caretaker Government and currently chairman of the Public Service Commission) have been interviewed as well. Field level sub-unit officials of line ministries (*e.g.*, education, agriculture, livestock, accounts, Local Government and Engineering Departments etc.) have been interviewed in groups to get their perception about the unfolding process of decentralization. A couple of trainee official of IMED
and some experts providing training in Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) have been consulted as well. We also had a chance to incorporate the views of the one influential member (former bureaucrat) of the newly formed Local Government Reform Committee¹.

**Evolution of Bureaucracy in Bangladesh**

The Bangladesh bureaucracy has a strong legacy and originates from the bureaucracy in British India.Traditionally, these bureaucrats were not at ease to perform under political supervision. This was particularly the case during Pakistan period which hardly experienced democratic governance. This mindset continued to affect their relationship with politicians in Bangladesh as well. In the early years of independent Bangladesh, the bureaucracy came under heavy pressure to operate under political supervision. But this phase did not last long. Subsequent phases of military rule reinstated the bureaucrats in their entrenched positions and strengthened their grip over the system. After the restoration of electoral democracy in 1991, the dominant role of bureaucrats in policy formulation and policy implementation continued in indirect manner as the political institutions including parliament and its standing committees could not function effectively due to deep-rooted confrontational politics.

The bureaucracy draws strength from its permanent stature, stronghold over information, expertise and experience in administering the country. Using the resources at their disposal, this institution has been able to exert considerable influence over the policy-making process. A number of reforms have been introduced to enhance the accountability of the bureaucracy in the 1990s and onward. These include the strengthening of parliamentary committee system, Institute of Parliamentary Studies (IPS) for research support and the introduction of Prime Minister’s Question Hour and the establishment of an independent parliamentary secretariat. The bureaucrats working in different ministries, department and corporations were summoned to

¹ The current interim government has formed a Local Government Reform Committee in mid-May 2007 headed by former secretary A.M.M. Shawkat Ali. Other members of the committee include Professor Syed Giasuddin Ahmed of Dhaka University and Professor Dilara Chowdhury of Jahangirnagar University, Badul Alam Majumdar, Executive Director, Sujon, Mir Enayet Hossain Montu, Chairman, Association of Union Parishad and Secretary, LGRD. In three months time, this committee shall submit a report on the ways and means of strengthening local governance system in Bangladesh having consulted with concerned stakeholders.
appear before parliamentary committee and respond to the questions and queries posed to them by the parliamentary committee members. The response has been the development of a compromising relationship between the politicians and bureaucrats. At times their relationship also deepened to encourage unwanted politicization of bureaucracy with a number of negative consequences.

Section 1: Understanding Decentralization

The purpose of this section is to obtain a more general understanding of the bureaucracy’s position on the advancement of local governance reforms (creating local government that are accountable—both economically and politically to the citizens) in general and the empowerment of UPZ in particular.

1.1 Key groups within the bureaucracy

- The civil bureaucracy in Bangladesh is not a monolithic entity. The entire bureaucracy in Bangladesh was plagued with deep-seated factionalism and waning esprit de corps. Currently, there are 29 cadres in Bangladesh civil service. Each cadre constitutes a relatively small but distinctly elite subset of the civil service. The most critical form of factionalism in civil service has been the conflict between the specialists of 28 cadres (such as health, agriculture, foreign affairs, economic, taxation, customs, engineering and so on), and the generalist of BCS (administration) cadre. However, the animosity between them has been reduced in the recent years, particularly at lower level.

1.2 Views within the bureaucracy on the definition and description of decentralization

- The experience of decentralization in Bangladesh hitherto has been no more than de-concentration, i.e., local government bodies have been the appendices of the central government. By decentralization all the bureaucrats understand financial autonomy of the local government. Financial dependency of local government bodies on the central government curtails their autonomy. Due to high dependence of local government on the central government and belated release of fund for the former there is a serious
dissatisfaction among the officials placed at UZPs to get the fund in time. Uncertainty prevails and budget making by the local government officials. They support the placement of officials as transferred subject at the disposal of the UZP. However, they also want central government to retain the final authority to regulate their conditions of services such as appointment, transfer, promotion and incentives.

1.3 Limited advancement of local government reforms and suggestions to overcome it

- Different groups within the bureaucracy are of the opinion that local government has not been considered seriously as a vital democratic alternative by the past ruling regimes and politicians in post independent Bangladesh. While political leaders are afraid of losing control over the development process, bureaucrats are reluctant to share power with peoples’ representatives at the local level and get themselves held accountable by the elected representative of people.

- The bureaucrats felt that decentralization efforts in Bangladesh have not been an uninterrupted and happy experience. Local government reforms were imposed in a hurried manner and the opposing parties were not consulted. The bureaucrats opined that the opposition political parties must be consulted prior to undertaking any sort of local government reform initiative by the incumbent government and the reform bill must be debated in the floor of national parliament thoroughly. Even in an extra-ordinary situation prevailing at present, there should be an attempt to get the views of the political parties on the possible reform of local governance. The newly formed local government committee can easily touch base with the political parties on this vital issue. Such interaction will contribute towards sustainability of the reforms.

1.4. Extent of support to local governance reform

- The officials at the upazila level regardless of their cadre affiliation prefer an elected upazila chairman to an elected MP. However, MP’s role as advisor to the UDCC must be scrapped prior to the reinstatement of the upazila system, they opined.
1.5 **Actors who may create impediments and supporters of decentralization reforms**

- Most politicians and MPs in particular belonging to the ruling parties were dead against restoration of elected UZPs. However, there are exceptions as well. A former secretary informed in condition of anonymity: “Almost all Ministers opposed the reinstatement of upazila during the last three regimes. Prime ministers were in favor of restoration of upazila. Potential MPs are still opposed to the restoration of the UZPs as that would mean curtailing of their political clout”. Bureaucrats are strongly in favor of restoration of UZP. Their bitter experience of working with MPs particularly after 1991 has convinced them to opt for elected upazila chairman. There is also strong demand among members of the civil society for the decentralized local governance at different levels. Grass-root level activists of different political parties want UZP back. This was disclosed by the officials working at the upazila level. They felt that local politicians will find stronger local governments as launching pads for higher level political leadership positions.

1.6 **Potential constraints and opportunities to building consensus for decentralization**

- Already there is a consensus for decentralization among all well-meaning politicians and almost all members of the civil society. There is not much desensus within the bureaucracy on this issue (explained in the following paragraphs)

1.7 **Bureaucracy’s level of support for the utility of the GS, UP, UPZ, and ZP**

- Most of the bureaucrats, irrespective of their cadre affiliations, support the decentralization plan. Most of the UNOs who have been interviewed do not have the experience of working under an upazila chairman. On the contrary, they do have the experience of working with MP as an advisor of UDCC. This experience has not been quite pleasant to them. They, therefore, would prefer to work with an elected upazila chairman. Senior administrative bureaucrats are also in favour of revival of the upazila system as they will not be affected by this reform. Union parisahd has been there for a
long and bureaucrats want its continuation and empowerment. This has also been firmly rooted.

- Bureaucrats are divided on the issue of revival of Zila Parishad (ZP). One sub-group (senior generalists and specialists) opined that (Zila Parishad) ZP should be revived. “You need immediate revival of higher tier of local government to coordinate the development activities conducted in different upazilas preferably by an elected district council chairman (not by MP)” opined one DC.

- Two former cabinet secretaries reported that it was a constitutional obligation of the government to introduce local government tiers at administrative units like district council and others. Government has to comply with the constitutional binding or amend it. One former cabinet secretary felt that infrastructural activities by large departments like LGED at the district level can only be coordinated by ZPs.

- Another group of bureaucrats (relatively young) think that local government tiers at the UP and upazila level will suffice. There was no need of the ZP. According to them, too many local government tiers (gram parishad, zila parishad/divisional council) will make things complicated and pose problems of coordination among those tiers of LGs. District council will not be financially viable either. It will also create overlapping responsibilities and thus slow down the pace of implementing development projects at the upazila level. Gram Sarkar (GS) has been politicized and lacked democratic character too. Complying with the directives of the high court it should be either abolished or be a directly elected body. Consensus was more towards abolition of this tier.

