



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ANALYZING THE STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCY OF UPAZILA PARISHAD IN SERVICE DELIVERY IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the structure and efficiency of the Upazila Parishad (UZP) in Bangladesh, focusing on its role in service delivery. The Upazila Parishad, as a local government institution, is tasked with providing essential public services at the grassroots level. Despite its pivotal role in rural administration, the UZP faces significant challenges in fulfilling its service delivery responsibilities. The research analyzes three main factors: the structural framework, operational efficiency, and financial capacity of the UZP. Key findings indicate that the lack of coordination between elected representatives and bureaucrats, limited autonomy due to the national government's influence, and insufficient financial resources hinder the UZP's performance. Furthermore, the study highlights the inefficiency in manpower allocation and the adverse effects of bureaucratic inefficiencies on service quality. The results show that while the Upazila Parishad plays a crucial role in basic services like road maintenance, sanitation, and primary education, its inability to manage more complex tasks is evident. Additionally, public dissatisfaction with the quality of services provided by the UZP was widespread, with respondents noting poor sanitation and inadequate nutrition services. The study emphasizes the need for structural reforms, enhanced funding, and clearer roles for local officials to improve the effectiveness of the UZP in serving rural communities. The paper suggests that decentralizing administrative control and addressing institutional inefficiencies could significantly enhance local governance and service delivery in rural Bangladesh.

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KEYWORDS

Upazila Parishad; Local Government; Service Delivery; Structural Efficiency; Rural Development



1 INTRODUCTION

Local government plays a vital role in ensuring that services reach the people. The effectiveness and efficiency of these services largely depend on the structure, functionality, and financial capacity of local government bodies. These institutions are in close proximity to the people they serve, allowing for easier access and a more personal connection. Citizens often feel more comfortable expressing their needs to local authorities, seeing these institutions as their own. Local government has become an essential component of modern states, regardless of geographical, ideological, or political differences (Ahmed, 1993). Countries worldwide have adopted local government systems to improve service delivery to their citizens.

In Bangladesh, the evolution of local government has seen various stages. In ancient and medieval Bengal, local government officials were appointed by the central authority to serve its interests. Under British colonial rule, these officials were similarly appointed to safeguard colonial objectives. After independence, successive regimes continued to modify the inherited system, often driven by political needs, consolidating power rather than focusing on genuine decentralization (Siddiqui, 2005). Although commissions were created to recommend reforms, their suggestions were often not fully implemented. This situation highlighted the need for a genuine devolution of power to local authorities.

Among the key decentralization initiatives in Bangladesh, the establishment of Upazila has been one of the most significant changes. Today, Upazila Parishad serves as the focal point for local administration and development. The majority of national government services are now accessible at the Upazila level, making it a critical component of service delivery. Academics and international agencies have long advocated for local government as a means of devolving power from central authorities to local bodies (Ahmad, 1993). Decentralization, as outlined in literature, is seen as a fundamental institutional framework for delivering better services to the public (Alam, 1994).

However, while local government institutions are theoretically expected to be the primary providers of services at the grassroots level, they often struggle to meet the expectations of the people. In rural Bangladesh, local government bodies such as Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad, and Union Parishad are tasked with service

delivery, but these institutions face significant challenges. This study focuses on the Upazila Parishad, analyzing three core issues—its structural framework, efficiency, and financial capacity—that hinder its ability to deliver the services that rural communities need.

Despite the significant role Upazila Parishad is expected to play, its ability to deliver quality services has been undermined by several structural and efficiency-related issues. The lack of clear authority and coordination between elected representatives and bureaucrats often leads to conflicts and delays in decision-making. Additionally, the administrative structure, which ties local government bodies to national ministries, limits their autonomy and hampers effective service delivery. These challenges, combined with inadequate financial resources, create substantial barriers to Upazila Parishad's effectiveness in fulfilling its responsibilities. Addressing these structural and operational inefficiencies is crucial for improving the overall governance framework and ensuring that rural citizens receive the services they deserve (Chowdhury, 1983).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW:

