

ABSTRACT

Local government holds great promise for improving the public delivery services. A vibrant and viable local government system can ensure the sustainable development of a country. The Bengal Self-Local Government Act, 1885 provided the first framework with provisions for local government at union level. Although Bangladesh had a long history of local government, especially the union parishad, but a politically empowered and financially viable local government system is yet to emerge.

Performance of public delivery service by union parishad differs union to union. The study provides a synthesis and comparative analysis of causes of variation in performance of rural local governance and public delivery system. The study also addresses the potential of performance for good governance of union parishads as engines of pro-people development.

There are various arguments in favour of good performance of union parishad. Reviewing experience from international and Bangladeshi settings, three propositions have been formulated for investigation:

1. Educated and visionary elected representatives enhance the performance of their Union Parishad.
2. An active citizenry, whose participation in broad area of political life, such as campaigning, attending meetings of local government activities, lobbying with representatives, etc. are vital causes for good performance of a Union Parishad.

3. Civil society and social capital creates ' local collective action' and it is sufficient for strong mechanisms for promoting performance of Union Parishad.

The Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance, 1983 describes 10 compulsory and 38 optional functions of UPs, but without backing of resource and authority all the functions can not be performed.

The research has examined the hypothesis and finds that first two are correct for enhancing the performance of Union Parishad. The concept of Civil Society is not institutionalized yet in Bangladesh. The key actors of Civil Society are NGOs and they are mainly engaged in micro-credit programmes. In my study area NGOs involvement in UP activities are very limited and not creating awareness among their beneficiaries about local government. This research will partially fill a gap in the literature of Union Parishad governance and performance. The research tries to identify various causes of performance variation and that helps to formulate future policy regarding local government.