1.8 Major Findings

Factionalism in civil service, though feeble, is still confined to the conflict between the specialists of 28 cadres and the generalist of BCS (administration) cadre. However, the intensity and magnitude of the conflicts has abated over time. Bureaucrats belonging to different specialist cadres are placed under the purview of different line ministries and they are
accountable to their superiors in the ministry. They are immune from the control and influence of the bureaucrats belonging to BCS (administration cadre) and formally they are not accountable to them for their actions in the service. So they are not unhappy with the present arrangement.

Two major local government reforms (the introduction of Gram Sarker and Upazila system) were carried out by two autocratic governments without consultation with the opposition political parties. This unilateral decision was imposed by promulgating ordinances. Legitimacy deficiency and exclusion of the opposition by the ruling regimes were two explaining factors for the eventual abolition of the local government reforms.

According to the Warrant of Precedence (which describes hierarchical arrangement of rank of public office holders) of the Government of Bangladesh, the rank and status of an MP is much higher than the UNO and other officials (UNO enjoys the rank of a deputy secretary at best while an MP’s rank is higher than a secretary) at the upazila level. The MP’s constituency and political support base, influence and her/his position in the national politics are also greater than those of the upazila chairman. Due to MP’s higher position in the Warrant of Precedence, the UNO is supposed to comply with the directions of the MP. The status of an Upazila chairman is equivalent to a deputy secretary. That is why the government officials including the UNO will feel more comfortable while working under the supervision and leadership of upazila chairman than the MP.

There is consensus among almost all the bureaucrats interviewed about the reintroduction of elected UZP and continuation of the UP and abolition of Gram Shava. Bureaucrats (senior and junior) are divided in their opinion about the revival of the district council. Senior group wants it for ensuring better coordination of development activities at the district level and meeting constitutional obligation of having an elected tier at the district level. Junior group does not want its revival on the ground of having too many local government tiers resulting in overlapping of functions, slow pace of implementing development programs and financial non-viability.
1.9 Analysis

Bureaucrats want limited devolution. Earlier there was deconcentration, *i.e.*, extension of the central government. Political unwillingness on the part of the politicians and strong resistance from the ministers, MPs as well as some bureaucrats can be attributed to the limited advancement of LG reform in Bangladesh.

Administrative bureaucrats support the placement of officials as transferred subject at the disposal of the UPZ. However, they want central government to retain the final authority to regulate their conditions of services such as appointment, transfer, promotion and incentives.

1.10 Preliminary Conclusions

Factionalism in civil service is confined to the conflict between the specialists of 28 cadres and the generalist of BCS (administration) cadre. Bureaucrats want decentralization albeit in way of limited devolution. They do not want their career advancement placed under politicians. There is a consensus among almost all the bureaucrats interviewed about the reintroduction of UZPs, continuation of the UP and abolition of Gram Parishad (GP).

Section 2: Assessing past experiences with UZP

Upazila system was primarily designed and driven by the then military government during mid 1980s. Though the tenure of elected UZP was short-lived, this was the first time in the history of Bangladesh devolution rather than de-concentration at the local government level was seriously attempted (see Annex-2 for a short review of literature on this attempt). This section deals how different groups in the bureaucracy view the UZP given their limited success in Bangladesh’s recent history.

2.1 Reasons behind the limited previous success of UZPs

- Senior bureaucrats pointed out that upazila system was initiated without consultation with the major political parties. As a result, they did not provide the necessary support for its sustainability.
Almost all bureaucrats interviewed highlighted that the party or regime in power wanted to make the local government representatives their power base so that the system could be manipulated to their end.

According to two former generalist bureaucrats, “the political governments, particularly the ones formed by The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) remained hostile to the UZP and didn’t allow this to function. The Awami League Government passed law in its favor but didn’t take measures to operationalise it.”

An overwhelming majority of senior generalist bureaucrats acknowledged that at the initial stage most UZPs could not perform mainly due to the reluctance and reservations from the bureaucrats.

It was told by one former cabinet secretary that “when BNP took power in 1991 many top bureaucrats expressed their dissatisfaction regarding UZP to the then Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and subsequently, at the end of 1991, BNP abolished UZP.”

One deputy commissioner who worked as assistant commissioner during UZP regime stated that “since all the local bureaucrats were placed under the direct control of UZP they started to be friend of UZP chairman rather than the MP. Soon UZP chairman began to replace MP as the chief guest in many development project inauguration ceremonies and social events. MPs found this emerging practice threatening to their political clout and apprehended that their political future could be in jeopardy. So they put pressure on the government to make room for MPs to engage in the local development projects.” As an example he cited that as soon as BNP came into power, many MPs delivered speeches in national parliament mentioning the corruption of UZP chairmen and asked for abolition of the system.

2.2 In what ways UZPs have been most effective

Senior and mid-level administrative bureaucrats reported that they had to encounter conflicts with the UZP chairmen at the formative stage of UZP. As time passed, UZP
chairmen were provided capacity building training by various agencies and the conflicts between them and the bureaucrats began to resolve. The chairmen started gaining decision-making capacity and began to communicate with the officials more effectively. In particular, the coordinating role of the chairman has been appreciated by most bureaucrats, both former and present.

- Specialist bureaucrats expressed mixed reactions regarding the performance of UZP. UZ level agriculture, fisheries and livestock, education, youth and sports etc officers explained that UZ system provided the opportunity to undertake highly customized development projects according to the local needs. UZP also enabled them to take up emergency projects following natural disaster or any other difficult situation. For example, one UZP livestock officer expressed that he carried out a project of emergency vaccination to around 70 cows immediately after a disease broke out among cows in a village. He prepared the project proposal and got approval from UZP in just two days. He thought, if he were to submit the project proposal to the district officer in line ministry it might have taken at least two weeks and there was no guarantee that the project would have been approved.

2.3 In what ways UZPs have been least effective

- It was reported that generalist bureaucrats at the UZ level reluctantly accepted the authority of the UZP chairmen for writing their Annual Confidential Report (ACR).²

- All bureaucrats mentioned that immediately after the start of the UZ system, most UZPs lacked separate offices, vehicles and residences for the new chairmen. Many instances could be noted when UZP chairmen captured the offices and vehicles of UNOs. This resulted unwanted but bitter conflict between UZP chairmen and UNOs (see Annex 3 on findings of newspaper scanning). However, it was reported that things settled down later.

² Career development of officials depends to a large extent on quality of the ACRs written by superiors.
Almost all the bureaucrats interviewed believed that they were better off in terms of education, experience, training and hence not confident about the technical knowledge of the chairmen. Yet, they felt that given adequate foundation training the chairman could pick up necessary nitty-gritty of administration as well.

All bureaucrats reported that there were severe conflicts among MPs and UZP chairmen over resource allocation at the UZ level. Specialist cadres pointed out one negative practice by the UZP chairmen in project planning and selection. It was reported that UZP chairmen usually did not promote people’s participation at great length. Rather they tried to make sure that only their political supporters and loyal UP chairmen received maximum benefit through their limited participation.

Project implementation officer (PIO) of Ministry of Disaster and Relief expressed that corruption had increased substantially during UZP regime. Some PIOs used to make substantial personal fortune through misappropriating the relief materials with the connivance of UZP chairmen who were not under any accountability radar.

However, one former UNO expressed concern with respect to relief distribution. He expressed that though relief materials were supposed to be allocated among unions depending on area, population size and number of distressed people, there were instances where UZP chairmen had allocated relief materials considering their personal and political rapport with the union chairmen. Often, they did not want to follow strictly the relief distribution criteria.

