

Leading to Participatory Local Governance?

Participation, Empowerment and Community-Driven Development

Parvaz Azharul Huq

MA in Development Studies (Institute of Social Studies, the Netherlands) 2006, Master of Social Sciences in Public Administration (University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh) 2000, Bachelor of Social Sciences in Public Administration (University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh) 1999.

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	i
LIST OF MAPS, TABLES, FIGURES AND PHOTOS	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
DECLARATION	x
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xi
ACRONYMS	xiii
GLOSSARY OF LOCAL TERMS	xvi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. The Project Background	2
1.3. The Bangladesh Context.....	5
1.4. Statement of the Problem.....	8
1.5. Research Objectives	11
1.6. Research Questions.....	12
1.7. Rationale and the Research Site	12
1.8. Chapter Outline.....	17
CHAPTER 2: PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT- A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	19
2.1. Introduction	19
Section I: Understanding the Subject Matter	20
2.2. Participation in Development	20
2.3. The Recent Interest in Participatory Local Governance.....	30
2.4. New Spaces for Participation.....	32
2.5. Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation.....	35
2.6. Community Driven Development (CDD): A Pathway to Transformation?.....	37
Section II: Discussion on the Key Concepts	42
2.7. Community	42
2.8. Community Participation.....	44

2.9. Gender and Community Participation	48
2.10. Participatory Local Governance	50
2.11. Trust and Social Networks.....	53
2.12. Participation as Empowerment.....	54
2.12.1. Power: The Root Concept of Empowerment.....	55
2.12.2. Community Empowerment.....	61
2.12.3. Participation and Empowerment: The Analytical Framework	64
Section III: Theoretical Underpinnings.....	68
2.13.1. Institutional Theory	68
2.13.2. Patron-Clientelism	70
2.14. Summary.....	76
CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND INFORMATION	79
3.1. Introduction	79
Section I: Urban Local Governance in Bangladesh.....	80
3.2. A Brief Description of Municipal Governance	80
3.2.1. The Origin and Development of Urban Local Government.....	81
3.2.2. The Constitutional Basis of Local Governance	85
3.3. Rajshahi City Corporation	85
3.3.1. The Historical Development of the RCC.....	85
3.3.2. Legal Framework, Composition and Structure of the RCC.....	87
3.3.3. Functions of the RCC	90
Section II: Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR)	92
3.4. The Logic and Project Components	92
3.5. Institutional Arrangements	94
3.5.1. Community Mobilisation Process.....	98
3.5.2. Group Savings and Credit Programme	99
3.5.3. Community Contracts.....	100
3.6. Summary.....	101

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCESS.....	103
4.1. Introduction	103
Section I: Research Design.....	104
4.2. Research Methodology	104
4.3. Case Study Research Method	108
4.4. Selection of the Research Sites and Data Sources	110
4.4.1. The Selection of Rajshahi City Corporation Area	110
4.4.2. Selection of the Study CDCs	112
4.5. Research Participants Selection Process.....	113
4.6. Field Visit and Data Collection Process	116
4.6.1. Initial Contact and Gaining Access	116
4.6.2. Data Collection Methods	118
4.7. Analysis of the Primary Data.....	122
4.8. Ethical Issues	123
4.9. Limitations.....	124
Section II: The Research Site	125
4.10. A Brief Description of Rajshahi City	125
4.11. A Brief Description of the Study Communities.....	128
4.11.1. Alampur (Study CDC 1).....	128
4.11.2. Salampur (Study CDC 2).....	128
4.11.3. Jogotpur (Study CDC 3).....	129
4.11.4. Sripur (Study CDC 4).....	129
4.12. Summary.....	129
CHAPTER 5: LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION - THE PROCESS, ACTORS AND FACTORS	131
5.1. Introduction	131
Section I: The Process, Actors and Factors.....	133
5.2. The Primacy of Politics	134
5.3. The Policy-Making and the Policy Sub-system of the RCC	142

5.3.1. The Policy Making Process of the RCC	142
5.3.2. The Policy Subsystem—the Actors and Factors.....	143
Section II: Participation Spaces and Local Governance.....	154
5.4. Formal Spaces: Scope, Forms and Nature	154
5.4.1. Standing Committees.....	155
5.4.2. Corporation Parishad Meetings	157
5.4.3. Local Government Election.....	158
5.5. Informal Spaces: Scope, Forms and Nature.....	161
5.5.1. Elected Representatives’ Visit to Communities	162
5.5.2. Community People’s Visits to the Elected Representatives.....	163
5.5.3. Spaces Created by Various Civil Society Groups	164
5.6. Summary.....	170
CHAPTER 6: UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT.....	174
6.1. Introduction	174
6.2. Historical Development of the Neighbourhoods	175
6.3. The Socio-economic Condition of the Residents	179
6.4. The Community Power Structure	187
6.4.1. Alampur (Study CDC 1).....	187
6.4.2. Salampur (Study CDC 2).....	191
6.4.3. Jogotpur (Study CDC 3).....	193
6.4.4. Sripur (Study CDC 4).....	195
6.5. The Ward Level Governance and People’s Participation.....	197
6.6. NGOs and the Community People	203
6.8. Summary.....	207
CHAPTER 7: SITUATING PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROCESS.....	210
7.1. Introduction	210
7.2. The Agents in Participation: Who Participates?.....	211
7.3. Members’ Motivation for Participation: Why Choose to Participate?	221

