

KHAN FOUNDATION

In Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

Report

On

**THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT (UNION PARISHAD) SYSTEM:
PERSPECTIVES AND STEPS**

July 2004

Abdul Momen Khan Memorial Foundation

Momenbagh Dhaka 1217 Bangladesh Tel : (880-2) 933 0323 Fax : (880-2) 933 1589
email : khanfoundation@bd.drik.net

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**THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
(UNION PARISHAD) SYSTEM: PERSPECTIVES AND STEPS**

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Preface

Khan Foundation was formed more than a decade ago primarily being motivated by the basic concept of "Democracy for development vis-a-vis development for democracy" espoused by the Foundation starting from national and international levels down to various grass roots level action programmes at the remotest of our villages. The vision of the Khan Foundation for the next millennium is firm but yet quite flexible. It would like to see a future Bangladesh where liberal democracy flourishes and sustains along with the growth of Economic Development, where basic human rights and dignity are honored, where the millions of downtrodden Bangladeshis no longer suffer under the yoke of poverty, rather adapt to a lifestyle which is simple, yet not impoverished, which is peaceful, yet not extravagant and which is decent yet not too materialistic.

Khan Foundation programmes are conducted in an inter-disciplinary approach, through its various activities in the areas of democracy and development like strengthening of local government and cultivating bonds of friendship between Parliaments across the party lines, empowerment of women, realization of children's rights, reproductive health rights, as well as advocacy/mobilization efforts through training and reforms exercise.

Good governance lies in the ability and performance of leaders at the local as much as at the national level. Achieving good governance at the grass-roots level lays a strong base for stable national democracy and sustainable development. Khan Foundation has extensive experience in the areas of capacity building of the local government. A project called the Capacity Building of the Union Parishad (CBUP) has been going on since 1993. The goal of this project is to create strong competent local bodies by ensuring the effective and knowledgeable participation of all members and in the process to promote and strengthen democracy at the grass-roots. With the same aim in mind, Khan Foundation organized this daylong workshop titled "The Economic Activities of the Local Government (Union Parishad): Perspective and Steps" involving the Government Officials, UP members and chairmen on the 7th of August, 2004 at the Democracy Auditorium.

Advocate Rokhsana Khondker
Executive Director

Introduction

Good governance lies in the ability and performance of leaders at the local as much as at the national level. Achieving good governance at the grass-roots lays a strong base for stable national democracy and sustainable development. The goal of any project directed in this line of actions should be to create strong competent local bodies by ensuring the effective and knowledgeable participation of all members and in the process to promote and strengthen democracy at the grass-roots.

Background

Initiated in memory of late Mr. Abdul Momen Khan, a Minister to the Government of Bangladesh from 1977 to 1982, a Cabinet Secretary and philanthropist & prolific social worker; Khan Foundation (KF) first began operations during the flood of 1988, in the area of relief & rehabilitation work. It rapidly built a reputation as one of the few PVDOs linking different levels of the society from the highest level of the government to the grass roots & working in the areas of democracy, human rights, poverty alleviation and development. KF's major focus has been on advancing the cause of development through the process of sustained democracy aimed at the most disadvantaged groups in the country. KF's programmes are based upon the founding concept of "Democracy for Development and Development for Democracy".



A part of women Participants

The vision of Khan Foundation for the new millennium is firm in determination yet quite flexible in approach. It would like to see a future Bangladesh where Liberal Democracy flourishes and sustains along with the growth of Economic Development, where basic human rights and dignity are honoured, where the millions of downtrodden Bangladeshis no longer suffer under the yoke of poverty, rather adapt to a lifestyle which is simple, yet not impoverished, which is peaceful, yet not extravagant and which is decent yet not too materialistic. The objective of the organization is as follows:

1. To strengthen and sustain true representative democracy in the country from the grassroots local government through to central government level while promoting a democratic culture in the country;
2. To improve the living conditions of the country's disadvantaged groups, in particular women, children & the poor, through launching of effective social and economic development programmes.

Having this noble aim in mind Khan Foundation has been working for the capacity building for a long time now. In continuation of this line of function it has initiated a program called Capacity Building of Union Parishad (CBUP). The goal of the project is to create a competent local elected body which will ensure effective participation of the community through their elected representatives at all levels of administration and promote good governance at the grass-roots. The objectives of the projects can be summarized in the following way:

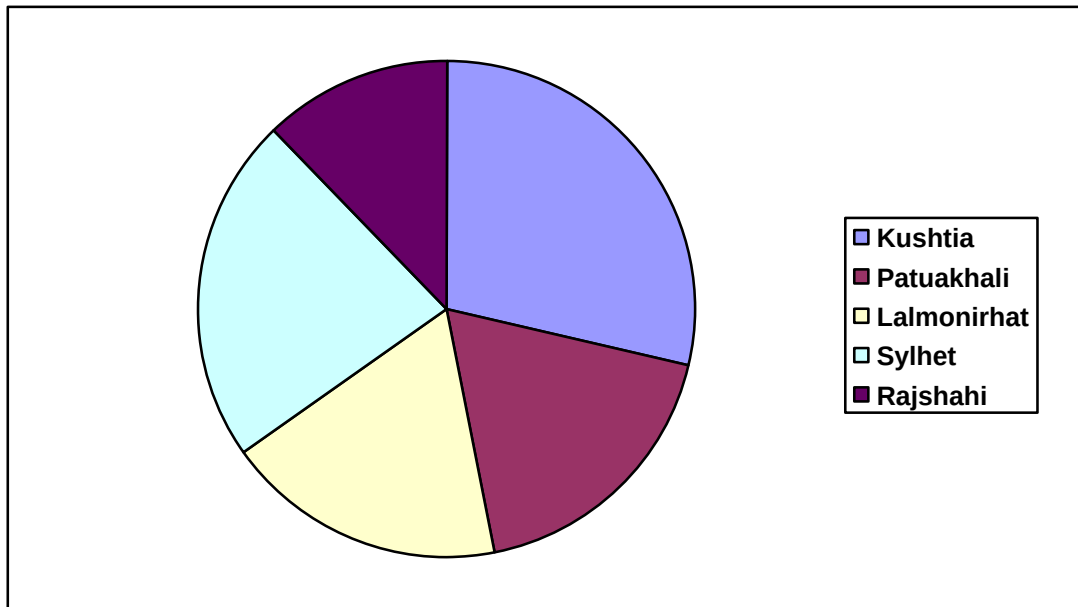
1. To reinforce the leadership skills of the UP chairmen and members in order to enable them to take part in the design, implementation and evaluation of development policies and activities.
2. To achieve administrative decentralization from central government to Union Parishads.
3. To establish accountability and transparency in all Union Parishad activities and processes.



A part of Participants

TARGET AREA AND GROUP

Target Districts



The project components consist of:

- ◆ Basic Training (One day)
- ◆ In-depth Follow-up Training Programme
- ◆ Monitoring
- ◆ Democracy Fair

The training are given by experts and professional trainers in the relevant fields, supported by audio-visual resources including documentary film, leaflets, flyers, posters, brochures etc.

The duration of the Basic Training Session is fixed at one day. The duration of the follow-up in-depth workshop is four days. The Basic training is held locally in district/thana headquarters. The in-depth training sessions are convened at the Khan Foundation's in-house 'Democracy Auditorium' in Dhaka.