The UZP engineers (junior specialists) were especially not happy with the allocation guideline of development budget as directed by the Planning Commission (central government) to UZPs. For example, according to this guideline UZP could allocate 25 to 35 per cent of the development budget in infrastructure development (depending on the size of UZP), which was much lower than the present expenditure level of these line ministries (fund allocated directly by line ministries e.g. LGED, not channeled through
UZP). Unless the guidance got revised, UZPs may not be performing so well as development coordinating body.

2.4 Major findings

Reasons behind limited successes

Though Upazila was an extraordinary policy innovation which was able to make significant impact on the local development, it lacked the smell of democratic process at its birth. The political parties though underscored the merit of UZP yet despised it for its non-democratic origin. All successive governments have tried to use the local government system for their own political interests. No regime demonstrated its commitment to reduce central control over rural local institutions. BNP government abolished UZP system when they came to power in 1991. BNP’s strong resentment against the then military regime, led by Ershad’s Jatiya Party played crucial role in abolishing UZP.

UZP was short-lived and the elections were opposed and boycotted by major political parties. Bureaucrats resisted UZP vehemently in its initial days and were not prepared to relinquish the control on resources and executive power. So they created various barriers against consolidation of UZP. The UZP, therefore, failed to deliver many of the promised results. MPs were afraid that private accumulation and patronage distribution by them would be threatened by the presence of elected UZP chairmen at their constituencies. So they raised many barricades against the successful evolution of UZPs.

Major successes

Having received rigorous training at Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Comilla and Rural Development Academy (RDA), Bogra UZP chairmen’s performance in running day-to-day administration improved significantly. Over the time, they were able to engage all officials placed under them in speedy implementation of the development projects. When UZP was established, most chairmen ensured physical presence of all officers at work place and held accountable to them. There was a tendency among some officers (e.g. medical
officers) in the initial period to remain absent without taking permission of the chairman. There were instances when some UZP chairmen started asking the medical officers in open public sessions why they remained absent. Medical officers felt embarrassed and then increased their presence and provided service at UZ level. Consequently, better service delivery was ensured and officials were subsequently made accountable to the UZP.

Initially, a UZP on an average used to receive Tk 7 to 10 million a year to formulate and implement development plans and programs. But as the years passed by they focused on domestic resource mobilization and subsequently, they had much greater financial autonomy to undertake development projects according to the need and aspirations of the local people. Both chairman and officials improved their capacity to implement larger projects as the institution began to mature.

When UZP system was in place, significant development budgets from line ministries like LGRD, education and health etc. were channeled through UZ development fund under closed supervision of the chairman. Some UZP chairmen developed enough autonomy to reject a project developed by a line ministry if it did not match the local development objective. This helped reduce wastage of scarce developmental resources. This was also in line with the people’s aspiration of local development.

**Major failures**

Since most of the UZP chairmen had poor academic background many UZP level bureaucrats continued to consult with district officers of line ministry instead of the UZP chairmen. This happened in almost all line ministries. This was proportional to the fund received from the line ministries. If the UZP’s fund was very low, the line ministry official’s interaction with the chairman was also low. This created some tensions at the UZP at times, which affected the level of efficiency of the officials of some line ministries.

According to bureaucrats of all shades, most of the UZP chairmen lacked the managerial and also project monitoring capacity, in the initial days, which severely hampered the performance
of UZPs in accomplishing various development projects. Conflicts developed among UZP chairmen and MPs around handling of resources and exercise of political power at the UZ level. Introduction of UZP allowed huge resources under the disposal of UZP chairmen. For example, under the previous Thana Parishad structure, only a few thanas had more than Taka 0.5 million placed at their disposal. But soon after introduction of UZP they received at the least Taka 6 million. This was a significant jump indeed.

Grants from central government to local UZP had two components — transferred and reserved funds. Local governance ordinance nominated UZP chairman and UNO as the supreme decision making authority in spending the transferred and reserved funds, respectively. In some cases UZP chairmen interfered in the expenditure of reserved part as well and thus conflict erupted between UZP chairmen and UNOs.

UZP election was conducted when UP chairmen were already elected. Most UZP chairman candidates asked assistance of some UP chairmen to mobilize voters for them and in return promised them to allocate more resources in future, if elected. This created a lot of anomalies in the pattern of resource allocation subsequently.

2.5 Analysis

Introduction of a democratic institutional entity like UZP was a major policy decision by the then non-democratic government. No nation-wide discussion was held or stakeholders’ perspectives captured beforehand. It was introduced essentially to establish a strong political base of the then government. There was no genuine commitment for effective decentralization. Seeds of its subsequent failure were sowed in the opportunistic, political aspiration of the ruling regime. Therefore, no future government should have a political ill motive centering on UZP. Instead, it should be allowed to flourish on its own course.

UZPs had a number of strong features of success as well. Dynamic local leadership could motivate upazila level government departments for better delivery of services to the people. Local development planning should therefore be designed by the future leaders of the upazilas in
collaboration with the local officials. Hence the UZP system can be a fertile ground for development of future leadership including some of the more successful MPs.

Previously UZP chairmen could closely monitor activities of various departments and development schemes. In future many other developmental actors may also be engaged in UZP activities. Therefore, appropriate training courses can be designed for the chairmen by national and international experts and organizations.

Poor academic background was one of the major sources of tension between UZP chairmen and bureaucrats. Therefore, many officials felt that minimum educational qualification such as graduation may be made mandatory for a candidate for UZP chairmanship. They however, also pointed out the limitation imposed by the constitution which is vague on this for any of the elected representatives. At the least, advanced level training should be provided to elected chairmen. On the other hand, to prevent the existing chairmen from taking advantage of campaigning for the next election, s/he should handover power to the UNO/interim UZP chairman ninety days before election in line with the constitutional innovation made at the centre.

2.6 Preliminary conclusion

To sum up, though introduction of UZ system was almost a paradigm shift in decentralization process, tensions and conflicts primarily were noted among Upazila Chairmen, MPs and different levels of local bureaucrats. As a result, shortly after democracy was restored in 1991, the then government in power threw out the idea of UZP. There was a strong protest from some MPs against this system. However, though there were some failures in the earlier UPZ system, most bureaucrats now believe that gradual strengthening of the UPZ institution will lead to smoothening and overcoming of those tensions. A consensus has indeed emerged in favor of elected UZP.

Section 3: Trajectories in UZP reforms
The present section captures views of the bureaucrats on incentives and conditions under which to support future reform programs, internal and external factors which could influence the system, and how to reconcile the tensions, if any, to carry forward the LG reform agenda. Other priorities of the bureaucrats have also been explored.

3.1 Incentives to support reform

- Revival of UZP would help develop career of junior bureaucrats. According to One former (currently a deputy secretary) and two present UNOs, UZP chairmen should have the authority to write Annual Confidential Report (ACR) of the UNOs. Previously in most cases (more that 85 per cent) UNOs received 98 to 100 per cent marks, which they normally do not get now (on average they get 60 to 65 per cent marks). Such high marks will help them get quicker promotion, they reckon.

- Professional bureaucrats (physician of Upazila Health Complex and one upazila engineer) have reservation about the future reforms as they would impose extra burden of work and lessen freedom in performing their duties at their workplaces. They do not want to be coordinated by either UNO or UZP chairman in future. On this point, two present UNOs informed that in the cases where district level authority writes the ACR of the professional cadre bureaucrats working at upazila level, they neglect the coordination of UNOs so as to get extra freedom in their duties. But they have to be regularly present and accountable to elected UZP. People would have received better service from relevant departments if elected chairmen coordinated them.

- According to a former UNO, bureaucrats are really in favor of neither election in UZP nor interference of MPs at UZP activities. But between an MP and a UZP chairman the UNOs will prefer the latter because it will work as a shade from the undesirable interference of the MP and his/her local followers in development activities in the locality.

3.2 Conditions to support local governance reforms
• The UNOs stated that there is a need for introducing strict rules regarding the control of funds by UZP chairman and UNO in order to avert future conflict between them. There should be no interference from the chairman in the control of reserve fund.

• Both UNOs and other bureaucrats suggested that job description of the line department offices should be specified in the future Upzaila Ordinance. Rationalization and right job description for the officials is also necessary. Some jobs like supervision of primary level education may be transferred to UNO.

