

# Democracywatch

7 Circuit House Road, Ramna, Dhaka

## Survey Report

### Union Parishad: Perceptions of the inhabitants

---

#### 1. Background:

Union Parishads (UP) have had a continuous existence since the 1880s, though their functions and constitution have changed over time, and they are currently the only elected, statutory local government body for the rural Bangladesh. The Local Government (Union Parishads) Ordinance of 1983 and its subsequent amendments provide the legislative framework for UPs, which are further regulated and controlled by orders and circulars issued by the Ministry of Local Government<sup>1</sup>.

Each Union is divided into nine Wards. One member is directly elected to the UP from each Ward on the basis of adult franchise. One woman member is directly elected from each of the three old Wards on the basis of adult franchise (male and female electors). The UP Chairman is directly elected on the basis of adult franchise from the whole of the Union. Thus a UP comprises 9 elected Ward members, three elected women members, and an elected Chairman.

Democracywatch has undertaken a project named Peoples Reporting Centre (PRC) on local government in cooperation with the Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA). Initially six Union Parishads (namely Bashon, Fatepur, Ramnagar, Khagakharibari, Singra and Bulakipur) under the district of Gazipur, Jessore, Nilphamari and Dinajpur, were chosen as the operational area of the project. Out of project area we do survey in three unions named Kachua at Jessore, Kaultia at Gazipur, Palsha at Dinajpur for watch comparative change in project areas and non-project areas.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Article 76, 77 of the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 1983

## **1.1 Objectives of this Study:**

### **General Objectives of the Study:**

To determine people's expectations and to appraise existing situations on some selected UPs.

### **Specific Objectives of the Study:**

- ✓ To obtain the people's perception about the LG bodies functioning
- ✓ To obtain people's opinion about the quality of the services provided by the LG body
- ✓ To determined demands made by the local people for the services expected from the elected representatives
- ✓ To assess people's perception about the efficiency of the elected chair, members etc.
- ✓ To get a picture of local initiatives taken by the people as alternative solution
- ✓ To get a picture about the sector-wise development plans taken by the concerned authorities
- ✓ To make a list of social dispute filed and remedies given by the local body
- ✓ To know people's perception about the law and order situations of the locality

## **1.2 Methodology:**

Data for the study was collected through a structured questionnaire. Through a sample frame as many as 560 female and 1250 male respondent being drawn from 9 Unions covering 4 Upazila in 4 districts were interviewed through a structured questionnaire. The field survey was conducted over a period of a month starting from 11 March 2004. A total of 1810 people were interviewed. The gathered data was processed, verified and analyzed on the computer using such software as FoxPro and SPSSWIN. This report is based on the findings from the resident survey.

### 1.3 Limitations:

1. People in some areas don't want tell anything against influential UP representatives
2. People don't want to spent time for interviewing

### 2. Findings:

#### Peoples' Awareness on Local Government Activities

- ✓ The people of the surveyed locality have a limited awareness on Union Parishad functioning. Respondents articulated only three common functions of Union Parishad in general and these are: reconstruction of roads, distribution of tubewell and sanitary latrine, and administering Shalish (village court).
- ✓ 23.1 percent of the respondents knew the existence of different committees of their Union Parishad. 21.8 percent respondents knew at least one committee name and out of this respondents 76.4 percent are male and 23.6 percent are female. On the basis of district category 43.2 percent respondents of the Nilphamari know the Union Parishad has some committees, on the other hand 87.7 percent respondents from Dinajpur says that they knew nothing about the Union Parishad committees.
- ✓ In reply to the question, *'In your opinion, are you Satisfied with the performance of Union Parishad performs?'* 45.5 percent of respondents answered that it carries out its duty properly and they are satisfied. 32.4 percent thought that its performance is average and 22.2 percent said that it has not been doing its job properly.

Table A: Respondents satisfaction on UP performance

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Very Satisfied	29	1.6
Satisfied	794	43.9
Moderate	586	32.4
Dissatisfied	354	19.6
Very dissatisfied	47	2.6
Total	1810	100.0

### Demand for Better Services

- ✓ 16.0 percent of the total respondents went to have some services from the UP and out of those 34.3 percent said UP representatives are always available for addressing their problem where as 52.6 percent replied they (UP Representatives) are hardly available.
- ✓ 16 percent of the respondents went to the Union Parishad over the last six months for their necessity. With these problems/necessity, on average concerned authorities were contacted six times and were pressed for having a solution. For every solution they take money on an average Tk. 1965.61 and average time taken is 38 days. Overall, 9.2 percent of the respondent got positive results from contacting the authority.
- ✓ In reply to the question *'Have you got any help from chairman or member?'* 30.7 percent people said that always got help from chairman or member. 49.2 percent respondent said that sometimes they got help from them. 7.8 percent replied they (UP Representatives) are hardly available and 7.1 percent respondent never got any help from them.
- ✓ For having a comparative study of the districts of the answer of the question *'Have you been to the Union Parishad for seeking any service in the last six months?'* 19.3 percent respondents from Jessore district said 'yes' and a large number of them (32.0 percent) are expressed their dissatisfaction with the services provided by the Union Parishad where as 8.7 percent respondents from Nilphamari went to UP for services and most of them (51.3 percent) expressed their satisfaction. The result shows, where people visited UP more time to get solution of their problems, they expressed dissatisfaction.

