

# Capacity Development of Local Governance Institutions: Opportunities, Challenges and Way Forward-Bangladesh Perspective

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# Introduction

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**It is perceived that well functioning local bodies with adequate capacity will ensure good governance at the local level by ensuring better delivery of services, peoples' participation, transparency and accountability.**

**Local Government Institutions (LGIs) play a key role in the development of the local governance in Bangladesh. Efforts for capacity development of local bodies have received impetus from the government, the development partners and the civil society since last decade.**

# Local Government Structure In Bangladesh:

Two different systems of local government are there:

## 1. Rural local government:

- *Union Parishad-UP* (lowest tier of local govt.)
- *Upazila Parishad-UZP* (Sub-district Council) and
- *Zila Parishad-ZP* (District Council)

## 2. Urban local government:

- *Paurashava* (Municipality)
- *City Corporation*

*Besides, a separate system of local government is established in indigenous people inhabited Chittagong Hill Tract areas.*

# Capacity Development of Local Governance Institutions

Currently capacity development initiatives of the Government, Development Partners and CSOs are focused on the following areas:

- **Local government bodies' operational procedures and functions including budgeting, planning, and resource management etc.**
- **Relevant Government Institutions responsible for capacity building of local government units**
- **CSOs' staff & Local communities.**

# Govt. Policies/Approaches in Capacity Development

**Till now, in Bangladesh there is no formal policy regarding capacity building of LGIs. Some Policy directions are found in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and Local Government Support Project (LGSP):**

- PRSP indicates positive attitude and commitment for decentralization and strengthening of the local government system in the country which also addresses the necessity of capacity building of LGIs.
- In recent years, government intends to ensure greater participation of people realizing importance of greater capacity development of LGIs & Community to improve service delivery situation and it is reflected in LGSP.

# Govt. Programs in Capacity Development

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- Until recent time Government's capacity building efforts for local government bodies were limited in organizing orientation and one day training for the elected officials.
- Government has been providing basic training on role & function of LGIs, planning & budgeting & resource management.
- Besides, nation wide project LGSP, covering in phases all the Union Parishads in the country with the provisions of capacity building has been under implementation.

# Govt. Institutions & Methodology related to Capacity Development

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## ***Government's institutions involved in Capacity Development are:***

- National Institute of Local Government (NILG)- Completely involved
- Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD)-Partially involved
- Rural Development Academy (RDA)-Partially involved

## ***Methodology***

- Orientation and training, study tour, exchange visit etc.

# Development Partners (DPs)

## Policies/Approaches in Capacity Development

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**In Bangladesh, DPs have policies on strengthening local governance through improving public service delivery, promoting participation & accountability, poverty alleviation etc., giving emphasis on capacity building of all stakeholders.**

# DPs Programs in Capacity Development

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- A number of interventions have been made by DPs for strengthening local government and local level governance. All these initiatives have given importance to capacity building of the LGIs, the local communities and CSOs.
- DPs are providing support mainly to government institutions and also CSOs to focus on the capacity building of LGIs and the local communities.
- DPs do not have their own Institutions for providing capacity development support.

***Following are major DPs involved in capacity development activities in Bangladesh:***

World Bank, USAID, SDC, DANIDA, ADB, UNDP etc.

# CSOs Policies/Approaches in Capacity Development

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**CSOs have policies for strengthening local governance in line with DPs with some interventions based on their field experiences. CSOs approach on capacity development is more intensive and wider.**

# CSOs Programs in Capacity Development

- CSOs are mobilizing local communities and developing awareness, building capacity of LGIs and undertaking local level lobbying activities on improving delivery of LG services, public services etc.
- CSOs provide capacity building services to the LGIs independently and sometimes in collaboration with government institutions.
- CSOs directly facilitate capacity building services to Local Communities, Local NGOs' Staff, Service Delivery Institutions etc.
- CSOs have been undertaking policy advocacy for strengthening local governance which also addresses capacity development issue.

# Continuation.....

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A number of CSOs have been working on local governance with LGIs and community since last decade. At present, more than 100 regional, national and international CSOs are providing capacity building services to LGIs and community.

## **Methodology:**

In the case of the NGOs, the training materials are generally prepared by them and they follow a number of methods which include, training, coaching, counseling, study visit and peer learning etc.

# LG Associations Related to Capacity Development

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Besides government, DPs and CSOs there are local government associations who have some interventions in the capacity building of their respective elected bodies.

They are:

- **Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB)**
- **Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum (BUPF)**

# Challenges to Capacity Development

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- **Policy and resource support from the government**

Absence of Decentralization policy and proper Acts that include provisions for capacity development. As a result, scope for capacity development and resource support are limited.

- **Quality implementation of capacity building institutions**

Only 3 govt. institutions exist to serve more than 5000 LGI Units and 60,000 elected representatives.

The training modules are prepared and trainings are delivered by govt. institutions and mostly by government officials.

Reluctance of the Government to involve CSOs in capacity development activities.

# Continuation.....

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- **Inadequate capacity development Institution of CSOs.**
- **Lacking in addressing the necessity on capacity development of the community to ensure effective participation.**
- **Limited scope for further inclusion of the women, poor and the marginalized**
- **Uncertainty of continued development partners' support to CSOs.**

# Ways Forward

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- **Need to adopt democratic decentralization policy and establish local self government in light of the provisions of the Constitution**
- **A comprehensive capacity development policy needs to be developed by the government through a participatory consultative process**
- **Based on the formulated policy a plan and implementation strategy are to be developed through participatory manner**
- **Initiative should be taken to harmonize the efforts of government, development partners and CSOs.**

# Continuation.....

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## Beside capacity development of LGIs, CSOs are working on policy issues in Bangladesh

- **Governance Advocacy Forum (GAF)** is (*a national level platform consisting of 35 national and international non-government organizations, networks, local government platforms, concerned institutions and civil society representatives*) working towards local government reforms through policy advocacy.
- GAF hold '**Democratic Decentralization National Convention**' and adopted 21 point demands which are focused on forming 'Decentralization Commission' for formulating 'Democratic Decentralization Policy' and 'Acts on Local Self Governments'.

# Call From CSOs of Bangladesh

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For promoting effective local governance and capacity development of LGIs it is also needed to initiate a joint regional collaboration among South Asian CSOs for sharing of learning and to take up joint action with a long term focus.

Thank you

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