3.3 Internal and external factors affecting UZP decentralization reforms

Internal factors

Economic

• According to present UNOs, one of the most important driving factors was to establish upazilas as local growth centers. In the changing circumstances an independently functioning UZP led by a local elected representative have all the potential to become vibrant economic zone if it is directly and sufficiently funded.

• Two former UNOs said that new tensions may emerge in implementing development schemes. Bidding system should be open and transparent. There should be independent committees in finalizing tenders of relevant line departments and the decision-making should be based on well-defined criteria to reduce Chairman’s power to influence the bidding process.

Political

• According to present UNOs, till recently an upazila of an opposition MP’s jurisdiction received lower allocation in terms of ADP projects and overall development activities. Conversely, over-expenditure in development work was observed very often if the upazila was under the jurisdiction of a minister or ruling party’s MP. Population and their socio-economic conditions, geographical location and vulnerability, infrastructural requirements, etc. were defeated by political identity of the local MP. In future the
development allocation should be determined keeping in mind the aforementioned factors, not by the political will and philosophy of the ruling party. Only an elected chairman can ensure this.

Social

• A former cabinet secretary, a deputy secretary and two UNOs expressed their opinion that there is a need for greater interaction between UZP and the society at large through people’s participation in UZP’s budgetary process.

External factors

International organizations

• According to a former UNO, international organizations (IOs) experienced in local governance may be involved in formulating principles of fund allocation from ADP and its utilization, rules of business of the bureaucrats, efficiency related matters, and people’s participation in upazila’s budget-making process.

• A former cabinet secretary strongly opposed the interference of international organization in local government reform. He argued that any kind of reform agenda should be home-grown and implemented by the institutions and experts from within. A one-shot type of intervention by the international organization would create future vacuum and imperfection in the institutional mechanism. In the past many reform projects initiated by the IOs failed to achieve desirable results (e.g., jute sector reform project). Due to involvement of influential donors many of the agenda may be imposed on the central and local governments which may not work in future. However, a present UNO said that international and domestic best practices may remain in background while shaping up future reforms. The positive features may be replicated with technical assistance from the IOs.
Regional development

• Both present and former UNOs admitted that before any reform initiative is put in place we should analytically and extensively review the success cases of the neighbors. They particularly indicated the successes of the Panchayet system in India.

• A former secretary strongly opposed the point. He argued that the political, economic, socio-cultural reality and administrative structure are completely different in Bangladesh. Therefore, any blind replication of model of the neighbor without any proper check and balance would bring more failures than successes in the future reforms.

3.4 How to facilitate reconciliation internal and external factors

• The present UNOs said that in order to facilitate reconciliation of internal and external factors, they (UNOs) need training and sufficient orientation. Dealing with many actors and factors particularly the IOs will help strengthen their capacity and eventually they will become good managers. A former cabinet secretary suggested that IOs should be involved in enhancing efficiency of the bureaucrats, particularly properly handling funds, and lessening domineering power of the UZP chairman.

• One deputy secretary apprehended that involvement of many actors may restrain the objective of the future reform. There may be conflicts in setting priority among many of the ingredients of reform.

3.5 Priorities on decentralization reform

3.5.1 Support for UZP with political, administrative and fiscal autonomy

Political

• All the interviewees opined that there should be regular elections in UZPs, but the candidates must not be nominated by the political parties.

• The present UNOs and a former cabinet secretary suggested that for proper functioning of the UZP activities, the chairmen must not be a leader of any political party. The future
Upazila Act or Ordinance should have a clause about forbidding political nomination or affiliation of a UZP chairman candidate.

**Administrative**

- All the present and former UNOs unanimously opined that there should be no intervention from the central government. UZPs should have enough power to make the departments functioning and accountable to the upazilas.

**Fiscal**

- All the bureaucrats also opined that UZPs should have opportunity of income generation on their own. There may be a performance score system for every upazila. They should be directly transferred an amount of block grant keeping in mind the overall developmental needs, number of population and other socio-economic perspective of an upazila. But depending on their performance rating in income generation an additional amount of grant should be transferred proportionally. This will act as an incentive for better performance.
- UNOs and Assistant Commissioners (AC) Land proposed that land transfer charge should be re-introduced.

**The process**

- Both former and present UNOs opined that fiscal autonomy should be the driving force of administrative and political autonomy. There must be direct fund transfer to the elected UZP at the outset along with a revised tax schedule. Once fiscal autonomy is there, upazilas will automatically enjoy other autonomies.
- A former secretary said that fiscal autonomy will not suffice in the presence of the central control over local governance and overall political culture of the country. UZP itself should take decision about posting and transfer and providing performance benefit to the bureaucrats.

3.5.2 *Nature of relationship between central government and UZP*
• A former UNO said that elected representation is urgently needed accompanied with sufficient resource allocation to the UZP so that they can run the Parishad and implement development schemes according to their needs.

• A deputy secretary reported that in the past a UZP on average used to receive Tk 7 to 10 million a year to formulate and implement development plans and programs. At present developmental needs have been increased in every upazila. So the budget should be enhanced as well.

3.5.3 Other priorities

• The reform agenda should clearly mention that in order to make upazila chairmen more accountable to local people, ensure fiscal transparency, and restrain top local leadership from becoming autocrat and corrupt.

• Once elected, UZP chairmen should be trained properly, so that they do not create disturbance in the system by seeking undue privilege and create undue pressure in project selection and implementation.

• Upazila level offices should have adequate funds to initiate development activities of the relevant departments. Otherwise, many departments would remain underutilized. For example, if fishery department realizes that they need some fund for fishery sector development in a particular upazila, they should have adequate fund for that.

• Some redundant officials should be merged with some other relevant departments to make the system more efficient.

• Human resource development is crucial. Officers should have training, orientation, modern technology (ICT) and frequent cross-learning visit to best cases.

3.6 Main findings

Incentives and disincentives

Upazila level bureaucrats have some certain incentives and disincentives in future reforms. Administrative bureaucrats will have opportunity to develop career as well as become an
effective coordination authority to make the UZP a vibrant LGI. It will also act to counter undesirable intervention of the MPs in UZP activities. However, professional bureaucrats have reservation in the reform because it may lessen their freedom in workplace.

**Conditions to support reform**

There should be strict rule to handle funds by UZP chairman and UNO to avoid potential conflict and tensions. At the same time job description of bureaucrats is needed to be well-defined in the future Upazila Ordinance to make the institution effective and greater coordination among bureaucrats and between bureaucrats and chairman.

**Factors influencing the reforms**

UZPs should be adequately funded from ADP to develop local growth zones around these institutions. Tender procedure should be open and transparent with limited role of the chairman. Independent committees of line departments should make decision in selecting a bidder. Not political considerations but socio-economic factors like socio-economic condition of the inhabitants, geographical location and vulnerability and infrastructural requirements should determine amount of resources to be allocated to the UZPs. Social interaction through people’s participation in UZP’s budgetary process be made mandatory. This will help increase local resource mobilization, ensure proper implementation of development schemes, and reduce corruption and malpractice by UZP chairman.

IOs which have working experience on LGIs may be important partners in the reform process. They may provide policy support to the government and monitor progress of the reform process. They can also help provide training to upazila level bureaucrats and share best practices to help the reforms work. Regional developments like successes of Indian *Panchayet* system may be learnt through cross-learning visits by elected chairmen and bureaucrats working with them.

**Reconciling internal and external factors**

Reconciliation of internal and external factors would require advanced level training and orientation. IOs and domestic institutions may provide such training. IOs may be involved in
enhancing efficiency of the bureaucrats, properly handling the funds allocated to UZPs, and reduce domineering power of the UZP chairman.

**Priorities on decentralization reform**

To ensure political autonomy elections must be held regularly. People should choose their leader at UZP to ensure it as a truly democratic institution which should always be functioning. To de-link national politics from local self-government institutions, the chairman candidates must not be nominated by the political parties at any time. There should be a specific clause on that in the future Upazila Ordinance.

