

Governance of Upazila Parishad in The Context of Globalization

Ranjan Kumar Guha¹

Abstract

Upazila Paishad (UZP) a decentralized local government tier at the sub district level in Bangladesh performs the coordinating role for delivering services to the local people. Globalization as a process of free flow of information, capital, goods, services and larger number of labour movement across the border has changed the demand of local economy and local people. In this context, the research question was how the UZPs perform its responsibilities in respond to the need of local people and economy and what role the local government should perform to fulfill the demand of changed situation? The article was based on the secondary materials along with incorporating personal learning during facilitating some initiatives of UZPs. Some of the elected representatives of the UZPs especially Vice Chairmen are found to be more interested in exercising administrative power rather than exerting influence utilising their political and social power. The UZP as an institution for planning overwhelmingly depends on the central government for financing the development programme that discourage to design project by articulating the voice of local people. A good amount of resources is spent through the transferred department for development projects and the UZPs have very limited role for planning and executing those programmes. Other than the routine works the decision making is consultative in nature and decisions are taken in the monthly meeting but influence of the MPs is evident. Poor functioning of Upazila committees and presence of different departmental committees in implementing the departmental programme inhibits the UZP to perform their monitoring role properly. Structural deficiency to coordinate the activities of non government and other organizations also inhibits the UZP to play its

¹ Ranjan Kumar Guha, Joint Director (Rural Economics), BARD, Comilla. The opinions expressed in the article are those of author's own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the organization he works at. Email. rkguha@live.com rkguha@gmail.com

role according to the changed economy. The UZPs need to be more innovative to exercise its administrative, social and economic power for coordinating the activities of multiple organizations for both private & public and working with a cross section of people. The members of UZPs can be motivated to explore the problems of resource utilization at the grassroots level and support individual imitative on a competitive basis. For increasing the capacity of generating own income of UZPs, central government can encourage UZPs to submit projects related to their own need on a cost sharing basis in addition to the ADP allocation.

Background

Centralized planning for development allegedly failed to address the diverse need of local areas and decentralization as an alternate planning process attracted the policy planners and practitioners for its successful implementation in several countries. Decentralization helps regional or local level officials to disaggregate and tailor development plans and programmes to the needs of heterogeneous regions or groups (Cheema & et.al, 1983). The need of the citizen is ever changing process especially at the advent of information revolution. Responding to their need efficiently is subject to the capacity and positive attitude of the service delivery institution. Local Government (LG) as a service delivery institution enjoys some advantages along with facing some limitations. The most important advantage is that the elected representatives of the LG institution reside very close to the people, so they are very much acquainted with the need of the local people and local areas. The most important limitation of the LG, especially in Bangladesh is financial stringency. In most cases it was found that the LGs in Bangladesh are mostly dependent on the central government for financial resources to undertake any development initiatives. Globalization, as a process of free flow of information, capital, goods, services and increased number of labour movement across the border has changed the demand of local economy and local people. Role of private initiative for boosting local economy is increasing and people want more quality and hygienic product or services than ever before. Moreover, a lot of service delivery agencies both private and public sectors are the today's reality at the micro level. In this backdrop LG need to be more efficient and innovative to perform its responsibilities. Resources both financial and human are more crucial nevertheless the governance of UZPs deserve special attention for performing the responsibilities in an efficient way. The dictionary meaning of

governance is the action or manner of governing a state or organization. (ESCAP), stated that governance is the process of decision-making and (UNDP, 1997) defined governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. From the definition it is clear that governance is a process for mobilizing resources by exercising power. Legitimate authority, knowledge, personal charisma, networking capacity of elected person, fund- raising authority and insights on the social dynamics of the elected representatives are the sources of power. The scope of the study was limited to the existing practices of UZPs for translating the rules into action in managing revenue and development project.