The action undertaken in support of chairmen and members, and their meaningful participation in local government needs to be secured by the establishment of an effective monitoring mechanism. The Monitoring Cell based at Khan Foundation follows up on the impact of the training, the members' participation in local development and their interaction with their community. The Monitoring Cell also acts as a 'watchdog' over the operation of the UPs and other relevant entities and provides chairmen and members with a permanent instrument they can use to denounce irregularities or gender discriminating practices in their Union Parishad.

A day long "Democracy Fair" is held in each of the targeted Thanas. The purpose of the Fair is to target the local communities and to emphasize the important of broad community participation. The Fair also allows the KF staff to directly interact with the community. KF arranges dramas and songs and shows film/videos on democracy, development and participation in these Fairs. KF also facilitates group discussion on local development and their responsibilities as voters. In addition, KF publicizes its programmes, so that people in the community can approach KF directly with any concerns or problems they have.

Designing of the workshop

The workshop was divided into two sessions. The first session consisted of speeches by the guests and plenary discussions. The later half constituted of group discussions by the six designated groups.

Honourable guests attending the workshop:

1. Advocate Rokhsana Khondker, Executive Director, Khan Foundation
2. Sirajul Hossain, Additional Director, NILG.
3. Mohammad Khorshed Alam, Upazila Engineer (LGED, Polash, Narshingdi)
4. Mohammad Mijanur Rahman, Director General, NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB)
5. Mohammad Alalunddin, Mohammad Alalunddin, Dohar, Dhaka.
6. Professor Amirul Islam, Professor, Janangir Nagar University.
7. Gouranga Chandra, Upazila Engineer, Belab, Narshingdi
8. Mohammad Alamgir Hossain, Shadar, Narshingdi
9. Mohammad Mijanur Rahman, Senior Additional Secretary, Science, Information and Tele-communication Ministry.

Inaugural Speech:

Advocate Rokhsana Khondker

Executive Director
Khan Foundation.

She starts her speech by thanking everyone. She fore mostly discusses the background of such a workshop. In doing so, she speaks of Khan Foundation and the objective of the noble organization. She asserted that Khan Foundation has been working to promote and make the local level government efficient for a very long time now. Since, 1990s a new slogan has emerged, she added, that is "Democracy for Development and Development for democracy". In order to assess democracy properly, we need to understand the basics of democracy, how it can be established and how important is the role of the people in it. So, as representatives of the local people the local government has immense significance and responsibilities. She says that there was an international conference held with MPs from all over the world and in that conference there was a common consensus on the issues of strengthening the Local Government Division, UP structure and the role of the elected members.

She further stated that Khan Foundation has been working in the capacity building of the UP and promoting good governance at the grass-roots level since 1993. People representatives have been conferred upon great power and duties, as people are the main source of power in a democracy. She stresses that in order to make the local government more powerful the uttermost importance should be given to the UP which is the lowest tire of the local government. Khan Foundation has provided about 40,000 elected women members with training and also helped to create a healthy atmosphere for them to work irrespective of their political beliefs and mandates.

A mass awareness has been created in Bangladesh in this regard. This type of workshop is the aftermath of such awareness. Khan Foundation has also created several forums and publishes a magazine called Trinamul so that the elected peoples' representatives can pinpoint their problems and also discuss the probable solutions to negotiate with the Government and work as a team. She states that Khan Foundation is carrying out such activities through two networks; one is that with the NGOs and the other through the women lawyers. She says that the main topic for today's workshop is the economic activities, the sources of funding of the UP. She expresses her deep satisfaction over the matter that both NGO and UP representatives present in the workshop can work hand in hand and such an integration could stimulate the pace of the works and make the UP more efficient and bolstered. She says that we are always more worried about the problems but not solution. She reiterated her hope that today's workshop will be successful in resolving some problems in addition to finding more obstacles.

At the end she again expresses her optimism on the fact that working together can and will make a difference at the local government system.

Key-note Presenter

Mr Sirajul Hossain

Additional Director

NILG.

In his speech he speaks of the duties of the UP more elaborately as described by the 1983 ordinance of the constitution. He says that though the main theme of decentralization was to empower the local people with the power that is necessarily theirs but the reality has become quite the opposite. According to him, as a lowest tier of the local government, the UP that has been functional for a very long time should be made stronger, effective and prompt on a priority basis especially in the democratic structure. He then says that the PRSP that is initiated by the Government, also shows that the decentralization of power is required more to ensure good governance than to meet political needs.



Sirajul Hossain, Asst. Director, NILG, Presented his Key-note Paper

His speech constitutes of the background of the local government system and also some guidelines in improving the administrative skill and creating efficient funding.

While discussing about the importance of the perspective of the local government, he correctly stresses that local government has immense importance in establishing good governance in several ways like in ensuring the solution of the local problems, nurturing fellow-feeling among the people, flourishing democracy, employing local skill, issuing and executing local level plans etc.

In discussing the background of such an institution, he states that the very inception of the concept in the sub-continent dates back in 1885 through the formation of the first Union Committee during the British rule. He explains that the structure and economic activities along with the name of different levels of local government evolved with time and now a day, there are four levels of local government in the rural areas; namely- Gram Sarkar, Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Zila Parishad and that for the urban areas are institutions like Pourashabha and City Corporation.

He then reads out the ten mandatory tasks of the UP as decided under UP ordinance, 1983, which are:

1. To assist the organization implementing law and order, resolve disputes and also retain the law and order situation in the respective areas.
2. To take different steps to prevent disorder and smuggling.
3. To implement different development schemes related to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, livestock, poultry, education, health, handicrafts, communication, irrigation and flood control for the economic and social development of the people.
4. To enhance and spread the programs of family planning.
5. To assist in the production of local resources and their usage.
6. To evaluate the development programs undertaken by different organization of the UP (GOs and NGOs).
7. To preserve and maintain different Government properties like roads, bridge, canal, dam, markets, telephone and electric wire etc.
8. To encourage the people to set up sanitary latrines and use them.
9. To conduct all types of census.
10. To register information regarding birth, death, blind, beggars and impoverished people and keep a record.

Besides this there are other 38 auxiliary tasks as is being attached with the whole keynote speech in Annexure-1.

He then briefly discusses different programs carried out by the UP and their expected outcome like Food for Work, VGD, VGF, TR etc. In the speech, it becomes clear that the main objective of the programs is to empower the local people, confer the necessary rights upon them and free them from the grim grasp of abject poverty. Thus they would contribute in making confident, successful citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

In discussing the limitations of executing the economic activities he put lack of eligibility, power and resources as the main impeding factors. The impertinence of some duties with respect to the infrastructure, the obsolete and ineffective duties also act as deterring factors in the way of carrying out economic activities properly.

In the end of the speech he also provided with some ideas about the UP as obtained from a sample survey report and then took everyone's leave with the hope that the participants will take part in a non-antagonistic way and corporate with each other with the common aim of the betterment for all.

Mohammad Khorshed Alam

Honorable Guest Speaker

Upazila Engineer (LGED, Polash, Norshingdi)

In his speech, he expresses his deep grief in the fact that after the independence, though all the governments have put thrust on UP development but it did not get the due importance. According to him UP should be the mini-parliament where first a scheme should be posed at the thana level and then at the UP level. But the total implementation and scheme presentation process is flawed, as a result the members do come up with good projects but it does not get passed in the monthly co-ordination meeting.

So in his opinion the UP system must be freed from the enticements of all the doctrines. He also suggests that at the monthly co-ordination meeting of the UP, the activities of all NGOs should be evaluated.

