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UPAZILA APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN BANGLADESH : AN EXAMINATION OF ITS EFFICACY*

Introduction

Bangladesh has experienced several models of development since the end of the British colonial rule, both during its phase as part of Pakistan (1947-71) and also as an independent country since 1971. The results of such development efforts have not been very encouraging. Inspite of some evidence of growth at certain brief stages, the cumulative effect has rather been depressing. Overall economic condition has deteriorated, particularly distressing is the fact that gaps between groups of people have widened.[1]

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1. See for example M. Alamgir, *Bangladesh : A Case of Below Poverty Level Equilibrium Trap* (Dhaka : BIDS, 1977); S. De Vylder, *Agriculture in Chains, Bangladesh : A Case Study in Contradictions and Constraints* (London : Zed Press, 1983) : A. Farouk, *Changes in the Economy of Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 1982); A.H. Pramanik, *Development through Urban Bias Public Expenditure : An Emperical Study of Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies, 1982) ; and M. Siddiqur Rahman, *et. al.*, "Dimension of Disparity and Inequality in Bangladesh", Paper presented in a Training Seminar on *Rural Centre and Settlement Planuing*, Sponsored by the Ministry of LGRD, Government of Bangladesh and UN ESCAP (Dhaka, 10-19 December, 1984).

There are probably many reasons for the failure in achieving desired objectives of development efforts in Bangladesh. Each successive government (and there have been many since 1947 or even 1971) tried to blame its predecessors for failures and for creating new problems. Each then experimented with a new model of development. The latest model has been initiated by the present government soon after it came to power in 1982. The model adopted has been claimed to be an approach to decentralized development administration and is known as *Upazila* system. According to this model major authorities for development planning and implementation have now been taken down from national and district level to the Upazilas (currently numbering 460)[2]. The new system also aims at ensuring greater participation of the people in the development activities, since the principal decision making authority now lies formally with an elected body known as the *Upazila Parishad* headed by an elected representative, the chairman. The bureaucrats and the professionals are required to respect decisions taken by the Chairman and his Parishad. This is, in fact, the first time that people's representatives are intended to be the principal decision makers in development administration at the local level in the country.

The past development strategies were too centralized and the development approaches were biased towards growth based urban industrial sector,[3] particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, which created a widening gap between the large section of disadvantaged masses and the privileged rural-urban elite. The result was a low level of participation of the people in the development activities and a distorted pattern of development. Moreover, distribution mechanism and access to resources had a systemic bias so that the rich and the elite dominated the process in reaping the benefit of development.

2. The Upazila has in reality replaced the earlier Thana level as a tier of administration and has an average population of 190,000 and an average area of 120 sq. miles.

3. A. R. Khan, "Rural Development in Bangladesh: Major Issues Revisited." *BIISS Journal* (Vol.5, No. 4,1984) p. 9, and A.H. Pramanik, *op. cit.*, p. 198

Political instability, lack of consistancy and continuity of programmes, lack of an appropriate political direction and a highly bureaucratic and centralized system of development administration have further aggravated the situation. In addition, various models for development in the past suffered from lack of appropriate priority scale, clear specification of the target population and in most cases insufficiency of budgetary allocations. The Upazila approach to development has been claimed as an approach to face some of these wide ranging problems of development in Bangladesh.

The aim of this paper is to examine the present strategy as to how it approaches the long standing problems and to understand the mechanism which is now being practiced at Upazila level as a scene of action within the broader context of issues that affect development, particularly the rural development. More specifically, an attempt is made to examine the evolution of Upazila approach as an alternative to previous *Thana* system in the backdrop of decentralization policy of development. Secondly, the paper seeks to comprehend as to how the present approach is being operationalized in terms of plan preparation, financing process of the projects implementing the policies and plans coordinating among the members of the Upazila Parishad, officers and other line agencies both horizontally and vertically and evaluation and monitoring the progress and problems.

Methodology

The data used in this paper were collected from both secondary and primary sources. Published materials on the subject in the form of books, journals, newspapers, government documents and records, etc. were reviewed. The primary data were collected at three stages through interview method. The first stage was at the village or target group level. The second stage was the Upazila level, where policies of the government are being implemented. The Third stage was at the national level where development policies and strategies were made, appraised and reviewed.

The survey on which this paper is based was restricted only to three Upazilas—Savar, Sariakandi and Daulatkhan. These were selected from three different regions of Bangladesh. The selection of these Upazilas was also based on their location in relation to towns and cities. Thus Savar in the central region is located close to a metropolitan centre (Dhaka), Sariakandi in the northern region, closed to a medium-sized town (Bogra) and Daulatkhan in the southern region near a small town (Bhola). Moreover, the selection was purposive in the sense that the new system has been operational for sometime since 1982 in these Upazilas by the time the study was undertaken in mid-1985.

A cross-section of the village people were identified from two villages in each Upazila. The respondents were selected keeping in view their income, occupation, land holding and social status as selection criteria. In total 84 village level people were interviewed with an open ended questionnaire at the first stage. At the second stage, an intensive survey was carried out on each Upazila selected to study how the new concept is being translated into reality. In addition, the Upazila level officials, 38 in number, including the chairmen were interviewed in all these three Upazilas to understand their attitude towards the new system. Finally, 20 national level experts/specialists were interviewed both from government and non-government organizations.

Upazila as an Alternative to Thana System

The function of a lower level local administrative unit is primarily to transform the policy inputs into service outputs according to the needs and priorities of the people. An efficient and people oriented administrative system is therefore an imperative towards the development of the society. How far the present administrative structure in the Upazila is efficient, depends mainly on its structure, constitution, functions and linkages both downwards and upwards. It is therefore necessary to note how the new approach appears to be an alternative to the Thana system.