UZPs should have strong administrative autonomy. In order to ensure the autonomy, monitoring mechanism should be within the system. Usually the elected representatives will be the monitoring authorities. But an independent Local Government Commission with power to impeach a UZP in case of substantial irregularities could be a facilitating mechanism to properly function the system. The Commission may also provide policy support to the UZP.

UZPs should have the power to generate revenue from the internal sources. They should be provided a basic fund, and additional fund should be allocated based on their capacity to revenue generation. This will substantially strengthen their financial capacity. One of such fiscal measures should be the reintroduction of land ownership transfer tax.

Fiscal autonomy should be the driving force, followed by administrative and political autonomy. But in order to ensure the fiscal, administrative and political autonomies, the central government’s control should be the minimum.

**Relationship between central government and UZP**

Effective decentralization implies independently functioning of LGIs. But this requires regular elections and sufficient fund transfer directly to the UZP. Minimum interference other than audit is highly required for such independence.

**Other priorities**
The reform agenda should clearly mention about creating people’s space in upazila budget-making process to help establish an accountable and transparent UZP. The chairmen should be trained and oriented properly about the rules and regulations. All offices should be equipped with modern technology along with necessary ICT support.

3.7 Analysis

It is obvious that within the bureaucracy every bureaucrat wants to exercise power in hand and maximize benefit they can derive within the system. In the present system although UNOs are the coordinating authority in a UZP, they can not exercise their role as the controlling agency of other bureaucrats are the line departments. Now the proposed reform can restore power of the UNOs, making the professional bureaucrats net losers. Winners and losers are essential by-products of any reform. But if the objective is to revive an institution which had been functioning desirably, the reform agenda should have some favourable option for the losers keeping in mind their professional development. Hence their ACR should be written by the district level authority but Charimen should write a separate performance report.

Since the political ambition of the then ruling party led to failure of the main spirit of establishing UZP, it would be wise to de-link UZP representatives from national politics. A separate clause on that in the Ordinance will therefore prevent political intervention at and resource allocation to UZPs. On the other hand, engagement of the IOs experienced in local governance will strengthen capacity of the Parishad and their leadership and benefit the government in UZP-related policy formulation and implementation, and increasing efficiency in utilization of both physical and human resources.

Devolution of power and resources should the two main spirits of UZP reforms. But without people’s participation in electing and making their representatives accountable to them through participation in budgetary processes the reform will not be viable and sustainable.

3.8 Preliminary conclusion
The present section deals with the future route of UZP reforms. These seem to be quite practical given the ground reality. However, nobody can deny that de-linking political intervention will not be possible in the short run. People’s involvement in UZP activities, raising consciousness among various actors, devolution of power and resources, human resource development at UZP, establishment of a permanent local government commission, and involvement of international organizations would be some of the important options to make the institution vibrant and the future reforms sustainable.

4. Desirable relationship between UZP and other local governments

The purpose of this section is to gauge different views of the bureaucracy on how to strengthen UPZ effectiveness and local accountability. Especially it would be useful to understand how they should function alongside other levels of government-Center, ZP, UZP, UP and GP.

4.1 Role of the central government be in promoting decentralization

- Central government should be a referee, facilitate resource flow and engage in monitoring of the quality of public expenditure. It should also encourage public-partnership by engaging more NGOs/CBOs in local development activities.

Independent technical unit for monitoring and fostering decentralization

- No technical unit for monitoring and fostering decentralization is imperative. The bureaucrats do not find the necessity of constituting a presidential committee. They prefer the constitution of a permanent Local Government Commission which can play the coordinating role between the centre and local government tiers.

Incentives for different levels of local government to work more cohesively

- The bureaucrats opined that central government should work on the principle of ‘circle within circle’. LGs should have its own treasury, budget, and accounts along with substantial authority to raise its own revenue. LGIs should be elected body. Central government administrators should serve purely as external advisors and inspectors and have no role within the local authority.
Relationship between the central government and UZP

- All of the interviewees suggested that the relationship between central government and UPZ should be based on mutual respect. UZP should be a local body that is constitutionally separate from central government and responsible for a range of significant local services.

Possible conflicts and redressal

- LGs should go slowly in overseeing sub-unit in overseeing line ministries to avoid tensions. The first step should be coordination and reporting of activities to inform each other. As LGs gain strength, they will gradually start overseeing the line ministry’s activities without much of a tension.

4.2 Effective relationship between the UZP and UP, role and functions

- The UZP is linked with UP in various ways: directly through UP chairman as representative member of UZP; the system of budget approval and development planning by the UZP; approval authority of the UZP over the rates and taxes to be imposed by the UP and the authority of the UPZ to assign any development schemes to the UP for implementation: UPZ is entrusted to coordinate the activities of UP. This relationship between the two tiers should be continued. The specific functions of each tier of local government including UZP and UP have already been assigned and written in government manual and those should followed. The bureaucrats in general are of the view that the UPs should have full entitlement over the revenue generated by them.

4.3 Strengthening accountability and performance of UZP and other local governments

- To restrict the upazila chairman becoming a tyrannical one like the MPs of 8th Jatiya Sangsad, an independent Local government Commission can be constituted which shall prepare an annual performance report of each upazila and share that among the people.

- The Upazila chairman must prepare the yearly budget with the active participation of functionaries from every union parishad. The Upazila chairman has to present the
expenditure of the previous financial year before the members of upazila parishad and seek their opinion on that. People from local government commission could be present there to share the best practices of other area.

- Central government, through CAG office, must audit the tax collection and ADP expenditure of each UZP. The former will ensure that no Upazila chairman provides any unethical preference to any voter group in tax collection.

- The issue of local resources mobilization was explained by the bureaucrats interviewed. They reported that the tools for generating own revenue by the local government institutions were inadequate. Leasing of markets, jalmahtals (publicly owned water bodies) and ferry ghats should take place as per rules of competitive bidding. Some of the other means of generating own revenue such as issuance of trade licenses should be implemented with much vigor.

4.4 How the UPZ chairman will be more effective

4.4.1 Extent of authority of UZP chairman over Parishad members

- The UZP should consist of the union parishad chairmen within the respective upazilas as well as government officials, the later without voting rights. The upazila parishad should be headed by a directly elected chairman. The UNO will be entrusted with supervisory control over the upazila level staff, deputed from the respective central ministries. The entire upazila administration shall work under the control and supervision of the upazila parishad chairman. In most cases, the bureaucrats suggested the characteristics of the pre-1991 upazila system.

- A number of suggestions were given by the bureaucrats about the extent of authority the chairman should have over the voting members of the UZP. The UP annual income and expenditure budgets have to be scrutinized and approved by the upazila council. The ADP grant of up can be channeled through UZP.
Officials belonging to both generalist and specialist cadres at the upazila level came up with a constructive suggestion which could defuse these tensions. The district level administrative superior of UNO (i.e., DCs) and other officials of line ministry/department will write the ACR of upazila level officers and the upazila chairman will write counter performance report which will complement the whole performance evaluation process. This is a new proposal.

4.4.2 Authority to dismiss the chairman

- None but the voters in the constituency will vote a poor performing upazila chairman out in the next election.
- The national integrity system can be strengthened and extended up to the local level. A functioning Anti-corruption Commission can be a deterrent against mismanagement and irregularities of fund by the UZP.
- The earlier provision of dismissal of the upazila chairman by bringing a vote of no-confidence on him/her by two-third majority members (UP chairmen) of the upazila council should be discontinued, the officials opined.

4.4.3 Measures to ensure complementary relationship

- Bureaucrats regardless of cadre affiliation are of the view that the MPs worked as the advisor to the Upazila Development and Coordination Committee (UDCC) and exercised his/her authority in the allocation and use of development fund at the upazila level. “The MP has emerged as the de facto Upazila chairman in the absence of the upazila parishad” remarked one former Chief Engineer, LGED. The existing provision of MPs as an advisor to the UDCC should be scrapped, the officials opined.

