



A review on standing committee

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ABSTRACT

The oldest governmental organization in our country is the Union Parishad (UP). The organization is developing with time. Its organizational design has undergone numerous changes in order to become more centered on people and responsive to rural development and poverty eradication. Our local governments are becoming more robust as constraints increase. Organization promoting the country's balanced development. We urgently require a robust UP with active committee participation. Standing committee is an important and crucial subject to improve the service and delivery quality at root level. Standing committee is important for promoting transparency, accountability. It also helps the union parishad to make them more participatory and democratic in management and decision making process. However, the Union parishad's perspective on the issue of standing committee effectiveness is not very favorable. The majority of Union parishads were created for official purposes, but in reality, their significance is not felt anywhere. Basically, each year at its initial meeting, however the study conducted on two union parishad of Hathazari upzilla named Fatehpur union parishad and Mirzapur union parishad. We would like to thank the committee members and people of those union parishad to help us to collect and analysis data. The study also considered the awareness and effectiveness of standing committee and try to find out the problems and it primarily made use of qualitative information and respondents' candid opinions. There are also a few quantitative data points presented.

According to the survey, both union parishads and our local members are completely ignorant of the committee process. This study has reason to believe that our local bodies won't be able to do much to advance peace, satisfaction, transparency and justice.

Keywords: Union Parishad, Participation, Participatory, Democratic

INTRODUCTION

Union parishad are the smallest rural administrative and local government units in Bangladesh. There are 9 wards in each union parishad. A ward is assigned to one village. There are 4554 unions in Bangladesh. A union parishad consists of a chairman and twelve members exclusively reserved for women. Union parishads are formed under the local govt.

A union parishad is the body particularly responsible for all kind of activities in a union parishad. The world is changing and more countries are opting for democracy. In this changing environment democratic control, decentralization of administration, local level participation in planning and role of central government. The union parishad is performing the duties of the standing committee. These standing committees are supposed to

assist UP in discharging their duties in a transparent and accountable manner and ensuring people's participation in the overall development of the country.

In Bangladesh, the standing committee is the permanent legislative body of the union parishad which is tasked with reviewing bills, directing government activities, oversight and examining specific policy areas. They provide expertise and recommendations to support effective governance in the country's parliamentary system as well. While such standing committees have been in existence for a long time, this study attempts to focus on the question of whether they work. Everything from agriculture to education to people's livelihood of a union is affected by standing committee. Yes, it is true that most of the union parishads of Bangladesh do not discuss these matters but standing committees play an important role in our system of government. Based on the

research and understanding of the results of various aspects of decentralization policy implementation of Bangladesh government, it can be argued that this committee is necessary at all levels of governance and it can be said that standing committee has become an integral part of the law making process since the establishment of committee nowadays. Considered as an important mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability of UP (Imtiaz, 2006).

Legal Framework Regarding Union Parishad

Constitution of union parishad: Accounting to the local government (union parishad) ordinance States that every union parishad consist of a chairman and twelve members including three members exclusively reserved for women. Chairman and members shall be elected by direct election on the basis of adult franchise in accordance with the provisions of this ordinance and the rules.

Functions of union parishad: Section 30 and first schedule of the above ordinance describes the functions of union parishad elaborately. According to the section 30 and the schedule every union parishad performs two types of functions compulsory and optional.

Compulsory functions:

- Maintenance of law and order and assistance to administration in the maintenance to law and order.
- Adoption of measures for preventing crime, disorder and smuggling.
- Adoption and implementation of development schemes in the field of agriculture, forest, fisheries, livestock, education, health, cottage, industries, communication, irrigation and flood protection with a view to increasing economic and social upliftment of people.
- Promotion of family planning.
- Development of local resources and their use.
- Protection and maintenance of public property such as roads, bridges, canals, embankment, telephone and electricity lines.
- Review of the development activities of all agencies at the union level and to make recommendations to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer in regard to their activities.
- Motivation and persuasion of the people to install sanitary latrines.
- Registration of births, deaths, blinds, beggars and destitutes.
- Conducting of census of all kinds.

Apart from these, the union parishad will have to perform the following optional functions:

- Provisions and maintenance of public ways and public streets.
- Provisions and maintenance of public place, public open spaces, public gardens and public play-grounds.