Structure Local Government Liberal arguments in favor of democratic local government fall into two categories. Firstly, local government is good for national democracy and secondly, there are some persons whose major concern is with the benefit of local democracy to the locality. At the national level, these values to political education training in leadership and political stability and at the local level these values are equality, liberality and stability (Diana, 1986). The first function has some criticism. There are many other social factors and institutions, such as class and formal education which also refer to political awareness. that state activities grow in scope and become increasingly centralized. But they offer three conflicting accounts of the different tiers of government. First, the dual polity model suggests that local governments are basically pluralist because they only handle secondary issues of little importance to national elites and they also provide a useful and complex institutional façade. In other words, the radical elites find the political formulas and consecrated myths of decentralization from their monopoly contrast of the key decisions of the state. National elites need to be supported by an underpinning structure of regional and local elites. And the policy makers also play a major role in channeling diverse influences from external business

and social elites into the govt. local governments are also tied to national elites. Thus allowing of local government, exploiting local interests, traditional loyalties, and incumbency to mobilize very diverse kinds of political support for national state and corporate elites. Third, local governments constitute an efficient diversion of political labour this is not only a matter of managerial wisdom but also a useful political strategy to shift the load of unpopular decision making to the executive elites (Siddiqui, 2005; Chowdhury, 2004)).

2.1 Structure of Local Government:

Bangladesh has a long history of local government with a changing habit of its structure along with the change of political power in the centre. The present structure of local government in Bangladesh receives its origin in British colonial period. The first attempt of establishing local government institutions was taken during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The structure, functions and financial management of local government institutions have undergone many changes from the British colonial period to the present day. Historically, three tiers of rural local governments are found in Bangladesh. At the top Zila Parishad is established, in the middle, it is Upazila Parishad and at the village level it is union Parishad. Among the rural local government bodies union Parishad is the oldest one that is rendering services to the rural people with good acceptance. Zila Parishad was known differently in different time viz. district board, district council and Zila Parishad. The journey of Zila Parishad was started in 1850 by setting up district committee which was headed by the district magistrate. In fact it was not a local government institution as there was not elected representative there. In 1885 district boards were created under the Bengal Local Self-Government Act 1885 having the character of

local government (Siddique, 2005).

2.2 Decentralization of Local Government:

Radical elite theorists agree that state activities grown in scope and become increasingly centralised. But they offer three conflicting accounts of the different tiers of government. First, the dual polity model suggests that local governments are basically pluralist because they only handle secondary issues of little importance to national elites and they also provide a useful and complex institutional façade. In other words, the radical elites find the political formulas and consecrated myths of decentralisation from their monopoly contrast of the key decisions of the state (Ali, 2004).

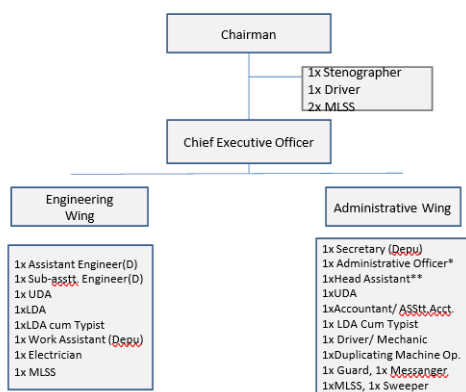
Second, national elites need to be supported by an underpinning structure of regional and local elites. And the policy makers also play a major role in channeling diverse influences from external business and social elites into the govt. local governments are also tied to national elites. Thus allowing of local government, exploiting local interests, traditional loyalties, and incumbency to mobilize very diverse kinds of political support for national state and corporate elites. Third, local governments constitute an efficient diversion of political labour this is not only a matter of managerial wisdom but also a useful political strategy to shift the load of unpopular decision making to the executive elites (Siddiqui, 2005).

2.3 Upazila Parishad in Local Government:

The history of the Upazila (sub-district) system in Bangladesh dates back to British colonial rule, with the introduction of Lord Ripon’s Resolution on Local Government in 1882. This resolution laid the groundwork for the local government system in Bengal, establishing a three-tier structure with district boards, local boards, and union committees. The local boards, created under the Bengal Self-Local Government Act of 1885, were designed to oversee development at the sub-district level. However, they lacked real independence and functioned primarily as agents of the district board, with limited power and no direct sources of income. These boards operated under the supervision of the district administration and did not have a significant role in local governance (Faizullah, 1987).