Mohammad Mijanur Rahman

Chief Guest

Director General

NGO Affairs Bureau

He starts off with praising the KF for organizing such workshops since 1993. He expects conflicts to be the key of solutions. He opines that the amendment of any law is debatable and thought provoking issue. Describing his association with the DDLG, he states that he has been with the organization for a long time now. According to him, ever since the very inception of the local government system in 1985, much legislation has been faced by the UP as an imposition. Constitution does not acknowledge the UP system properly. But he thinks that any legislation is flexible to changes keeping an eye in the changing course of events and reality. The power and influence associated with the membership allures anyone to be one and this very attitude gives rise to conflicts of interest between the members and the Government. According to him, in-terms of distribution of power and funding sources, the people should be given the proper guidelines.

He expresses his deep concern about the micro-credit system. Micro-credit organizations must guide the poor by giving the proper directions for receiving the loan and also suggesting the proper way of repaying the debt. But the flow of fund should be increased, he opines. He sees the present strategies taken to be not sufficient.

He exclaims in deed grief that UP is clinically dead. All the fund flows have dried out. He suggested the UP members and chairmen to establish a good liaison with the Government officials. He also regrets the fact that the members are not being remunerated properly for all the hard work that goes in, they are only given mere allowances. He also suggests the members to be always present for the people to restore the mass-trust in them. For the fulfillment of this purpose, he appreciates the Government's decision that the members have to stay overnight if the occasion calls for it.

In his opinion, a total number of 1842 NGOs are working now according to the current statistics. NGOs are pretty much external source dominated organizations. He hopes that there should be a both way receiving and giving mechanism today in an un-antagonistic manner. It would be better if they could suggest proper guidelines for the proper functioning of the NGOs as well, he pleads. This would sharpen the leadership qualities among the NGO

workers and officials. The NGOs only provide the annual report at then end of the year. About 16 to 17 core taka is given for the reduction of poverty.



(From right) Mr Mostafizur Rahman, UNO of Satoria, Manikgong, Mr. Alauddin Dohar, Dhaka, Prof. Amirul Islam, JahangirNagar University, Mohammad Mijanur Rahman, Director General, NGO Affair's Bureau Advocate Rokhsana Khondker, Executive Director, Khan Foundation & Chairperson, Shaishab Bangladesh and Mr Sirajul Hossain, Asst Director, NILG

Women constitute the 50% of the total population. So proper attention should be given to the development of women UP members who are always neglected by their male counterparts, he stresses.

There are total 4483 number of UP. No matter how good the campaigning is, the eligible one will be elected, he states.

Hoping that this meeting will be fruitful in providing a guideline, he took everyone's leave.

Mohammad Alalunddin

Honorable Guest Speaker
Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)
Dohar, Dhaka.

In the beginning of his speech, he expresses his confusion about the activities, as it is not mentioned that whether the activities are income generating or expenditure related ones that have been covered under the jurisdiction of the meeting. The UP system is financially weak. According to him, steps should be taken to generate income like imposing tax. Tax assessment is a new strategy initiated recently. He suggests establishing a new tax base to strengthen the tax base. The leasing out of the markets is good source of revenue, he opines. The authority could be rested with the chairman to avoid the bureaucratic intricacies.

He regrets that the number of the secretaries is insufficient. The staff also lack in the proper skill associated with the duties. According to him, trainings could go a long way in this. But training all the members everywhere would also be a superfluous strategy as only 5% of the

members and chairmen are re-elected. So, according to him a proper strategy should be developed to avoid the duplication of the training.

ADLG is not being able to function properly. Training and capacity building should go hand in hand and the members themselves could train the other members.

He opines that the sense of empowerment and democracy has to be innate inside a system and could only be developed eventually.

Professor Amirul Islam

Honorary Guest of Honor
Jahangir Nagar University (JU)

Professor Islam foremostly discusses about the perspective of the Local Government. He opines that if the main aim is to strengthen the Local Government system then decentralization is a strategy. The three components are:

- a) Distribution of Finances and Management
- b) Distribution of Administrative power
- c) Distribution of Responsibilities

If UP system is provided autonomy in all these aspects only then development of the Local Government system is possible. It has been increasingly burdened with impractical responsibilities while the continuous squeezing of the block allocation of ADP aggravating the situation. The power has been more centralized in the name of decentralization, he opines. The process of obtaining funds is also very humiliating.

Economic activities have many types of fallout. He states that tax system is not that unpopular. The more taxes, the more services will be provided and the more popular the elected will become. A national board for collecting taxes should be established if the occasion calls for it, he suggests. According to him, service is related with resources and the gap between the two has to be reduced. The block allocation is given through a very intricate process. The poor people are benefited the least from it impeding the optimum allocation of resources, he exclaims in deep grief. But people, on the other hand, always want their chairmen to be with them.

He states the budget is normally very extended and oversized because the cruel intentions of the bureaucrats and politicians are catered by it but only a mere percentage of ADP allocation actually is spent for the betterment of the UP. All the natural monopolies of the country have been bureaucratized. NUPF should protest all these irregularities for that all the supports should be extended to them, he suggests. The chairmen would submit the report of the monthly meeting to the forum so that the Government can directly respond to the situations and demands. Thus the NUPF could serve as a medium.

He also suggests that the women should be elected through the general seats like the male counterparts. He says that the key-note presentation should have included the UP budgets. The block allocation of ADP should be increased and it has to be spent by the Local Government institution instead of spending centrally. In this case, area and population should be the fund deciding criteria, he opines. According to him, experts should be appointed from the National Commission of Finance to redress and reallocate the block allocations.

Plenary Discussions

After the speeches, the floor was opened for the plenary discussion. In the plenary discussion, the participants pointed out to several problems and suggested their own well thought solutions. Some of them are listed below:

1. Though the UP system is burdened with many duties but in reality, it is ceased to have any authority.
2. Together, if all the UP members and chairmen could get unified, then they are bound to make a difference as it has been seen in their joint protest through the NUPF (National Union Parishad Forum) to pass the 14th amendment which was about to confiscate the UP members' and chairmen's power.
3. The NUPF has already submitted their twelve-fold demands.
4. NGOs face a lot of problems in preaching the women empowerment.
5. NGO officials are not catered properly by the members and the chairmen.
6. NGO members are often blamed for not having the accountability wrongfully. Most of their projects are impeded or deterred in the name of lack of accountability.
7. An audit for funding should be followed bi-laterally.
8. There is ambiguity about Gram-Shankar being a proper tier of the Local Government. The source of ADP block allocation and the process of disbursement are also very doubtful and obscure.



Group s work of the Participants

9. There should be public budget declaration and discussion to ensure transparency.
10. The UP system is severely influenced by the powerful personnel at the center. The constituency of the ruling party's MPs enjoys skewed benefits.
11. People are willing to pay taxes but just to ensure the chairmanship and membership in the next round, the UP members and chairmen do not levy taxes properly.

