

RAPID ASSESSMENT REPORT

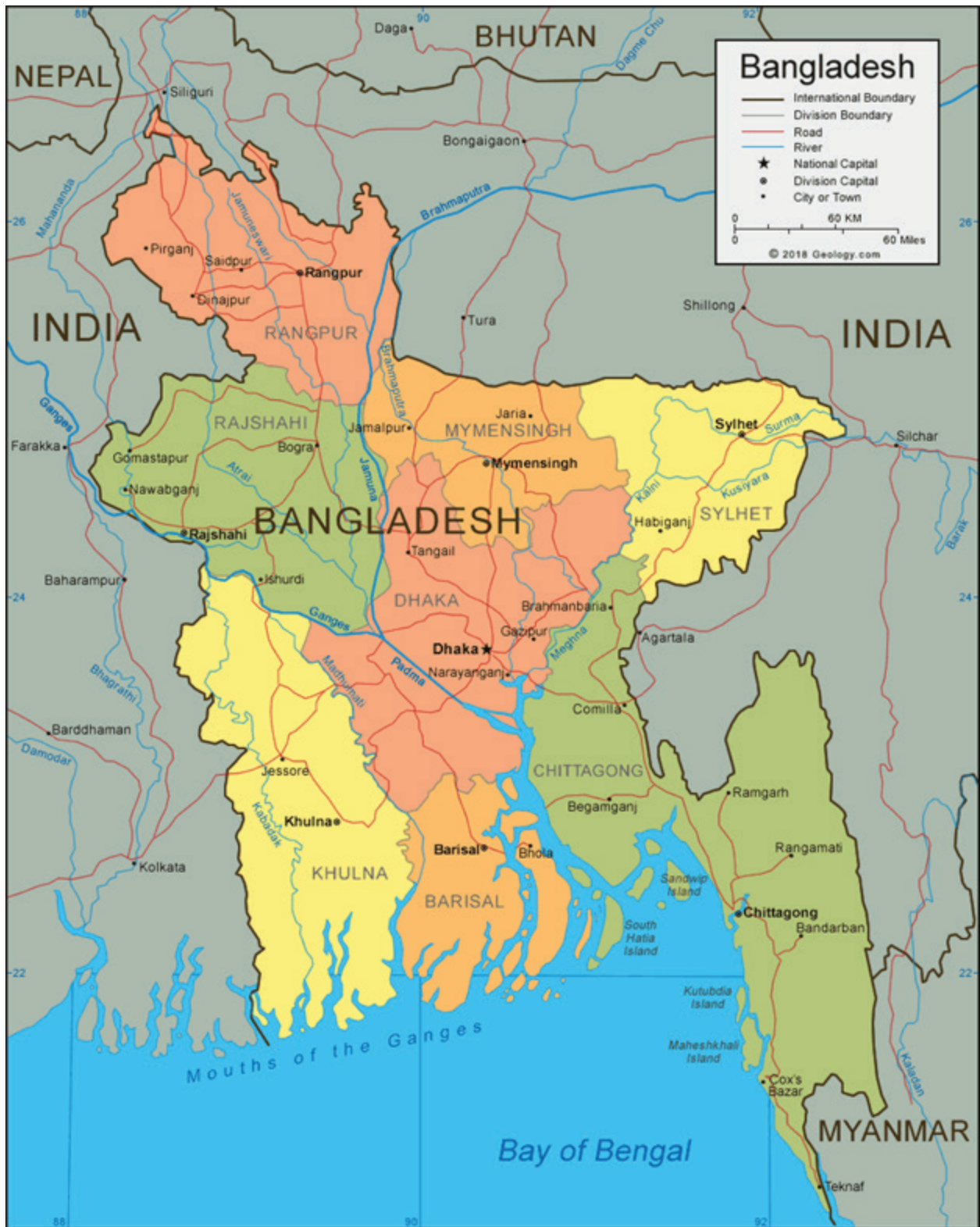
**The structure and Composition
of Existing Local Government Committees**

[With Focus on Health and Family Planning, Social Welfare, and Disaster Management]

Organized By HLP Foundation with Support from CEGAA

December 2021





RAPID ASSESSMENT REPORT

The structure and Composition of Existing Local Government Committees

[With Focus on Health and Family Planning, Social Welfare, and Disaster Management]

Organized By HLP Foundation with Support from CEGAA

December 2021

What's the Right2Grow Program?

Getting to zero undernutrition, and zero people without access to basic WASH

Despite marked progress over the past decades, almost 200 million children under-five still suffer from stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), or both, over 340 million children from vitamin and mineral deficiencies; while COVID-19 and climate change further aggravate the situation. Right2Grow has analyzed the root causes of our inability to get these numbers to zero. We see a world full of great intentions, expertise, and wealth which does not live up to its promises and potential.

International partners

Right2Grow is a Strategic Partnership between Action Against Hunger, the Centre for Economic Governance and Accountability Africa (CEGAA), Max Foundation, Save the Children, The Hunger Project and World Vision. With funding from the Dutch Government (Civil Society for Strengthening the Power of Voices), Right2Grow will collaborate with communities, community-based organizations, and civil society organizations in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, South Sudan, and Uganda from 2021-2025. In Bangladesh, HLP Foundation joined this R2G Consortium to work on Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking arena under the overall guidance of CEGAA.

Strengthening local voices

Right2Grow believes that sustainable progress can only be achieved by working with local communities, including especially women and other marginalized groups. Right2Grow, therefore, invests in communities, CBOs, and CSOs to collect their own data and stories on nutrition and WASH. We help them reach out to their nearest relevant government officials to account for what is needed, planned and — often not — delivered. We help build those stories into strong evidence to convince national and international leaders and officials to make better choices.

Strengthening partnerships

Right2Grow strengthens partnerships between local communities and their local governments to make a joint analysis of what is needed, and how local solutions can be supported, as well as build partnerships among civil society, private sector, and governments to approach the issue in an integrated way, breaking down the silos between nutrition and WASH actors, gender and economic growth through scaling up and funding bottom-up, gender sensitive approaches that cut across sectors, and build on meaningful community involvement and ownership. Right2Grow will collaborate closely with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands and in the program countries towards joint objectives for sustainable impact.

Source: Extract from R2G Project Document, 2020

This Report is published by the HLP Foundation in collaboration with CEGAA for the “Right To Grow (R2G)” Program Bangladesh.

Authors: Mr. Santanu Lahiri, Senior Decentralization Specialist, Think Tank Member, HLP Foundation and Consultant, World Bank; Mr. M. Shafiqul Islam, President, HLP Foundation and Former Additional Secretary, GoB; Mr. Mark Ellery, Senior Institutional Specialist, Think Tank Member, HLP Foundation and Consultant, UNICEF.

Rights and Permissions

The material in this work is subject to copyright. Because HLP Foundation and CEGAA encourage dissemination of its knowledge, this work may be reproduced, in whole or in part, for non-commercial purposes as long as full attribution to this work is given. Any queries on rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to the HLP Foundation and CEGAA.