4.5 Urban-rural relations in local government

Possible sources of tensions and redressal

- There remains no major institutional and functional conflict between pourashava (municipality) and upazila. In most cases, their jurisdiction of work and working areas
has been earmarked. In order to ensure coordination between the paurashava and upazila and resolve dispute between the two (in terms of functional jurisdiction, revenue collection, infrastructural development) the chairman of paurashava (except class-I municipality) can be made an ex-officio member of the UZP.

**UZP election and urban local government reform**

- Municipality and upazila have learnt to live together. Chairman of class III municipalities is a member of UDCC and he/she attends the meeting chaired by the UNO. Problems remain with the chairmen of class I and class II municipalities who will not be willing to attend the UDCC meeting at the upazila level. They may prefer to attend coordination meeting at the district level chaired by an elected district council chairman rather the DC.

4.6 Major findings

**Relationship between Central and local government**

Central government should be a referee and facilitating resource flow and engage in monitoring of the quality of public expenditure. The relationship between the centre and the UZP should be based on mutual interest and respect. Excess control by the central government over the UZP affairs would stifle the ultimate goal of decentralization and it will adversely affect its performance. LGs should go slowly in overseeing sub-unit in overseeing line ministries to avoid tensions. Officials belonging to some specialist cadre are in dilemma in expressing in their opinion about the revival of the upazila system. The officials who enjoy huge allocations for implementing development projects (such as the officials belonging to education ministry, LGED) are against the reinstatement of the upazila chairmen.

**Relationship between the UPZ and UP**

The specific functions of each tier of local government including UZP and UP have been assigned and written in government manual should be followed. Entitlement over the revenue
generated by UPZ and UP should be specified. Any portion of the revenue generated by UP should not be retained by the UPZ in order to avoid tension and conflicts

**Strengthening accountability and performance of LGIs**

Participatory budgeting should be practiced. CAG must audit the tax collection and ADP expenditure of each Upazila parishad. Central government, through CAG office, must audit the tax collection and ADP expenditure of each Upazila parishad. Internal revenue mobilization initiative should be strengthened. A local Local government Commission can be constituted which shall prepare an annual performance report of each upazila and share that among the people. The entire upazila administration should work under the control and supervision of the upazila parishad chairman.

4.7 Analysis

The national government should retain the reserved function including the offices of police, the magistracy, the judiciary, revenue collection and land administration. Transferred functions which include agriculture, livestock, primary education, health and family planning, rural water supply and sanitation, Food for Work Program, Cooperative and social welfare should be the preserve of the local government. Officials of the transferred subjects should be placed under subjects at the disposal of UPZ. Matching grants from government can be given as incentives based on considerable amount of internal revenue generation.

Officials belonging to many subunit offices of the line ministries (agriculture, health, youth and cooperative, fisheries and so on, all belong to specialist cadres) do not want to be overseen by the UPZ. The officials are accountable to their seniors at the district level. There is no one left to oversee the activities of these officials at the upazila level. In many cases their families stay away from them and they use to go back home at the weekend. Restoration of upazila and the presence upazila chairman will stand their way of doing the same. Contrarily, the chairman can ensure accountability of the officials by getting them more available in the station. Officials belonging to cadres other than the BCS (administration) do not feel comfortable in attending the
coordination meeting of UDCC where the UNO is the member secretary and he is the de facto coordinator as well. The coordination task by the upazila chairman will put an end to this issue. In this respect, they prefer upazila chairman to chair the coordination meeting to UNO.

In order to ensure coordination between the paurashava and upazila and resolve dispute between the two (in terms of functional jurisdiction, revenue collection, infrastructural development) the chairman of paurashava (except class-I municipality) can be made an ex-officio member of the upazila parishad.

4.8 Preliminary Conclusions

Bureaucrats are not sharply divided on their opinions on the local government reform. Government should be a referee facilitating resource flow and engaging in monitoring of the quality of public expenditure. Bureaucrats prefer the constitution of a permanent Local Government Commission which can play the coordinating role between the centre and local government tiers. Matching grants from government can be given as incentives based on considerable amount of internal revenue generation. LGs should go slowly in overseeing sub-unit in overseeing line ministries to avoid tensions. The entire upazila administration should work under the control and supervision of the upazila parishad chairman. None but the voters in the constituency will vote a poor performing upazila chairman out in the next election. MP’s role as advisor to the UDCC must be scrapped in order to make the upazila functional and effective.

General Conclusion

The paper captures views of the serving and former bureaucrats about the problems, prospects and challenges of decentralization and local government reforms in Bangladesh. Preliminary findings hold that most of the bureaucrats are in favor of the reintroduction of UZP. They maintained that people’s participation in the decision-making process of the upazila must be ensured and clearly defined roles and responsibility of every local government tier must be chalked out. They are, however, divided on the revival of district council led by an elected
representative. One group opined that Zila Parishad elections should also be held immediately, and zila parishad chairman should be elected through direct vote. Other found it unnecessary. Officials belonging to professional cadres such as physicians, engineers expressed their preferences to remain under the line ministry in order to serve their narrow personal and coterie interest. However, they also recommended the strengthening of ACC and its expansion of activities to the UP and UZP level and establishment of a permanent Local Government Commission which can look after the litigation and disciplinary matters of all LG tiers. However, majority of the interviewees suggested holding elections at every tier of LG simultaneously in order to avert undesirable circumstances. They also strongly favored substantial financial, political and administrative autonomy of the LGIs in order to let the LGs evolve as viable institutions and enable the local people to reap full range of benefits from future local governance reforms initiatives (See Annex – 4 for the synthesis of diverse views expressed by different groups of bureaucrats on issues related to decentralization).
# Annex 1

## List of bureaucrats Interviewed

### Senior Generalist (Deputy Secretary and Above)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dr. Akbar Ali Khan</td>
<td>Former Adviser to the Caretaker Government (Former Cabinet Secretary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dr. Saadat Hossain</td>
<td>Chairman, Bangladesh Public Service Commission (Former. Cabinet Secretary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Former Secretary and Member, Local Government Reform Committee 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Md. Sharful Alam</td>
<td>Additional Secretary and Ex. Director General, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Additional Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Anwarul Karim</td>
<td>Joint Secretary (Admin.), Ministry of Establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ashok Madhab Roy</td>
<td>Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Md. Faizul Kabir</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner, Narayanganj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Khodeza Begum</td>
<td>Additional Deputy Commissioner, Narayanganj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kazi Shakhawat Hossain</td>
<td>Additional Deputy Commissioner, Narayanganj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Md. Shahadat Hossain</td>
<td>Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Senior Specialist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dr. M.G. Sarwar</td>
<td>Join Chief, General Economic Division, Planning Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Member, Bangladesh Medical Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Local Government and Engineering Department</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Junior/Mid-level Generalist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Md. Babul Mean</td>
<td>Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Doha Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Md. Abdul Jalil</td>
<td>Assistant Commissioner (Land), Doha Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kamruzzaman</td>
<td>Magistrate, Narayanganj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shirajun Noor Chowdhury</td>
<td>Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mohammad Hossain</td>
<td>Senior Assistant Secretary and Personal Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mohammad Emdad Ullah Mean</td>
<td>Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sagaraika Nasrin</td>
<td>Assistant Commissioner (Land), Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Syed Irtiza Ahsan</td>
<td>Assistant Commissioner (Land), Kaliakair Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>IMED, Planning Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sl.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Designation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Abdul Mannan</td>
<td>Upazila Agriculture Officer, Doha Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Md. Amzad Hossain</td>
<td>Upazila Livestock Officer, Doha Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nirmal Kumar Saha</td>
<td>Upazila Agriculture Officer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Siddiquur Rahman</td>
<td>Project Implementation Officer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Md. Shahidur Rahman</td>
<td>Secondary Education Officer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Md. Obaidullah</td>
<td>Upazila Primary Education Officer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Monotosh Chand</td>
<td>Accounts Officer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gaj Nabi Khan</td>
<td>Youth Development Officer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Jalal Ahmed</td>
<td>Upazila Engineer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nazir Ahmed</td>
<td>Public Health Engineer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ziarat Ali</td>
<td>Livestock Officer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nikhi; Chandra Dey</td>
<td>Social Welfare Officer, Mirzapur Upazila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Upazila Nirbahi Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2

Local Governance Reform and the Bureaucracy: A Brief Review of Literature

Numerous policymakers, academicians, researchers and civil society organizations have closely analyzed the UPZ performance issues and the challenges it faced and prescribed various solutions for success. First, UZP system had been instated only for 8 years (1983 to 1991), of which democratically elected chairman ruled the last 5 years. Second, there have been frequent policy changes and subsequent rearrangements of the tiers of local government since independence. Therefore it is hard to outline concrete suggestions based on the impact of changes, the performance issues, the problems and the evolving pattern of local governance.