Evolution of Upazila Concept

Thana as a tier of police administration was introduced by the British in 1885,[4] to maintain law and order while the Districts were seat for general administration until the end of the century. During 1913-1914 the Bengal District Administration Committee observed that the government is virtually out of touch with local conditions.[5] The Committee proposed to create some Circles in each Districts mainly for revenue collection, and subsequently the Circle Officers were given responsibility to supervise the local bodies (the Union Board and Village Chawkidar) who were also responsible for rural reconstruction activities. The Committee further observed (1944-45) that the rural reconstruction efforts of the government cannot be a separate work to be performed by the local bodies, and recommended to increase number of Circles for each Thana.[6]

The Circle Officer was supposed to plan and undertake development activities including coordination function among the various technical officers posted in the Circle. The development activities, however, did not get prominence until the early 1950s. The government of Pakistan introduced a new approach to develop rural areas with V-AID programmes.[7] This essentiated to form a committee at Thana level called NDO (National Development Organization).[8] After the introduction of Basic Democracies NDO programmes were discontinued and a Thana Council was installed for each Thana which continued upto the end of 1960s. After independence of Bangladesh the Thana Councils were dissolved and an ad-hoc arrangement was made by creating Thana Development Committees consisting of the

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4. A. I. Chowdhury, "Local Government Finance in Bangladesh" Ph. D. Thesis (Wales : University of Wales, 1978) p. 74.

5. Shaikh Maqsood Ali, et. al. *Decentralization and People's Participation in Bangladesh* (Dhaka : NIPA, 1983), p. 152.

6. *ibid.*

7. *ibid*, p. 159.

8. *ibid*, pp. 159-60.

officers from nation building Departments at Thana level.[9] By a notification in 1978. Thana Council was restored again in the name of *Thana Parishad* and a Thana Development Committee (TDC) was reorganized by taking Union Chairmen as ex-officio members of the committee. Both of these committees were abolished in November 1982 and their responsibility for development activities was transferred to Upazila Parishad.[10]

In April 1982, a Committee for Administrative Reorganization/ Reform (CARR)[11] was appointed to review the structure and organization of the existing civilian administration with a view to identifying the inadequacies of the present system for serving the people effectively and to recommend an appropriate and effective administrative system. It was found that the existing system was one of concentration of power at the central level, ineffective local government and cumbersome procedures and rules of business in which decision making was based on *tadbir*[12] and the large majority of the masses was alienated from the mainstream of political, administrative and development processes.[13]

The CARR strongly recommended for an effective decentralized administrative system in which people would participate in the process of governance and development. On the basis of CARR recommendation total 460 Thanas were upgraded during the period

9. *ibid*, p. 159.

10. Kamal Siddiqui, (ed.), *Local Government in Bangladesh* (Dhaka : National Institute for Local Government, 1985), p. 27

11. A Committee for Administrative Reorganization/Reform' (CARR) was formed in April 1982 under the Chairmanship of Rear Admiral M. A. Khan, the then Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrator. The Committee submitted their report in June, 1982.

12. *Tadbir* is a local term meaning a process by which decisions are influenced in an inappropriate manner to promote personal and/or group interests. For details see Report of the Committee for Administrative Reorganization and Reform (CARR), June, 1982, p. 2.

13. Q. K. Ahmad and Hiroshi Sato, *Aid and Development Administration in Bangladesh* (Tokyo, Institute of Developing Economies, 1985). p. 38

of November 1982 and February 1984 in 10 phases through an Ordinance[14] and were renamed as Upazila. At the same time Thana Parishad and TDC were abolished (in Nov. 1982) and their responsibility for development activities were transferred to Upazila Parishad.

Problems of Development Associated with Thana System

Thana was not an isolated entity from the overall administrative setup of the country. According to the CARR report[15] major inadequacies of the past administrative system of the country were (1) an inappropriate and inconsistent personnel policy for development administration, (2) *tadbir* based approach to decision making, (3) barrier and complexity for the common people to participate in governmental decision making, (4) absense of sound and durable political process to make appropriate policies for development, (5) weak local government system, (6) parallelism in the political and administrative institutions which led to conflict in jurisdiction, (7) lack of power and authority to make decision at the local level and (8) highly centralized colonial and bureaucratic system. All these problems and their cumulative effects alienated the mass from the mainstream of the economic process.

The Thana as a part of the whole system is obviously affected by all these problems. In addition, the Thana was prone to many other problems. The following are some of the most serious problems at Thana level as revealed by the present study. First, a top-down approach to decision making was not suitable for a micro level planning unit. Micro level plan in the conventional planning procedure as a part of the overall top-down planning process lacks in autonomy, spontaneity and people's participation in real sense. Local level plans undertaken earlier in the country, emphasized mainly on a particular geographical area, as a part of a sectoral

14. Government of Bangladesh *Manual on Upazila Administration*, Vol. II (Dhaka : Cabinet Secretariat, 1983), p 156.
15. Report of the CARR, *op. cit.*, pp. VII-VIII

plan. This kind of planning usually includes a particular economic group, sometimes called target group and the strategies were mainly the distribution of some inputs or relief material, etc. Development activities therefore were performed in a piecemeal manner in this approach. There was no planning procedure at Thana level. Following a conventional procedure Union Parishad Chairmen used to indentify projects which were subject to approval of Thana Development Committee and Thana Parishad. Sometime approval from higher authority was also required.

Second, limited resources were available at Thana level for development function. Moreover, there were no standard fund allocation and resource distribution system. The availability of fund was dependent on the influence or *tadbir.*

Third, as a unit of local government Thana was very weak. It is administered by a Thana Parishad which was chaired by the Subdivisional[16] Officer (SDO). But the Chairman of Thana Parishad hardly attended the meeting and therefore decision making was very difficult. Moreover, the Parishad did not have any power to tax to generate their own fund. The Chairmen of Union Parishad could hardly disclose any problem in front either of the Circle Officer or SDO as a member of Thana Parishad, rather, they used to seek their favour for their own benefit such as getting contract, relief and (or) other funds and so on.