Design & Print by Progressive Printers Pvt. Ltd.

Table of contents

5	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
7	ABBREVIATIONS
9	BACKGROUND
9	THE CONTEXT
10	LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN BANGLADESH
13	STRUCTURAL FACTORS: MAPPING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM
14	DETAILED STRUCTURE OF UNION PARISHAD
15	ASSIGNMENT OF ROLES
16	DETAILED STRUCTURE OF UNION PARISHAD
17	TIME-LINE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM
18	LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A MULTI-AGENT REALITY
19	EXISTING ELECTION PATTERN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS
21	SYSTEMIC FACTORS
22	IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES
23	CHALLENGES AHEAD
26	CONCLUSION
26	REFERENCES

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to convey their thanks and deep appreciation to the colleagues of HLP Foundation and senior members of academic institution, government agencies, especially to:

Dr. Mohammad Yunus, Senior Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), **Dr. Hossein Shahbaz**, Former Director of Research and Pilot Projects Divisions, CIRDAP; and **Mr. Salim Hossain Bhuiyan**, HLP Expert and Executive Engineer, DPHE.

*The diagrams on decentralizations / Page-14 and Page-15 that are used have been developed by **Mr. Mark Ellery**, Senior Institutional Specialist and Think Tank Member, HLP Foundation.*

Abbreviations

ACR	Annual Confidential Report
ADP	Annual Development Programme
BBGs	Basic Block Grants
BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BINP	Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition Project
BP	Best Practice
CEGAA	Centre for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa
CSG	Community Support Groups
CU2	Children under Two
CU5	Children under Five
DDLG	Deputy Director, Local Government at District Level
DLG	Director, Local Government at Divisional Level
DP	Development Partner
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GMP	Growth Monitoring and Promotion
GP	Good Practice
GUI	Graphical User Interface
HH	Household
HLP	Horizontal Learning Program
HLP-F	HLP Foundation
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
LGD	Local Government Division
LGIs	Local Government Institutions
LGSP-III	Third Local Governance Support Project
MDD	Minimum Dietary Diversity



MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MIS	Management Information Systems
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Multi-Stakeholder Partnership
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NILG	National Institute of Local Government
NNP	National Nutrition Programme
NPAN	National Plan of Action for Nutrition
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UDCC	Upazila Development Coordination Committee
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
USD	United States Dollar
R2G	Right to Grow
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WB	World Bank

Background

Right2Grow (R2G) is a Strategic Partnership among Action Against Hunger (Action Contre la Faim), the Centre for Economic Governance and Accountability Africa (CEGAA), Max Foundation (Max F), Save the Children, The Hunger Project (THP), and World Vision. In Bangladesh, HLP Foundation (HLP-F) joined the R2G Consortium to especially assist selected 40 Union Parishads, the lowest tier of rural local governments in Bangladesh, to carry out Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking related to water supply, sanitation, hygiene (WASH), and nutrition arena under the overall guidance of CEGAA.

With funding from the Dutch Government (Civil Society for Strengthening the Power of Voices), R2G will collaborate with communities, community-based organizations (CBOs), local and consortium partners (NGOs), and local government institutions (LGIs) in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, South Sudan, and Uganda from 2021-2025. The R2G Program will play a catalytic role in strengthening partnerships between local communities and their local government institutions (LGIs), Union Parishad in the case of Bangladesh, to make a joint analysis of what is needed, and how local solutions can be supported for every child to reach their full potential.

To achieve this long-term goal of R2G, the Program strongly emphasizes the strengthening of the partnerships among civil society, private sector, and governments to approach in an integrated way, breaking down the silos between nutrition and WASH actors, gender, and economic growth through scaling up and funding bottom-up to ensure reductions of all kinds of health risks for pregnant and lactating mothers and newly born babies, and to mitigate potential risks of stunting. The gender-sensitive approaches cut across sectors and build on meaningful community involvement and ownership which are also focused on under the R2G Program.

The Context

In the last two decades, Bangladesh has made major progress in many fields of development, drastically improving the stunting (low height for age) and nutritional status. However, according to the Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey 2017, 31% of children under-five (with 39% of two-year old children) are stunted, while 8% are wasted (low weight for height). There is a wide disparity in poor, rural, and urban slum areas where stunting rates reach 40% of the population.

Against this backdrop, R2G Program has initiated a pilot scheme in 2021 'to play a catalytic role for assisting and facilitating decision-makers jointly and effectively address

undernutrition in a multi-sectoral, gender-sensitive and inclusive way'. The Program will continue till December 2025 in 40 Union Parishads. To initiate the provision of catalytic support to 40 unions in 5 upazilas of 4 districts in Bangladesh, the R2G Program planned to carry out a rapid assessment on existing 'structure and composition of Local Government Committees, especially at the Union Parishad level for health and family planning, social welfare, and disaster management'.

Local Government in Bangladesh

The quest for a grass-root institutional strategy that combines the twin goals of strengthening participatory development at the local level and building local governments as key vehicles of local democracy and service delivery have been recurring themes in the development discourses of Bangladesh. Articles 11, 59, and 60 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh stipulate a well-defined structure of LGIs. There is a general agreement today that a devolved and effective local government system is crucial for making the development agenda pro-poor, widening participation in decision making, and ensuring that resources are directed to where they are most needed through increased allocative efficiency.

The local government system in Bangladesh has evolved within a three-tier framework - union, upazila (thana), and district - first envisioned in the colonial-era Bengal Local Government Act of 1885. This has not meant, however, that an effective three-tier local government system is actually operational.

The Union Parishad (UP) is the lowest tier of the local government system having the most robust presence by virtue of institutional continuity as an elected body. The Upazila Parishad (UZP) is the second tier of local government but has a much smaller history as an elected body, while an elected body at the district level is yet to appear.

At present, there are around 5,400 elected local government institutions (LGI) with around 60,200 elected representatives/councilors. These include 4,554 Union Parishads (UP), 482 Upazila Parishads (UZP), 329 Paurashavas (municipalities), and 12 city corporations. Union and Upazila parishads, usually seen as rural local governments, are independent tiers of local government while the Paurashavas and city corporations are not independent tiers but represent urban centres of smaller and larger sizes respectively.

In addition to the above, there are 64 Zila Parishads at the district level that have no elected representation and are functionally quite limited. These are currently overseen by officials nominated from the central bureaucracy and a political nominee. There is also an additional local government system in force for the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bandarban, Khagrachari, and Rangamati districts) where alongside the statutory LGIs, there are District

Councils legally empowered to exercise customary laws as well as a Regional Council for all three districts. However, these are currently being run by nominated persons rather than elected representatives.

An important goal of the local government system has been to bring elected representatives, executive functionaries, and service departments of the government under a uniform functional umbrella. To this end, laws were enacted to 'transfer' selected central government departments to the jurisdiction of the LGI at the relevant tier. The Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Act 1998 and subsequent amendment in 2011 placed 17 government departments under the UZP and clear provision was made for compulsory reporting of activities by other departments not categorically transferred. Similarly, the Local Government (Union Parishad) Act 2009 made 13 field level extension officials of 7 ministries transferable to the UPs. However, despite these initiatives, delegation is yet to be achieved as desired and directed in the legal framework.