- Lighting the public ways, public streets and public places.
- Plantation and preservation of these in general and plantation and preservation of these on public ways, public streets and public places in particular.
- Management and maintenance of burning and burial grounds, common meeting place and other common property.
- Provision and maintenance of accommodation for travellers.
- Prevention and regulation of encroachment on public ways, public streets and public places.
- Prevention and abatement of nuisance in public ways, public streets and public places.
- Sanitation, conservancy and the adoption of other measures for the cleanliness of the union.
- Regulation of the collection, removal and disposal of measure and streets sweeping.
- Regulation of offensive and dangerous trades.
- Regulation of the disposal of carcasses of dead animals.
- Regulation of the slaughter of animals.
- Regulation of the erection and re-election of building in the union.
- Regulation on dangerous buildings and structures.
- Provisions and maintenance of well, water pumps, tanks, ponds and other works for the supply of water.
- Adoption of measures for preventing the contamination of the source of water-supply for drinking.
- Prohibition of the use of the water of wells, ponds and other sources of water-supply suspected to be dangerous to public health.
- Regulation or prohibition of the watering of cattle.
- Bathing or washing at or near Wells, ponds or other sources of water reserved for drinking purpose.
- Regulation or prohibition of the sleeping of hemp, jute or other plants in or near ponds or other sources of water-supply.
- Adoption of measures for increased food production; provision for maintenance and regulation of cattle pounds.
- Provision of first-aid centers.
- Provision of libraries and reading rooms.
- Voluntary registration of the sale cattle and other animals.
- Holding of fairs and shows.
- Celebration of public festivals.
- Promotion of public games and sports.
- Provision for management of environment.
- Aid in the promotion of education under the direction of the deputy commissioner.
- The upkeep and management of public roads, public spaces, public gardens, and public playgrounds.

- Management and upkeep of burning and burial grounds, common meeting places, and other common property.
- Provision and upkeep of lodging for visitors.
- Prevention and regulation of encroachment on public ways, public streets, and public places.
- Responsible for preparing and implementing plans for local development within their jurisdictions.
- Union parishads may have roles in disaster management and relief efforts in coordination with higher levels of government.

Union parishads are given the authority to handle local issues and advance the general development of their respective regions through the performance of these defined functions. If you're looking for the most recent details on the roles and obligations of union parishads in Bangladesh, it's best to consult official government sources or legal papers.

Statement of the Problem

A committee is a body to which some task has been referred or committed. According to Muttalib and Khan committees are a universal phenomenon of local govt. in different parts of the world. Committees may be statutory or non-statutory, standing or ad-hoc, functional or non-functional, vertical or horizontal, executive or consultative (Amin et al., 2011).

While the standing committee system is essential for effective governance, it faces several problems. In the beginning, corruption and partisanship can be complicated and committee members prioritize party interests over constructive decision-making, their own party interests become bigger. Second, the committee's heavy workload and limited resources may hinder proper implementation and scrutiny of proposed legislation and oversight functions. Additionally, committee proceedings may lack accountability and transparency, raising concerns about accountability and public involvement. Potential conflicts of interest among committee members can undermine the objectivity of their decisions and create adverse reactions. Elites are favored in decision-making due to which the lower classes are deprived of opportunities. Addressing these issues requires consideration of impartiality as well as establishing strict ethical guidelines to promote cooperation, allocate adequate resources, increase transparency, and maintain the credibility and effectiveness of standing committees.

Objectives

Therefore, the objectives of this study: Are examine the scope and performance of UP standing committees.

- To identify the problems of SCs in UP.
- To recommend the solution of those problem.
- To draw the attention of attached authorities to solve those problems.

Key Questions

In order to reach the objectives, the answers to the following key questions will be sought in this study:

- Are the standing committees functioning effectively?
- Do all members participate in activities of SCs?
- What are the obstacles possibly faced by the members of standing committees in discharging their duties?
- How can we overcome the obstacles in order to provide better services to common people?

Justification of the Study

UP members are elected by the people to deliver services. It is said that governance can be achieved at the grass roots level through a strong UP with the contribution and participation of local people. UP works as the lowest tier of our local government system and if it does not function properly good governance cannot be ensured at the local level. Standing committees have a great potential on this respect. Thus the aim of the research is to examine the scope and performance of standing committees from various angles. The nature of impediments faced by the members of standing committees also need to be assessed so that recommendations can be made in order to mitigate those obstacles.