The first and strongest hurdle UZP faced at its early phase and also throughout the 8 year lifetime was from the administration. The government placed all functionaries at the upazila level under the administrative control of the UZP chairman — in alignment with the decentralized decision making goal. Hye (1985) warned that “this move towards decentralization and devolution is grudgingly accepted by the well-entrenched bureaucracy. And at the first available opportunity they will strike back and try to reduce the local government functionaries to a subordinate status.” Schroeder (1985) also expressed his concern regarding the potential conflict between the elected chairman and the UNO as well as other upazila officers. And it emerged as harsh true as soon as UZP started to function.

Ali (1987) observed that after nearly two years the elected chairman took over, in most upazilas, relation between the chairman and UNO remained strained. The administrative conflict flowing from top-down and bottom-up, explicit and implicit, that found expressions during the early days continues even now in the upazila system. While Ali reasoned on lack of training of chairmen in bureaucratic rules and procedures, Schroeder stated that shortage of experienced administrators needed to fill the combination of DC, ADC and UNO also played significant role.

Schroeder also mentioned that since at initial stage UZP lacks the technical capabilities and experience, in short run there may be considerable inefficiency and wastage. This constraint may be overcome through gaining experience and additional training programs but each takes time. And in reality this happened at early stage in majority UZPs. Bureaucrats, as cautioned by Hye (1985), exploited this opportunity to establish various rule and procedural based control over UZP activities. Throughout the reform, Ershad strongly favored UZP chairman which saved the UZP from the bureaucratic wrath.

However, the bureaucracy managed to strengthen their grip on UZP through various government directives. Khan (1987) find that as of 1984, four ordinances, four rules, one resolution, five guidelines and instructions, and 174 orders and notifications compiled in three volumes of the Upazila manual provided the guiding principles for UZPs. Besides, Hasan (1992) explicitly noted that the language of control used for the upazila is the same as that introduced by Basic Democracies Order of 1959 by the then Pakistan government. And also supported by Siddique (2000), “the central government has always tended to favor bureaucrats in their relationship with the local elected functionaries”. This tight and overwhelming control on UZP activities, in planning, approval and implementation of development projects, by the central administration suggests that the performance of UZP became largely dependable on the performance of bureaucrats.

Bangladesh does not possess a strong and committed administration. Corruption is part of service delivery by the public sector. An in-depth survey on class I officers in 1999 results show instances in Bangladesh’s civil service where professional conduct is perceived to be sacrificed at the expense of personal and political concerns. It revealed that public officials strongly acknowledged three commonly held view — bureaucrats are seldom formally punished for bad performance. Control is not delegated sufficiently and public officials make more than their

---

4 Bangladesh: The experience and perceptions of public officials (Draft). This report analyses the findings from a survey of public officials in Bangladesh undertaken in 1999. The survey is one of a major program of public officials’ surveys funded by the Bank Netherlands Partnership Program (BNPP).
official salaries. Regarding the other partner, the elected representatives, it is inarguably true that widespread corruption prevails in political practices. This resulted in silent allegiances among elected representatives and local level bureaucrats in many UZPs for mutual financial gain. Rahman (1994), by investigating the nature and magnitude of corruption at several UZPs, concluded that bureaucratic control over massive financial resources without proper accountability and self-seeking nature of bureaucrats are principal contributing factors to the growth of corruption at the local government level.

It is also inarguably true that UZP enabled participation of people at local government and simultaneously make it accountable to the public. Based on the stated objectives, sufficient financial resources are channeled through UZP for a balanced, localized and priority based development. But the key mechanisms of ensuring participation and accountability at UZP were not defined; it was thought that people will voluntarily participate through the political process and thus those can be ensured. According to McCarthy (1993), in societies with unequal access to power at the local level, devolution would tend to reinforce the power of local elite. And this has by and large been the case in Bangladesh (Westergaard and Alam, 1995). Voluntary participation strategy resulted into party-based control on rural resource delivery system (McCarthy, 1993), bias toward infrastructural work against education, healthcare and social welfare (Westergaard and Alam, op cit), and the vulnerable groups received very little in the way of projects intended to assist them (Crook and Manor, 1994).

Another significant constraining factor was UZPs were heavily dependent on block grants, and with the decrease in amounts of block grants in some UZPs, the development activities became limited in scope. Ruling political party intended to obtain support from the UZP chairmen. The government came up with this control mechanism at the time of the first-ever elections of UZP chairmen in may 1985, when supporters of opposition political parties or independent candidates won 56 per cent of the positions (Khan, 1987). The five major problems of resource mobilization at UZP were a meager resource base, a tax ceiling, the national government’s
control over sources of revenue, the planning and budgeting guidelines, and administrative rules and regulations (Hasan, 1992). Weak tax management resulting in poor collection (Chowdhury, 1997), and the rules regarding the utilization of own revenue income were also rigid and not helpful in creating incentives for further generation of own revenue (Alam, 1989). The other major concerns regarding UZP were (i) the UZP system taken away the vigor and energy of union parishads (Ali, 1987) and (ii) the involvement of the MPs in UZP development work as an adviser severely impinging the power of UZP chairman as well as the UP chairman.

Therefore any future attempts to reform and reorganize UZP should address these issues to make them truly decentralized, institutionally effective, financially viable, participatory, gender sensitive, transparent and accountable local government institutions (CPD, 2001). The successful example of Sirajganj Local Governance Development Project (SLGDP) by UNDP demonstrates that there are certain mechanisms, like open budget session and regular meeting with local citizens ensure participation of and accountability to local people. Capacity building is also necessary for the elected representatives to operate the local government with transparency and accountability. They achieved considerable success in restoring the people’s confidence in local government and also make it effective and efficient remaining within the unfavorable policy context.

Based on their real life experience and learning from various donor funded projects toward effective and efficient local government through increasing participation and accountability, a group of union chairmen known as ‘Self-governing Union Parishad Advocacy Group’ on 25 June 2005 arranged a news conference in the national press club and put forward some suggestions. The suggestions can be segregated in two broad categories: first, minimize bureaucratic interferences, conflicts and hassles at local government level, and second, improve the performance of local government in service delivery. Suggestions reside in first category are

6 http://www.local-democracy.org/events/2005/Press%20conference/budget_lg.htm in Bengali
reform the local government laws in aligning with the 1992 directions from Supreme Court (Kudrot-e-elahi Vs Government of Bangladesh), scrap the sections 12, 60, 61, 65 and 81 of the Local Government Ordinance 1983, and channel ADP allocation directly to the union parishad fund. Second category suggestions include assigning new tax source or increase the transferred share of taxes collected by central government, increase the accountability of local government by making participatory budget allocation and implementation as mandatory, revamp the Village Court or Gram Salish, increase manpower at union level and finally increase the honorium of union chairman.