12. A separate Local Government Unit should be established as an administrative unit and NILG should provide with necessary trainings.
13. The vulnerability of the UP members should be eradicated.
14. Salish and mediations are done by UP courts. So, training has no alternative.
15. The NGOs should be given the task of providing training to the members and chairmen at the grass-roots level.
16. Women chairmen and members cover more wards than male counterparts. So their duties are also many folds. But they are the most teased at section. Women should not be confined into reserved seats.
17. Though the schemes are given by the local members and chairmen after careful scrutinization, but the MPs have the power to alter it according to their free will.
18. The widow and old age allowances and pension should be specific and carefully provided among them.
19. The provisions of all kinds are very frugal for the UP members and chairmen.
20. Women members should be given proper respect and power. They should come from the general seats.
21. The allowances should be increased.
22. The corrupt chairmen and members are the root of all the devils.
23. UP should be given the freedom to ask for funds and implementing the projects according to the need of the locality.
24. Sometimes people take loan from different NGOs to pay off the loans taken from other NGOs. This vicious chain gives rise to corruption and misappropriation of funds.
25. The problems and prospects of the UP chairmen should also be considered. It is not possible for them to stay at the office over-night for days together.
26. Because of the loopholes or missing links the chain of command collapses. The poor and rich gets more polarized.
27. UP has been given the power to levy and collect taxes. There is no loophole in the law. So the chairmen should collect taxes indiscriminately.
28. There is no conflict of interest between the MPs and the members. But problems are created when the MP is from one political party while the chairman belonging to the other one. An optimal strategy should be determined in this context.
29. Education is the key to reduce all the conflicts.
30. The MPs should visit their constituencies on a regular basis to listen to the general people.



A part of Participants

After the plenary discussion, all the participants were divided into six groups. Each of them was given with an individual topic. They had to identify the problems and also the resolutions for each of the problems. Later on, the group leaders presented them before the session.

Group Discussions

Group-1

The importance and impediments in using the local resources in the local economic activities:

Importance:

1. To renovate the roads and highways.
2. To open adult education centers.
3. To construct health complexes.
4. To free the confiscated Khas land and to undertake plantation.
5. To develop the markets.
6. To collect the necessary taxes.
7. To make arrangements to improve the security system.
8. To financially help the poor children
9. To make provisions for aquaculture in the local rotten ponds.
10. To provide scholarships to the local poor but meritorious students.
11. To use the 1% land transfer tax properly.
12. To take necessary steps to combat the natural disasters.
13. To make good arrangements for constructing sanitary latrines and drinking water.
14. To make trade license as a source of income.

Impediments:

1. There are lack of proper planning and resources for opening up adult education centers and health complexes.
2. There are several obstacles that one has to face in order to obtain the confiscated Khas land.
3. The power of giving necessary leases is limited for the development of the local markets.
4. There is lack of assistance from the local people and administration in order to improve the security system.
5. There is lack of sufficient funding for the renovation of roads and highways.
6. There seems to be lack of assistance to provide scholarships to the poor but meritorious students.
7. Lack of proper ownership of ponds in order to make the ponds suitable for aquaculture.
8. Lack of funds, space and awareness.
9. Lack of proper skilled manpower and sufficient funds.
10. Reluctance of the businessmen to obtain trade license.

Group Leader – Dr. Abdul Mannan
Presenter- Md. Shah Jamal (Tota)



Group s work of the Participants

Group-2

The role of the government officials and the peoples' representatives for conducting the activities of the local government properly and smoothly:

The role of the Government Officials:

1. To allocate the allocation out of the ADP directly to the Parishad.

2. To bear the responsibility of the supervision solely.
3. To bring transparency in receiving bribes when a new project would be inaugurated.
4. To initiate an active role in the equal distribution.
5. To confer the absolute power on the local government to carry out its economic activities independently.

The role of the peoples' representatives:

1. To implement any development programme the chairman should bear the entire responsibility along with all the members.
2. To make the people aware of the proper implementation of various projects related to creating waterways, constructing roads, plantation, aquaculture, poultry raising, delivering safe drinking water, small and cottage industries etc.
3. To generate awareness among the people about fire, flood, storm, cyclone, tornado and other natural calamities.
4. To bring in the economic well-being and solvency among the people through education, social development, co-operative committees etc.
5. To create employment opportunities for the widow, orphan, poor and impoverished.
6. To make provisions for primary health care complexes.
7. To collect the 1% allocation of ADP and revenue and deposit them in the account of the Union Parishad to spend them for its development activities. To use the Jalmahal and the markets for the development activities of the UP.
8. To suggest the parents to send all the children to school.
9. To encourage the poor and impoverished for self-empowerment through different types of trainings.
10. To make provisions so that the gap between the administrative officials and the peoples' representatives is reduced and co-ordinate both of them in such a way that both can work for the implementation of economic development of the local people.

Group Leader- Mr Abid Hossain

Presenter- Ms Rubina Alam.

GROUP-3

The problems and solutions regarding the power of the Union Parishad to carry out the economic activities for local development:

1. To provide a separate budget for the Union Parishad. This is so because there is no separate budget for the UP in the national budget. As a result, the members and chairmen face several problems pertaining to the proper implementation and conducting of several programs.
2. To give back the sectors regarded as sources of income to the UP. For example, land tax, leasing out of the markets, jalmahal etc.
3. To increase the number of sectors for the ADP allocation instead of the prevailing 4 sectors.
4. To increase the total allocation of ADP projects for the Union Parishads from 50,000 taka to 1,00,000 taka.

5. To provide the women members of the reserved seats some special provisions alike the other members.
6. To provide the tasks equally to all the members and increase the allowances of the members.
7. To keep the UP activities free from the grasp of politics.
8. To provide trainings for carrying out the economic activities properly.
9. To increase the provision for legal activities from 5,000 taka to 50,000 taka.
10. To follow some specific rules and regulations in collecting taxes.

Group Leader and Presenter-Saiful Alam

Group-4

The problems and their solutions faced by the women members in the effective participation in the economic activities of the Union Parishad.

Problems:

1. Unequal distributive rules.
2. They are being deprived of the economic development activities.
3. They are being deprived of many opportunities and privileges.
4. The rules in the gazette notification are not being abided by.
5. They are being deprived of the activities of the VGD cards.
6. To increase their allowances especially in the cases of widow and old age allowances.

Solutions:

1. The problems have to be resolved through the direct assistance of the official concerned.
2. To resolve the problems pertaining to the implementation of development activities through the respective government officials.
3. The respective chairman has to take the practical and necessary steps in this regard.
4. The transparent and proper rules should be distributed equally for the proper implementation of the projects. In this regards all the necessary arrangements should be made.
5. The UNO at the thana level can take the proper steps for the proper implementation of the rules and regulations.

Group leader and Presenter- Advocate Ferdaus Akter Wahida.

Group-5

The present main problems and their solutions faced by the local government (Union Parishad):

Problems:

1. The demand for expenditures is higher than the sources of funding.
2. The Union Parishad is facing several obstacles especially in the case of collecting taxes from different sources.
3. The national allocation for the Union Parishads is very miniscule.

Solutions:

1. To increase the revenue income of the Union Parishad from the current rate of 1% to 5%.
2. To encourage the people to pay off taxes regularly and extend the administrative support in this respect.
3. To increase the sources of income of the Union Parishads to carry out different development activities and thus create their own funding.
4. To increase the national allocation for the Union Parishads including the ADP block allocation.

Group Leader and Presenter- Md. Sirajul Islam.

Group-6

The problems faced by the local government and the steps that can be taken to create a practical budget for the local government (UP):

Problems:

1. Lack of private (own) funding and resources.
2. Taxes cannot be collected according to the assessment.
3. The Government in implementing the budget makes no allocation.
4. The lack of proficiency of the secretaries to implement budget.
5. The budget is not declared openly before the people.

Solutions:

1. To increase the income through collecting taxes.
2. To make the system of collecting tax more accurate, it is necessary to integrate the common people.
3. To increase the government allocation towards the Union Parishads.
4. To impart training on the secretaries in creating and implementing budget.
5. To declare the budget in front of the general people.

Group leader and presenter- Hafez Abdul Wahab.