Scope of the Study

The study was confined to Fatyepur union parishad of Hathazari upazilla, under Chattogram district. Chairmen, members, of different UPs were interviewed with different sets of structured questionnaire. Apart from them, local people of both men and women were also interviewed with another set of questionnaire as a measure of cross referencing and validating the findings from the initial survey.

The duration of field study was around 3 days. First, UP chairmen and other representatives and local people of Hathazari upazilla conveyed their opinion through interview. The officials of various govt. departments working in the upazilla also expressed their opinion about standing committees in informal discussions. The whole process was replicated Hathazari upazilla. The scope of the study was to get an idea about how in changing environment UPs can include people in local level planning and implementation process using the instrument of standing committees.

Study Design and Research Methodology

The present study is based on empirical data collected through survey involving structured and unstructured interviews with members of union parishad, standing committees and local people. This study relies on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected with the help of questionnaire and personal interview with

the up chairmen, members and also with the local people. Information was collected directly from the members of standing committees who are supposed to be the primary respondents. Other sources of information was union parishad chairman, members and some local elite and govt. officials working in upazila and union level.

Selection of the Union Parishads for Study

Total 1 union parishads were selected as part of study on the basis of some type of representative characteristics of other parts of Bangladesh. Fieldwork was carried out in "Fatyepur union parishad" of a upazilla situated in Chattogram district. To examine the diversify of UP we have selected this union parishad from Hathazari upazilla.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations of this study. It was not possible to cover the whole Bangladesh due to time and resource constraints, only two upazilas were selected for that purpose. A total of 1 chairman, 12 members and 33 local people were initially targeted for the purpose of survey, ultimately 1 chairman, 12 members and 33 local people were found as respondents during the field survey.

One of the difficulties was the non-availability of some of the UP members and it was a tough task to connect with them and people were not that much supportive and female members were not that much cooperative but they all provided their reviews and thinkings. A few UP representatives were to some extent reluctant to express idea (Jahan, 2014).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The committees are emerging as an important component of modern local government system. Both India and UK are well known for their long history of committee system in local government set-up. The status and powers of committees vary not only from county to country and from one set of local authority to another but also from one committee to another, depending on the importance of the functions assigned.

Standing Committee System in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, provisions for forming standing committees are stated both in the local government ordinance, 1976 and the local government (union parishad) ordinance, 1983. So this concept has been has in vogue for around three decades. Though there id no death of literature on union parishad, compared to that not much information is available on the performance of standing committees of Ups.

Kamal siddiqui in his "Local government in Bangladesh" examines the pros and cons of standing committees elaborately. It has been stated that standing committee has a number of positive attributes. First, the committee

system involves a number of outsiders into the functioning of the UP. On the one hand, it involves common people's participation and on the other it ensures transparency and accountability of the parishad. Through the system the members can divide the burden of work among themselves. The division of labor encourages the committee members to enhance their abilities and specialize their services. Additionally, it enables them to contribute more effectively to the UP. Third, the separation of a broad range of tasks among committees ensures more thorough and efficient coverage of services and obligations and enables the entire parishad, during the constrained period of its meeting, to focus on policy problems without becoming bogged down by excessive detail. Fourth, members can have a detailed, casual discussion on a given topic. Fifth, the committee system in local government is a very complicated matter because the union parishad full committee meetings are held on a regular basis (Pittenger et al., 2017).

United nations department for development support and management service conducted a research on our local government system. The title of the study was "Local government in Bangladesh: An agenda for Governance". They studied on 37 union parishads and pointed out that in reality only one/two standing committee can work independently. But there is little opportunity for the common people to send their representatives in those committees. According to legal framework, though there is provision for people's participation and representation, the existing scenario in local government does not encourage those practices.

Bishawjit mallick criticized the union parishad's decision to create standing committees. He claims that these standing committees have not been established anywhere in Bangladesh. These are essentially an extension of union parishads, thus even if they were founded, they would be meaningless because there would be little opportunity for the public at large, and the underprivileged in particular, to participate.

A.K.M Jahangir in his book "field administration" has evaluated the standing committees in the following way. "Though the committees are formed, there activities are hardly observed. If the committees perform accordingly, the socio-economic status of the inhabitants of union parishad will certainly be improved".

Dr. Dil Rowshan Zinnat Ara Nazneen has commented that if free thinking persons and representatives of the opposing factions are included in the committees, then the representative nature of the committees would be demonstrated and the scope of participation of the people would be ensured (Sager and Ravlum, 2005).