The Decentralisation Commission (Hobhouse Commission) of 1907 reviewed the existing local government structure and recommended reforms, including the election of local officials and the expansion

Figure 1: Organogram of Local Government



of the boards' functions. Despite these recommendations, the creation of a more autonomous system did not materialize until the enactment of the Village Self-Government Act in 1919, which introduced direct elections to local boards and gave them the responsibility of preparing public works schemes. The local board system continued until 1936 when it was abolished, but its legacy persisted in the form of the circle system, which remained until 1982.

During the colonial period, local government reforms were shaped by various reports and recommendations, including the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918. However, the real shift towards local self-government came after the independence of India in 1947. Pakistan, which Bangladesh was part of at that time, introduced a two-tier local government system comprising union boards and district boards. In 1959, General Ayub Khan implemented a radical change with the introduction of the Basic Democracy system, which created a four-tier local government system. However, many of the members of these councils were either nominated or elected through a limited franchise. Despite its shortcomings, Basic Democracy brought significant administrative changes at the Thana (sub-district) level, with the creation of the Thana Development Committee (TDC) and the establishment of various development programs (Wahab, 2002).

After Bangladesh's independence in 1971, the local government system was dissolved, and relief committees were established to manage the distribution of aid. In the years that followed, local government bodies were restructured, and the role of the Upazila (sub-district) began to take shape. The government initially focused on the Union Parishad and, in 1976, introduced the Local Government Ordinance, which established a three-tier system consisting of Union Parishads, Thana Parishads, and Zila Parishads. However, Thana Parishads were not fully elected, and the system lacked sufficient power to implement local development effectively.

In 1982, General Ershad's government introduced major administrative reforms, establishing the Upazila Parishad as a central component of the local government structure. The Upazila system aimed to decentralize administration, bringing more power and authority to the local level. The Upazila was intended to serve as the focal point for local governance and development, with elected representatives overseeing the administration. However, in 1991, the BNP-led government abolished

the Upazila Parishad, citing political reasons (Islam 1997).

The Upazila Parishad was revived in 2009 under the Awami League government through the Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Act, 1998, which was later amended. This revival aimed to strengthen local governance and ensure better service delivery at the sub-district level (Khan, 2009). The Upazila became a critical point for rural development, with various government services being decentralized to the Upazila level. However, despite the re-establishment of the Upazila system, challenges remain in terms of governance, coordination, and political interference, which have hindered its effectiveness in delivering services to the people (Jahan, 2005).

The Upazila system in Bangladesh has undergone several transformations since its inception during the British era. While it has played an essential role in local governance and development, political interference and a lack of resources have often hindered its full potential. Despite these challenges, the Upazila Parishad remains a significant part of the local government structure in Bangladesh, continuing to evolve in response to the changing political and administrative landscape.

3 METHODOLOGY:

The study area chosen for the research is Dumuria, the largest Upazila in Khulna District, in terms of both population and area. The researcher, who served as the Upazila Nirbahi Officer in Dumuria for three years, had a good understanding of the area's political and administrative dynamics. This familiarity facilitated the collection of secondary data and valuable cooperation from both local officials and the general public. Dumuria's proximity to the district headquarters also provided easy access to the necessary resources for the study.

The sample size for this research was calculated using a standard formula to ensure a reliable estimate of the population proportion. A confidence interval of 95% was selected, and the sample size was determined to be 384 households, based on the assumption that approximately 50% of the households would have experience with Upazila Parishad services. However, to simplify the process, the researcher ultimately selected 192 households from the area. The sampling process followed a systematic approach, with households selected from different unions based on a defined

interval. Only one voter per household was interviewed, typically the head of the household, to gather information on the community's experience with Upazila Parishad services.