Fourth, there was hardly any coordination for development activities at Thana level. The reasons are many. Firstly, the Circle Officer who was the chief coordinator at Thana level had alignment with the Ministry of Local Government. Similarly, the other officers had some alignment with their parent ministries. As development functions began to increase in the Thana the officers began to maintain harmonious relationship with their parent organization,

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16. A Subdivision was the fourth level of administrative tier in the previous system. All these subdivisions have now been upgraded into Districts. SDO was an executive head of a Subidvision.

which led to an inter-departmental jealousy and a major barrier in coordination. Secondly, due to some procedural difficulties coordination in practical term was not possible. Various nation building offices used to follow the guidelines from their respective departments because of their accountability to them. In this case, even if the CO had intended to coordinate, practically it was not possible. And thirdly, the CO despite being the Chief Coordinator used to

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The thana system like its predecessors was ridden with problems including lack of peoples representation and participation, inadequate co-ordination, absence of local planning mechanism and preponderance of bureaacracy.

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get a basic pay of Tk. 625/-while the other technical officers like Doctors, Engineers, Agricultural Officers used to get the scale of Tk. 750/-. This difference created a psychological barrier on the part of professionals to coordinate under a person who was in lower grade.[17]

Besides colonial nature of administration, strong bureaucracy and unlimited corruption remained as basic characteristics of Thana administration which virtually fragmented the society into two factions — the privileged few and the deprived mass — the size of the latter having been increasing at an alarming rate.

Main Features of the Upazila Approach

There is hardly any difference between Thana and Upazila in terms of area and population. The difference is therefore organizational and functional. The basic organizational and functional differences between Thana and Upazila are shown in Table 1. In the process of upgradation of Thanas into Upazilas the responsibility of all development activities at local level were transferred to the Upazila Parishad, while the national government has retained the respon-

17. Shaikh Maqsood Ali, *op cit.*, p. 154.

Table 1   Comparison between Thana and Upazila*

Thana	Upazila
1. Thana was administered by government official, i.e. the SDO was the ex-officio Chairman of the Thana Parishad and Circle Officer (Dev.) was the Vice Chairman.	1. Elected people's representative is the chairman of the Upazila Parishad. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer works as a member secretary of the Pairshad, without any voting right.
2. There was no mention about the tenure of Thana Parishad.	2. The tenure of Upazila Parishad is three years.
3. Thana Parishad consisted of official member, U.C. Chairman ex-officio member and Chairman from higher authority without any nominated member.	3. Upazila Parishad includes three nominated members, elected UP. Chairman as ex-officio member from Upazila without their voting right.
4. Chairman, TCCA was not the member of the Parishad.	4· Chairman of the TCCA (now UCCA) is a member ex-officio.
5. Comparatively junior officers were at Thana level	5. More senior officers are posted at Upazila level.
6. Chairman of the Thana Parishad and other govt. official member were powerful in the Parishad. The elected members of the Parishad were kept in low key.	6. The elective body of the Upazila Parishad holds supreme power. The govt. officials have no right to vote in the Parishad.
7. Services of the officers and staff were not placed at the disposal of Thana Parishad. They were neither accountable nor answerable to the Parishad for their activities.	7. Services of the officers and staff have been placed at the disposal of Upazila Parishad and they are also accountable to the Parishad (except the judicial unit).
8. The Thana Parishad had no power of taxation.	8. The Upazila Parishad has the power to levy taxes, tolls, fees. etc.
9. The Thana Officers were accountable to the line ministries, therefore, horizontal coordination was not possible.	9. The power and scope of the Upazila Parishad is wider. Since the Parishad is supposed to control and coordinate the activities. Horizontal coordination is also possible.
10. The Chairman of the Thana Parishad (SDO) was not accountable to the Parishad.	10. The Chairman and member of the Upazila Parishad accountable to the Upazila Parishad.
11. There was no Planning and decision making mechanism in the framework of Thana system.	11. A planning mechanism has been initiated at the Upazila level with a decision making power.
12. There was no judicial unit in the Thana system.	12. Independent judicial unit both criminal and civil has started functioning.

*The table has been prepared on the basis of two government ordinances, the Local Government Ordinance, 1976 and 1982.

sibility of regulatory functions and development activities of national and regional coverage.[18] The transferred subjects include Upazila health and family planning, education, agriculture, cooperative, livestock, rural development, fishery, social welfare, mass communication and engineering side. The regulatory functions, on the other hand, are Upazila accounts, magistracy, law and order, statistical sections and controlling food delivery. As a key executive person Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) will assist the Chairman in implementing the government policies. He will also assist the Parishad in preparing a comprehensive and integrated development plan for the Upazila and supervise both retained and transferred subjects.[19]

The task given to the Upazila Parishad is massive as well as very important and significant. The Parishad is supposed to prepare a Upazila Development Plan both for five years and one year and to maintain a Plan Book which would continuously be updated in each financial year. In addition the Parishad will assist, supervise and guide union Parishads in their activities of identifying projects and implementing Plans. The Upazila Parishad will launch various promotional activities like health and family planning, employment, socio-cultural activities, cooperative movement, educational and vocational activities and protection and management of environment etc. It will also coordinate and control activities functionally and horizontally at the Upazila among the various field level offices. The Upazila Chairman on behalf of the Upazila Parishad will maintain a linkage with higher and lower level authorities. The task of monitoring and evaluation of development activities also rests with the Parishad.