Another empirical study carried out by Sharique, a local NGO, in three unions in Rajshahi and one in Sunamganj district showed that none of the unions had established a single standing committee. Only two of the unions where

standing committees were established did so in accordance with the law; none of the twelve unions' standing committees were determined to be productive, and the locals in the aforementioned unions had little to no knowledge of their existence. Standing committees were not seen to be fully functional by more than 5.7 percent of those in the Rajshahi region and 2.09 percent of those in Sunamganj. 50 percent people in rajshahi and 58.84 percent in sunamganj don't know anything about standing committee (Anesi and Seidmann, 2015).

CARE with the assistance of the union education committee, a foreign NGO in Bangladesh improved the quality of education in primary schools in four upazillas of the Rangpur and Gaibandha districts. At the project's conclusion, it was discovered that the members of the standing committee were in regular touch with the school administration and the school management committee, and the parents actively participated in a variety of school-related topics. In fact, the standing committee members established a library, improved the restroom, installed tube-well ceiling fans, etc. with the help of SMC, teachers, and parents.

A number of organizations, foreign and local NGOs such as BARD, SDC (SEWISS agency for development cooperation) CARE Bangladesh, sharique, democracy watch Khan foundation, gender and development alliance etc. conducted a study titled "governance in union parishad of Bangladesh: Problems and prospective" and found that in most cases, union parishads do not form these standing committees which is causing problems in managing various activities of the Ups. In some cases standing committees were formed to fulfill the official purpose but were kept non-functioning and inoperative as reported in the daily star (Bertsias et al., 2008).

Constitution of Standing Committees

According to the section 38 of the local government (union parishad) ordinance 1983, union parishad can formulate standing committees for each of these areas:

- Finance and establishment.
- Education and mass education.
- Health, family planning and epidemic control.
- Audit and accounts.
- Agriculture and other development works.

- Social welfare and community centers.
- Cottage industries and co-operatives.
- Law and order.
- Fisheries and livestock.
- Union public works.
- Conservation of the environment and tree plantation.
- Rural water supply and sanitation
- Welfare of women and children, sports and culture.

A standing committee under this section shall consist of such number of members and other co-opted persons as may be determined by the union parishad concerned. A standing committee shall elect one of its members, others than a co-opted members to be its chairman and another such member to be its vice- chairman; provided that one-fourth of the total number to be its vice-chairman of the standing committee shall, subject to the availability of candidate, be elected from amongst the member elected in the reserved seat. Furthermore, a UP may co-opt a person of either sex who is not member of the parishad but who may, in the opinion of the parishad, possess special qualifications for serving on any of the standing committee, however, sure a member does not enjoy any voting rights in the standing committee meetings, and sometime they are ignored in decision making.

RESULTS

Socio-economic Status of Union Parishad Members

Union parishad is the lowest tiers are our local government system. Existing socio-economic conditions provide the background of the UP representative, since Bangladesh is a homogeneous country regarding religion, ethnicity and language, different factors of socio-economic conditions play and important part in selection of leaders of the local level. The study was conducted in Hathazari upazilla, Fatehpur union and Mirzapur union.

There is a variation at age of members and chairman. Here, majority of members and chairman are in the age group of 30-40 and 40-50 years. The percentage of those group is 69% here minority of members and chairmen are in the age group of 50-60 and 60-70 years. The percentage of those group is 31% (Table 1).

Table 1: Age of UP chairmen and members.

| Age | Total | Percentage |
|-------|-------|------------|
| 20-20 | 0 | 0% |
| 30-40 | 5 | 39% |
| 40-50 | 4 | 30% |

| | | |
|-------|----|------|
| 50-60 | 3 | 23% |
| 60-70 | 1 | 8% |
| Total | 13 | 100% |

Age of Local People

There is a variation of age of local people. Here, majority of local people are in the age group of 30-40 years, the percentage of this group is 38%. Here, minority of local

people are in the age group at 50-60 years. The percentage of this group is 13% (Table 2).

Table 2: Age of local people.

| Age | Total | Percentage |
|-------|-------|------------|
| 10-20 | 7 | 23% |
| 20-30 | 13 | 38% |
| 30-40 | 8 | 26% |
| 40-50 | 5 | 13% |
| 50-60 | 0 | 0% |
| 60-70 | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

Marital Status of UP Chairman and Members

Marital status plays a major role for participation in politics. At the union level in our country as married

people are more acceptable as political leaders in rural Bangladesh due to maturity and stable family life, the 2 unions are no exceptions to this. Here, all members and chairman are married (Table 3).