*Upazila Parishad*² (UZP), a local government tier at the sub district level was first introduced in Bangladesh in 1982. The system was abandoned after being practiced nine years in the year of 1991. The same was reactivated in the year of 2009 after a long interval. The intension of forming the local government at the sub district level was to ensure desired service to the people with the joint initiative of a democratic institution and nation building departments. The aim of the paper is to describe the governance system of UZP and analyze the role of UZP in the changed economy in context of globalization. Governance in the area of managing revenue and development programme is the special foci of the article. Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) undertook several initiatives for facilitating functioning of UZP after its revitalization under the auspices of UNDP, Bangladesh. The initiatives were related to facilitating to prepare five year plans of two Upazilas- Choudagram and Brahmanpara, under Comilla district, documenting the functioning of Homna Upazila, Comilla and organize series of training courses for the elected representatives and some key officials of UZP under Chittagong and Sylhet Division. The published documents of those initiatives and the author's learning obtained from institutional

² UZP as a self-governing institution is composed of one Chairman and two vice Chairmen- one male and one female, all elected chairman of Union Parishads (UP) and Poursava, if any, under the geographic boundary of UZP are the member of this institution. According to act, one third of women members elected from the reserve seat in UPs and Poursava to be elected as member of UZP. Functions of fifteen nation building departments have been transferred to the UZP for carrying out its activities.

attachment as a faculty member of BARD are incorporated to prepare this paper.

Globalization and Local Economy: Perspective from UZP

Globalization is a broader and macro concept as it goes beyond economic, social and political dimension. The economic dimension of globalization is more pronounced now- a- days due to its visible role on free trade and free movement of capital. How globalization can affect the local economy and what are the transformation channel of globalization from macro to local economy might be more interesting. Five economic dimensions of globalization are identified by (Goldin & Reinert, 2006) as trade, finance, aid, migration and idea. Free flow of information and wider access to information of local people through ICT has empowered citizen with the update information in different area. So, the ICT and several private organizations have replaced the monopoly role of nation building department for disseminating information related to technological innovation. The dominant role of the state in agriculture development especially input supply is no more visible. Non Government Organizations (NGOs) and private initiative are there for supplying inputs of agriculture. The traditional small and cottage industry in rural areas are not competitive with the commercial production in a large scale. Although government is the main player for providing public goods related to education, health and physical infrastructure, but private imitative for providing education and health services prevails to a some extent in the local areas. Increased role of service and industry sector at the macro economy have encouraged young people to be involved in nonfarm sector and avail the wider opportunity to be employed as foreign remittance earner. The expectation of the people also changed a lot in commensurating with the changed economy. People demand more quality public and private goods and services for enhancing their competitive capacity. On the other hand, people who are not able to take advantage of the globalization due to lack of skill want some support from the government for their survival. The young generation wants more skill training having demand in the market for readjusting their knowledge with the workplace. For boosting industrial base agriculture sector plays important role by supplying rice comparatively cheaper price. But, due to low price elasticity of demand of rice compared to other high valued agricultural product, farmers are less motivated to cultivate

rice. On the other hand, due to problem in the high valued agricultural supply chain farmers are not getting their expected share. As a result people expect that the UZPs will perform its responsibility according to their changed desire.

According to act, the UZP is supposed to do 14 functions related to planning, execution, monitoring, supervision, coordination for ensuring effective services to the citizen. The areas of services delivery is focused on delivering public goods related to infrastructure development, small scale irrigation through using surface water, health, nutrition & family planning, sanitation, safe drinking water, and education. Technology transfer and improving productivity in agriculture, small and cottage industry and to the youth labor force is also identified as area of operation for UZP. Facilitating to make formal and informal organization under cooperative department, initiatives of NGOs and supporting vulnerable group of people are other concern of the UZP. UZP is supposed to play vital role in the area of environment protection by considering the impact assessment of environment in every projects (GoB, 2013). Other than the Chairmen of the UZP, the other elected members of UZPs have no power in the routine administrative affair of the UZP. They are empowered to play role in development activities in the form of planning, monitoring, supervising and coordinating. But, it was observed that the other members of UZP especially Vice Chairmen are very much interested to play role in daily administrative affairs rather than their wider scope to be involved in development works.