Most of these suggestions are similar with suggestions prepared by eminent bureaucrats, policymakers and experts in this field. Alamgir (1990) summed up the issues nicely: (i) making chairman actually responsible and accountable to local people, (ii) extending the tax base and related revenue, (iii) strengthening staff assistance for coordinated decision-making, and (iv) streamlining accounting and expenditure control and improving transparency of accounts. The Transparency International suggested abolishing the Official Secrets Act 1923 to ensure greater transparency at local government level. In addition to that, the Local Government Reforms Commissions set up in 1992 and 1996 both suggested the creation of a permanent Independent Local Government Commission (ILGC) (Siddique, 2000). This will not only shield the local government from politicization by the central government but also work as facilitator in minimizing the conflict with the bureaucracy. Finally, the reform should address the performance issues and challenges of both the UZP and UP simultaneously in its endeavor to build a new brand of local government.

References
Alamgir, MK, (1990) “Local Government in Bangladesh: Recent Changes and People’s Participation”, presented at a seminar on Government and Participation, Bergen: Chr, Michelson Institute, 6-8 June.
Crook, R and Manor, J (1994), Enhancing participation and institutional performance: democratic decentralization in South Asia and West Africa, report to ESCOR, on phase two of a two phase research project, Mimeo, London: ODA.
Annex 3

Stories related to UZ (particularly relationship between local bureaucrats and UZP chairmen) published in the national dailies during UZP regime:

**BOX A: Reluctance of embracing participatory decision making by UPZ Chairman**

In Atgharia Upazila, four out of five representative members boycotted parishad meetings as many as three times, the fifth member being the Upazila chairman himself. The last of these meetings boycotted was the one to consider budget for 1985-86. [Source: Ittefaq, June 28, 1985, cited in Ali (1987)]

Nine Union Chairmen of Modhupur upazila under Tangail district in a joint statement demanded action against the chairmen of UZP for what they said his alleged corruption, inefficiency and abuse of power. They condemned that UPZ chairman did not convene any meeting since the election virtually turning the parishad ineffective. They also complained that UPZ chairman took decisions unilaterally with support from UNO. In last month they had lodged a complaint in DC office. This prompted an official enquiry on the allegations. Additional District Magistrate investigated the matter but no action is taken. [Source: The Bangladesh Observer, 23 November, 1985.]

In 2002-2003, we [the Hunger Project Bangladesh] succeeded to hold 22 open budget meeting [of Union Parishad], while in 2003-2004 there was 27 open budget meeting all around the country. It is one type of improvement in relation to increase the number. But, in actions like this, maintaining continuity is also important. It is somewhat unexpected that, there were only four unions where open budget meeting held in both the fiscal year. [Source: Report on Open Budget Meetings 2003/04, May 2004, The Hunger Project-Bangladesh]

**BOX B: Corruption allegations against UPZ**

Mr. Abul Hossain the newly elected chairman of Bagarpara Upazila parishad is alleged to have misappropriated Taka 1,12,500 sanctioned for different projects. The allegation against him is under investigation of district Anti-Corruption Department. [Source: The Bangladesh Observer, 18 November, 1985.]

The Project Implementation Officer recently identified misappropriation of 195 mounds wheat (in Food for Work programme) by the chairman of Nanner union Parishad (Manikgonj). He filed a case in Dhamrai police station. A case also has been registered with Anti-corruption Bureau. [Source: The Bangladesh Observer, 4 November, 1985.]

A substantial majority, nine out of 10 respondents [in a survey conducted among elites, government officials and elected representatives], reported personal experience of corruption in the Upazila administration, primarily associated with financial misuse. [Source: Ingham & Kalam (1992)]

Transparency International Bangladesh in their 2005 Household Survey revealed that -
- 26% households who faced judgement by elected local government representatives had to pay 4035 taka as bribes
- 30% households who were enrolled for relief had to pay 56 taka as bribes
- 39% households who received relief got reduced relief

Annex 4

Synthesis of the major findings reflecting the views of different bureaucrat groups about decentralization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bureaucrat Groups</th>
<th>Understanding Decentralization</th>
<th>Assessing past experiences with UZP</th>
<th>Trajectories in UPZ reforms</th>
<th>UZP relations with other levels of government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior/Middle level</td>
<td>Deconcentration, Limited devolution, Financial self-sufficiency</td>
<td>i) Used UZP as power base ii) Local bureaucrats didn’t like writing ACR by the UZP chairman</td>
<td>i) ACR should be written by DC but UZP chairmen should separately write performance report ii) Elected UZP will ensure the presence and accountability of line ministry officers iii) Need for specific job description for UZP chairman iv) Reduce financial dependence on central government v) UZP should have strong administrative and political autonomy vi) No political affiliation/nomination of UZP chairman candidates vii) Right-sizing the bureaucracy viii) Training and modern equipment (ICT) is needed ix) Cross learning visit to best cases x) Permanent Local Government Commission</td>
<td>i) Favor the restoration of upazila ii) Do not want local government tier at the district and village level iii) In favor of increased internal resources mobilization iv) Establishment of a local government ombudsman v) MP’s role as advisor must go away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>Deconcentration, Limited devolution, Financial self-sufficiency</td>
<td>i) Used UZP as power base ii) UZ system provided the opportunity to undertake highly customized development projects according to the local needs.</td>
<td>i) ACR should not be written by UZP chairmen ii) Do not want to be coordinated by either UNO or UZP chairman iii) Need specific job description for UZP chairman iv) Reduce financial dependence on central government v) Sufficient budget in line departments is needed</td>
<td>i) Reluctantly favor the restoration of upazila ii) Do not want local government tier at the district and village level iii) In favor of increased internal resources mobilization iv) Establishment of a local government ombudsman v) MP’s role as advisor must go away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior/Fomer</td>
<td>Generalist</td>
<td>Deconcentration, Limited devolution, Financial self-sufficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| i) The regime in power used UZP for their own political interests  
ii) Used UZP as power base  
iii) BNP’s strong resentment towards the then military regime played crucial role in abolishing UZP.  
iv) UZP elections were opposed and boycotted by then major political parties  
v) Bureaucrats resisted UZP vehemently and was not prepared to relinquish the control on resources and executive power  
vi) MPs were afraid of losing control over the development process  
vii) Most of the UZP chairmen ensured physical presence of all officers at work place and hold accountable to them.  
viii) Bureaucrats didn’t like writing ACR by the UZP chairmen  
ix) Capturing offices and vehicles of UNOs by the UZP chairmen created unwanted but bitter conflict  
x) Between UPZ chairmen and UNOs |
| i) Will ensure the presence and accountability of line ministry officers  
ii) Need specific job description for UZP chairman  
iii) Reduce financial dependence on central government  
v) Replicate the experience of SLGDP  
v) Review the success cases of the neighboring countries.  
v) UZP should have strong administrative autonomy  
vii) Right-sizing the bureaucracy  
vii) Training and modern equipment (ICT) is needed  
ix) People’s space for participation in budget-making and monitoring process is needed  
x) Permanent Local Government Commission for policy support, but no power for monitoring and supervision |
| i) Favor the restoration of upazila  
ii) Want local government tier at the district level  
iii) In favor of increased internal resources mobilization  
v) Establishment of a local government commission  
v) MP’s role as advisor must go away |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialist</th>
<th>Deconcentration, Limited devolution, Financial self-sufficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i)</td>
<td>Used UZP as power base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii)</td>
<td>BNP’s strong resentment towards the then military regime played crucial role in abolishing UZP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii)</td>
<td>Bureaucrats resisted UZP vehemently and was not prepared to relinquish the control on resources and executive power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv)</td>
<td>UZ system provided the opportunity to undertake highly customized development projects according to the local needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v)</td>
<td>UZP chairmen usually did not promote people’s participation at great length</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialist</th>
<th>Do not want to be coordinated by either UNO or UZP chairman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ii)</td>
<td>Need specific job description for UZP chairman and MPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii)</td>
<td>Reduce financial dependence on central government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv)</td>
<td>Need for sufficient budget in line departments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialist</th>
<th>do not favor the restoration of upazila</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ii)</td>
<td>Do not want local government tier at the district and village level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii)</td>
<td>In favor of increased internal resources mobilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv)</td>
<td>Establishment of a local government Ombudsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v)</td>
<td>MP’s role as advisor must go away</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>