Data for the research was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered through field surveys and interviews, as there were no prior studies addressing the comprehensive structure, efficiency, and financial strength of the Upazila Parishad. Secondary data was collected from relevant published and unpublished materials, including books, journals, laws, reports, and previous research on local government in Bangladesh.

The data analysis process involved summarizing and interpreting the collected information using MS Excel to reduce complexity and ensure clarity. The findings were analyzed in the context of the theoretical frameworks and previous studies discussed in the literature review.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Status of Service Delivery:

As the structure of the local government body has a

Table 1: Role of Local MP in Delivering Services (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
Positive	98	65.33
Negative	45	30
No Response	07	4.67
Total	150	100

Regarding the role of local MP 64.28% of positive response was non-interference in the decision of the UZP, 20.41% response was promotion of local infrastructure development and 15.31% response was

significant role in service delivery, it requires a perfect structural organization. The structure of the local government body is encompassed with its elected functionaries who are responsible to take decisions. The officials of the Parishad are also vital to implement the decision of the Parishad.

According to the Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Act, 2009 the Member of Parliament is the advisor of the Upazila Parishad and the Parishad shall take the advice of the advisor. The respondents are asked to opine about the advisory role of MP. Regarding the role of Member of Parliament in the Upazila Parishad for service delivery 98 out of 150 respondents replied positively, 45 replied negatively and only 7 respondents did not make any response. On this issue maximum 65.33% replied in favour of the role of MP in the UZP. The different comments of respondents regarding the positive role of the Member of Parliament are shown in the following Table.

cooperation towards decision making process. All these answers showed here that the respondents had supported the advisory role of the MP in the Upazila Parishad.

Table 2: Role of Local MP in Service Delivery (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
Non-interference in Decision Making of the UZP	63	64.28
Promotion of Local Infrastructure Development	20	20.41

Cooperation towards decision making process	15	15.31
Others	0	0
Total	98	100

Regarding the provision of delivery of services by vice-chairmen in the Upazila Parishad 129 out of 150 respondents replied negatively, 18 respondents replied positively and 3 respondents did not make any response.

86% respondents denied the provision of vice-chairman in the Upazila Parishad. The different replies of the respondents are listed in the following Table.

Table 3: Role of Vice-chairmen in Delivering Services (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
Positive	18	12
Negative	129	86
No Response	03	2
Total	150	100

4.2 Dividing Upazila for Better Service Delivery:

Regarding the detail status of the positive response towards dividing Upazila into wards for Upazila Parishad election 74 out of 112 respondents showed the logic that other local government bodies were divided

into wards, 11 respondents argued for completing the UZP at a time, 12 respondents commented for avoiding double role of union parishad chairman and women members at a time which is in the UZP and union parishad. It refers that the maximum answers 66.07% were in favour of the example of other local government bodies and 18.75% were in favour of avoiding double role of UP chairman and women members.

Table 4: Dividing Upazila into Wards for the UZP Election (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
Having Wards of Other LG Bodies	74	66.07
For the Completion of the UZP at a Time	11	9.82
Avoiding Double Role of UP Chairman and Members	21	18.75
Others	06	5.36
Total	112	100

In case of the issue related to dissolving the committees other than the standing committee in the Upazila 98 out of 150 respondents replied positively, 41 respondents replied negatively and 11 respondents were aloof from making any response. It means that 65.33% respondents

were in favour of dissolving the committees except the standing committees of the UZP. Among the respondents 27.33% replied negatively and 7.34% respondents did not make any response.

In connection with dissolving the departmental

committees 70 out of 98 respondents opined that the UZP could not be strong because of the bad impact of different departmental committees in Upazila. On the other hand, 16 respondents opined that there was no necessity of the departmental committees for the effectiveness of the

UZP and 8 respondents opined for weak performance of the standing committees and 4 replied for others. In terms of percentage 16.33% respondents argued that Upazila Parishad could not be strong because of these departmental committees.