Fiscal Governance at UZP

The structure of budget of the UZP comprises two overheads i.e. revenue and development fund. As per rule there are various sources for generating own revenue of the UZP but in practice own revenue of UZP mainly limited to the house rent of officials at the Upazila complex, a portion of land transfer fees, land development tax and leasing of *hatbazar* (rural market) & water bodies.. In the year 2010-11, Brhamanpara Upazila Parishad (BUZP) earned Tk. 5 million and Choudagram Upazila Parishad (CUZP) earned Tk 6 million as revenue of its own. More than one half of the revenue comes from land transfer fees. Some UZPs were found to have introduced several areas for revenue collection such as renting out auditorium, leasing of ponds at

the UZP complex, and auto rickshaw-stand and providing approval of housing plan within the Upazila Sadar. Due to overlapping of areas of Union Parishads (Ups) between UZP and absence of model tax schedule it is very difficult for the UZP to collect tax from the business initiatives. The major head of expenditure are salary and honorarium, office expenditure, capital expenditures and repairing cost. The UZPs mostly monitor the revenue collection and maintain books of accounts.

The development fund constitutes with the surplus of the revenue fund of previous year and ADP allocation from the central government. CUZP was able to transfer Tk. 0.2 million revenue surpluses to the development fund for undertaking the development projects in 2011-12. Although there is a provision for maintaining a separate account of development fund with the signature of Upazila Cahirman and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) but the initiative was limited to only own revenue income of the UZP. The revenue budget and development budget of the transferred department comes through respective ministry and Upazila Accounts Office. As a result the UZP has very limited administrative power in those areas. Besides this, there is a another account operated by Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) and Upazila Engineer (UEn) for preserving 1 percent land transferred fees in excess to the UZPs share to provide salary support of the Gram Police of different UPs under the Upazila. The UZPs need to follow guidelines set by the central government for allocating money to different heads and sectors under revenue and development funds respectively. All the expenditure from the own revenue and development fund needs approval from the Chairman of UZP through UNO. The fund of the ADP allocation is placed to the Upazila Accounts Office. The accounts office pays the bill when the same is forwarded through UNO and Upazila Chairman. Lack of full pledged accounts office at the UZP the fund is managed through different office of Upazila.

Governance of Development Programme at UZP

Governance of development programme implies the decision making procedures for managing the development programme at the UZP. Two types of development programmes- one is initiated by the UZP and another is initiated by national government and implemented by various transferred department are visible in an *Upazila*. The UZP is believed to make a plan to support the programme initiated by own

from the development fund of the UZP. The respective UPs and Nation Building Departments are supposed to come with some projects in line with the plan. A project selection committee, headed by Upazila Chairman is involved in screening the projects to be financed in the next year. Then the projects need to be getting approval from the meeting of UZP. A project having less than Tk. 1 lakh is implemented by the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) chaired by an elected person of the respective area. Although more than 16 projects having less than Tk. 1 lakh in a year is not permitted to be implemented by one UZP, but in reality there are some deviations in practice.

Planning at UZP

There is a provision for preparing long and short term plan for every UZP. But, in practice the planning process is ad-hoc in nature and virtually they prepare a list of projects on a quarterly basis after getting the allocation of ADP. Moreover, the UZP is interested to approve several small projects covering all Unions under its jurisdiction. Lack of an adequate database at the local level is also seen, as a major hindrance to proper planning, and efforts require a system of collecting information that would facilitate planning at the local level. The planning process needs to be supplemented with appropriate tools such as PRA in order to identify problems at the grassroots level and to ensure peoples' participation in the planning process (CIRDAP, 1992). (Salehuddin, 1992) put emphasis on training, finance, institutional development and personnel for enhancing planning capacity at the local level. Commitment of the national government to decentralized planning, financial autonomy, framework for integration of multilevel planning, creating a database etc. is also found important.