Concluding Speech
Mohammad Sirajul Hossain
Asst. Director, NILG.

In the concluding speech, Mr. Hossain states that there are many economic activities that all the members conduct starting from relief work to all sorts of duties. There are also many invisible tasks. Motivation is a part of it. The Government is losing its power day by day. So, we ourselves have to empower ourselves. In this regard about 40 steps have been suggested in the workshop. He hopes that even a fraction of those are implemented then this effort will become successful. The Government will be pressurized to listen the Local Government unit, he suggests. With that note of hope, he took everyone's leave and thus a successful day-long workshop came to an end.

Key-Note Presentation:

The Economic Activities of the Local Government (UP) System: Perspectives and Steps

Keynote speech:

The economic activities of the Local Government (UP) system: Perspectives and Steps

Background

The main theme of establishing local government system is to confer the pertinent power upon the local people through decentralization. But after 33 years of independence, it has not yet been possible to set up a fruitful local government system in Bangladesh. However, because of the relentless demand exerted by the civil society, different political activists and most of all, the common people of different level in the favor of setting up an effective local government system through proper decentralization, the government has been much pressurized to take necessary steps in this regard recently. There is a mass agreement that the lowest tier of the local government system, the Union Parishad that has been functional for a very long time should be made stronger, effective and prompt on a priority basis especially in the democratic structure.

In the mean time, the government has already initiated the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP) for the interim period. This PRSP will provide a guideline for the next Fifth Year Plan. It has been acceded in the PRSP clearly that the decentralization of power is required more to ensure good governance than to meet political needs.

In the light of this background, the administrative role of the Union Parishads in carrying out their own economic activities has been discussed in this essay. Later on, some guidelines have been pin pointed to improve the administrative skill of the UP in carrying out its own economic activities.

The importance of the Perspective of the Local Government and the Local Government of Bangladesh:

There is local government system almost everywhere in the world today. Bangladesh is no different. The local government has been conferred upon its legal rights on the 59th paragraph of the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to emphasize on the importance of the local government. The significance of the local government in establishing good governance in the country can be discussed in the following manner:

1. The ambit of activities in a modern country has been enhanced from different aspects. It is not always possible for the central government to execute all the tasks properly and effectively from a distance. So, in order to ensure the proper solution of the local problems, the importance of the local government is quintessential.
2. The local government can play an important role in resolving the local problems in exchange of frugal expenditure and labor in accordance with the demand of the local people.
3. The local government is confined within a geographical boundary. They are set up centering about a specific administrative unit like- Union, Thana, District, municipalities etc. It helps to make the people aware of their rights as a citizen in the political sense and also to nurture such consciousness.
4. The local government has significant importance in flourishing the democracy. The first lesson of democracy begins from the local government.

5. Though the common people cannot actively participate in the activities executed by the central government, but they have to opportunity to play their necessary roles in the activities carried out by the local government institutions. Thus, it becomes possible to employ the skill of the people in the pertinent sectors.
6. The local government plays an important role as an intermediate medium to issue and execute the central and local level plans.
7. The local government participates actively in collecting necessary information and survey samples in taking up the effective and practical plans.
8. The implementation of the small projects and programs for the development of the local areas is only possible through the local government.
9. The local government can encourage the local people to participate in different development activities initiated by the Government.
10. Local government can eradicate the local dissatisfaction and can flourish self-dependency by taking decisions locally.
11. Since the local government represents the local people, it is accountable to the people. So, they become extra effective to execute the local development programs.

The structure of the local government that is prevalent today in Bangladesh was introduced during the British rule through the issuing of different legislation. The initiative of establishing the local government started at the end of the 18th century in the cities and beginning of the 19th century in the rural areas.

Today, there are four levels local government for the rural areas, like- Gram Sarkar, Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Zila Parishad. For the city areas there are two types of local government institutions like Pourashabha and City Corporation.

The local government institution at the Union level has been working since the British rule that is for more than a century in Bangladesh. During the British rule, in 1885, the first Union Committee was formed after the issuing of the rural self-ruling law. Afterwards, the name, structure, economic activities and other activities of the local government have changed many a time in different regimes through the passing of several legislations.

The Economic Activities of the Union Parishad: An Evaluation:

The committee that started its journey as the Union Committee in 1885 within the ambit of the rural self-ruling act is still functioning even-though it went through several changes in its structure and activities. Today, the Gram Sarker, the lowest tier of the local government institution at the village level, is working as an assistant organization to the Union Parishad. So, in this way this is also a local government body. The local government (UP) ordinance, 1983 and later on the amendments of the legislation provided the legal infrastructure of the local government. It has also been made more coordinated and controlled by the orders and circulars of the Local Government Division (LGD). The UP is obligated to perform several economic, social and community development works. The ten mandatory tasks for the UP that has been stated in the Local Government (UP) act under section 30(2) are the following:

1. To assist the organization implementing law and order, resolve disputes and also retain the law and order situation in the respective areas.
2. To take different steps to prevent disorder and smuggling.
3. To implement different development schemes related to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, livestock, poultry, education, health, handicrafts, communication, irrigation and flood control for the economic and social development of the people.

4. To enhance and spread the programs of family planning.
5. To assist in the production of local resources and their usage.
6. To evaluate the development programs undertaken by different organization of the UP (GO and NGO).
7. To preserve and maintain different Government properties like roads, bridge, canal, dam, markets, telephone and electric wire etc.
8. To encourage the people to set up sanitary latrines and use them.
9. To conduct all types of census.
10. To register information regarding birth, death, blind, beggars and impoverished people and keep a record.

In addition to the mandatory tasks, there are 38 other auxiliary tasks that are stated in the first chapters of the first section of the UP ordinance are being attached here at the annexure.

Although some works of the UP was regarded as relief work at the beginning but later on those were converted into economic activities by adding a trend of development aspect into them. Those activities are briefly discussed here:

The prevalent food related programs are:

1. Food for Work programme
2. VGD programme
3. VGF programme
4. The maintenance of Rural Infrastructure (TR) program
5. MRP programme
6. Hill Tracts food assistance programme.

Food for Work programme:

The Food for Work programme is implemented by different department and organizations in different names, such as:

- Rural Development programme (RD)
- Food for Work Programme (FFW)
- Renovation of the Rural Infrastructure programme

Rural Development programme (RD)

The FAO aided Food for Work programme is being implemented in the name of Rural Development (RD). The main aims of RD are:

- ✓ To build up food security through creating opportunities for employment.
- ✓ To produce resources for the poor and impoverished people.
- ✓ To provide income-enhancing training and thus developing skill, providing loan, create savings provision and provoke community support and assistances to make the beneficiaries of the project to be self-empowered. There are four sectors through which this programme is being executed; namely, water, boat, fisheries and forestry.

Food for Work programme:

Under the jurisdiction of this programme several projects are undertaken for the physical infrastructural development of the rural areas. To implement this programme several strategic papers providing the guidelines have been declared.

Renovation of the Rural Infrastructure programme:

- ✓ Construction of roads, road cum dam etc.
- ✓ Improvement of the quality of different educative, religious and cultural institutions.
- ✓ Digging and redigging of ponds.
- ✓ Digging and redigging of canals and channels.

Food for the poor:

To emphasis on the socio-economic development of the people though assisting in food so that they could be elevated from the grim poverty line.

Women Empowerment:

To build up maintenance programme of the rural infrastructure which would only be executed by women.

Prioritized Assistance in Food:

In order to properly implement the food assistance programme priorities should be given to the areas that are more vulnerable to food insecurity. For this purpose, the entire Bangladesh has been divided into four food insecurity zones.