Table 5: Dissolving Departmental Committees (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
Bad Impact of Departmental Committees on the Effectiveness of UZP	70	71.43
Weak Performance of Standing Committees	8	8.16
No Necessity of Departmental Committees	16	16.33
Other	4	4.08
Total	98	100

4.3 Manpower of the UZP in Delivering Service

The UZP has only a stenographer cum computer operator, two MLSSs and a driver. The other officials of the transferred departments are working in the same place with the same status as before when they were not transferred to the UZP. In the case of sufficiency of manpower of the UZP 7 out of 150 respondents replied positively, 140 respondents replied negatively and 3 respondents did not make any comment. It means that

only 4.67% of respondents were in favor of the status of the manpower of the UZP but 93.33% of respondents were against it and only 2% of respondents were aloof from making any comment. In response to manpower issue, 96 out of 140 answers were insufficient manpower, 42 answers were no manpower in practical and 2 answers were others where the percentage is 68.57%, 30% and 1.43% respectively. Here the maximum answers were for insufficient manpower.

Table 6: Manpower of UZP in Delivering Service (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
Insufficient Manpower	96	68.57
No Manpower in Practical	42	30
Others	2	1.43
Total	140	100

4.4 Basic Services vs More Services for the UZP

In response to assigning basic services instead of 21 services for the UZP 61 out of 128 positive responses were in favor of basic services, 32 responses were delivering more services are problematic, 28 responses were that less service could enhance efficiency and 7 for others. It means that of these is 47.66% positive answers were for assigning basic services, 25% positive answers showed logic that delivering more services was problematic, 21.88% positive comments said that

assigning less service could enhance service quality and 7% responses were for others. The following Table shows that only the basic service should be assigned to the UZP to ensure quality of services. The details of the quality of the construction works of the UZP can be described in this way that 20 out of 128 respondents argued for the use of below standard construction materials, 44 respondents argued for insufficient supervision of construction site, 38 respondents argued for syndication in contractor selection process and 28 respondents made comment for taking speed money by

the officials and representatives. It refers that 15.63% negative answers were of using below standard construction materials, 34.38% were for insufficient supervision, 29.68% were for syndication in contractor

selection process and 26% were for taking personal benefit by officials and representatives.

Table 7: Basic Services Instead of More Services for the UZP (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Providing Basic Services by the UZP	61	47.66
Creating Problems by Delivering More Services	32	25
Enhancing Quality by Giving Less Service	28	21.88
Other	7	5.46
Total	128	100

Table 8: Response of Service Receivers on the Quality of Construction Works of the UZP (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
Use of Below Standard Construction Materials	20	15.63
Insufficient Supervision of Construction Sites	44	34.38
Syndicate in Contractor Selection Process	38	29.68
Taking Personal Benefit by Officials and Representatives	26	20.31
Total	128	100

4.5 Basic need-based Service of UZP

4.5.1 Sanitation Service:

About the quality of sanitation service of the Upazila Parishad 8 out of 150 respondents replied positively, 139 respondents replied negatively and 3 respondents were aloof from relying. It means that 5.33% of respondents replied positively and 92.67% of respondents replied negatively which was the maximum. It seems that the people were not satisfied with the sanitation service of

the UZP. Relating to the detailed Status of negative responses about the quality of sanitation service of the Upazila Parishad was observed that 73 out of 139 responses were that the Upazila Parishad did not provide sanitation service, 59 responses was as like as bad sanitation service and 7 for others. It means that the maximum responses 52.52% were for not having the service and lowest 5.03% was for others. It can be assumed that the people did not have any idea about the sanitation service.

Table 9: Quality of Sanitation Service of the UZP (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
No Sanitation Service	73	52.52

Bad Sanitation Service	59	42.45
Others	7	5.03
Total	139	100

4.5.2 Water Supply Service

Regarding the quality of the pure drinking supply service of the Upazila Parishad 68 out of 150 respondents replied positively, 73 respondents replied negatively and 9 respondents did not made any comment. It refers that 48.66% of respondents were not satisfied with the service pure drinking supply service of the Upazila Parishad and only 6% of respondents were abstain from the response. About the detailed status of negative

responses of the pure drinking water supply of the Upazila Parishad 42 out of 73 responses were that union Parishad supplied pure drinking water and 28 responses were of no drinking water supply service. It refers that 57.54% of responses were that the union parishad supplied drinking water. 38% of replies were for not having supply of pure drinking water. People did not have the idea in favor of drinking water supply by the Upazila Parishad.