Linkages or the chain of command is an important determinant of quality of development administration. It is more so in relation to the issue of institutional linkage between different levels of administration for an effective policy implementation. To perform

18. Government of Bangladesh, *op. cit.*, p. 156
19. *ibid.*

the development functions at Upazila level smoothly some necessary institutional linkages have been established under the new arrangement. The Chairmen of the Union Parishad (UP) in most cases, are the majority voting members in the Upazila Parishad. It provides an effective control of the Upazila Parishad by the UPs, because the responsibility for looking after the activities in the Union is the Upazila Parishad in which the UP Chairmen dominate. It, therefore, has brought these two tiers very close. Moreover, Upazila Parishad controls the annual budget and account of the Union Parishad and activities in the Union.

After the introduction of Upazila system until 30 June 1985 no specific linkage or relationship of Upazila Parishad with the districts —the immediate upper tier of administration were specified, except an annual statement of the accounts to be submitted to the Deputy Commissioner (DC)—the Chief Executive of the District. By a notification on 30th June 1985,[20] the government specified certain relationship between the District and the Upazila Parishad. For example, the district level officers will now offer technical assistance and direction for the transferred subjects also. The DC will invite Upazila Chairmen to a District Development Conference every month where development activities would be reviewed. The departmental linkages would also be maintained through meetings where Upazila officials can attend but the communication would be through Upazila Chairmen. The retained subjects would be coordinated by the districts although the Upazila Parishad can discuss the matter except judiciary function.

The Upazila development programmes are required to be in consistence with the national development programmes. The National Planning Commission has control over the activities in Upazilas in terms of providing guidelines, fixing allocation and in monitoring the progress. According to the 1982 Local Government Ordinance, the

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20. The notification was issued from the office of the Chief Martial Law Administrator's Secretariat on 30 June 1985.

national government has following controls: (a) development plans of Upazila Parishad require the sanction of national government in respect of functioning, execution, implementation and supervision (clause 40), (b) the national government can quash the proceedings, suspend the execution of any resolution if anything done inconsistent with the law and policy of the national government and it can enquire on any issue it thinks essential. It is clearly apparent from the above discussion that the government theoretically removed the major problems which they had identified before the introduction of the new system. It has delegated certain power and authority at the Upazila level which were never at this level before. The Upazila Parishad has been given enough financial power to allocate money for development activities and raise their own funds from within the Upazila. To facilitate quick and appropriate decision making, comparatively higher level officials have been posted at the Upazila level. These arrangements are expected to imrpove previous top-down planning process and problems of weak local government.

To ensure peoples participation a people's representative body called Upazila Parishad have been innovated. The Parishad is the higher authority within an Upazila to make decision and all other government officials at this level have been deputed to the Parishad. To facilitate the common man in getting decision at their doorsteps all the nation building departments were set up at the Upazila level including an independent judiciary unit.

The major barriers of an effective coordination were also removed. Moreover, several committees are now at Upazila level to look at different aspects of development functions. Some members of these various committees are from the local people which is likely to ensure the participation of common people in the development process.

Development Process under Upazila System

It has already been highlighted that the Upazila replaced the age-old Thana system with some promising attempts at restructuring development administration at the local level. The process of development

administration involves 5 essential stages : (1) plan preparation, (2) process of financing, (3) implementation, (4) coordination and (5) evaluation and monitoring. This section describes how these stages operate in reality in each of the three Upazilas studied.

Process of Plan Preparation

The Planning Commission provides detail planning guidelines for the Upazila Parishad.[21] The Parishad prepares a Five Year Development Plan and Annual Upazila Development Programme (AUDP) according to the guideline. To prepare realistic and pragmatic plans the Parishad is also supposed to undertake socio-economic surveys and feasibility studies concerning the Upazila in order to enable itself to identify specific problems. The surveys and studies should be designed for the preparation of schemes on physical infrastructure, irrigation and flood protection, agricultural landuse and crop production, production oriented socio-economic activities for the destitutes and the provision of social services like health, education, family planning, etc.[22] The main emphasis is on increasing production so that poverty can gradually be eliminated.

The procedure for plan preparation at Upazila level is shown in the Figure 1. It includes 4 main steps including two other additional steps. The Upazila Parishad first makes a sectoral allocation of development fund and identifies the projects on the basis of available fund. The Upazila Parishad then asks the respective officers to formulate the actual schemes and projects in a prescribed proforma given by the Planning Commission. All these projects are to be evaluated by the Upazila Planning and Evaluation Committee (UZPEC)[23]

21. The Guidelines for Upazila Parishads for the Utilization of Development Assistance provided by the national Government issued by the Planning Commission in July 1983.

22. Government of Bangladesh, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20

23. The Upazila Planning and Evaluation Committee may be consisted of 5-7 members from both officials and non-officials to be constituted by the Parishad. The UNO may be the Chairman and the Upazila Planning and Finance officer may be the member secretary. See Government of Bangladesh, *Upazila Parishad Manual*, Vol. III. p. 23.
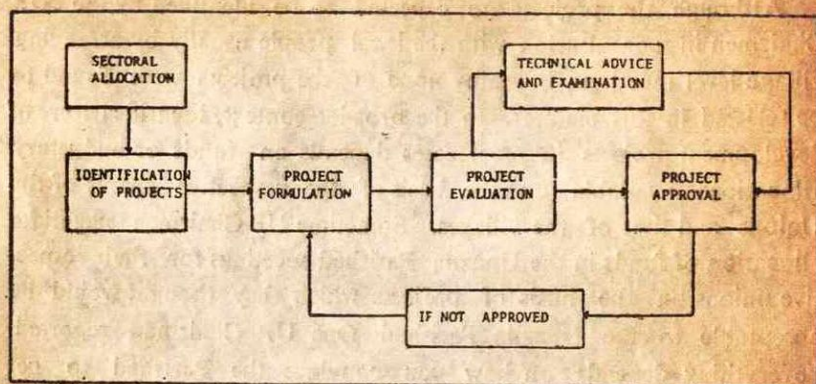
Figure 1 Suggested Process of Plan Preparation in Upazila

which places them in the Upazila Parishad for final approval. UZP EC may seek some technical advice and examination at the expert level. District level officers may also be consulted on technical matters for project preparation when it is felt necessary.