VGD Programme:

The VGD programme is the single largest poverty alleviation programme of the country. It has included all the Unions of the country within it's ambit of activities. Presently, this programme has been implemented with the help of two pro-projects; namely Union VGD pro-project and Training the women pro-project. Among them the Union VGD programme is the largest one. Through this programme, about 4,50,000 beneficiaries get 30 kgs of wheat or rice each every month.

- ✓ To create opportunities for women to enhance their proficiency in marketable skill, encourage accumulating savings to generate primary principal for investment and provide opportunities in making them earning members and capable so that they could be integrated in the ongoing development programmes.
- ✓ To increase the social awareness of women by ensuring the group participation of women in practical education and other human resource development related training.

The limitations of executing the economic activities:

If we carefully evaluate and discern objectively then we would find that there are sufficient lack of eligibility, power and resources to implement all the elaborated tasks conferred upon UP (both mandatory and auxiliary) as stated in the ordinance. If we look at some of the task, we can easily assess that some of the duties do not measure up to the legal infrastructure,

management or financial capability of the UP. The main task list of the UP was issued about 40 years ago within an autocratic and colonial environment and in the light of present changes many of the tasks have become ineffective if not obsolete. In the context of the changing social, political and economic reality it has become absolutely necessary to re-evaluate and renovate the tasks of the UP. At one hand, the UP has no power to determine the strategies and take implementary steps as the grass-root level tier of the local government, on the other hand, UP cannot take any principle related decisions without the authorization of the respective authority. According to the UP ordinance, 1983, most of the power pertaining to setting up laws, rules and regulations are controlled by the Government which has impeded the way of the huge economic activities of the UP.

The Perspective of the Economic Activities of the UP

Some ideas about some special institutional features of the UP obtained from a survey report based on samples on its activities are being stated here:

- In order to execute all the tasks of the UP, there are lack of finance, manpower and material which is breaking the continuity of the work progress of the UP leading to a slower pace of work completion.
- The idea of development and activities of the UP have been confined within construction kutcha roads and repairing them.
- The institutional and management power of the UP is very frail. A major fraction of the administrative officers of the UP suffers from lack of training in execution, planning and management.
- The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Project Implementation Officer (PIO) and Upazila Engineer (UE) only have some working liaison with the administrative officers of at the Upazila level. In addition to that, Government extension workers and the UP officers have absolutely no formal connection amongst themselves. The works of the UP have no link with that of Government or NGO grass-level development extension works because of the lack of a proper coordinated plan. So, the Government and the NGOs work completely in isolation with that of the UP.
- The women members of the UP are only serving a symbolic role without holding much substance. Almost all of the women members think that their works are being belittled and they themselves are teased at and harassed. In addition to that most of the times, they are not made the one third of the chairpersons in the Project Implementing Committee (PIC) that violates the rules.
- Most of the UP doesn't have 12 permanent ongoing and functional committees. The permanent committee of the UP plays no role in carrying out a project or in the issuing.
- The financial and resource base of the UP is very flaccid. The especially the revenue collection through imposition of taxes is far beyond the targeted one. Because of the weak resource and financial base and also owing to the lack of training, the UP is not being able to take any steps to issue or implement any development project on their own accord.

Auxiliary Works

1. To provide for roads and highways and to maintain them.
2. To provide for public places, open spaces, parks and playgrounds and also to maintain them.
3. To lit the lights in the roads, highways and public places.

4. To initiate general plantation and the maintenance. In addition to that initiate plantation especially beside the roads, highways and public places and their maintenance.
5. To maintain and carry out the procedures in the graveyards and cremation centers. In addition to that, to maintain different public properties and provide space for public meetings.
6. To provide places to stay (guest houses) for the visitors and the maintenance of the guesthouses.
7. To control roads, highways and public places and prevent trespassing.
8. To identify the reason of mischief at public places, roads or highways and resolve it.
9. To supervise the rivers, forests etc. for the cleanliness of the Union, to improve the health services and make arrangements for other issues.
10. To collect and remove cow-dung and other dirt and filths and also to make arrangements to ensure cleanliness of the area.
11. To control criminal and other dangerous activities.
12. To remove the dead body of an animal and make necessary arrangements to control.
13. To control the slaughtering of the animals.
14. To control the construction and reconstruction of the buildings in a Union.
15. To control the construction of dangerous buildings and monuments.
16. To make arrangements for water delivery services like water wells, water taps, water bodies, ponds etc and maintain them
17. To make arrangements to prevent water pollution at the sources of drinking water.
18. To prohibit the use of the water from such wells, ponds or other sources that are suspected to be injurious to public health.
19. To prohibit and control bathing, washing clothes and giving a bath to the domestic animals near ponds, wells or other sources of water which is exclusively used for drinking purposes.
20. To prohibit and control drenching of stalk, jute etc. near well, pond or other sources of water exclusively used for drinking.
21. To prohibit or control leather dying in the residential areas.
22. To prohibit or control of extracting stones of other materials through digging the soil of any residential area.
23. To prohibit or control the establishment of a brick-field, clay pots or any other industrial set up for production in a residential area.
24. To construct a list of those who are willing to sell domestic or other animals.
25. To make arrangements of fair or exhibition.
26. To make arrangement to celebrate any public occasion.
27. To make arrangements for combating bonfire, flood, hail, storm, earth-quake and other natural disasters.
28. To help the widow, orphan, poor and impoverished.
29. To make improvement in the sports.
30. To encourage in education or social development, co-operative revolution and development in the rural handicrafts.
31. To make arrangements for overproduction of food items.
32. To maintain the environment.

33. To make arrangements for the control of the stables for the domestic animals and also to maintain them.
34. To make arrangements for primary health care centers.
35. To make arrangements for libraries.
36. To extend the hand of support to those organizations serving purposes like the Union Parishad.
37. To help in the improvement in the quality of education as per the order of the District Administrator.
38. To make necessary arrangements for the development, better health, security, comfort and luxury for the residents of the union.

PARTICIPATION LIST

SI No	Name	Designation	Address
1.	Mr Md Mizanur Rahman as Chief Guest	Director General	NGO Borue, Matsa Bhaban, Ramna, Dhaka
2.	Prof. Amirul Islam as Guest of Honour	Professor	Zajangirnagar University
3.	Mr Mohammad Alauddin	UNO	Doher, Dhaka
4.	Mr Md Yousuf	UNO	Sonargoan, Narayangong
5.	Mr Kazi Nazir Hossain	UNO	Araihazar, Narayangong
6.	Mr Md Alamgir Hossain	Upazila Engineer	Sadar, Narsindi
7.	Mr Md Korshed Alam	Upazila Engineer	Palash, Narsingdi
8.	Mr Anarul Baki	Chief Executive	ADLP
9.	Dr Md Abdul Mannan	Chairman	NIDA, Chandicon, Raygong, Sirajgonj.
10.	Mr Md Ibrahim Mia	Asst. Director	VOSD, 8/8 Lalmatia, Block A Dhaka
11.	Md. Mr Zahajgir Hossain	ED	BMS, Joymonirhat, Bhurungamari, Lalmonirhat
12.	Mr Anower Hossain	Advisor	BMS, Joymonirhat, Bhurungamari, Lalmonirhat
13.	Mr Rajon Mahadi Makul	ED	30/31 Noor Manson, Sashed Rofique Road, Manikgonj
14.	Ms Mina Rani Bhokto	Sr. Teacher	Saptadinga, Sheakertak, Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207
15.	Mr Boni Amin	Program Officer	SAP-Bangladesh
16.	Mr Rafiqul Islam Panna	ED	PDF, Matrisadan Road, Pirozpur
17.	Mr Saiful Alam	Coordinator	BITA, Chittagong
18.	Mr Harun Al Rashid	Monitoring Researcher	BCDIC, 53 Central Road, Dhaka
19.	Mr Chandan Kumar Lahiree		Steps Stewards Development, Lalmatia, Dhaka
20.	Md Matiur Rahman	Director	CTW, Monmothopur, Chaklabazar, Dinajpur
21.	Ms Zesmin Khan Poly	Trainer	Shoishab Bangladesh, , 38/2 New Eskaton Road, Dhaka
22.	Ms Rucita Bhowmik	Social Worker	Shoishab Bangladesh, 38/2 New Eskaton Road. Dhaka
23.	Ms Mahmuda Khan Chowdhury	Liaison Officer	Nari Progoti, 68/F 8 Motizeel AGB Colone Dhaka
24.	Mr Kazi Enayet Hossain	Executive Director	SCOPE, Counia Main Road, Barisal
25.	Mr Delower Islam	Asst Coordinator	ESDO, Collagepara, Takurgong
26.	Mr Joytirmaya Basu	Director Program	VPKA, Rajbari
27.	Mr Aminul Islam Bakul	Regional Coordinator	AID, Shamoly, Dhaka