LGIs in Bangladesh are entrusted with a long list of functions, but almost no money and functionaries are provided to fulfil the requirements of local governance. While regular elections are held at the union parishad and upazila levels, Bangladesh has a complex hierarchal local administrative structure that creates tensions between these two sets of institutions.

The local administrative structure is made up of fragmented agencies including administrative oversight, regulatory departments, development departments, and service-providing agencies. The government officials are vertically aligned with their parent department and ministries, but hardly any horizontal linkages and accountability mechanisms exist at each level with the corresponding local government institution. Some ad hoc coordination among government departments through a committee system is taken up, but in reality, most committees are non-functional.

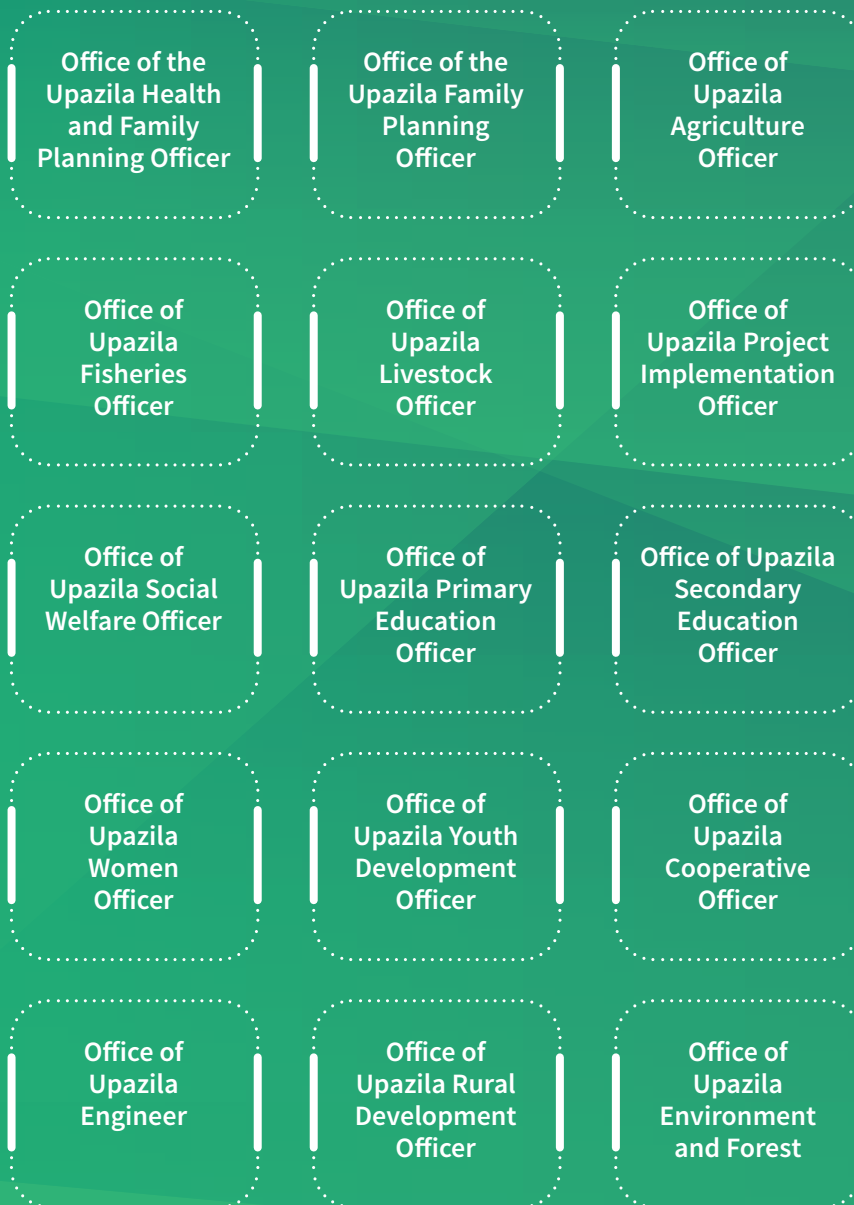
The viability of the LGIs and the achievement of their goals will remain illusory if a network of cooperation is not adopted. Although LGIs are legally bestowed with service obligations, these institutions are without the funds or functionaries (i.e., unfunded mandates). In contrast, parallel service agencies are allocated with funds and functionaries to provide the same services. At a bare minimum, this necessitates parallel service agencies working together with local government representatives to develop local service plans.

On behalf of the government of Bangladesh, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C) supervises all local governments while the special provisions related to the Regional Council and District Councils in the hill districts are supervised by the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs.

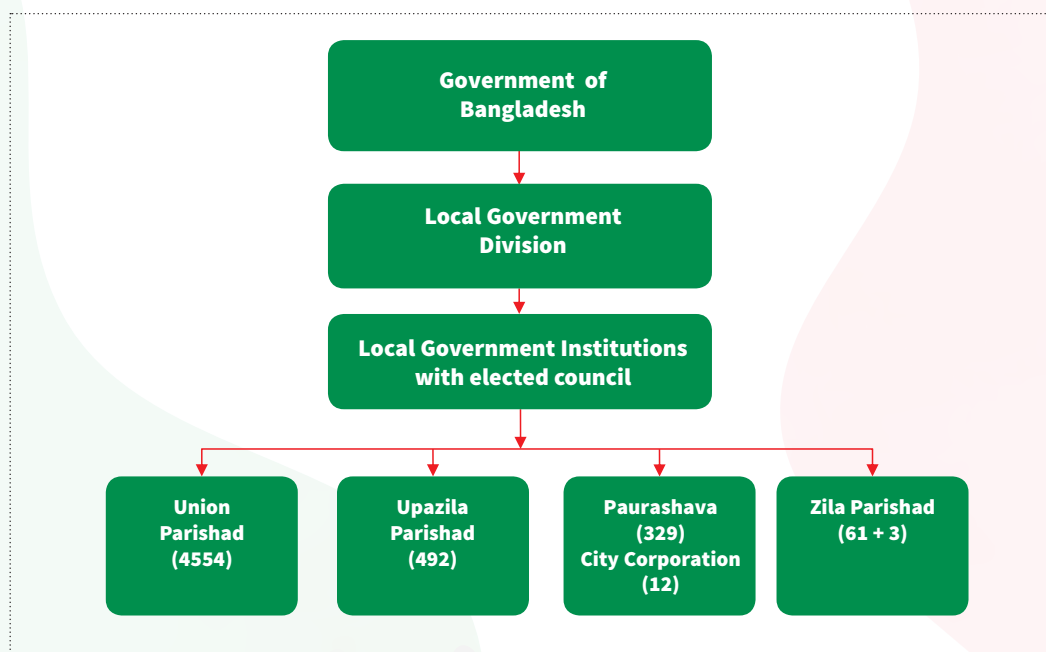
The Union Parishad is the lowest level administrative unit of the state. A union is divided into 9 wards. Each ward elects a Union Parishad member with every 3 wards creating a separate and reserved constituency for women. The whole territory of the Union Parishad is the constituency for the post of UP chair. The council has, therefore, a total of 13 elected representatives. In accordance with the law, there are two staff members in a Union Parishad: Secretary and Accounts Assistance-cum-Computer Operator and up to 10 locally recruited village police, popularly known as Chowkidars.