The present study shows a substantial gap between the formulated procedures and actual practice (Figure 2). The officers and the Union Parishad members still follow the traditional method of preparing scheme without any substantial examination of its viability, needs and priority.
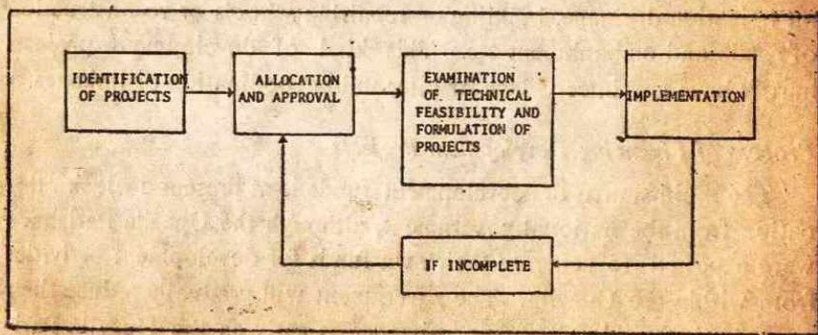

Figure 2 Process of Plan Preparation as Actually Practised

Although the projects are expected to be identified by the UP Chairmen in consultation with the local people usually by arranging village level meetings, in reality none of the projects were found to be selected in this manner. In the broader context, identification of development projects in most cases depends on funds or budgetary allocations available on the basis of the respective shares of the Unions and that of the villages. Sometime UP Chairmen negotiate allocation of funds in the Upazila Parishad meetings for their respective unions on the basis of projects which they thought would be acceptable to the Upazila Parishad. One UP Chairman reported, "everything depends on how you convince the Parishad to get enough funds, no matter what projects you are going to submit". At this stage all projects are in fact, 'arbitrary' or in the form of project ideas. These project ideas are necessary because they are the basis for bargaining for funds in the Parishad meeting. When UP Chairmen get their project lists approved by the Parishad along with funds they inform the village member (UP members) about the selected projects to be carried out. It is interesting to note here that at the union level they follow the same procedure which was done at the Upazila level. The success of UP members depends on their influence and capacity vis-a-vis the other members.

Development planning at the Upazila level is, therefore, a combination of village level small projects like making or extending of an irrigation drainage, building or repairing schools or reconstruction of roads and embankment etc. This kind of development projects hardly have any inter-village or inter-union coodination or linkages.

Process of Financing Development Projects

The main source of development funds is at present a block allocation from the national government, although the Upazila Parishads were expected to generate their own funds for development activities from within the Upazila. The government will gradually reduce their contribution on development assistance as early as the Upazila Parishad can achieve self-sufficiency. The annual budget of the govern-

ment for the development of Upazila was Tk. 170.9 crore in the year 1983-84 and Tk. 200.00 crore in 1984-85 which means an average allocation of Tk. 45 lacs for each Upazila. This volume is about 25 times more than what was during the Thana system.

For the allocation of development funds the government follows some criteria, such as i) population (40 percent) ii) area (20 percent) iii) backwardness (20 percent) and iv) performance (20 percent). Those Upazilas which can control the population growth rate within the limits of national targets will get full amount of 40 percent for population quota, otherwise 5 percent will be deducted in the subsequent year. The unused fund can be used in the subsequent year which was not possible in the Thana system, but then performance will be considered low.

In the Thana system, one of the serious problems was *tadbir* based lengthy procedure in the fund release. The present study reveals that 5-10 percent of the total project cost was required to spend as bribe for a timely release of funds. This kind of malpractice became almost institutional at this level. In the present system funds are available at Upazila level and theoretically there should not be any problem in the fund release process.

The national Planning Commission issued a guideline for financial allocation for each development sector in order to achieve a balanced growth. The upper and lower limits of allocation as indicated in the guideline along with observed situation in the study Upazilas regarding their development expenditure for 1984-85 are shown in Table 2. It shows that maximum allocation (40 to 75 percent) has been given for the development of infrastructure both physical (transport and communication) and social (education, health, sports and culture) while the productive sectors like agriculture and small scale industry have the allocation limits of 20 to 30 percent.

The development schemes of each study Upazila were categorized according to the development sectors identified by the Planning Commission in the same table. It can be observed from the table

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Table 2 Financial Allocation System of the Government and Pattern of Expenditure in the Study Upazilas

Development Sectors	Expenditure limits set by the Planning Commission		Daulatkhan 1984-85		Sariakandi		Savar	
	Mini- mum share	Maxi- mum share	No. of Proje- cts	Alloc- ation (%)	No. of Proje- cts	Alloc- ation (%)	No. of Proje- cts	Alloc- ation (%)
a. Irrirgution and agiculture	15.0	25.0	15	18.9	24	30.0	22	30.0
b. Small and cottage industry	5.0	10.0	3	9.5				
c. Tranport and communication	17.5	30.0	14	25.0	22	8.8	7	35.0
d. Physical planning and housing	10.0	17.5	4	3.0	6	6.8		
e. Education	5.0	12.5	23	20.0	21	27.5	18	22.5
f. Health and social welfare	7.5	15.0	4	3.9	3	2.7		
g. Sports and culture	2.5	7.5	8	5.7	4	8.0	4	5.0
h. Development assistance*	5.0	7.5	6	8.5	12	8.7		
i. Miscellaneous (relief or some emergency purpose)	2.5	5.0	13	5.0	1	7.5	3	7.5
Total			90	100	93	100	54	100

Source: Planning Commision, Government of Bangladesh, Guidelines for Utilization by the Upazila Parishad of the Development Assistance Provided by the National Government through the Annual Development Programme, Revised edition, July 1985, (Dhaka: Planning Commission, 1985), p. 4.