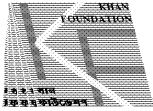
SI No	Name	Designation	Address
28.	Ms Afshri Begum	GMA	ARD-LGI, House 2B, Road 48 Gulshan 2, Dhaka
29.	Mirza Ataur Rahman	Coordinator	ARDS, 196/3 Shantibag
30.	M A Halim	Treasure	ARDS, 196/3 Shantibagh, Dhaka 1217
31.	Mr Khaliduzzaman Khalid	Programme Officer	Democracy Watch, 7 Circuit house Road Ramna Dhaka
32.	Mr Abdullah Al Mamun	Program Officer	AYA Sylhet
33.	Mr Abdul Matin Khan	-	Palli Punargathon- Club, Bhandaria, Pirojpur
34.	Mr Md Zahangir Alam	Member	Dhamrai Union Parishad, Dhamrai, Dhaka
35.	Mr Md Salim Prodhan	Member	Dhamrai Union Parishad, Dhamrai, Dhaka
36.	A K M Idres Ali Sani	Secretary	Zongolia Union Parishad, Kaligong, Gazipur
37.	Md Abbas Ali	Member	Astodhar Union Parishad, Sadar, Mymensing
38.	Ms Rubina Shahin	Member	Konabari Union Parishad, Konabari, Gazipur
39.	Md Zalaluddin	Member	Konabari Union Parishad, Konabari, Gazipur
40.	Md Rezaul Karim	Member	Duptara Union Parishad, Arihazar, Narayangong
41.	Mr Lokman Hakim	Chairman	Dhamrai sadar Union Parishad, Dhamrai, Dhaka
42.	Ms Rubina Akhter	Member	Nowagoan Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangong
43.	Ms Ambia	Member	Nowagoan Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangong
44.	Mr A Khalaque	Member	Nowagoan Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangong
45.	Ms Sahida Begum	Member	Gozaria Union Parishad, Palash, Narsingdi
46.	Ms Bilkis Begum	Member	Gozaria Union Parishad, Palash, Narsingdi
47.	Mr A Motaleb	Member	Muksudpur Union Parishad, Doher, Dhaka
48.	Mr Mogal Bhuyan	Member	Chinspur Union Parishad, sardar, Narsingdi
49.	Ms Munni Begum	Member	Chinspur Union Parishad, Sardar, Narsingdi
50.	Md Sadiqur Rahman	Member	Nazirabad Union Parishad, Sadar, Moulavibazar
51.	Md Fokhoruddin	Member	Nazirabad Union Parishad, Sadar, Moulavibazar
52.	Mr Khondker Abul Arif Hetu	Member	Kolacopa Union Parishad, ... Dhaka
53.	Mr S N Islam	Member	Kolacopa Union Parishad, ... Dhaka
54.	Md Delower Hossain	Member	Sutipara Union Parishad, Dhamrai, Dhaka

SI No	Name	Designation	Address
55.	Mr Mahmud Samsul Alam Badal	Chairman	Narisa Union Parishad, Dhohar, Dhaka
56.	Md Nurul Islam	Member	Jontrail Union Parishad, Nawabgong, Dhaka
57.	Mr A Jalil	Member	Jontrail Union Parishad, Nawabgong, Dhaka
58.	Mr Md Younus Ali Khan	Chairman	Mahmudpur Union Parishad
59.	Mr A Halim	Chairman	Mukundapur Union Parishad
60.	Md Siraj	Member	...Union Parishad
61.	Hafez A Wahab Dhohari	Chairman	Kusumhat Union Parishad
62.	Mr Abdul Makaque Khan	Member	Mahmudpur Union Parishad
63.	Mr Syed Ali Mollah	Member	Mahmudpur Union Parishad
64.	Md Lutfor Rahman	Member	Narisa Union Parishad, Dhohar, Dhaka
65.	Mallah	Member	Narisa Union Parishad, Dhohar, Dhaka
66.	Mr Abed Hossain	Chairman	Agala Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
67.	Mr Irsed Al-Mamun	Chairman	Bokshonagar Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
68.	Mr Akhter Hossain	Member	Bokshonagar Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
69.	Mr Sheake Milon	Member	Bokshonagar Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
70.	Mr Zebon	Member	Agala Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
71.	Mr Khoken	Member	Agala Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
72.	Md Moniruzzaman Bhuyan	Member	Zenirdi Union Parishad, Palash, Narsingdi
73.	Ms Irien Parvin	Member	Chanchpur Union Parishad, Sonargong, Narayanganj
74.	Ms Sahana Akhter	Member	Sambhupura Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangong
75.	Ms Arzu Khoki	Member	Kutubpur Union Parishad, Fatullah, Narayangong
76.	Ms Rashida Begum	Member	Kutubpur Union Parishad, Fatullah, Narayangong
77.	Md Sakiluddin Mia	Chairman	Barthra Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
78.	Mr Joynal Abdin	Member	Chinspur Union Parishad, Sardar, Narsingdi
79.	Mr Mizanur Rahman Bhuyain	Chairman	Sholla Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
80.	Md Aunal Haq	Member	Sholla Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
81.	Md Mobarok Hossain	Member	Sholla Union Parishad, Nawabgonj, Dhaka
82.	Md Alimullah	Member	Nowagoan Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayanganj
83.	Md Sowkot Ali	Chairman	Sadasodi Union Parishad, Araihaazar, Narayanganj
84.	Md Nasiruddin Mollah	Member	Konabari Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur

SI No	Name	Designation	Address
85.	Mr Rokhon	Member	Gozaria Union Parishad, Palash, Narsingdi
86.	Ms Ummul wara Sweety	Staff Reporter	The Daily Bhorer Kagoj, Dhaka
87.	Mr Akber Hossain	Staff Reporter	The Daily Star, Dhaka
88.	Mr Tabibur Rahman	Reporter	The Daily Janata, Dhaka
89.	Ms Nasima Sikder	Photo Journalist	The Daily Inqulab, Dhaka
90.	Mr Selim Zahid	Staff Reporter	The Daily Inqulab, Dhaka
91.	Mr Zahangir Alam Sikdr	Member	Kusumhati Union Parishad, Dhohar, Dhaka
92.	Hazi Ruhul Amin	Chairman	Duptara Union Parishad, Araihasar, Narayangonj
93.	Ms Noorzahan Begum	Member	Sambhupura Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
94.	Ms Sahanaz	Member	Sambhupura Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
95.	Mr Khairul Alam	Member	Zanirdi Union Parishad, Palash, Narsingdi
96.	Ms Zosna Begum	Member	Zanirdi Union Parishad, Palash, Narsingdi
97.	Md Abul Kashem	Member	Tabaria Union Parishad, Natore
98.	Ms Taherunnsa	Member	Kanchpur Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
99.	Ms Rahima Baywa	Member	Bazitkhila Union Parishad, Sadar, Sherpur
100.	Ms Mostafa Begum	Member	Bazitkhila Union Parishad, Sadar, Sherpur
101.	Mr Ziaul Islam	Member	Bazitkhila Union Parishad, Sadar, Sherpur
102.	Md Hafizul Islam	Member	Zanirdi Union Parishad, Palash, Narsingdi
103.	Md Abu Taher Masud	Member	Sadipur Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
104.	Mr Abu Sayed Khan	Chairman	Sadar, Manikgonj
105.	Md A Hamid	Chairman	Asian, Sadar, Manikgonj
106.	Ms Ferdousi Begum	Member	Bazitkhila Union Parishad, Sadar, Sherpur
107.	Md Kafil uddin	Member	Barthra Union Parishad, Nawabgong, Dhaka
108.	Ms Kazol Rekha	Member	Zirnide Union Parishad, Palosh, Narsindi
109.	Md ShahJamal Tota	Member	Mograpara Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
110.	Mr Lokenath Datta	Member	Mograpara Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
111.	Md Abu Taher	Member	Mograpara Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
112.	Mr Fariduddin	Member	Mograpara Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
113.	Ms Zahanara Begum	Member	Mograpara Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj

SI No	Name	Designation	Address
114.	Ms Alya Ferdousi	Member	Mograpara Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
115.	Md Matinur Rahman	Member	Barthra Union Parishad, Nawabgong, Dhaka
116.	Md sirajul Islam	Member	Nayabari Union Parishad, Dhoher, Dhaka
117.	Ms Hasina	Member	Mohammadpur Union Parishad, Arraihazar, Narayangonj
118.	Ms Ruma Akhter	Member	Sadipur Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
119.	Ms Rokhsana Akhter	Member	Sadipur Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
120.	Md Soloyman	Member	Sadipur Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
121.	Md Yousef Ali Prodhan	Member	Tabaria Union Parishad, Sadar, Natore
122.	Md Abdul Quader	Chairman	Astodhar Union Parishad, Sadar, Mymensing
123.	Ms Supheya Khtoon	Member	Kowiltia Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
124.	Ms Zohora Akhter	Member	Kowiltia Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
125.	Ms Ranu Begum	Member	Gozaria Union Parishad, Palash, Narsingdi
126.	Mr Harun ar Rashid	Member	Kusumhati Union Parishad, Dhoher, Dhaka
127.	Ms Nasima Akhter	Member	Sadipur Union Parishad, Sonargoan, Narayangonj
128.	Mr Sokot Ali Nayan	Chairman	Raipara Union Parishad, Dhohar, Dhaka
129.	Mr Bozlur Rahman	Member	Pubail Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
130.	Mr Allauddin Bhuyan	Member	Pubail Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
131.	Dr M A Based	Member	Pubail Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
132.	Mr Shake Alfazuddin	Member	Pubail Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
133.	Md Abed Bhuyan	Member	Pubail Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
134.	Ms Farhana Beli Lailee	Member	Pubail Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
135.	Ms Zaharna Begum	Member	Pubail Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
136.	Ms Zotsana Begum	Member	Pubail Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
137.	Ms Alema Khatoon Kokila	Member	Koultia Union Parishad, Sadar, Gazipur
138.	Mr Abdul Kader Hawlader		Palli Punaruathos Club, Bhandaria, Pirojpur
139.	Md Mohibul HasanShamin	Coordinator	GBS, Naruli Bogra
140.	Mr Himangshu Mitra	Executive Director	AYA, Sylhet

SI No	Name	Designation	Address
141.	Md Alim		BGP, 23/2 Topkhana Road Dhaka
142.	Mr Mahbul Alam	PE	House 24, Road 11 DIT Project Maral, Badda, Dhaka
143.	Md Faizul Abedin	A/A	CRDC, Chandgon, Chittagong
144.	Md Anwar Islam	Coordinator (Admin)	POPI, 9/10 Block D Lalmatia, Dhaka
145.	Advocate Ferdaus Akhter Waheeda	Advocate	Supreme Court of Bangladesh
146.	Advocate Mariam Mansur	Advocate	Supreme Court of Bangladesh
147.	Advocate Khaleda Panna	Advocate	Supreme Court of Bangladesh
148.	Advocate Gulzer Akhter Wahida	Advocate	Dhaka Bar
149.	Advocate Jesmin Akhter Keya	Advocate	Supreme Court of Bangladesh
150.	Advocate Morsheda Begum lipi	Advocate	Supreme Court of Bangladesh
151.	Mr Golam Sarwar	Chairman	Teberia Union Paridhed, Sadar, Rajshahi



KHAN FOUNDATION

In Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

NATIONAL SEMINAR ON The Economic Activities of The Local Government (Union Parishad) System : Prospective & Steps

Democracy Auditorium, Khan Foundation, Momenbagh Dhaka, Wednesday 7 July 2004

Programme

1st Session

- 09:00am-10:30am : Arrival of Participants & Registration
- 10:30am-10:40am : **Welcome Address**
ADVOCATE ROKHSANA KHONDKER
Executive Director, Khan Foundation &
Chairperson, Shaibsab Bangladesh
- 10:40 am-11:55 am : **Keynote Paper Presentation**
MR. SIRAJUL HOSSAIN, Assistant Director, NILG
- 11:55 am- 12:10 pm : **Open Discussion**
- 12:10 pm-12:45 pm : Honourable Speakers
: **Md Alamgir Hossain**, Upazila Engineer, Sadar, Narsingdi
: **Mr Khorshad Alam**, Upazila Engineer, Palash, Narsingdi
: **Md Yousef**, UNO, Sonargoan, Narayangong
: **Mr Kazi Nazir Hossain**, UNO, Arrihazar, Narayangong
: **Mr Mohammad Alauddin**, UNO, Dhoher, Dhaka
- 12:45 pm-01:00pm : Address by Guest of Honour
PROF AMIRUL ISLAM
Professor, Zahangirnagar University
- 01:00 pm- 01:15pm : Address by Chief Guest
MR MD MIZANUR RAHMAN
Director General, NGO Bureau

01:15pm-02:00pm : Group Work

02:00pm-03:00pm : Working Lunch

2nd Session

- 03:00 pm-04:00 pm : Group Work Presentation
- 04:00pm-04:30pm : Open Discussion
- 04:30 pm- 04:45pm : Address by Chairperson
Advocate Rokhsana Khondker
Executive Director, Khan Foundation &
Chairperson, Shaibsab Bangladesh
- 04:45 pm-05:00 pm : Concluding Session & Refreshment

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE, FUNDED BY USAID AND IMPLEMENTED BY ARD INC.

Abdul Momen Khan Memorial Foundation

Momenbagh Dhaka 1217 Bangladesh Tel : (880-2) 933 0323 Fax : (880-2) 933 1589

email : khanfoundation@bd.drik.net