The Upazila Parishad is the sub-district administrative unit of the state. A upazila is divided into 3 electoral constituencies, with one constituency for electing the Chair and two constituencies for the posts of Vice-chair, of which one is reserved for women. The chairs of the respective UPs and Paurashavas plus female members elected from one-third of respective UPs constitute the council of the Upazila Parishad.

The following offices of sectoral departments of the government have been transferred to the Upazila Parishad but they are budgeted and administered through the sectoral department:

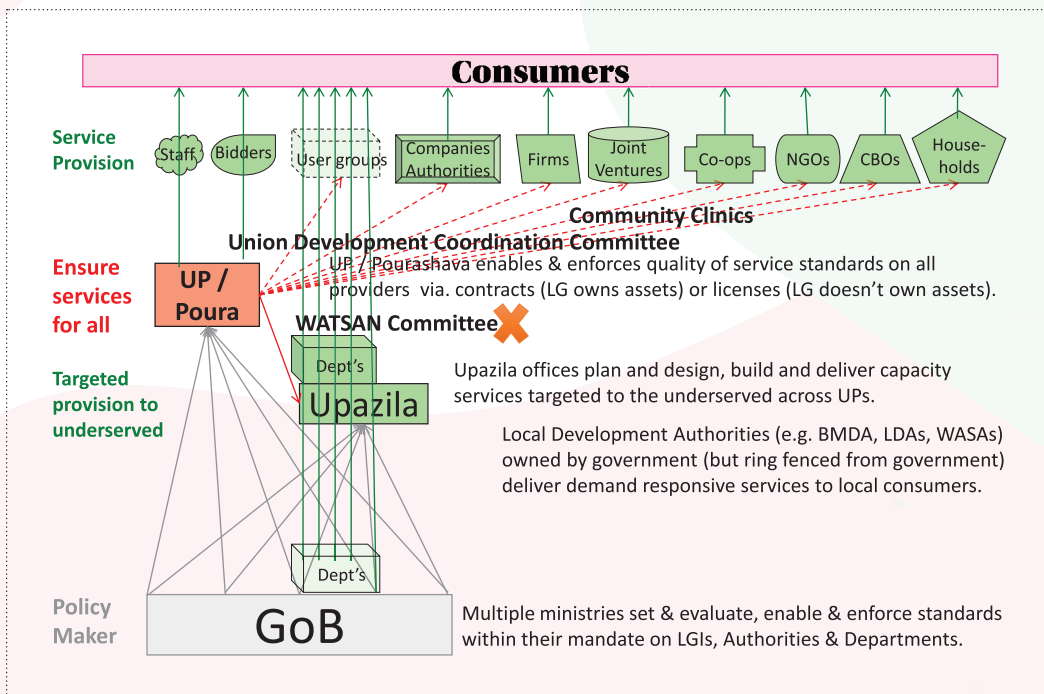
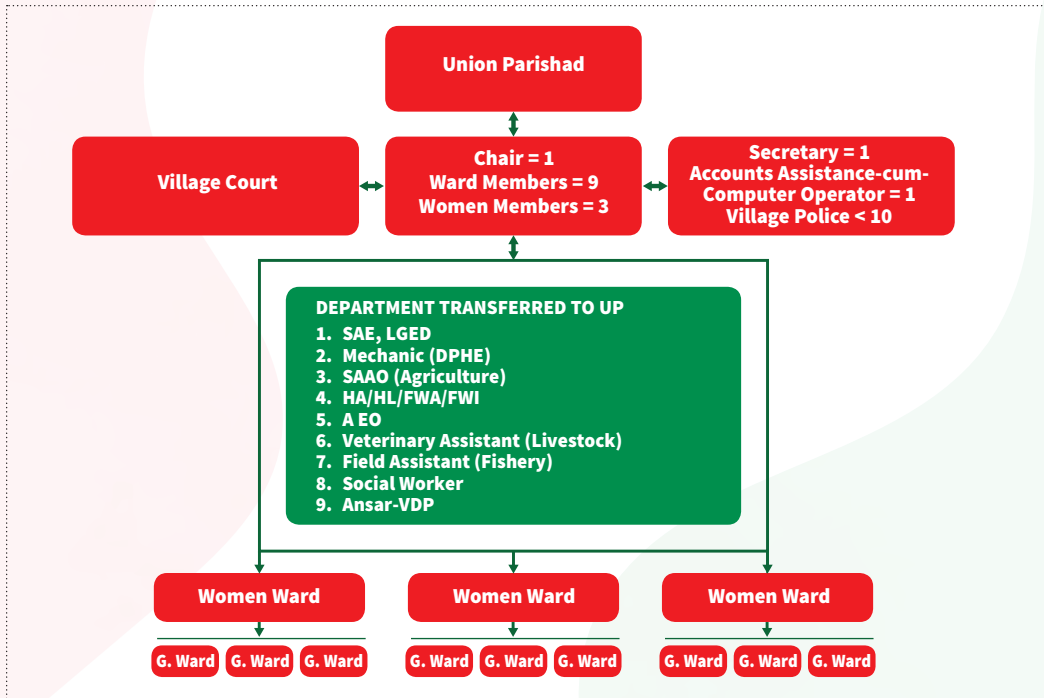