*to the unions for rural works programme.

that in most cases the schemes followed allocation procedure of the government. But, irregularities can also be detected in the financial allocation practice. A high allocation for education, for example in Daulatkhan and for agriculture and education in Sariakandi can be pointed out. Miscellaneous expenditures were also found in access in all cases compared to national allocation quota.

Low expenditure on the other hand were found in the cases of some important sectors such as small and cottage industries, physical planning and housing, etc. Although the scope of financial allocation is wider in the productive sectors like agriculture, small industry, fisheries etc., due to limitation in the allocation system, funds cannot be provided for such productive schemes.

Process of Implementation of the Development Projects

Upazila Parishads are required to identify and nominate the concerned development officer to be responsible for implementation of a project. The Parishad may also form a committee consisting of respected local persons like social workers, the imam (religious leader), teachers, educated youth and other local personalities to supervise the work of each project. At each project site a signboard should be displayed indicating the name of the project, location, estimated cost, wage rates, date of commencement and completion etc., so that common people can be aware of it.

One of the major sections of development works are done under Food for Works Programme (FFWP) and Rural Works Programme (RWP). The procedure of launching these programmes are more or less same as development programmes. A Committee is usually formed for the identification of the projects under these programmes. It is also responsible to distribute the resources (whether foodgrain or cash money) and supervise. It was found that the Committee is heavily biased in favour of rural elites and it is also a usual practice regarding these programmes that they use these resource for their own interest. It was reported in one of the study Upazilas that the

Chairman of Upazila Parishad allotted two-thirds of the foodgrain under Food for Works Programme for the people who supported him during the election. This is, however, not the case only in that particular Upazila. This kind of malpractice may also be found throughout the country. Implementation process of development plans and schemes are also characterized by unusual delay.

Process of Coordination

Inter-departmental coordination is an essential task to expedite development process in an integrated manner. It is more essential to establish a communication linkage for horizontal coordination at the local level for successful planning and implementation of development programmes. It was indicated that the major bottle-necks of coordination in the previous system are expeected to be removed by introducing some institutional arrangements under the present system. An attempt has been made to examine as to how the development programmes are coordinated at Upazila level now.

One of the functions of the Upazila Parishad is the control and coordination activities of officers except munsifs, trying magistrates and officers, engaged in the regulatory functions. The regulatory functions are coordinated partly by UNO and partly by the respective higher authority. Each and every issue regarding development func-tions are discussed in the Parishad meeting which is usually held twice a month. Besides, the Chairman can call for a meeting whenever it is necessary. Coordination is also done by various sub-committees formed at Upazila level such as Upazila Planning and Evaluation Committee, Upazila Project Committee, etc. The UNO has the power to some extent to coordinate the function at his own disposal.

The case studies at the Upazila level shows that coordination is not yet satisfactory, although most of the officers opined that certain degree of coordination has been achieved. There are some 18 different offices now at the Upazila level and the instructions and circulations regarding their inter-relationshsip are not yet clear. Few examples

can be mentioned here as to how the process of coordination is being hampered.

1. In the field of agriculture the functionary head at Upazila level is Upazila Agricultural Officer (UAO) who is responsible for all the activities regarding agricultural development. But because of the absence of clear cut instructions, the agricultural input distribution wing (BADC) is reluctant to work under UAO. It has created a lot of problems, specially in relation to supply of inputs.

2. In the field of education, Upazila Education Officer (UEO) has the responsibility to supervise, control and manage the educational institutions, particularly the primary education, but the UEO has no power to transfer or punish any concerned person even if it becomes a necessity. , It is therefore difficult for him to implement effective control.

3. There are a number of development agencies at Upazila level which do not have clear cut jurisdiction of their works and responsibilities. Examples are the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) and similar functionaries. It is difficult for the common people to understand the exact roles of these agencies. On the other hand, in reality they were found competitive, conflicting and repetitive in the functions and hence hindering coordination.

4. After the introduction of the Upazila system many changes have been observed at the local level without corresponding changes

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Power has been delegated to peoples representatives to take decisions to initiate plans and to implement, monitor and evaluate these in a coordinated manner.

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at the district or national level. When Upazila Parishad controls the activities, it finds difficulty in regulating them, because the individual officers are still under the control of respective higher

authorities. It was, therefore, observed that a dual control is functioning at Upazila level which affects proper coordination. Moreover, functional relationship among the various agencies are still undefined. There are many such examples revealed from the field survey which, in fact, are not so difficult to remove for a better coordination. The main problem observed in coordination process is the lack of a coordinating system. It was also observed during the interview with officers that they have confusion regarding their duties. It seems that they cannot do anything which is not written in their Charter of Duties. Moreover, absence of a cooperative mentality among some of the officers could also be considered as a bottleneck for effective coordination.

Process of Monitoring and Evaluation

The official procedure of monitoring the development projects at the Upazila level involves review of the progress of implementation at least once in a month by the Upazila Planning and Evaluation Committee (UZPEC). The progress report by UZPEC is to be submitted in the meeting of Upazila Parishad with their observation for the consideration of the Parishad.

The Upazila Parishad is to furnish quarterly statement showing expenditure and physical programme of each project to the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner sends the consolidated report to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development within 15 days after the close of each quarter. Our case studies on Upazila develepment process show that there is no UZPEC in two out of the three study Upazilas. The UNOs, however, told that they maintain the government procedure regarding monitoring the development projects.