Table 3: Marital status of UP chairman and members.

| Status | Total | Percentage |
|-----------|-------|------------|
| Married | 13 | 100% |
| Unmarried | 0 | 0% |
| Divorced | 0 | 0% |
| Others | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 13 | 100% |

Education and Qualification

In case of educational qualifications, none has been found to be illiterate among the members and chairman but 8% illiterate people is found among local people all representatives have received formal education to some extent, which is positive sign. Here 0% members and

chairmen are PhD and MPhil holder but 2% local people are mphil holder. 15% members and chairmen and 13% local people are post graduates 8% members and chairman and 24% local people are graduate (Table 4).

Table 4: Educational qualification of members, chairmen and local people.

| Indicators | Chairmen and members | | Local people | |
|------------|----------------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| | Total no. | Percentage | Total no. | Percentage |
| PhD | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |

| | | | | |
|---------------|----|------|----|------|
| PHD | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| M Phil | 0 | 0% | 1 | 2% |
| Post graduate | 2 | 15% | 5 | 13% |
| Graduate | 1 | 8% | 8 | 24% |
| HSC | 6 | 46% | 6 | 20% |
| SSC | 4 | 31% | 4 | 14% |
| Class 6-10 | 0 | 0% | 2 | 4% |
| Class 1-5 | 0 | 0% | 5 | 15% |
| Illiterate | 0 | 0% | 2 | 8% |
| Total | 13 | 100% | 33 | 100% |

Occupation Status

Table 5 reviews that 50% of chairmen and members are involved in business and 24% local people are involved in business. Most of the local people are involved in others kinds at occupation. Some of the member's

chairmen and local people are involved in various kinds of occupation. Such as: Teacher, banker, village, doctor, service, farmer etc.

Table 5: Occupational status of member, chairmen and local people.

| Indicators | Chairmen and members | | Local people | |
|----------------|----------------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| | Total no. | Percentage | Total no. | Percentage |
| Businessmen | 9 | 70% | 8 | 24% |
| Teacher | 1 | 7% | 5 | 18% |
| Banker | 0 | 0% | 1 | 3% |
| Village doctor | 0 | 0% | 1 | 3% |
| Housewife | 3 | 23% | 4 | 11% |
| Advocate | 0 | 0% | 1 | 2% |
| Engineer | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Farmer | 0 | 0% | 4 | 12% |
| Others | 0 | 0% | 9 | 27% |
| Total | 13 | 100% | 33 | 100% |

Activities of SC

SCs play an important role in UP. SCs have done various kinds of activities to improve the socio-economic position of UP. UP formulates various kinds of committee to perform its activities those committees are called standing committee. e.g. Finance committee, education committee and agriculture committee etc.

According to the statement of UP members and chairmen financed and establishment committee, education and mass education committee, health and family planning committee and law and order committee are 100% active in a UP and committees are 80% active others committee are active in some UP and inactive in some UP (Table 6).

Table 6: Activities of SC.

| Name of SCs | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Finance and establishment committee | 6 | 100% |
| Education and mass education | 8 | 100% |
| Health and family planning | 7 | 100% |
| Audit and account | 6 | 80% |
| Agriculture | 8 | 80% |
| Social welfare | 5 | 80% |
| Cottage industries | 6 | 80% |
| Law and order | 9 | 100% |
| Welfare of women and children | 6 | 80% |
| Fisheries and livestock | 6 | 80% |
| Tree plantation | 5 | 80% |
| Rural water supply and sanitation | 6 | 80% |
| Union public works | 6 | 80% |

Performance of Standing Committee Evaluated by Members/Chairmen

responses in terms of satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Which are indicated in the Tables 7 and 8.

The respondents when asked about the performance of the standing committee. They were asked to reveal their

Table 7: Performance of standing committee evaluated by members/chairmen.

| Indicators | Total | Percentage |
|----------------|-------|------------|
| Satisfactory | 11 | 83% |
| Unsatisfactory | 2 | 17% |
| Total | 13 | 100% |

Table 8: Performance of SCs evaluated by local people.

| Indicators | Number | Percentage |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Satisfactory | 13 | 44% |
| Unsatisfactory | 20 | 66% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

Performance of Standing Committee Evaluated by Members/ Chairmen

It is shown in Figure 1.