Structural Factors: Mapping the Local Government System



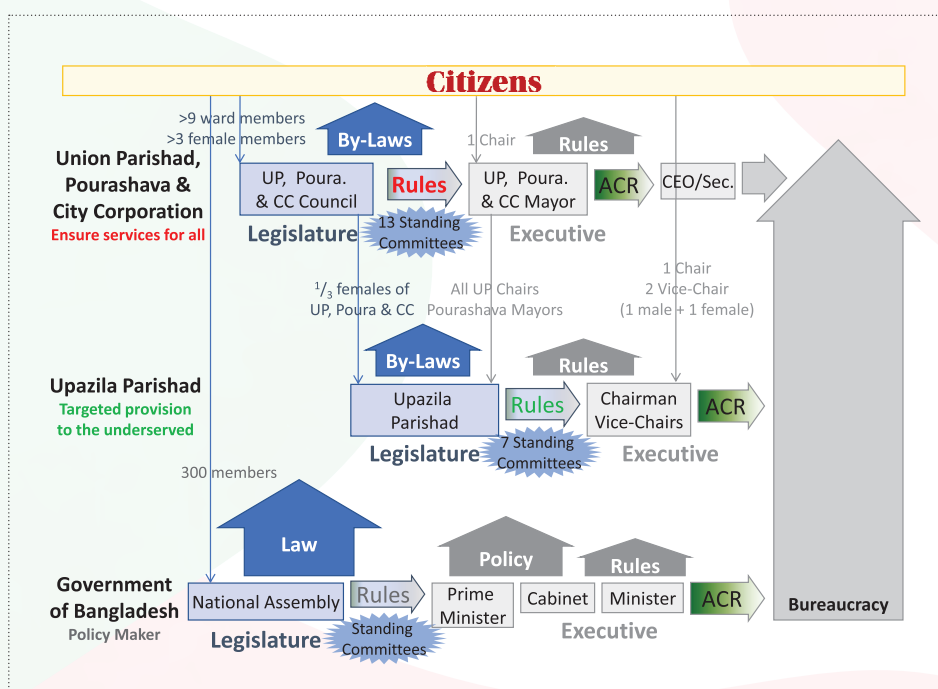
Administrative Unit	Number	Average Population Size per unit	Structure of Local Government
Zila Parishad	64	Appx. 1.9 million	Elected 1 Chairman, Chief Executive Officer, and 15 Members and 5 Woman Councilors
Upazila Parishad	492	Appx. 0.25 million	1 Chairman and 2 Vice-Chairmen including 1 reserved seat for women. Chairman of respective Union Parishads and Paurashavas' Chairman as ex-officio members. Elected female members from 1/3 total numbers of respective UPs and Paurashavas
Union Parishad	4,554	Appx. 23.6 thousand	1 Chairman and 9 members and 3 reserved seat for women members
Paurashava	329	Appx. 45.9 thousand	1 Mayor and 9-24 Councilors and 3-8 Women Councilors
City Corporation	12	Appx > 100,000	1 Mayor, 27-57 Councilors and 9-19 Woman Councilors

Detailed Structure of Union Parishad



Assignment of Roles

The Union Parishad (UP) and Paurashava Acts prioritize the role of UPs & Paurashavas in ensuring the quality of preventative health services (i.e., WASH, nutrition & primary health care) for citizens, while the Upazila Parishad (UZP) Act emphasizes the role of the upazila in the provision of preventative health services (i.e., WASH, nutrition & primary health care). In practice, the UZP is the tier of government where the control over the targeting of government programs is exercised and while UPs have never been a major provider of services, they have always played a major role in coordinating service delivery. This suggests a core role (*de jure* and *de facto*) of the UZP of targeting provision to the underserved and the UP / Paurashava of coordinating provision to ensure safe and sufficient preventative health services for all. The core role of the Government of Bangladesh is, therefore, to set and evaluate the performance of local governments against the quality of service and inclusion standards.



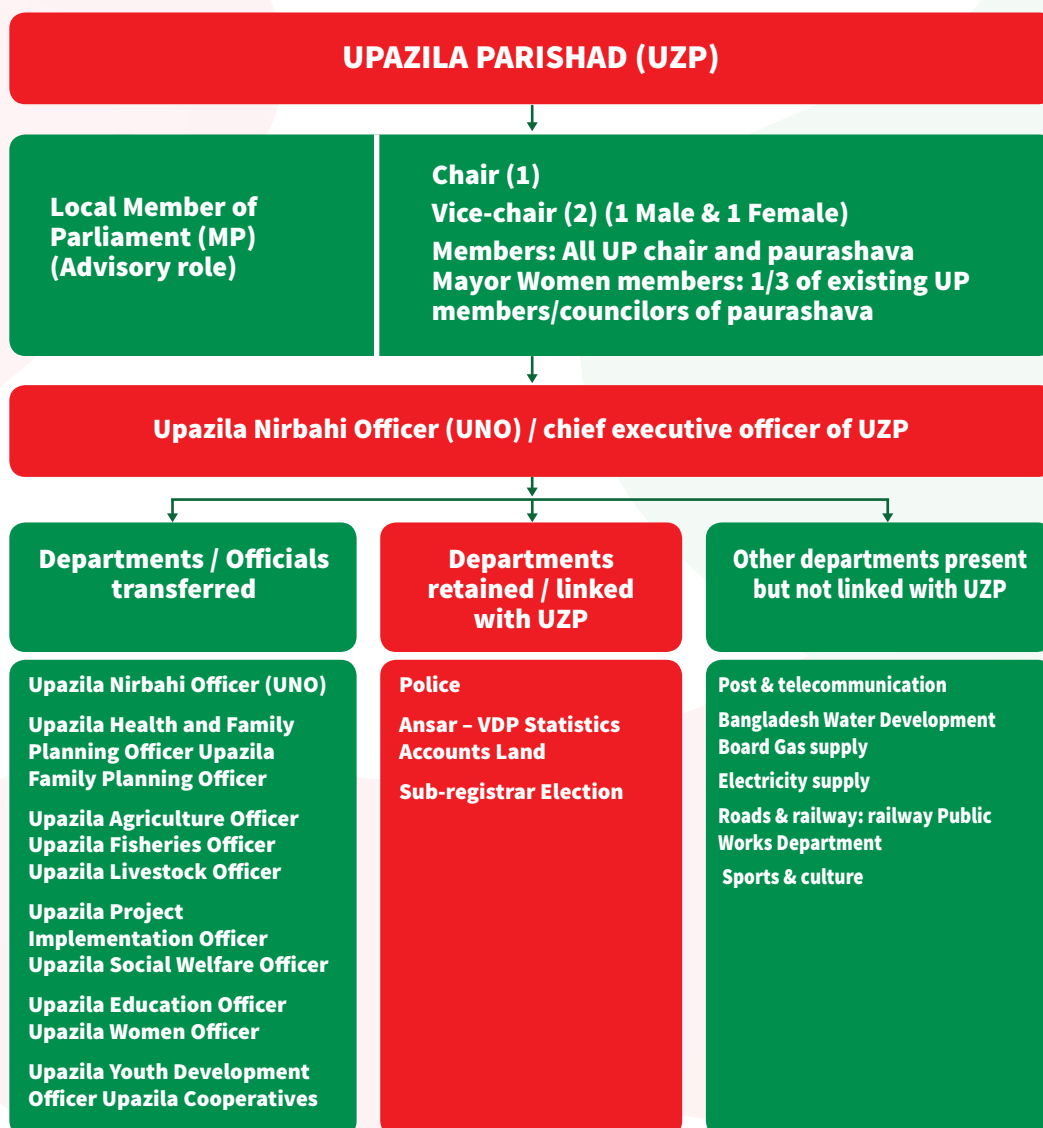
Assignment of Responsibilities:

All UP / Upazila Chairman and Paurashava Mayors are directly elected, while the Upazila council is comprised of directly elected UP Chairman, Paurashava mayors, and 1/3 women members. All of the councils are responsible to make the rules, the executive body (Chairs and Secretaries) to execute the rules, and standing committees to arbitrate on compliance to those rules. While upazila officers are required to comply with the procedures established by the bureaucracy, they are also responsible to the Upazila Chair to comply with the targets established by the upazila parishad through the quorum of Union Parishad Chairmen and Women members.