For evaluation, Upazila Parishad undertakes annual review of progress of implementation of the schemes done by them at the end of the financial year and publishes a report showing the major heads of expenditure, amount spent (complete or incomplete) etc., and

achievement and evaluation of each project. The Parishad also submits these reports to the higher authorities to show its performance. It is to be noted here that 20 percent of the annual development budget for Upazila is allocated on the basis of performance. The Parishad, therefore, maintains evaluation and monitoring part of their duties very carefully and regularly at least in the paper.

Attitude of the Village Level Respondents and Upazila Level Officials towards the New System

The process of development administration in terms of preparation of plan, financing, implementation, coordination and monitoring and evaluation as discussed above was put to further scrutiny by examining the attitude of the target group people at the village level as to how they perceive the impact of the Upazila system and their involvement in the development process. This is particularly important mainly because of two reasons. First, an evaluation of the nature and effectiveness of the system cannot be complete disregarding the opinion of the recipient group of people, which should provide the inputs for direction of further improvements. And second, it is imperative to examine whether or not the people can participate in the process which was in fact one of the main objectives of the Upazila strategy.

Table 3 shows observations of the village level respondents by leading economic sectors. In the agriculture, industry, education and social welfare sectors people did not see any remarkable change. Some of the respondents rather evaluated the situation to be worse than before. But in case of some sectors like employment, physical infrastructure and recreation, a major section of the respondents observed improvement. For example, 63 percent of the respondents indicated that infrastructure facilities have improved a little, while about 17 percent told that it has substantially improved after the inception of Upazila system. In respect of administration, 50 percent of the respondents observed that

the situation improved a little although some 27 percent indicated no change.

Table 3 Observed Change after Introduction of Upazila System in the Field of some Leading Economic Sectors of the Study Areas (Respondents - villagers)

Sectors/areas	Change Observed				
	Worse than before	No change	Little improve ment	Substantial improve ment	Total
Agriculture	7	54	23		84
	(8.3)	(64.2)	(27.3)		(100.0)
Industry	2	65	17		84
(small scale)	(2.3)	(77.3)	(20.2)		(100.0)
Employment	3	31	48	2	84
	(3.5)	(36.9)	(57.1)	(2.3)	(100.0)
Education	3	55	24	2	84
	(3.5)	(65.4)	(28.5)	(2.3)	(100.0)
Health &	4	49	30	1	84
Family	(4.7)	(58.3)	(35.7)	(1.1)	(100.0)
Planning					
Physical		17	53	14	84
infrastructure		(20.2)	(63.0)	(16.6)	(100.0)
Social Welfare	5	33	38	8	84
justice/law	(5.9)	(39.2)	(45.2)	(9.5)	(100.0)
and order					
Recreation		40	36	8	84
		(47.6)	(42.8)	(9.5)	(100.0)
Administration	4	23	42	15	84
	(4.7)	(27.3)	(50.0)	(17.8)	(100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages
Source : Field Survey, June-July, 1985

The people's participation in the development process has not increased as it is evident from Table 4, although the scope of participation has widened theoretically. Since a democratic system has been initiated, it can be argued that this would also ensure mass participation, because, it is expected that the people's expectations will be translated by their representatives. But, participation means more, such as a direct involvement of the people in the development process.

The same table shows that out of 84 respondents at the village level only about 4 percent were involved in any kind of development activities after the Upazila system has been introduced. The respondents were asked whether they knew about any kind of development activities going on in their respective Upazilas or whether they heard of anything about it. As is evident from Table 4 only a few (3.5 percent) were involved in the projects, about 21 percent knew about them, 33 percent merely heard about them, while as much as 42 percent did not know anything about the system.

The responses however differed with the respondents' socio-economic background and also with the closeness and remotness of their residence from the Upazila centre. The people from higher socio-economic strata are more involved compared to those from the lower ones. It may be noted here that 77 percent of the lower class people are not even aware of the development activities in the upazila. In comparison, there were only 7 percent of such people in the high class. Again, those who live closer to the upazila centre are more aware of activities than those who live in the remote areas, irrespective of class.

A mixed reaction was observed among the officials working at Upazila level about the present decentralized system of development and administration. Most of the officers (32 out of 38) were found to be in favour of the new system, although a few (11 out of 38) want some change in the mechanism of administration. Those who do not support the new system at all, opined that changes in the

system will not bring any positive outcome unless people's attitude is changed. However, most of the officers are optimistic about the new system of Upazila mainly due to introduction of many innovative ideas with the system.

Table 4   Involvement in and Awareness of Villagers Development Projects at Upazila Level

Respondents by socio-economic groups* and villages	Level of involvement/awareness (%)				
	Involved	Known	Heard	Don't know	Total
High n = 15 a (8)	25.0	37.5	25.0	12.5	100
b (7)	14.0	57.0	28.5	—	100
T (15)	20.0	46.0	26.6	6.6	100
Middle n = 39 a (21)	—	23.8	47.6	28.5	100
b (19)	—	22.2	50.0	27.7	100
T (39)	—	23.0	48.7	28.2	100
Low n = 30 a (14)	—	14.2	14.2	71.4	100
b (16)	—	—	18.7	81.25	100
T (30)	—	6.6	16.0	76.6	100
Total N = 84 a (43)	4.6	23.0	32.5	39.5	100
b (41)	2.4	19.5	34.1	43.9	100
T (84)	3.5	21.4	33.3	41.6	100

Source : Field Survey, June—July, 1985.

a = Village closer to Upazila centre
b = Village remote from Upazila centre
T = Total of a and b
Figures in parentheses indicate number of respondents

* The social groups were identified on the basis of four socio-economic variables—the annual household income of the respondents, land holding, occupation and social status.