Lack of initiative, lack of database, lack of capacity and financial limitations are found inhabiting factors to prepare plan. ADP allocation from the central government and surplus amount of revenue budget of previous year of *UZP is the main source of fund for undertaking development projects from its own of UZPs*. UZP is empowered to undertake big projects in one or two sectors by utilizing the ADP allocation for visible development but, it is hardly practiced as UZPs shares the allocation to each Union by supporting their project. The main source for financing development project is the departmental

programme or project being implemented by various transferred department. It was found that UZPs has autonomy over 2 and 4 percent of the total development expenditure of the CUZP and BUZP respectively. In most cases it was found that the projects supported by the UZPs are related with the priority areas of national government and developing physical infrastructure and there are lots of duplications with the areas of projects implemented by UPs. In the year 2010-11 BUZP and CUZP prepared five year plan. The volume of plan is mentioned in Table-01. On that time 13 nation building departments were transferred to the UZPs. The programme of 13 transferred departments is reflected on their plan.

Table 01: Per Year Average volume of Plan of Two Upazila Parishad and Thirteen Transferred Department

	BUZP	CUZP
Area (Sq. Kilometer)	128.90	268.48
Number of Household 2011(in thousands)	38	80
Population 2011 (in Millions)	0.20	0.44
Number of Unions	8	13
Average Revenue Expenditure Per Year (in Million Tk.)	124	256
Average Development Expenditure Per Year (in Million Tk.)	214	582
Average Upazila Parishad Development Fund (in Million Tk.)	8	10
Different Projects of Transferred Department (in Million Tk.)	206	572
	214	582

Source: ³Five Year Plan of Choudagram and Brahmanpara

Table 01 show that the volume of plan has connection with the area of Upazila. The area and the total revenue expenditure of CUZP are more than twice than the BUZP but in term of development expenditure it is 2.78 times higher in CUZP. Considering the population it is found that share of each person in development expenditure is higher in BUZP than the CUZP. Although there are some problems with the data but it may be explained that the transfer of Upazila Development Fund

³ Five year Plan of Brahmanpara and Choudagram Upazila Parishad 2011-1016, in Bangla, A team of BARD facilitate to prepare the plan under the auspices of UNDP_Bangladesh.

(ADP) is allocated considering the area, population and socio economic status but some of the national programme considers the backwardness of the area. BUZ is more backward in terms of poverty. This may one of the reasons for higher share of each person on development fund. For undertaking big project according to the need of local area the UZP need to depend on political power to influence Member of Parliament (MP) as they have very limited financial resources of its own. It was observed that BUZP strongly believe that the area needs some projects related to water management as the topography of that Upazila is low. But due to lack of fund and manpower discourage them to prepare plan on that area. The plan was drafted by the UZP's committee and it was consolidated by a committee chaired by UNO. Finally, the plan was approved in a special meeting of UZP in presence of the MPs of respective area. It was observed that the some members of Upazila committee and some departmental officials who have good relation with the MP are not interested to prepare plan. They argue that the adhoc system of project selection is efficient as it is flexible and fast. There were also some conflicts within the members of standing committee during preparing plan in respect of their status. In some cases it was found that some UPs members who hold a portfolio in the committee of a political party at local level are less interested to work in an Upazila committee under the leadership of a Vice Chairman.

Development Programme of Different Transferred Department: Role of UZP

The services of 13 transferred departments were classified into 05 broad categories. The services under primary education, health and public health engineering department was identified as inputs for developing human resources and the support services related to crop, livestock and fishery development were identified as technology transfer for improving agricultural productivity. Department of Family planning, youth and women affairs provide services related to family welfare and empowerment of rural people. The support services provided by the Local Government and Engineering Department is related to development of physical and social infrastructure and the services provided by the department of social welfare and department of Relief and Rehabilitation was considered as public employment creation and social protection.

Table 02: Per Year Average expenditure of Two Upazilas by the Transferred Department

(in million Tk.)