Table 10: Quality of Sanitation Service of the UZP (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
UPs Supply Drinking Water	42	57.54
No Supply of Drinking Water of the UZP	28	38.36
Not Satisfactory	3	4.10
Total	73	100

4.5.3 Nutrition Service

Regarding the quality of the nutrition service of the UZP 8 out of 150 respondents replied positively, 139 replied negatively and 3 respondents were abstained from replying. In other words most of 92.67% of respondents replied positively and only 5.33% of respondents replied negatively. It means that the people's conception was

against the quality nutrition of the UZP. In response to the nutrition service of the Upazila Parishad 140 answers were for no nutrition service, 2 were for bad nutrition service and 4 are for others. Accordingly the percentage for the answer, no nutrition service was 95.89% which was the highest and the lowest bad nutrition service was 1.37%. In this case, people knew that the Upazila Parishad did not provide nutrition services.

Table 11: Quality of Sanitation Service of the UZP (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
No Nutrition Service	140	95.89
Bad Nutrition Service	2	1.37
Others	4	2.74
Total	146	100

4.5.4 Construction Works of the UZP

On this issue 17 out of 150 respondents replied positively, 128 respondents replied negatively and 5 respondents did not make any response. It is in percentage that 11.33% made positive response, 85.33% made negative response and only 3.34% made no

response. It is evident that the respondents were not satisfied with the quality of construction works of the UZP. The details of the quality of the construction works of the UZP can be described in this way that 20 out of 128 respondents argued for the use of below standard construction materials, 44 respondents argued for insufficient supervision of construction site, 38

respondents argued for syndication in contractor selection process and 28 respondents made comment for taking speed money by the officials and representatives. It refers that 15.63% negative answers were of using

below standard construction materials, 34.38% were for insufficient supervision, 29.68% were for syndication in contractor selection process and 26% were for taking personal benefit by officials and representatives.

Table 12: Quality of Construction Works of the UZP (Source: Field Survey, 2015)

Status	Number	Percentage (%)
Use of Below Standard Construction Materials	20	15.63
Insufficient Supervision of Construction Sites	44	34.38
Syndicate in Contractor Selection Process	38	29.68
Taking Personal Benefit by Officials and Representatives	26	20.31
Total	128	100

5 DISCUSSION:

The structure of the Upazila Parishad is crucial for ensuring effective service delivery, yet several structural issues hinder its efficiency. One significant concern is the role of the Member of Parliament (MP), who, according to the Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Act, 2009, serves as an advisor to the Upazila Parishad. In Dumuria Upazila, despite political affiliations between the MP and the Upazila Parishad Chairman, there is no conflict. The public supports the MP's advisory role, believing that MPs can assist in resource allocation from the government. Consequently, the advisory role of the MP should be maintained as it is viewed positively by the people.

Another issue is the role of the vice-chairmen, who do not have executive powers except when the chairman is absent. This lack of authority has led to dissatisfaction among the respondents, who suggest that a panel of chairmen should be created to handle the executive functions during the chairman's absence, ensuring a more effective leadership structure.

The Upazila Parishad also lacks a ward-based system for electing members, unlike the Zila Parishad and Union Parishad, which are divided into wards for elections. Currently, the chairmen of Union Parishads and the mayor of Paurashava serve as members. Respondents favored the division of Upazila into wards to elect members, as it would promote more representative participation and governance. They opposed the dual role

of the Union Parishad chairmen and female members, advocating for a more streamlined election process.

The existence of several departmental committees, formed before the Upazila Parishad's establishment, creates inefficiencies in governance. These committees, which were meant to be temporary, continue to operate, hindering the Upazila Parishad's functioning. Respondents strongly supported the abolition of these departmental committees to enhance operational effectiveness.

Additionally, while seventeen departments were transferred to the Upazila Parishad, it does not have control over them. The Upazila Parishad lacks authority over the appointment, salary, and performance management of transferred department staff, as these decisions remain under the central government's control. Respondents advocated for full control over these departments, including the absorption of their manpower, assets, and liabilities, to ensure smooth functioning and better service delivery.