Major Findings

The UP and Paurashava Council members are responsible to set rules to hold the UP Chair to account and quality of service agreements to hold upazila providers to account. The UP and Paurashava members are also responsible to hold the Upazila Chair and Upazila Officers to account through the Upazila Council. As the UP and UZP chairpersons exercise executive powers over the budget and are directly elected, there is a need to continue to strengthen their accountability to the respective councils.

Detailed Structure of Union Parishad



Time-Line for Local Government Reform

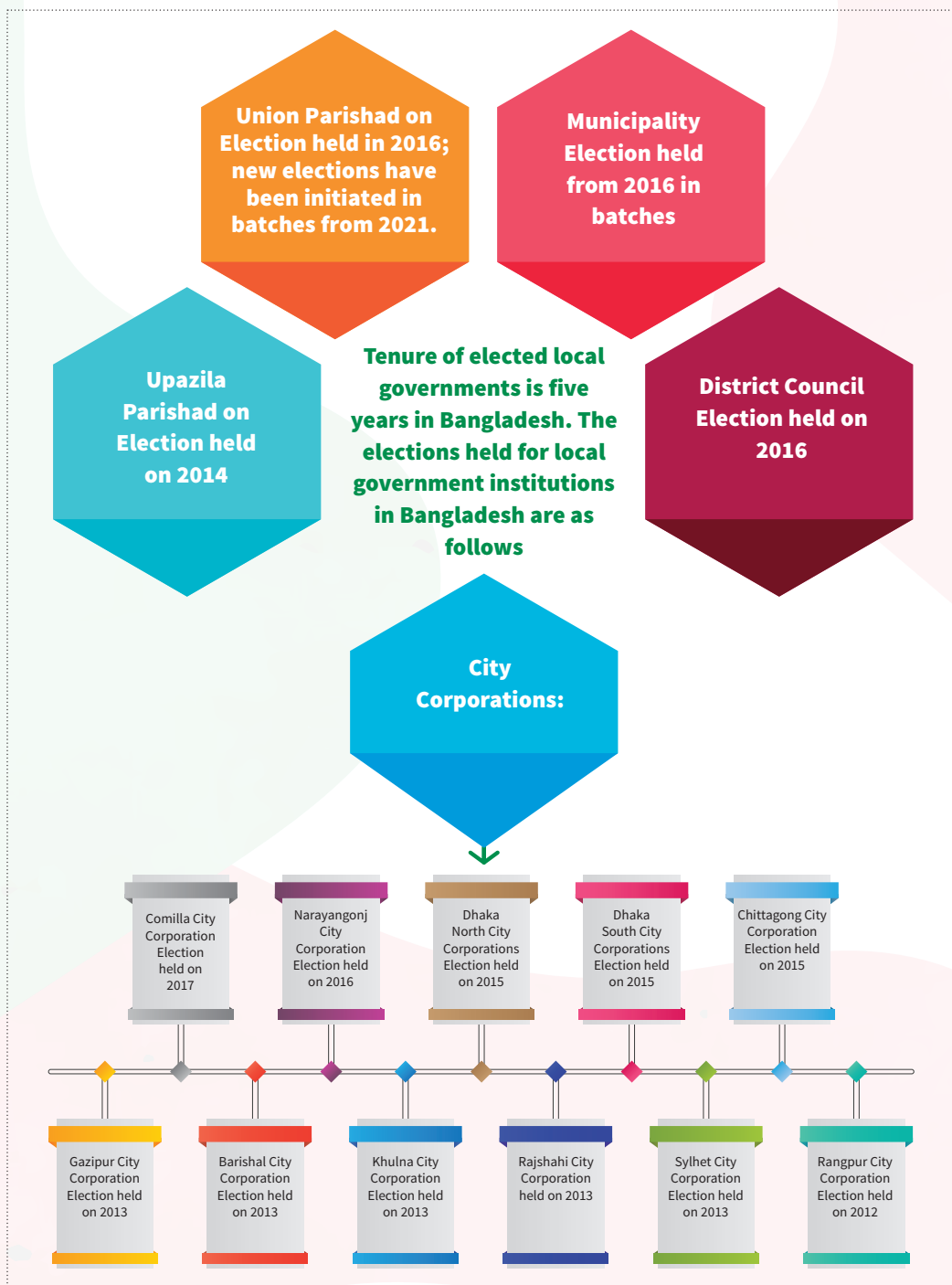
Key Targets/ Concerns	Actions taken/Underway
Effective strengthening of Union Parishads and Paurashavas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job description for women members developed Considerable number of Union Parishad complexes built Orientation/training for all UP functionaries implemented Position of UP secretary upgraded New tax schedule for UPs issued Pilot projects on strengthening different aspects of UPs ongoing
Ensuring women's participation in local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act 20 of 1997 provided for exclusive reservation of three seats for women to be elected directly based on adult franchise. The 1998 Act relating to Upazilas provided for one-third of the total members to be women members The Zila Parishad Act 2000 reserved five seats for women Upazila Parishad Ordinance of 2008 introduced a new position of women vice-chairman For each of the Hill District Councils, including the Regional Council, reservations for women members were made.
Strengthen resource position of Union Parishads and Paurashavas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paurashavas are getting direct ADP allocation UPs are getting direct block allocation from FY 2004-05 Guideline for use of Block fund has been implemented
Strengthen urban local governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipality of 10 major cities upgraded to the status of city corporations (controversial bifurcation of Dhaka city corporations into two separate bodies covering north and south of the city)
Establish all constitutionally mandated LG bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of Upazila Parishads (elected representatives now in place but these yet to emerge as strong LGIs) Establishment of Zila parishads (No elected representatives)
Activate dormant capacities such as UP standing committees, SMCs, upazila health review council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot projects ongoing for activating UP standing committees Gram Sarkars established but later abolished SMCs for secondary schools revived

Key Targets/ Concerns	Actions taken/Underway
Innovate and expand performance-based budgetary support to Union Parishads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligibility criteria developed Several pilot project experiences have accumulated ADP supplementation for selected UPs being reviewed.
Strengthen independent oversight of the local government sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision for Local Government Commission as a formal oversight and supervisory body introduced and implemented in 2008 (the body was abolished in 2009)
Strengthen participatory space for non-state actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot projects for inclusive Union Development Coordination Committee meetings Good practices on open budget sessions SMCs and PTAs exist but are yet to be effective
Broader participation and autonomy for the tribal people	Establishment of the Hill District Councils and the Regional Council in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which ended the sense of isolation and deprivation of the tribal people and enabled them to decide matters relating to their general welfare locally.