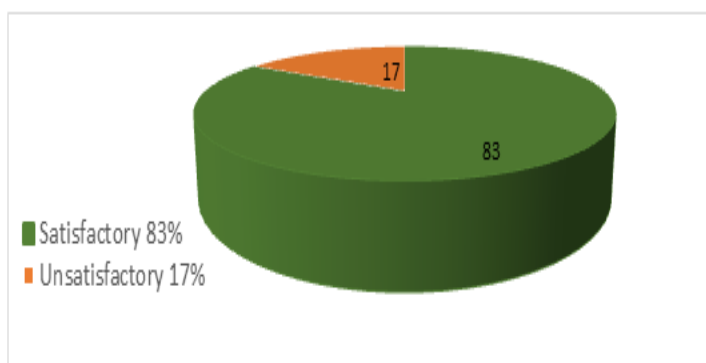


Figure 1: Performance of standing committee evaluated by members/chairmen.

According to 83% of member and chairman evaluated performance of SCs are satisfactory and 17% of member and chairman evaluated the performance of SCs are unsatisfactory.

Performance of SCs Evaluated by Local People

As local people bear powerful role the rural level. Some of them were asked to evaluate the performance of standing committees of UPs of their own locality and the results obtained are given below Figure 2.

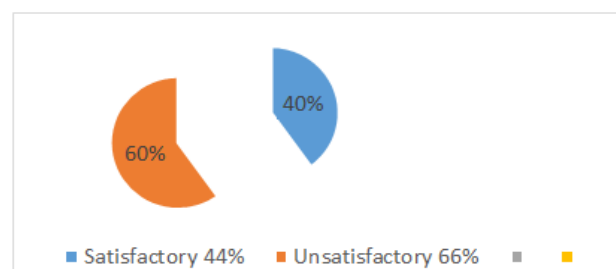


Figure 2: Performance of SCs evaluated by local people

According to report of SCs evaluated by local people. Performance of SCs are satisfactory is 44% and unsatisfactory is 66%

Involvement of Chairman, Member and General People in SCs

Standing committees are constructed by the chairman, member and general people. To active the standing committees. The involvement of those persons are important. We can find out by our research that the involvement of local people in SCs are incompatible (Table 9 and Figure 1).

Table 9: Involvement of chairman, member and general people in SCs.

| Category | Total | Percentage | No. of taken sample |
|--------------|-------|------------|---------------------|
| Chairman | 1 | 100% | 1 |
| Members | 12 | 100% | 12 |
| Local people | 12 | 50% | 24 |



Figure 3: Involvement of chairman, member and general people in SCs.

The involvement of member and chairmen is 100% but the involvement of local people is 23% which is very incompatible.

Awareness of General People about Functions of SC

It is shown in Table 10 and Figure 4.

Table 10: Awareness and unawareness of general people about standing committee.

| Indicators | Total | Percentage |
|------------|-------|------------|
| Aware | 5 | 22.5% |
| Unaware | 15 | 77.5% |
| Total | 20 | 100% |

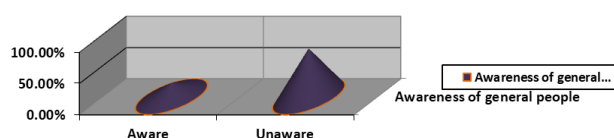


Figure 4: Awareness and unawareness of general people about standing committee.

Remarks: A lot of good qualities, such as higher educational attainment in comparison to many other areas in Bangladesh. The field survey revealed a stable marital status and a reasonable degree of cooperation between the UP chairman and members. These benefits are intended to aid in the smooth operation of the standing committees. However, the survey data does not support this notion because the vast majority of members and local residents believe the performance of standing committees to be inadequate.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the findings: The upazilas surveyed during the survey present a slightly different socio-economic profile than the average upazila of our country. Here all members and chairpersons are included in SC of UP but participation rate of local people is low and many people are not aware about SC. Which does not fit. The UP Ordinance of 1983 which clearly states that every member must be included in any committee and emphasizes the inclusion of women representatives as committee members, but in the field work that has hardly been found.