Finally, the Upazila Parishad's manpower is insufficient to deliver the twenty-one services it is assigned. The staff available, such as a stenographer, a computer operator, and two MLSSs, is inadequate to manage the diverse responsibilities. Respondents emphasized the need for more resources and personnel to ensure the Upazila Parishad's effectiveness in serving the local population. In conclusion, structural reforms such as the decentralization of authority, the creation of a ward-based election system, the dissolution of unnecessary committees, and the absorption of transferred

departments with full control are essential to enhance the Upazila Parishad's efficiency and service delivery.

The Upazila Parishad plays a crucial role in delivering services to rural communities in Bangladesh. However, the efficiency of its service delivery is hampered by structural and operational challenges. One of the key issues is the dual role played by members and staff, who work both for their own organizations and for the Upazila Parishad. This division of focus means that the Upazila Parishad's services are often not prioritized, and its limited manpower is stretched thin as it attempts to deliver 21 different services. Many respondents in the study suggested that the Upazila Parishad should focus on providing only basic services to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Another critical concern is the poor quality of construction work supervised by the Upazila Parishad. The Upazila Engineer, who is supposed to oversee construction projects, is primarily engaged with projects managed by the local government engineering department and works under the control of an Executive Engineer located at the district level. Due to this divided attention and lack of direct control, the quality of construction work under the Upazila Parishad suffers. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the quality, highlighting the need for the Upazila Parishad to have its own dedicated staff, including engineers, with decentralized hiring authority to ensure proper supervision and quality control over construction projects.

In the areas of health and family planning, sanitation, and nutrition, respondents were also dissatisfied with the services provided by the Upazila Parishad. Health services are managed by the Upazila Health Department and Family Planning Department under the supervision of the relevant ministries, and the Upazila Parishad itself does not directly provide these services. Respondents noted the lack of involvement of the Upazila Parishad in these essential services, suggesting that the government should transfer these responsibilities to the Upazila Parishad, allowing it to absorb the relevant staff and resources and provide services directly to the local population.

Similarly, sanitation services, including the supply of sanitary latrines and tube wells, are managed by the Public Health Engineering Department, with little direct involvement from the Upazila Parishad. Most respondents indicated that they did not consider sanitation a service provided by the Upazila Parishad. It was recommended that the sanitation and water supply

services be transferred to the Upazila Parishad, which could then ensure better quality and responsiveness to local needs.

Lastly, nutrition services were found to be absent after the completion of a government-run project in 2012. Most respondents pointed out that the Upazila Parishad did not offer any nutrition services, and it was suggested that new projects be initiated to address the nutritional needs of the rural poor.

In conclusion, the Upazila Parishad's ability to deliver efficient services is hindered by a lack of focus on essential services, poor supervision, and inadequate resources. Decentralizing control, transferring key services to the Upazila Parishad, and empowering it with the necessary resources and staff could improve service delivery significantly.

6 CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the Upazila Parishad, a crucial institution in local governance in Bangladesh, faces significant challenges in its ability to deliver effective services to rural communities. Structural inefficiencies, a lack of authority over transferred departments, insufficient manpower, and dual roles played by local officials have all contributed to the poor service delivery. The study suggests several reforms to address these issues, such as decentralizing authority, creating a ward-based election system, abolishing unnecessary committees, and transferring key services directly under the Upazila Parishad's jurisdiction.

Improving the Upazila Parishad's efficiency will require a shift toward focusing on basic services, ensuring that the available resources are allocated to meet the most pressing needs of the local population. Additionally, the quality of construction work, health services, sanitation, and nutrition must be enhanced through better supervision, resource allocation, and direct involvement of the Upazila Parishad in these critical sectors.

By empowering the Upazila Parishad with more autonomy, resources, and control over local services, the government can improve its responsiveness to the needs of rural communities, ensuring more efficient service delivery and better governance at the local level. The research emphasizes the importance of addressing these structural reforms to improve the Upazila Parishad's capacity and its role in rural development in Bangladesh.

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