### Initiatives Taken by Local People

- ✓ In addition to the services provided by the surveyed Union Parishad, the inhabitants have undertaken some initiatives by their own. Most notable among them are:
  - Reconstruction of lanes/roads in front of their households/locality
  - Shalish
  - Distribute VGF/VGD cards

## People's Perception on Elected Local Officials

- ✓ The respondents were asked to evaluate their respective UP officials (chairman, members, Women members) on the basis of some traits. The responses are given below in percentage:

Table B: Evaluation of Chairman/Members- Union Parishad

Traits	Very high			High			Average			Poor			Very poor		
	C	M	WM	C	M	WM	C	M	WM	C	M	WM	C	M	WM
Honesty	19.6	16.9	10.9	27.0	28.9	21.6	32.3	39.8	69.7	6.9	5.0	7.4	4.1	2.2	4.5
Ability to socialize	14.1	12.9	6.7	31.4	32.5	18.5	32.8	38.3	37.7	8.1	8.5	14.1	5.0	2.5	7.5
Knowledge about the locality	12.3	9.0	4.9	36.5	35.0	14.6	35.7	40.1	34.2	11.3	11.6	19.1	5.1	5.3	9.3
Ability to resolve problems	15.6	6.7	4.6	21.2	23.5	11.4	30.4	38.1	31.1	11.8	13.9	18.5	5.8	5.7	12.0

C=Chairman, M=Member, WM= Women Member

- From the above table it is understood that people of the surveyed locality rated their elected representatives very highly against above-mentioned four traits. However, there are some divergences in people's opinion and perception on their Chairman/members. Almost half of the respondent (41.6 percent) said that the UP representatives of their locality are honest and 10.0 percent rated dishonest.
- On the ground of capability to meet people of the locality, a large number of respondents 46.5 percent rated the chairman is capable, 45.4 percent for members and 25.2 percent respondent said for women member. It illustrates that the chairman and member is highly capable and women member is less capable to meet the people of their respective locality.
- About the state of the locality, above table shows that the chairman is more familiar than the members and women member.
- For resolving the problems of the inhabitants of the respective Union Parishad, 36.8 percent interviewee answered that chairman is efficient, where as 30.2 and 16.0 percent said for the member and women member respectively.

- On the basis of these four traits, among the UP representatives, women members are illustrated as incompetent respect to their personality and responsibility though the women representation has been introduced in the Union Parishad since 1976.

#### Assessment of respective UP women member

Table C: People's perception about Women member

	Percent	Male	Female
Satisfactory	30.1	30.3	29.6
Couldn't understand	17.3	15.9	20.5
Not satisfactory	19.8	20.2	18.9
Don't know about her duties	30.4	31.0	28.9
No answer	1.5	1.6	1.1
Don't Know	0.8	0.9	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

- ✓ 30.1 percent of the respondents said that the duties of women members are in satisfactory level and 19.8 percent not in satisfactory level. 30.4 percent respondents said that the women members don't know their duties.
- ✓ Those who are not satisfied (19.8 percent) with the duties that performed by the women members, out of them 38.9 percent says that they don't take initiatives for helping people. 11.0 percent answered that people don't know the women member personally and 5.8 percent raised question about their literacy.
- ✓ 30.3 percent of the male and 29.6 percent female respondents are satisfied with the performances of UP women member. It shows that the women respondents are less satisfied than men with the women LG representatives' performances.

#### Local Problems Identified by the Residents

- ✓ The respondents identified some 'Major' problems that need to be solved. Three problems, in order of magnitude are as follows:

For Union Parishads:

- Road reconstruction, particularly small roads of the locality
- Setting up tube-wells/Sanitary latrine in every household and
- Electricity.

Table D: Major problem of Union Parishad

Category Label	Percentage
Development of communications (roads etc.)	18.1
Agriculture/irrigation	1.9
Plantation	.9
Help poor people	2.0
Development of education	3.5
Create scope for job	.5
Health care/family planning	3.3
Improve law and order	2.0
Proper Shalish	1.0
Sanitary latrine/Tubewell	13.8
Birth & death registration	.1
Proper distribution of VGF/VGD card/relief	2.1
Protect child marriage/women torture	.4
Social development	2.1
Electricity	4.6
Religious establishment	2.4
Others	.4
Don't know	41.0
Total	100.00

Law and Order Situations

- ✓ There are no major occurrences like extortion, rape, acid throwing, minority torture etc. are reported during the last six months in the surveyed union parishads. The only common problem in those rural areas is theft (43.6 percent). Some other occurrences keep going like robbery (10.3 percent), women torture (10.5 percent) and dowry (18.6 percent).