Local governance: A multi-agent reality

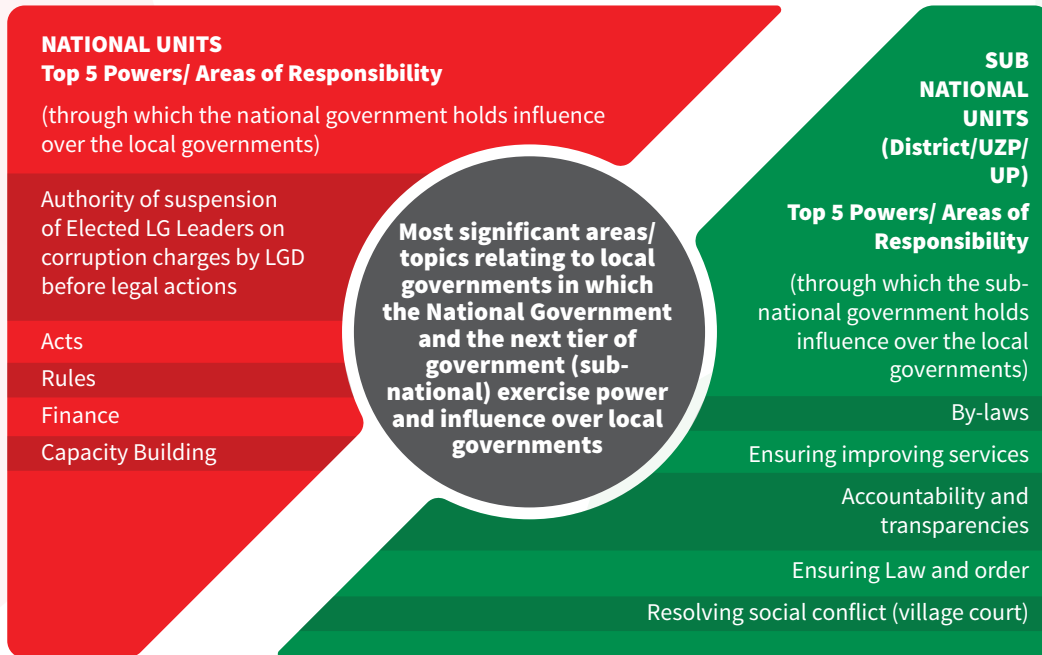
Agent type	Role
Government agencies	Infrastructure, Service-provision, Security, Monitoring
Local governments	Political representation, Justice, Protection, Ensuring service delivery, Catalyst for local economy promotion, Village Court/ Conflict Resolution
Line Agencies/National Building Agencies	Investment Planning, Service delivery, Supervision
NGOs	Service-delivery, Mobilisation of the poor, Advocacy
Community/CBOs	Voluntarism, Dispute resolution, Power issues, Value creation
Political parties	Demand articulation, Protection, Social mobilization, Power issues
Private sector	Service-delivery, Economic growth, Partnership with Local Government
Support institutions	Capacity-building, Catalyst for local economic development
Think-tanks	Agenda formulation, Progress monitoring

Existing Election Pattern in Local Government Institutions

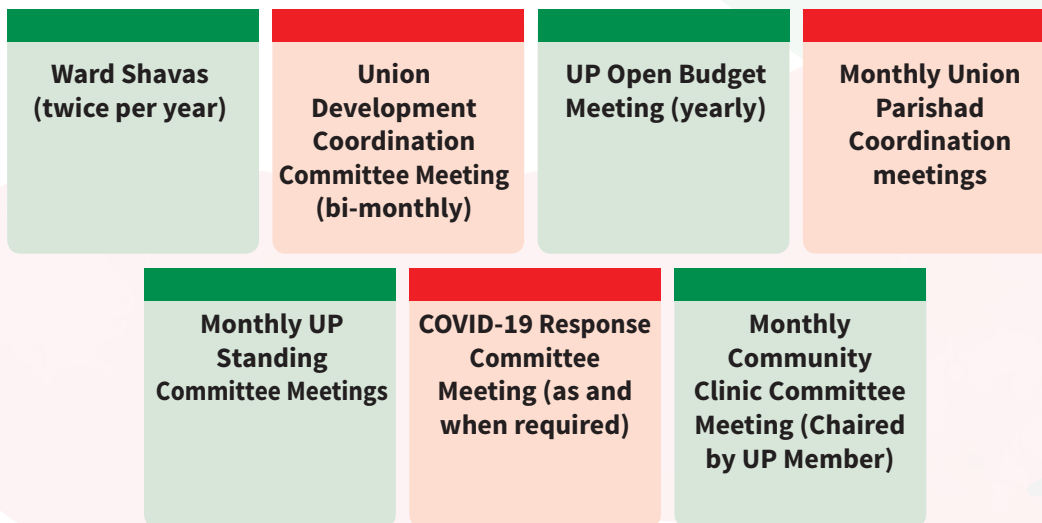


The regulatory framework for operating local government are as follows:

- Constitution
- Local Government (UP) Act, 2009
- Local Government (Paurashava) Act, 2009
- Local Government (Upazila) Act, 2011
- Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 1998
- Three Hill Districts Council Acts, 1989



Union Parishad uses the following formal spaces/forums/prescribed meetings and mechanisms for citizens and households to interact, discuss, debate, and influence the decision making by their local government:



Nature of engagement of Local Governments among themselves are as follows:

Nature of Engagement	Formal means of engagement	Informal means of engagement
Local government to local government	administrative meetings, upazila coordination meeting, horizontal learning program.	Party meetings, regional, and national events, BUPF, MAB
Local government with higher tiers of government	Administrative meetings, scheme approval, fund disbursement, supervision, and performance assessment through auditing.	Party meetings, regional, and national events

Systemic Factors

Interface with Local Government and other stakeholders are as follows:

Citizen Groups	Ward Committees, UP Standing Committees, Citizen Forum, Village Development Committee, Community Based Organizations, Water Management Committee, Self Help Group, Disaster management group for disaster management, Community Support Group for Community Clinics, Community groups for social protections, and COVID-19 Community Response Group.
Line departments at the sub-national level	UDCC, TLCC, Standing Committees
Political parties	Chief of elected LGI is a political party nominated person
Media	No institutional arrangement, but a regular informal relationship between two parties
NGOs	Monthly Coordination Meeting with NGOs at upazila and district level.
Private Sector	No formal institutional mechanisms have been established so far at the UP level.