	BUZP			CUZP		
	Revenue	Development	Total	Revenue	Development	Total
Human Resource Development	66	57	123 (38)	1 73	112	285 (34.76)
Technology Transfer for Improving Agricultural Productivity	16	8	24 (7.5)	32	15	47 (5.73)
Family welfare and Empowerment	26	9.6	35.6 (11)	35	8	43 (5.24)
Physical and Social Infrastructure	4	39.8	43.8 (13.64)	4	138	142 (17.32)
Public Employment Creation and Social Protection	2.5	92.1	94.6 (29)	4	299	303 (36.05)
	114.5	206.5	321	248	572	820

Source : Five Year Plan of Choudagram and Brahmanpara

From the above table it is found that priority area of development of the national government is reflected in the expenditure by transferred department of UZPs. The most priority area of development was creating public employment and social protection under different type of social safety net for alleviating poverty and fostering human resource through imparting knowledge and facilities for maintaining good health. More than two thirds of the total cost of the thirteen transferred department are utilized in the area of poverty alleviation and human resource development. LGED plays vital role for developing physical and social infrastructure which is 17 and 14 percent of total development plan outlay of Choudagram and Brahmanpara Upazila respectively. Family welfare & self employment and technology transfer for improving agricultural productivity got little importance among the departmental programme. The role of UZP in the programme of transferred departments is limited to monitoring, coordinating and dispute resolution. Virtually the UZPs are informed about the progress of the departmental programme at the monthly meeting. It is also evident that revenue expenditure for transferring agricultural technology, human resource development and family welfare and empowerment is higher than the development expenditure. The revenue expenditure generally covers salary and travelling and daily allowances for providing professional services while

development expenditure includes the cost of physical goods. Ensuring quality of services is the main challenge for optimum utilization of resources. The quality of professional services delivery related to human resource development is monitored by the local level managing committee. The UZP should have access to the information related to problem of resources utilization. On the other hand, there are lots of qualified human resources for technology transfer in the field of agriculture and developing skill among the youth generation at the Upazila level. But due to lack of development programme their potentiality is not fully harnessed. UZP should have a plan to utilize that resource properly by giving support from its own. In most cases it is observed that UZP spends lot of energy and resources for physical infrastructure development projects. For effective governance interaction among the school managing committee, health centre managing committees, NGO officials, different private organisations, entrepreneurs are essential for boosting the local the economy.

Decision Making at UZP

The meeting of *Upzila parishad* play vital role for taking decision and coordination. Upazila development and coordination meeting was replaced by the monthly Upazila Parishad meeting after the reactivation of UZP. All departmental officials are invited to explain the progress of their activities at this meeting. It was found that the departmental officials of retained department are reluctant to present in the Upazila Parishad meeting. (Rahman & Dasgupta, 2012) recorded 14 meeting of Homna Upazila Parishad during March 2009 to April 2010. On an average 33 persons attended in those meeting. Thirty six percent agendas in the meeting were related to development issues followed by the financial issue with 15 percent. Rest 49 percent issues were related to administrative and miscellaneous. They also found that the Chairperson of the UZP chairs the meeting but there is influence of MP for taking decision. The elected vice chairmen were found silent in most of the meeting. The officials of Nation Building Department (NBDs) are found to be interested in explaining the departmental activities. LGED Engineer and Project Implementation Officers (PIO) were found most active in those meeting. The UPs chairmen were

found to be interested in discussing socio political and service related problem. As a whole decision making was observed as participatory in nature. The UNO as a secretary of the UZP is found to be involved in explaining the rules and regulation for taking decision and his role is more or less as diplomatic. It is evident that the department's deals with hardware development got more importance in the meeting and the role of other departments deals with transferring soft skill got little priority in those meeting.