Table E: Opinion on Law & Order situation of surveyed area

Category label	Percentage
Murder	4.5
Extortion	4.8
Rape	2.4
Acid Through	1.4
Theft	43.6
Robbery	10.3
Women Torture	10.5
Torture against minority	4.0
Dowry	18.6

## People's Opinion on 'Gram Sarker'

- ✓ A large number 30.8 percent respondents thought that the formation of 'Gram Sarker' is a good initiative and it also strengthen Union Parishad. 26.7 percent respondent thought it is a good initiative but they wonder how it will work, and 13.3 percent of the respondents replied they know nothing about 'Gram Sarker'

Table F: Respondents opinion on 'Gram Sarker'

Category label	Percent
This is a Good initiative	30.8
Good initiative but can't guess how it works	26.7
Can't guess its good or bad impacts	15.6
Its not a good initiative	4.9
Its a rehabilitation of local politics	3.2
Don't know about "Gram Sarker"	13.3
No comments	5.4
Not Applicable	.1
<b>Total</b>	100.0

### **3. Recommendations:**

In the backdrop of the above findings and review, we may suggest that:

- Strengthening and capacity building of Union Parishads needs to be addressed from a broader perspective. Need for training of the UP officials (both male and female). However, it is to be noted that because of adverse socio-cultural conditions and relatively low level of competences, the need for training of the Female UP members deserves priority over the male members.
- Extensive programs and campaigns should be taken by the non-government organizations, civil societies, and the government to raise and increase awareness, and to create demand among the people for having services from their local governments.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

It has been observed throughout the fieldwork that people's awareness and attitude towards their Union Parishad is as low as the services and benefits they receive from local bodies. Union Parishad's activities and services have a little or no impact on rural lives. People are only enthusiastic and show interest during UP elections and afterwards they do not find any utility of Union Parishad.

Throughout the field visit two issues of importance has been revealed. Firstly, local elected bodies, more precisely; the Union Parishads need more legal authority as well as monetary and resource control to meet the necessities of the people and requisite development of rural Bangladesh. Secondly and finally, mammoth programs and campaigns should be undertaken by the non-government organizations, civil societies, and the government to raise and increase awareness, and to create demand among the people for services from their local governments, which they are entitled to get.

## Appendix I

### Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	1250	69.1
Female	560	30.9
Total	1810	100.0

### Unions

	Frequency	Percent
Bashon	199	11.0
Kaultia	200	11.0
Fatepur	196	10.8
Ramnagar	203	11.2
Kachua	201	11.1
Khagakharibari	183	10.1
Shingra	219	12.1
Palsha	200	11.0
Bulakipur	209	11.5
Total	1810	100.0

### Thanas

	Frequency	Percent
Gazipur Sadar	399	22.0
Jessore Sadar	600	33.1
Dimla	183	10.1
Ghoraghat	628	34.7
Total	1810	100.0

## Districts

	Frequency	Percent
Gazipur	399	22.0
Jessore	600	33.1
Nilphamari	183	10.1
Dinajpur	628	34.7
Total	1810	100.0

## Occupation

	Frequency	Percent
Service	160	8.8
Student	75	4.1
House wife	433	23.9
Farmer	585	32.3
Business	288	15.9
Tailor	18	1.0
Haker	3	.2
Carpenter	7	.4
Teacher	39	2.2
Driver	13	.7
Mechanic	5	.3
Jobless	40	2.2
Labour	72	4.0
Retired	5	.3
Handicraft worker	17	.9
Doctor	13	.7
Immam	4	.2
Rickshaw/Van Puller	25	1.4
Beggar	2	.1
Potter	1	.1
Health worker	3	.2
Engineer	1	.1
Advocate	1	.1
Total	1810	100.0

### Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent
Unmarried	186	10.3
Married	1583	87.5
Divorced	6	.3
Widow	22	1.2
Separated	7	.4
Husband or Wife left	6	.3
Total	1810	100.0

### Are you a voter

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1764	97.5
No	46	2.5
Total	1810	100.0

### Do you Cast your vote last UP Election

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1748	96.6
No	62	3.4
Total	1810	100.0

### Do you know UP has some committees

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	419	23.1
No	1391	76.9
Total	1810	100.0

Average Age =38.46 Year

Monthly income from profession=1814.50 taka.

Yearly income from other properties = 12331.42 taka.