Comments of chairman: According to the UP chairmen, the performance of the standing committee is satisfactory. According to the official notification, this committee has been formed. Whenever any urgent and necessary situation arises, the concerned standing committee starts working on that matter, involves the common people and tries to take their opinion and advises the UP Chairman to solve the problem. Responding to a question on whether the committee members regularly perform their duties related to the committee, the UP chairman said it would take time to follow the entire process. A group of these members do not actively participate in starting and finishing the work, but create chaos in various ways which ultimately hampers the quality of the work. Many members try to achieve their own interests, he added. According to him, overall the work of this committee is very satisfactory (Sarojini et al., 2013).

Comparison write the analytical framework: UP members are elected for 5 years. At the end of 5 years they have to go back to their electorate for another term and the process continues. During tenure, their accountability increases if they inform the people about their activities and work for the people. The Standing Committee plays an important role in this regard. In

interviews with UP members, most of them expressed satisfaction with the work of the Standing Committee but when asked about the general public, they expressed the opposite. From this it can be inferred that the members of the standing committee do not meet the common people or discuss their work. Hence the accountability factor is also largely passive of the Standing Committee. A common tendency of our elected representatives is to spend public funds in areas where their supporters and followers live among the largest constituents. There should be proper procedures to use public money so that the poor people benefit from it. Moreover, government funding is less than required. Here most of the times the UP Chairman enjoys high status and authority over other members. As a result, many times the organization becomes like a one-man show. Effective use of Standing Committees can reduce this power of the UP Chairman. But if the standing committees do not function as well as the polled unions, the supremacy of the UP chairman remains intact and local participation is hampered

Cause of ineffectiveness: This is the age of democracy. Many other countries are on the road to democracy. Democracy requires us to practice and practice the necessary virtues in political, social and other spheres. UP being one of our grassroots local government institutions and standing committee has a huge scope for democratic practice at field level. Despite the good opportunities, the institutions have not utilized the potential of the committee so far. Below highlights the reasons for non-functioning of Standing Committees of Ups

- Lack of transparency, responsibility and accountability in standing committees.
- Standing Committees have no specific terms of reference.
- Lack of initiative by UP members and not discussing with people at field level.
- Lack of public pressure.
- Even though the standing committee is on paper, its activities are not there.
- Reluctance to delegate authority on the part of the chairman.
- Lack of coordination and communication.
- Providing maximum facilities to upper class people and political interference.
- Lack of skills needed to plan and implement development programs.
- Corruption is a major hindrance in the functioning of the Standing Committee.
- Limited government funding and lack of proper utilization of government funding

With the help of 13 standing committees, union parishad is supposed to perform 10 compulsory and 38 optional works. But the problem is there are no specific terms of references or direction for the standing committees. As a result, sometimes the activities of one standing

committee overlap with the other and the creates problems and conflicts. Moreover, a UP is divided into 9 wards and these 9 wards are represented by 9 male and 3 female members. Each committee have 3 to 5 members. When one standing committee members start working on agriculture, sanitation, primary education or other issues in a word. it can create misunderstanding with the elected members of that ward if none of them are included in the said committee. Because it is a common attitude of our elected representative not to allow others to perform in such a way within his jurisdiction which he considers may reduce his popularity among the voters. Union Parishad is the nearest organization of our rural people. The UP representatives are the next door neighbors of the rural people. The people can meet their representative anytime during day and night. The UP office is also situated in their area. In spite of all these factors, not even the elite people of the local areas are aware of these committees, let alone the common people. So things have not change in spite of the provision of standing committees in UPs.

Despite the many advantages of committee system, Union Parishad chairmen are not interested in forming various committees. One of the reasons for this ineffectiveness of the committee is the UP Chairman's prevention of devolution of authority to the committee members. The attitude of UP members here is against devolution. In an article published in "The Daily Star" (2005) it was initiated that in the absence of a Standing Committee under the Union Parishad, the Chairman enjoys all the rights to use the money allotted to the UPs. Authoritarian leadership is more common in various areas of local government in third world countries like Bangladesh. May be, many of our UP chairmen also do not try to come out of this trend as all political situations are largely authoritarian rather than democratic.

So, if effective democracy is lacking in the larger political arena, how can it be fostered locally?

All of these factors contribute to the failure of standing committees in several Bangladeshi UPs.

