

# People's Reporting Centre : Changing the scenario of some UP's

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Peoples Reporting Centre aims to decrease the gap between the general people and their union Parishad representatives. It also functions as a channel between the people and UP. Currently, people elect the UP members by their own votes that are supposed to deliver the services to the people. However in practice there is a little interaction between the UP members and their electorate and the people's voice is not being heard. PRC is helping the UP in strategic planning, participatory management and community participation and assist linking UPs with community groups such as traditional leaders, councillors and officials, the private sector and women activists. It is focusing on building self-reliance within the community, and developing effective relations between the different layers of government. PRC gradually spawn a monitoring system to asses the performance of UPs and will try to solve the problems through peoples participation.

PRC in bangla 'JONOGONER DORBAR' has already set up 6 centres in 6 unions of 4 districts in Bangladesh. The unions are Bason of Gazipur, Khogakhoribari of Nilphamari, Singra and Bulakipur of Dinajpur and Fatehpur and Ramnagor of Jessore. PRC has formed citizen committee in each ward to identify the issues, which still exist in the union level. They are doing regular monthly meetings and take notes regarding different problems. They are liasing with the UP representatives and trying to solve their problems by their own initiative. Alongside an advocacy group will be formed which will present the respective UP demands to the policy level. Finally through the whole process many of vital problems of the targeted area will be addressed and many of them will be resolved.

It is true that most of the people in Bangladesh take bad governance for granted. They neither know what to demand or who to demand it from. On the other hand the service providers are often similarly unaware of their own responsibilities. Using various activities, PRC wants to create the demand for good governance, as well as provide mechanisms for local government to improve.

Democracywatch, an NGO initiating this process through people's Reporting Centre, which funded by DANIDA, human rights and good governance program support unit. This work started since October 2003 and will continue up to September 2005 as a pilot basis. The organization has already found a list of problems of UP's and already took the initiative to resolve some of the problems. PRC people arranged more than hundred yard meetings with the grass roots people to find out the real problems and discussed with their own UP representatives. They traced out a major problem, which is lack of transparency and accountability in UP representatives.

The Citizen Committee of Ramnagor union of Jessore discussed with the UP chairman and motivate him to declare their budget in front of all people. The chairman discussed with them several times and finally on 7<sup>th</sup> July in this year he declared the budget in front of all people to prove his as accountable and transparent representative. All people appreciated this initiative in that union. Taleya Rehman, Executive Director of Democracywatch, Lars Iskjaer, Programme Coordinator and Hossain Shahid Sumon Program Officer of DANIDA, human rights and good governance program support unit were also present on that event.

In Khogakhoribari union of Nilphamari, the citizen committee took step to build up sanitary latrine in their own wards. They discussed with their own UP representatives and collected some money from their own income and build sanitary latrine in ward 1 and ward 9 of the said union in last month. Other Citizen committee are trying to do this thing voluntarily with the help of PRC.

On 25 June, 2004, Chairman of Khogakhoribari union sit with general people and talked to them directly regarding the problems of UP. Hundred of people questioned him and it was a really example of accountability to the people.

On 13 June,2004, a UP alliance was formed with a number of 2 UP's to run their activities smoothly. All members of Ramnagor and Fathepur union of jessore were present. Even there will be a scope to join any UP representatives in that alliance. This alliance will create an opportunity to work closely with UP and PRC. Moreover they will have an option to discuss their own problems and find out the solutions as well.

On 15 May,2004, Chairman of Singra union told citizen committee to develop the singra Bazar jointly. He also assured that he would arrange some dustbins and public toilet for that bazaar.

The Citizen committee has also arranged several meetings with UP representatives, local political leaders, local administration and different groups in the society to find out the ways and means to resolve the existing problems. They also pressure them to build up a alliance and work together to bring a positive change in union parishad. It should be mention that all are use to come PRC regularly and discussed about their local issues seriously.

The Foreign people are very interested to see the pro-people activities at union level. People from Kenya, England and Denmark also visited some PRC areas.

This is seen that some changes have already been made in those union parishad where PRC is working. The positive changes are: a. UP representatives are more aware and responsive b. All chairman are taking preparation to declare their budget in front of people c. Secretary of those unions are active D. people are more aware E. Birth registration are increasing and f. The UP women members raised their demand to get more work from chairman.

PRC will change the whole scenario of UPs and create more opportunities to build good platform for general people where they will raise their voices.

Now members of the Citizen Committee are working to promote good governance at local level. They are watching as follows: the performance of UP chairman and members, the lack of democracy in the decision making process in UP, local administration corruption, performance of govt officials, Lack of standing committee, Performance of village court and village police, Birth and death registration activities and work distribution of women UP members etc. They are also activating the local government officials to obtain better services for general people.

In fact at the end of the project they will ensure that local citizens will act as contributors in the local development process. PRC will also promote the interaction among the people, civil society groups, local govt, law-enforcing agencies and policymakers. PRC thought that local

media will also be sensitive on LG issues and people voice will be heard and they will get good services from the Authority.

This process will be a unique example in the country, because people's participation is the main key to improve the situation of UPs. If all people come in a platform and wants to improve the situation of UPs then this project will be successful. This is the real time to make pressure from the people because without them there will be no improvement or development in the country.

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