The officials were asked to make comments if they observed any significant change after the introduction of the Upazila system. Their observations are summarized in Table 5. The largest group of the officials (50 percent) felt that the situation has been improving, 42 percent of them did not observe any change in the process while about 8 percent experessed that the situation is worse than before.

A mixed reaction was also marked about the present system of administration. Most of the officers questioned the capability of the Upazila Chairmen who, according to them, were not well educated compared to the government officials. The relationship between the Upazila Chairmen and the UNOs are very important for smooth functioning of the system. There are many issues on which the relationship among them is strained. In the case of the present study, three different types of relation were observed in the three study Upazilas. In one of the upazilas, for example, the Chairman is a former member of the parliament and consequently very powerful, at least locally. In this Upazila, the Chairman finds no difficulty to control the UNO and the UNO also maintains good relationships with the Chairman. In another, the relationship between the Chairman and UNO is rather strained, while in the third a smooth relationship was marked between them although the Chairman, according to the observation of some officials, is not very competent. The UNO is pleased to work under a people's representative and to guide him as much as possible for the benefit of the people.

Table 5 Attitude of the Officers towards the Results of Development under Upazila System

Attitudes	Frequency	Percent
Worse than before	3	7.8
No change	16	42.1
Little improvement	21	36.8
Substantial improvement	5	13.1

Source: Field Survey, June-July 1985.

The Upazila officials were also requested to point out as to what were the major problems that they faced in the smooth functioning of the development process. The problems identified can be categorized into three broad groups. The first group of problems are institutional and administrative, like decision making problems. 72 percent of the officers believed that due to lack of voting rights of the official members of the Parishad, inappropriate supervising, management and coordination system and inconsistant circulations and guidelines from different ministries realistic and genuine development schemes cannot be taken. Moreover, they do not have the power to take decisions in the Upazila Parishad. They argue that members of the Upazila Parishad including the Chairman belong to the elite group, and that they are not above the influence of party politics, favouritism and patron-client relationships.

The second group of problems is localized in nature. The local social structure, dominated by elite groups, are real barrier in delivering development services to the largest group of people. This problem is more serious at present, due to their easy access to the Upazila Parishad Chairmen and other members. Moreover, the local touts are creating more problems since the introduction of Upazila system.

The third group of problems are internal to Upazila administration and rather more serious among all these three groups of problems. Misuse of money and power, corruption, insincerity and irregularity of the officials are of this type of problems. The severity of the problems are best reflected from the village level respondents but the problems are also admitted by the officials themselves.

There are also many advantages of the new Upazila system as mentioned by the officials. Most of them (60%) agreed that the decision making is now much easier than the previous thana system. They also admitted that the necessary administrative and development services are now at the doorstep of the people. Scope of people's participation has been increased and the basic problems of coordi-

nation and financial allocation and release of funds have also been removed.

The most important advantage that the respondents indicated was the initiation of a democratic and decentralized process of decision making. The officials mentioned that due to decentralization, burden of the national government will be reduced along with the complicacy of previous bureaucratic centralized process of development.

All systems have some merits and demerits, or in other words, create problems and advantages, but it is very difficult to compare as to which one among the two (problems and advantages) weighs heavier. It is true that none of the officials considered Upazila to be inferior to the thana system, although some of them had indicated that situation is rather worse than before, without implying that the system itself is bad.

Conclusion

Too many experimentation for development were made in the past. Not only was this chain of experimentation unable to produce the desired results, rather it generated many problems of lasting consequences. Every successive government between 1947 and 1982 felt for a new administrative and institutional machinery for successful implementation of their economic policies. The stated objectives of all these attempts were to devise a better system to serve the people in an efficient way. But in reality, the political regimes consolidated their power with the help of local leaders and the development process remained always in the hands of bureaucracy while people remained outside the mainstream of development.

In the past, a planned and decentralized development was hardly emphasized in Bangladesh. The recent policy of Upazila approach to decentralized development is a laudible attempt with possiblities of planned and coordinated development for vast rural areas of

the country. Compared to the past development approaches, the present Upazila system is unique in many respects. It is now the people's representatives who should control the development administration at the Upazila level instead of bureaucrats. In addition, a

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The changes are laudible but the real success depends on administrative efficiency at the local level, commitment of the political authority and genuine participation of the people.

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comprehensive approach to planned development has been initiated by means of delegating power and devolving authorities at the local level.

Since institutional arrangements have been made to delegate decision making power at the local level, the possibilities of achieving the desired development have increased with the Upazila system. But the system is fraught with problems. Proper planning and implementation, necessary coordination, adequate financial arrangements and an objective monitoring and evaluation of the programmes have not yet been possible. The major bottlenecks in the process are lack of appropriately qualified and trained staff, lack of proper politically committed cadre, conflicts among the functionaries, confusion over the role of various organizations, officials and Upazila chairmen, insufficient coordination, and conspicuous lack of popular participation and involvement of the people so far in the planning and development process. The spirit of decentralized development has, therefore, been heavily constrained by all these problems. Although, the people at various levels such as village and Upazila and even national level experts felt that the system has the potential to bring about positive changes, the signs of such prospects are yet to be seen clearly.

A policy of enforcing adherence to rigid guidelines uniformly across the country appears to be a serious drawback. Importance should have been given to make things according to local requirements and adaptability.

The present government's idea of decentralized development activities to mobilize internal resources, attract private investment and generate employment is laudible but its success depends on its effectiveness in terms of administrative efficiency at the local level, commitment of the political authority and genuine participation of the people. If the authorities talk about decentralization to secure their position and power and to manage scarce resources for a variety of administrative and political functions the objective of real development would never be fulfilled.