As a result, despite possessing a lot of excellent attributes of standing committees to ensure good governance at the grass roots level, our UPs are unable to put such features into reality in a fruitful manner. In fact, a strong and effective UP cannot be built at the local level unless the standards of accountability, transparency, and people's participation in decision making are followed. It is extremely difficult to ensure good governance at the local level in the absence of a strong and effective UP. At the same time, a poorly functioning UP jeopardizes the Union's overall development, and the rural people eventually do not obtain the expected degree of service from this grass-roots government organization (Melhuish et al., 1995).

CONCLUSION

Having a long traditional history and organizational function, the existing local government system at the rural level of Bangladesh is underwritten and functions as an ancillary organ of the central government to implement its policies in rural areas. "Union Council" is an important institution of the country. Union Parishads, the lowest level of our local government system, are already involved in many development activities. According to the rules, the Union Parishad will conduct all its activities under the management of various standing committees with the participation of the people of the concerned area. Here the performance of the standing committee and the level of involvement of the members were discussed. From the findings of the survey, the performance of the Standing Committees is slow and can be attributed to a number of factors which have been discussed above. In this context, the measures required to encourage local governance are not good and it goes without saying that the functioning of standing committees affects the overall governance of the country. To strengthen their performance by Standing Committee and UP, some recommendations can be taken into consideration.

The present UP members are trained by district and upazila level officials soon after assuming their duties. Various aspects of UP including responsibilities and duties of UP members were discussed at length in the training. They are even provided with a booklet about important aspects of UP. But when interviewed, most of the members were not very clear about the composition, functions and nature of the standing committee. Some of them have completely forgotten the concept of standing committee. This indicates that only one training for 5 years is not enough to familiarize members with UP activities. Rather every year UP responsibilities require alternate training so that they can enhance their knowledge and enhance their organization management capabilities.

Standing committees are formed to deal with specific areas like agriculture, fisheries, sanitation etc. Any specific terms of this committee. This may happen when members of a standing committee serve in a ward where no member of that ward is included in that committee and jurisdictional issues may arise. Therefore, certain terms and conditions are urgently needed for the effective performance of the Standing Committee. The mentality of handing over the power of the Chairman of the Union Parishad should be created So that the Standing Committee can carry out its work on its own responsibility

Members of the UP rely significantly on the UP secretary for official work. Indeed, the UP secretary is overburdened with meetings, transmitting varied information to upazila and district administrations, and other official responsibilities. In general, the secretary drafts resolutions for all types of

meetings. If the 13 standing committee meetings are held on a regular basis, the secretary is in charge of preparing resolutions because most UP members are not used to meeting processes. It slows things down and lacks accountability. To avoid a situation like this, the UPs should change the present statute to allow them to hire more people.

UNO is tasked with preparing performance reports of UP offices every year. In that report nominal marks were allotted regarding the formation of standing committee. To activate the performance of the Standing Committee, provision should be made to include examples of specific work performed by the Standing Committee

Surprisingly the local people and even the elite are not aware of the existence of Standing Committees, where it plays an immense role in providing better services at the local level. The committee members must consult with the rural people and inform them about it

Again print media live daily and weekly newspapers can publish reports about Standing Committee to make common people aware of its need and importance. Standing committee members need accountability, responsibility and proper monitoring of their activities. The tendency to favor one class must come out of it and fulfill its responsibilities honestly. The biggest problem is funding, so the government needs to be aware that the amount of money provided from public funds is spent in the right amount and in the right place. Standing committee should arrange campaigns in various Ups about the usefulness of the committee system.

From the data of this study, it was found that educational qualification of the members is very poor. So setting a minimum educational qualification standard is a policy matter, but considering its far reaching effects the concerned authorities can think about taking such a step.

The dream of every citizen is a capable local government. Due of standing committees' poor performance, we haven't had much success in this area thus far, especially when it comes to providing quality service to the people involved. It is imperative that we get past this situation and inject fresh ideas into the standing committee structure, which has been in place for close to 30 years. There is no other way to develop democracy at the grassroots level to improve the performance of standing committees of UP.

Need for Further Research

This study did not take into considerations the various geographical location of UPs of the country such UPS

located on hilly, riverine, hoar areas. Such differences in location could have resulted in different findings. Moreover, financial aspects and revenue sources of union parishad have not been covered in this study. To properly understand the performance of UP standing committees, these aspects need to be researched elaborately. Hopefully, we would be covered in future research initiatives in this area, and very much hopeful to provide more relevant and important information.

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