Monitoring and Evaluation by UZP

Upazila Parishad is supposed to play a vital role for monitoring and evaluation of development programme through different type of Upazila committees. There are 14 Upazila committees under the leadership of Upazila Vice Chairman. At the beginning of these committees were not formed but after being made compulsions to get ADP allocation it was formed in most of the UZPs. The Vice Chairmen act as Chairperson of each committee. But there is a conflict between the committees of respective department and Upazila Committee. (Rahman & Dasgupta, 2012) found 33 departmental committees of 10 transferred department. Other than the departmental committee most of the departmental officials are involved as tag officers at the Union level to monitor the supply of goods under social safety net programme. On the otherhand it was observed that the Vice Chairman is not well conversant with the departmental activities of the related department of Upazila committee. As a result they can't play effective role in monitoring the programme of the sector related to their area of operation. For evaluation of development project the UZP has very limited scope due to resource constraint both financial and human.

Governance of UZP in the context of globalization: An Analysis

The role of government and private organizations for the development is seen complementary and equally important in the era of globalization. The government is supposed to play facilitating role by developing infrastructure and perform regulatory functions while private sector will drive the economy by creating employment and producing goods and services. Although services related to human resource development is available in the market through private initiative but many people in Third World County like Bangladesh cannot afford it. As a result the government has to invest a lot of

resources for providing basic foundation of human resource development. UZP as an extended arm of the central government need to be efficient to assess the problem of development in local area and responding to this identified area. The main challenge is to coordinate the development efforts of multiple organisations at the grassroots for ensuring optimum utilization of scarce resources. The UZP is not in a position to coordinate the development programme of NGOs due to lack of database and system to monitor their activities. Connecting the trained persons from the government departments with NGOs or private organisations is the demand of time. Inculcating the skill for using ICT among the young generation by using the available professionals also deserve special attention. Promoting individual initiative in different agro processing supply chain and non agricultural sector through competitive basis may help UZP to play their role according to the desire of economy. It is true that people with less capabilities are not gainer from the wider opportunity created through globalization. The central government is supporting a lot under social safety net programmes. UZP should play effective role for reducing targeting error and misappropriation of resources at local level by going beyond the political interest. Market is taking care for input supply for increasing agricultural productivity. Sometimes farmers are affected with the low quality inputs. Regulatory functions of the respective department should be strengthened through proper monitoring by UZP. The main limitation of UZP is lack of resources. The UZP is empowered to raise its own fund through different mechanism. In reality, there are some limitations due to ambiguity in instructions and duplication of boundary with other local government. By removing this ambiguity each UZP should be encouraged to strengthen its competitive advantage to prepare and implement plan according to their own need. The competitive environment will enhance the capacity of local government to enhance the revenue earning of its own. Moreover, the UZP should be equipped with adequate manpower for performing its responsibilities and developing UZP as a strong institution.

Conclusion

A good image of the UZP depends on its ability to serve the citizen according to their expectation. The capacity of the UZP to prepare plan

based on the local needs and capacity to work with multiple agencies to make the UZP a viable institution is essential. The political powers of the elected representatives of UZPs need to be translated to work with different institution by respecting the values and culture of respective organisations. For increasing the capacity of generating own income of UZPs, the central government can encourage UZPs to submit projects related to their own need on a cost sharing basis in addition to the ADP allocation. Side by side, there should have some initiatives to support potential individual imitative on a competitive basis.

References

- Cheema, G. S., & et.al. (1983). Decentralization and Development: Policy Implementation in Developing Countries. New Delhi: SAGE Publication.
- CIRDAP. (1992). Impact of Decentralization on Rural Poverty . Dhaka: CIRDAP and AIT, Thailand.
- ESCAP. (n.d.). What is good governance. Retrieved October 30, 2014, from <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf>
- GoB. (2013). Upazila Parishad Manual. Dhaka: Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives.
- Goldin, I., & Reinert, K. (2006). Globalisation for development : Trade, Finance, Aid, Migration and Policy. Washington: The World Bank.
- Rahman, A., & Dasgupta, S. K. (2012). Working of Upazila Parishad in Bangladesh: A Study of Homna Upazila. Comilla: BARD.
- Salehuddin. (1992). Strategies for Enhancing Planning Capabilities at Local Level. In CIRDAP, Impact of Decentralization on Rural Poverty. CIRDAP Dhaka & AIT Thailand.
- UNDP. (1997). Governance for sustainable human development. New york: UNDP.