7.4. The Process of Participation: How do People Participate?.....	224
7.4.1. Project Awareness among the Members.....	224
7.4.2. Group Leadership	227
7.4.3. Group Meetings	235
7.4.4. Group Decision-Making	238
7.4.5. Training and Workshop Programme Participants.....	243
7.4.6. Accounts Management and Community Contracts	245
7.5. Summary.....	253
CHAPTER 8: PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE STUDY COMMUNITIES	256
8.1. Introduction	256
8.2. Empowerment and the Savings and Credit Programme	258
8.3. Empowerment and the Community Contracts.....	264
8.3.1. Settlement Improvement Fund (SIF)	264
8.3.2. Socio-Economic Funds (SEF)	267
8.4. Participation and Control in Local Planning	272
8.5. Community Groups and the Project Decisions.....	275
8.6. Community Groups and the Ward Level Governance.....	279
8.7. Participation, Empowerment and Social Change	284
8.7.1. Gender Relations	285
8.7.2. Building Trust and Social Networks.....	288
8.7.3. Involvement in Non-project Community Affairs	292
8.8. Sustainability of the Community Groups	294
8.9. Summary.....	299
CHAPTER 9: PARTICIPATORY LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY- DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT	303
9.1. Introduction	303
9.2. A Brief Review of the Findings.....	305
9.3. Implications in the Societal Arena.....	312
9.4. Policy Implications	314

9.5. Conclusion and the Way Forward	318
APPENDIX I.....	320
APPENDIX II	321
APPENDIX III.....	322
APPENDIX IV	323
APPENDIX V.....	324
APPENDIX VI.....	325
APPENDIX VII.....	326
APPENDIX VIII.....	331
APPENDIX IX.....	334
APPENDIX X.....	336
APPENDIX XI.....	339
APPENDIX XII.....	341
APPENDIX XIII.....	343
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	345

LIST OF MAPS, TABLES, FIGURES AND PHOTOS

Maps

Map 1: Map of South Asia Showing Bangladesh	xvii
Map 2: Map of Bangladesh Showing UPPR Towns and Rajshahi District	xviii
Map 3: Location Map of Rajshahi District and Rajshahi City	126
Map 4: Rajshahi City Corporation Wards.....	127

Tables

Table 1: Participation in Development Theory and Practice: A Selective History....	28
Table 2: Participation and Empowerment: An Analytical Framework.....	67
Table 3: List of Respondents.....	115
Table 4: Political Affiliation of the Ward Councillors.....	148
Table 5: PIP Estimation of Poverty in the Study Communities.....	180
Table 6: Group Loans.....	259
Table 7: Settlement Improvement Funds (SIF) Community Contracts	264
Table 8: Socio-Economic Fund (SEF) Community Contracts.....	268
Table 9: Impact of Trainings and Workshops.....	271

Figures

Figure 1: Policy Sub-system of RCC	154
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Photos

Photo 1: Human Chain Organised by Rokkha (CSO 2).....	167
Photo 2: Semi- <i>pucca</i> and <i>kacha</i> Houses on the Eastern Side of Alampur.....	181
Photo 3: <i>Pucca</i> houses on the western side of Alampur (Study CDC 1).....	182
Photo 4: Semi- <i>pucca</i> houses of Santals in Salampur (Study CDC 2).....	183
Photo 5: <i>Kacha</i> houses in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) Notun Para (back portion).....	185
Photo 6: Houses in Sripur (Study CDC 4).	186

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores community participation and empowerment within the framework of Community-Driven Development (CDD) in the Bangladesh context. Stemming from critiques against state-led top-down models of development, a renewed interest in participatory development in the 1990s led a number of development agencies to implement projects using participatory mechanisms. This second wave of participatory development tended to be informed by broad-based social inclusion and empowerment discourses. More recently, participation has been related to the concept and practices of participatory local governance, aiming to bring transformation in institutional relations within the local governance sphere. Participation and empowerment are two concepts that incur different meanings depending on use and the context (e.g. social, political, institutional and cultural) in which they are applied. Hence, a precise understanding of participation and the underlying processes of empowerment requires a critical analysis of the spaces within which they take place.

As such, this qualitative case study examines “Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction” (UPPR), a CDD intervention in Bangladesh, to explore its contributions to community participation and empowerment in moving towards participatory local governance practices. Being inspired by the immanent process—‘development’ as a historical process of social change—the study focuses not only on the immediate outputs of the project, but also on the processes and outcomes in relation to the overall socio-economic, institutional, cultural and political milieu of Bangladesh. Field work for collecting primary data was conducted in four project communities in Rajshahi City, Bangladesh during the years 2009-2010.