The most significant disadvantaged groups till now are:

- Persons with Disability
- Women and Adolescence girls
- Tribal populations
- Socially disadvantaged communities
- Minority/Vulnerable and Excluded Group

Identifying Opportunities

Stakeholder Category	Opportunities	Easily Doable (Within a Year)	Medium Term	Long Term/ Systemic
LG Bodies	Learning and replications	Replications on innovations	Institutionalize a system of replications	Establish a system that is well functioning.
Donors	Local Consultative Group to create a consensus for new initiatives.	Introduce lessons learned from R2G countries and pilot some initiatives.	Establish a norm for identifying learning agenda by Local Consultative Group with support from HLP Network.	Establish a system that is well functioning.
NGOs	Mutual learning within and across R2G countries.	Identify some learning agenda to move forward.	Establish a Community of Practice within the country and region to move the agenda forward.	Establish a system that is well functioning.
LG Network	Building consensus, sharing learning, and creating the voice of critical mass	Initiate collective piloting, share lessons learned and prepare policy advocacy notes and start policy dialogue.	Prepare road map for addressing decentralization agenda to support DLG reform.	Take lead role for DLG reform.
Media	Initiate part ship of selected thematic areas for learning and dissemination.	Dissemination of key issues and lessons learned.	Partnership with selected areas and partners on DLG	Institutionalize learning agenda jointly with DLG partners.
LG Associations	Join DLG Forums.	Better organize and work on selected DLG themes.	Learn from other LG Associations from other R2G countries and to be better organized.	Take a lead role on DLG reform.
R2G and HLP Network	Select specific DLG agenda to work on in BD.	Capture learning, documentation (such as, HLP process, EWM initiatives) to disseminate.	Positioning within BD DLG for supporting LG reform.	Create credibility within BD as an honest broker for DLG reform in BD.

Challenges Ahead

As per UP Act, 2009, all UP must have 13 Standing Committees, such as,

- 1 Finance and establishment;
- 2 Audit and accounts;
- 3 Tax assessment and collection;
- 4 Education, health and family planning;
- 5 Agriculture, fisheries and livestock, and other economic development work;
- 6 Rural infrastructure development, protection, and maintenance;
- 7 Maintenance of law and order;
- 8 Birth-death registration;
- 9 Sanitation, water supply, and drainage;
- 10 Social welfare and disaster management;
- 11 Development & conservation of environment and tree plantation;
- 12 Resolution of family conflicts, women and children welfare (not applicable for Chittagong hill tracks people);
- 13 Culture and sports.

A research study conducted by the National Institute of Local Government in five unions and found out some revealing facts. The research found that closely 77 committees of different ministries and departments are supposed to work at the union level. Closely around 10 committees out of these 76 are supposed to work at the ward level of any UP. Thus, the total number of committees are supposed to be 140 ($8 \times 9 + 68$) at the UP level. However, slightly over 42 committees are found formed out of 77. It was also observed that most of these committees are inactive, and notice and minutes are rarely prepared. The attendees are also quite low. At this juncture, therefore, it is quite important for R2G Program not to suggest creating any new committee, which often a new project requested to UP. Instead of that R2G should utilize GoB's regular institutionalize mechanisms to operate and run the Program to make it easier to operate and able to provide the opportunity for sustainability. Therefore, the proposed positioning of actors for R2G are suggested below.

WASH

The main responsibility for ensuring universal access to safely managed water supply, sanitation, and hygiene services is assigned to the Union Parishad. The Union Parishad through the “UP Sanitation, water supply, and drainage Standing Committee” in consultation with citizens during Ward Shavas, Open Budget, and Union Development Coordination Committee (UDCC) meetings should ensure planning, delivery, and monitoring of safely managed WASH services for all. This should include the leveraging of NGOs that are directly engaged with households and citizens in improving WASH services for the underserved. In addition, as most of the WASH services in rural Bangladesh are financed by households themselves, Union Parishads must also seek to develop systems to ensure the safety and sufficiency of self-provided WASH services. (NB - ‘WatSan Committees’ established by DPHE during sanitation movement (2003-2009) have tended to bypass legislated Standing Committees). Therefore, the challenge is to encourage and support the legislated “UP Sanitation, water supply, and drainage Standing Committee” to ensure that all service providers (i.e., government departments, NGOs, private sector, households) deliver safely managed WASH services for all.

Nutrition Sub-Sector (Health and Family Planning)

The Nutrition sub-sector is the legislated responsibility of the “UP Education, Health and Family Planning Standing Committee”. On average, there are approximately three Community Clinics that provide access to preventative health services in each Union Parishad, of which the respective Union Parishad Ward Member is the Chairperson and the respective Women Representative the Advisor. Each Community Clinic is managed by a Community Clinic Committee that is responsible to establish a Community Support Group.

Social Security

The Government of Bangladesh and the World Bank piloted ‘Income Support Program for the Poorest (ISPP) –JAWTNO” Project in 444 Unions in Bangladesh to provide income support to the poorest mothers in selected Upazilas, while increasing the mothers’ use of child nutrition and cognitive development services, and enhancing local level government capacity to deliver safety nets. The achievement of the ISPP Project objective is being measured by the following indicators:

Number of ISPP beneficiaries registered to receive cash transfers

Proportion of ISPP beneficiary households in the bottom two expenditure quintiles

Proportion of ISPP beneficiaries receiving at least 70 percent of their maximum benefit

Number of Unions maintaining a single beneficiary registry for at least five SSNs

The ISPP is now wrapping up with the Government of Bangladesh and the World Bank in dialogue to prepare the next generation of ISPP, which will expand the approach in more areas in Bangladesh.

Disaster Management and COVID-19 Response

The Government of Bangladesh creates disaster management groups at the grassroots level, and in addition to that due to pandemic at each union, a COVID-19 Responsive Committee has also been established. Therefore, it is very important whatever R2G activities are being planned, all have to be interlinked with all the above-mentioned committees to sustain the initiatives of R2G Program.

Conclusion

R2G Partner agencies and their local NGOs must therefore be engaged with the community support groups as well as “UP Education, health and family planning Standing Committee” to enable preventative health and nutrition interventions to be sustained and shared with other UPs through horizontal learning.

Linking the R2G programme to this planned initiative of the GoB will foster the greater potential for the replication of good practices.

References

1. RightToGrow Project Document, Max Foundation, 2020.
2. Ahmed, Tofail., Bangladesh: Reform Agenda for Local Governance, Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance, Issue 21, December 2018.
3. LOGIN Bangladesh Country Context Analysis with Focus on Decentralization and Local Governance, LOGIN Asia, 2017.
4. Yahia, Md. Golam., Islam, Nurul., Effectiveness of Union Level Committees of Different Ministries: A Study of Five Union Parishads in Bangladesh, National Institute of Local Government (NILG), 2016
5. Strategy on Local government strengthening, Background paper for 7th Five Year Plan, Hossain Zillur Rahman Executive Chairman Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), and Tofail Ahmed Head, Democracy, Politics and Governance Cluster BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), 2015.
6. Ahmed, Tofail., Decentralization and The Local State: Political Economy of Local Government in Bangladesh, Agamee Prokashani, Dhaka, 2012.



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Mr. M. Shafiqul Islam

President, HLP Foundation; and
Former Additional Secretary, Government of Bangladesh
HLP Foundation Office, Moar, Level-03, Plot-37, Road-11,
Block-H, Banani,
Dhaka-1213
E-mail: <shafiq5757@gmail.com>

and/or

Mr. Nhlanhla Ndlovu (NN),

Director, Centre For Economic Governance
And Accountability In Africa (CEGAA)
CEGAA OFFICE, 157 Pietermaritz Street, Office Suite C8
Pietermaritzburg,
Republic of South Africa, 3201
E-mail: <nhlanhla@cegaa.org>