The proponents of the CDD approach claim that this new type of participatory intervention bestows the participants with better control over the projects where they become ‘makers and shapers’ in local development. However, the study finds that this particular development intervention, and the way it has been managed, does not escape the legacy of the previous practices which have been termed as ‘the tyranny of participation’. At the implementation level, project rules and guidelines, being infused with local socio-economic and political factors, encouraged the reproduction of pre-existing power structures instead of the radical transformation envisaged by the populist notion and CDD.

In many instances the research findings indicate that the project intervention has initiated a process of community empowerment in terms of gaining access to local decision-making and resources within the existing, but evolving, socio-economic and political realities. Empowerment, *vis-a-vis* transformation, can be understood as creating new spaces and occupying existing spaces where power is not always about the exercise of power over others and, therefore, not necessarily confrontational but shared.

Through an analysis of the development interventions and impacts on local development, this dissertation contributes to the understanding of various socio-political and institutional factors of the local governance process in Bangladesh. By positioning the development intervention within the broader framework of the immanent process of development, the research does not negate the transformative potential of CDD intervention, but rather suggests some context specific policy lessons which might be useful to adopt elsewhere.

DECLARATION

This is to certify that

- (i) *the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD*
- (ii) *due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material*
- (iii) *the thesis is less than 90,000 words in length, exclusive of footnotes, table, bibliographies and appendices.*

Signature:

(Parvaz Azharul Huq)

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ACRONYMS

ADB: Asian Development Bank
AL: Awami League
BDT: Bangladesh Taka
BNP: Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CAP: Community Action Planning
CBD: Community-Based Development
CBOs: Community-Based Organisations
CDC: Community Development Committee
CDD: Community-Driven Development
CDW: Community Development Worker
CSA: Civil Society Activist
CSO: Civil Society Organisation
DAC: Development Assistance Committee
DFID: UK Department For International Development
DLGP: Democratic Local Governance Programme
ER: Elected Representative
ESCWA: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FGD: Focus Group Discussion
GTZ: German Agency for Development Co-operation
IDS: Institute of Development Studies
IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO: International Labour Organisation
ISS: Institute of Social Studies
JICA: Japan International Co-operation Agency
LCDD: Local and Community-Driven Development
LCG: Local Consultative Group
LGE: Local Government Expert
LGED: Local Government Engineering Department
LPL: Local Political Leader
LPUPAP: Local Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation Project
NGO: Non-Government Organisation

NPCM: Non-Participant Community Member
MP: Member of Parliament
MSP: Municipal Services Project
OB: Office Bearer
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAR: Participatory Action Research
PG: Primary Group
PGM: Primary Group Member
PIP: Participatory Identification of Poor
PM: Parliament Member
PMB: Project Management Board
POB: Project Outcome Board
PRA: Participatory Research Appraisal
PRSP: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RCC: Rajshahi City Corporation
RWP: Rural Works Programme
SCG: Savings and Credit Group
SEF: Socio-economic Fund
SIF: Settlement Improvement Fund
SIPP: Social Investment Program Project
STIFPP-II: Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project Phase II
SIP: Slum Improvement Project
TOB: Town Outcome Board
TPB: Town Project Board
TM: Town Manager
UN: United Nations
UBSDP: Urban Basic Service Delivery Project
UGIIP: Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project
UNCHS: The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF: The United Nations Children's Fund
UNRISD: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UPPR: Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction
USAID: United States Agency for International Development

V-AID: Village Agricultural and Industrial Development

WB: World Bank

WC: Ward Councillor

WHO: World Health Organisation

WWC: Woman Ward Councillor

GLOSSARY OF LOCAL TERMS

Bengalis:	The Bengali people are an ethnic community native to the historic region of Bengal (between Bangladesh and India).
Jamidar:	Landlords who were locally called kings.
<i>Kacha</i> house:	A type of house that has a ceiling which is low and is made of very cheap construction materials like straw, bamboo, chhan (grass), golpata (leaves), polythene sheets, gunny bags etc.
Khas land:	Khas land is defined in the 1950 East Bengal Acquisition and Tenancy Act (EBSATA) and refers to land that is diluviated or appears after diluvion (newly accreted).
<i>Pucca</i> house:	The structure which has its roof and wall made of bricks and mortar.
Santal:	The Santal are the largest tribal community in India. There is also a significant Santal minority in Bangladesh, and a small population in Nepal.
Semi- <i>pucca</i> house:	A structure of normal height with walls made of bricks. The roof is made of any material other than cement/concrete.

Map 1: Map of South Asia Showing Bangladesh



Source: Alabama Maps, University of Alabama¹

¹ <http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/contemporarymaps/world/asia/South%20Asia%20Political.jpg>, visited on 4 July 2012.

Map 2: Map of Bangladesh Showing UPPR Towns and Rajshahi District

